

CASSH response to the Draft London Budget 2023-24

Consensus Action on Salt, Sugar and Health (CASSH) are a registered charity and group of experts based at Queen Mary University of London. Alongside research and international teams, CASSH comprises two campaign arms: Action on Sugar and Action on Salt.

Action on Sugar

Action on Sugar is a group of experts concerned with sugar and obesity and their effects on health. It is working to reach a consensus with the food industry and Government over the harmful effects of a high calorie diet, and bring about a reduction in the amount of sugar and fat in processed foods to prevent obesity, type 2 diabetes and tooth decay.

Action on Salt

Action on Salt (formerly Consensus Action on Salt & Health, CASH) is an organisation supported by 24 expert members and working to reduce the salt intake of the UK population to prevent deaths, and suffering, from heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, osteoporosis and stomach cancer.

For more information on our response or our charity, please contact: Mhairi Brown, Policy and Public Affairs Lead Mhairi.brown@qmul.ac.uk

The Mayor of London's commitment to and progress in improving London's food system should be applauded. In our work to encourage policy measures to reduce salt, sugar and excess calorie intakes in the UK and worldwide, London is an excellent case study in how to implement measures at a local level that provide a benchmark that national policymakers should work towards.

Healthy and thriving communities are only possible with sufficient access to, availability and affordability of nutritious food. At a national level, the National Food Strategy last year starkly revealed that the food system does not enable this. As part of this budget process, we urge the Greater London Authority to ensure that the budget prioritise previous commitments to this agenda and the recognition of the role that the food system plays and the role that the Mayor and the GLA can take in shaping this system. This includes:

- [The London food strategy](#)
- [Every child a healthy weight – London child obesity taskforce](#)
- [London vision](#)
- [London Health inequalities strategy](#)
- [Green new deal](#)
- [The London Plan](#)
- [Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration](#)
- [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#)
- [Sustainable Food Places silver award](#)
- Creating a [robust safety net](#) and the other missions set out by the Mayor

We strongly encourage the continued championing of TfL's Healthier Advertising Policy which has provided a successful model of ensuring healthier food and drinks are advertised in support of better health, which many other communities across the UK are in the process of adopting. Where possible, we recommend a strengthening of the criteria that forms the basis of the policy.

We also support Sustain's response to this consultation, which we have included below.

Sustain has seen that small but significant and continuous funding commitments to food programmes can really assist progress and would encourage the following consideration in the budget:

- Providing a modest budget to ensure the GLA coordinates and has oversight of joined up work and borough level progress, replacing the previous food team with a similar level of resource within the GLA function, to draw in additional resources and deliver on multiple agendas.
- Provide funding for a Food Partnership and Food Plan in every borough, building on the successful Food Roots programme and following the steps of [other devolved governments](#).
- Continuing to use resources and budget to influence and champion the work of London's local authorities as key stakeholders in delivering better food in London, including continuing to support Sustain's [Good Food for All Londoners report](#), and survey of council action on food. The report champions the good practice of leading London Boroughs, and identify areas for improvement under two key themes: tackling food poverty, and how the council is bringing good food to the borough, including their approach to climate and health.

A ROBUST SAFETY NET – Tackling Food Poverty and its root cause

We have seen that food poverty is rising here in London. Building on the Robust Safety Net mission we think it is critical that the Mayoral resource focusses on tackling the root cause and ensuring a dignified response to food poverty.

- This means continuing the great work on ensuring income levels are sufficient, and that any emergency response is provided in a dignified way, that does not focus on surplus food for surplus people, but focuses on choice and nutritious quality food.
- Investment in good food enterprises, community projects and the good food economy. Support needs to go beyond the food bank to sustainable, more resilient models of community food provision like cooperatives and food pantries
- Ensure all school-aged children access a healthy lunch by supporting every London borough to provide universal free school meals (UFSM) to ensure all children have at least one nutritious meal each day and fund school food improvement officers for every borough.
- Support and promote the take-up of Healthy Start Vouchers across London.
- Ensure every older and disabled Londoner can access at least one good meal every day.

A THRIVING FOOD ECONOMY: Supporting good food businesses and the local economy through the Cost-of-Living and Climate Crisis

During the pandemic and now as we weather the Cost-of-Living Crisis, we are seeing Food SMEs and food social enterprises that have been the lifeblood of London's fairer economy, being challenged in all directions. We are also seeing inequalities grow and believe that where government targets its budgets can change this. This includes:

- Investment in infrastructure and programmes to support supply chains to ensure greater survival of these businesses, jobs and local economies (which keep more money flowing locally). Localised food systems can also help to tackle climate change and [provide skills and jobs](#) to a new generation of good food entrepreneurs and workforce. This could be in the form of good food business infrastructure fund to lever investment and create 1000's of good food jobs, paying the London Living wage, building skills, and kickstarting businesses to support green economic recovery and a low-carbon economy and tackle food poverty at the root cause.

- This should catalyse councils within London to focus their resources on building skills within the food and hospitality sector with a focus on sustainability, enterprise and social enterprise start-up and other joined up ways of working.
- Place Food Social Enterprise and cooperative models at the centre of growth and innovation to ensure more of the money spent goes back to the community and reduces inequalities.

FOOD FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET – tackling the climate crisis and improving health

Food systems go beyond council boundaries and the Mayor has a critical role to play in supporting London's food system to tackle the climate and nature crisis. We would like to see:

- Existing green infrastructure, tree planting and grow back greener funding more explicitly acknowledged and meeting the overwhelming demand from Londoners to grow their own food and have more access to land where food can be grown at scale.
- Assigning budget to ensure that community food gardens or allotments with available plots can be accessed by all within a short walk, with opportunities on housing estates or underutilised green space for food growing for residents. All new developments allocate areas for community growing. Ensure Boroughs' local plans are consistently implementing London Plan policies for healthy neighbourhoods (Healthy food environment and food growing) and sustainable farming practices where this is relevant to outer London boroughs.
- Ensure that the Mayor and GLA Group procurement spending is in line with climate commitments and sets an example for other local government spending. Using the budgets as a lever for change in the capital including supporting councils to make the food they procure for schools and other services reflect a healthy and sustainable diet. The London Circular Food Procurement Working [Group](#) is aiming to make London the first in the world to deliver such cross-city commitments to food procurement, and the GLA should support Sustain, Re:London and Hackney Council to coordinate the work.
- Continue to champion the health of all Londoners by bringing in and maintaining world-leading policies that address health inequalities, such as TfL's Healthier Food Advertising policy, Water-Only Schools, and School Superzones.