

Food Mapping Toolkit

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JANUARY 2007
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Food Mapping Tool kit

This toolkit is a guide to assist in mapping a chosen area to discover and show its provision of healthy food. It was developed following research undertaken in 2006 that studied access to food in the London Borough of Hackney. The report from this project 'Shopping for food: accessing healthy, affordable food in three areas of Hackney' should be read in conjunction with this tool kit. It will help you to make your project applicable to the area that you are researching and help you to decide what future action you can take. Throughout this document this is referred to as the 'original report' and page numbers are provided in the text for the reader to refer to:

Bowyer, S., Caraher, M., Duane, T. & Carr-Hill, R. (2006) *Shopping for Food: Accessing healthy affordable food in three areas of Hackney*. London: Centre for Food Policy, City University.

This is available from m.caraher@city.ac.uk.

If you are new to this work then we recommend that you also consult the following:

Two reports from the National Consumer Council:

National Consumer Council (2006) *Food access radar*. National Consumer Council: London. Further details behind the development of this tool are given in an earlier report

National Consumer Council (2005) *Putting Food Access on the Radar- how to target and prioritise communities at risk*. National Consumer Council: London.

Both these are available at http://www.ncc.org.uk/food/access_radar.pdf

Sustain (2000) *Reaching the parts... Community mapping: working together to tackle social exclusion and food poverty*. Sustain; London.

Also useful is another report from Sustain:

Sustain (2000) *Making Links- A toolkit for local food projects*. Sustain; London

For further details view the Sustain website <http://www.sustainweb.org/>

McGlone, P., Dallison, J. & Caraher, M. (2005) *Evaluation resources for community food projects*. London: Health Development Agency. Available on the National Institute for Clinical Excellence website <http://www.nice.org.uk/>.

This toolkit poses many questions for you to consider in the development of a project to measure the availability and price of food in an area. In developing any piece of research or evaluation work there is a need to be clear about what you want to know and how it will be used to further the health and wellbeing of people in the area. In other words how you will use the findings from any research or evaluation needs to be considered at an early stage. Part of this consideration needs to pay attention to what you might not find as well as what the research may find!

Planning your Project

A key question to ask yourself at this stage is why do you need to do this work. There is a danger that the mapping of food outlets, availability and prices of food can take on a life of its own; even taking more resources and time than the project you are trying to set up. The focus or utility of the work can be lost in the scramble to acquire resources and meet deadlines. You may well have more than one reason for undertaking the work and this can include the development of local agencies working together and to improve local provision of food. If you are mapping food premises and the range and types of food in them, you need to ask yourself why? Be as clear as you can about why you are undertaking the work and why, how and with whom you hope to use the findings. See checklist 1.

Checklist 1

What has prompted the work?

How do you intend to use any findings?

What is the purpose?

Is it to influence local shops, the council or others?

Be as specific as you can.

Simply documenting the local provision of food is probably not sufficient in itself. The work should have utility or purpose and this should include some clear directions as to how you will use the findings. As findings become clearer you can modify these initial thoughts but it is important to think them through. In the Hackney work an 'unexpected' finding was the widespread availability in local shops of fruit and vegetables and the lack of availability of other items, such as fresh fish and low fat and high fibre options, from food groups as specified in the 'Balance of Good Health' model.

This issue of utility is important and needs to be thought through. It is unlikely and undesirable that you are mapping for the sake of mapping. Accumulating data on food available can be useful in:

- a) Helping inform project plans and what should be done;
- b) Establishing baselines against which to measure the impact of your project;
- c) Helping inform local policy.

There are at least ten stages to project planning and implementation:

Stage 1 Identify your team, who might be involved? Is there a core team and others who may be involved on a volunteer basis or helping out on specific aspects such as data collection?

Stage 2 Identify the area you are to study and why you want to study this area or areas?

Stage 3 What work has already been done in the area? This might include community development and or food access work.

Stage 4 What information is already available from public health departments, PCTs and local authority data?

Stage 5 Decide exactly what you want to find out.

Stage 6 Deciding on sampling procedures such which foods to include in a basket, which ethnic groups will you shop for/survey, will you collect data in all shops in an area or just a sample of shops?

Stage 7 Developing or adapting data collection forms.

Stage 8 Data collection itself.

Stage 9 Analyses of data and interpretation of results.

Stage 10 Dissemination of findings.

Some of these stages will overlap and developments in later stages may mean going back to an earlier stage to refine the process.

We think that there are a number of key elements to consider at the early stage of programme planning and these are

1. Do not ignore the importance of local involvement and understanding of the issues.
2. Have you access to key skills such as dietetics and research?
3. Have you ready access to data such as demographics, shop location, local statistics? If not do you need to negotiate such access?
4. What other documents or toolkits are available alongside this tool kit such as the National Consumer Council Food Access Radar toolkit and Sustains Community Mapping toolkit, mentioned earlier?

Starting Out

Checklist 2

Consider who you might involve:

- Local council- departments on regeneration, housing, environmental health, transport, GIS mapping services
- Primary care trust- dietetics department, public health department, etc
- Community Centres- what groups are run from there?
- Voluntary groups
- Support groups
- Housing groups e.g. tenants associations

Remember to talk:

- Local community representatives
- Local shops or their representatives
- Local councillors
- The Council regeneration team/Environmental Health/
- Community Dieticians
- Local food workers such as 5-a-day and outreach workers/food co-op workers.
- Any one else you feel plays a part in the local community and access to food
- Other people you decide can contribute to your work

Set up a team of interested parties. Think about all the different organisations, both statutory and non-statutory, interest and support groups' shopkeepers and residents living and working within the area you wish to look at (see checklist 2).

Once your team is formed, you must also decide for your research and data collection

- What exactly do you wish to find out?
- What exactly are you going to look at?
- What specific geographical area(s) will you be investigating.
- Start by looking at what information your interested parties can

contribute.

What do you already know?

Initial investigation into what is already known about the area will make sure that work is not duplicated- has anyone already looked at the same or similar topics?

Other work can strengthen your research- what other documents or reports or figures support your research? And from other work you can see where there are gaps or missing pieces in the knowledge base of the area. Finding out what others have done and what is known about an area, means that you do not have to duplicate or replicate this work. This can include policy documents which have specified targets for action in them or include local food policies or actions related to food contained in local area agreements. Issues that others may have done something about include:

- The demographics/population profiles of the area such as household incomes; car ownership; number of occupants per household; age of occupants; employment levels.
- Ethnic populations.
- Local plans for transport.
- Targets in Local Area Agreements (LAAs) relating to food.
- Local food policies.
- Reports on local shopping patterns.

Mapping using maps and resources and data sets such as road networks, public transport, PCT boundary lines, district/borough county lines as outlined in the NCC (2006) report cannot be undertaken easily without a high level of support from the local council or other specialist agencies. This may include access to council databases and resources such as borough or boundary maps, environmental health (EH) data on registered food retailers such as the FLARE database from the EH or the local trading standards department.

Consulting local people

You could opt at this stage to use an approach based on participatory approaches as set out in the Sustain report '*Reaching the parts... Community mapping: working together to tackle social exclusion and food poverty*'. This is a useful and important process in documenting community perceptions and knowledge of the problem. Also

look at 'Making Links- A toolkit for local food projects'. Sustain (2000). For further details you may wish to view the Sustain website <http://www.sustainweb.org/>.

These reports stress the importance of local consultation and listening. Such approaches can help inform the more quantitative approaches such as mapping described above and indeed in many instances contribute more to a view of what it is like to live and shop in area than the more formal processes that lack a local voice. This voice of the local community can inform:

1. The detail as to where and how people shop and which shopping areas or shops they use most.
2. Refinement of the food basket lists that you have selected for a shopping survey.
3. Other barriers to healthy shopping in an area

Ask the people who live in the community that you are interested in;

- What do they think are the good points about shopping in the area?
- What helps them?
- What makes shopping easier for them?
- What makes shopping a pleasanter/less stressful experience?

At this stage of the research think of exploring food access in terms of not just physical access to and affordability of food but how and what local people consider key issues surrounding access to food. For example for local people key issues might be the friendliness of a local shop keeper and staff not just a matter of being within a certain distance. One way to help guide you in sorting out the macro and micro issues is to think of food access under, and use as the focus of your mapping exercise, the following headings:

- **Awareness** (e.g. of the importance of eating more fruit and vegetables).
- **Acceptability** (e.g. of eating green vegetables or eating fruit in place of a sweet snack).
- **Appropriateness** (of the foods on offer to the individual, household or groups in the evaluation).
- **Affordability** (e.g. of food to people on low incomes).
- **Availability** (e.g. of food to people through a breakfast club, local food co-op or shops).

- **Accessibility** (e.g. to healthy food choices in shops that are convenient and affordable).
- **Advocacy** (e.g. of community groups through better lobbying and policy development).

You do not have to address all of the above but deciding to focus on one or two may help provide a focus for your project. You could form the aims and objectives of your project around the above list.

Now look at your chosen geographical area or area to be surveyed

Your decision to focus on a particular geographical area needs to be detailed and have a clear rationale. In the Hackney study we used areas identified by the Regeneration teams, in agreement then along with other members of the steering group these areas and the reasons for their choice were discussed before reaching a final decision (See page 10 under 'Health and food in Hackney' in the report).

Another option is to focus on the shopping patterns of a community which may have a wider spread than the area in which they live. This could be a defined ethnic community or a community with a common interest or identity.

The NCC 'Food Access Radar' can be used as a tool to identify initial areas where food access problems are indicated this should then be followed up by research 'on the ground' to complete the picture.

The size of your sample area may will depend upon the number of food shops to be surveyed and the resources available to you to physically collect the data See table 1 below.

In the Hackney work we used Local Authority data from the environmental health team to find the shops that retailed in our study area. So as a starting point:

1. An indicator of the type and number of shops in an area can be found out through -
 - Official local government sources, such as Environmental Health Departments, Trading Standards Departments.
 - Officials (staff) e.g. Environmental Health Officers – ideally involved as a member of your project team.

- Public documents, databases-e.g. FLARE database.
 - Use of yellow pages, local directories and/or lists from local traders organisations.
 - Other local sources?
2. You will probably need to refine and validate this information with-
- Information already gathered from your investigation team/working party.
 - Local opinions gathered from community mapping questionnaires, individual interviews or focus groups from those living in the community and those using the shopping facilities.
3. Ensure the accuracy of your data by
- A street-by-street survey to see if any new shops have opened or any established ones have shut down.

All this can be time consuming depending upon;

- How many people you have,
- What distances have to be covered?
- Whether it is done on foot, by bike, or in a car.

In the Hackney project we had three people cycling and walking the areas and it took them approximately 40 hours to check 119 shops (this excludes the time spent on the price and availability surveys in the shops).

What resources do you have available?

The size, depth and extent of your project will be determined by the resources you have available to you. See table 1 for a list of some considerations

Table 1 Issues to be considered in designing you study/evaluation

Resource Factor	Issues to consider	Potential problems
Time -how long have you got to carry out the work?	Number of shops to survey. Time of year. Holidays -any religious occasions may distort the food normally available.	Allow for needing to return to shops when it is convenient for shopkeepers. Allow for inclement weather.

		Public holidays.
People -who will be collecting the survey data.	What skills do they have Are they food workers such as registered public health nutritionists, registered dieticians, food workers, volunteers from the community? Can a dietician train the data collectors.	Need baseline nutrition training in data collecting to ensure correct food products are selected.
Professionals -who is available to help e.g. environmental health officials, other council officials.	Can any of these people help with data collection? If so how much time will you require from them and how much time do they actually have available.	Time factors when people already have busy schedules.
Transport -how far is the distance to cover in collecting the shop data – a car is not necessarily needed but if you are in rural setting you may find it necessary.	Mobility of data collectors.	Access to refreshment and public conveniences.

Bearing the above in mind use checklist 3 to think of the make up of the implementation team and the evaluation team, are they one and the same or do you need different skills represented?

Checklist 3 Consider the following:

- Who is to carry out the data collection- we recommend someone with a good knowledge of food leads and trains the team e.g. Registered dietician, dietetic assistant, registered public health nutritionist
- Distances to be covered – on foot, by bike or by car
- Weather conditions

- Refreshment breaks- are there cafes in the vicinity?
- Public toilets- consider where these are for your data collecting team.
- Fitness and capabilities of the data collecting team individuals
- Size of shop- small aisles may prove tricky with buggies and backpacks.
- Timing- you may wish to avoid busy times in shops.
- Whether English is the first language of the retailers
- Personal safety issues
- Others aspects specific to your area

Selecting the foods for the survey basket

The items that you choose for your food basket may well depend upon the ethnic diversity of the people living in your chosen geographical area and/or the specifics of the groups may want to find out more about. For example you may decide to focus on the shopping experiences of a specific group of people regarding their life stage e.g. the elderly or of pregnant women or you may wish to look at a particular ethnic or cultural group or even those on low incomes or in receipt of benefits.

We recommend that to compile your list of healthy foods you consult with:

1. A dietician with an expertise in the specific age group or ethnic group and their dietary habits and requirements.
2. With the local communities to see to what extent their diets combine their ethnic backgrounds with traditional UK foods.

Below is a list of core food items that were used in the Hackney project (see page 16 of the Hackney report). It represents a selection of healthy food items that regularly appear in a shopping basket for an adult who is fit and well with no 'special' dietary needs. Some of the items have two options- a healthy food or its healthiest alternative e.g. semi skimmed milk and skimmed milk.

Table 2 Core food basket items

- Apples
 - Oranges
 - Satsuma or similar
-

-
- Grapes
 - Bananas
 - Broccoli
 - Onion
 - Fresh tomatoes
 - Cucumber
 - Carrot
 - Cabbage
 - Tinned tomatoes
 - Unsweetened orange juice
 - Baked beans
 - Reduced sugar baked beans
 - Potatoes
 - Wholemeal bread
 - White bread
 - Weetabix
 - Cornflakes
 - Oats
 - Wholemeal pasta
 - White pasta
 - Brown rice
 - White long grain rice
 - Fresh chicken
 - Lean minced beef
 - Fresh cod
 - Fresh eggs
 - Semi skimmed milk
 - Skimmed milk
 - Low fat plain yoghurt
 - Unsaturated margarine
-

To this core basket you may add extra food items to accommodate the nature of your locality with respect to the group of people that you are interested in regarding their shopping and eating patterns. Table 3 shows the food lists we used in the Hackney project which concentrated on four ethnic groups namely White British, Turkish, Black African and Black Caribbean (See page 17 in the original report). In the

Hackney report we developed these into imaginary case studies designing a seven-day menu to price and map shopping in specific areas (See page 32- 37 of the Hackney report

Table 3 Healthy food items for White British, Turkish, Black African and Black Caribbean communities

White British food basket	Turkish food basket	Black African food basket	Black Caribbean food basket
36 items	43 items	53 items	48 items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apples ▪ Oranges ▪ Satsuma or similar ▪ Grapes ▪ Bananas ▪ Broccoli ▪ Onion ▪ Fresh tomatoes ▪ Cucumber ▪ Carrot ▪ Cabbage ▪ Tinned tomatoes ▪ Unsweetened orange juice ▪ Baked beans ▪ Reduced sugar baked beans ▪ Potatoes ▪ Wholemeal bread ▪ White bread ▪ Weetabix ▪ Cornflakes ▪ Oats ▪ Wholemeal pasta ▪ White pasta ▪ Brown rice ▪ White long grain rice ▪ Wholemeal flour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apples ▪ Oranges ▪ Satsuma or similar ▪ Grapes ▪ Bananas ▪ Broccoli ▪ Onion ▪ Fresh tomatoes ▪ Cucumber ▪ Carrot ▪ Pumpkin ▪ Cabbage ▪ Aubergine ▪ Aubergine ▪ Green olives ▪ Black olives ▪ Tinned tomatoes ▪ Unsweetened orange juice ▪ Unsweetened baked beans ▪ Baked beans ▪ Reduced sugar baked beans ▪ Baked beans ▪ Reduced sugar baked beans ▪ Potatoes ▪ Wholemeal pita bread ▪ White pita bread ▪ Weetabix ▪ Cornflakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apples ▪ Oranges ▪ Satsuma or similar ▪ Grapes ▪ Bananas ▪ Broccoli ▪ Onion ▪ Fresh tomatoes ▪ Cucumber ▪ Carrot ▪ Cabbage ▪ Aubergine ▪ Okra ▪ Tinned tomatoes ▪ Unsweetened orange juice ▪ Baked beans ▪ Reduced sugar baked beans ▪ Potatoes ▪ Sweet potatoes ▪ Sweet potatoes ▪ Plantain ▪ Green bananas ▪ Cassava root ▪ Cassava root ▪ Yam ▪ Wholemeal bread ▪ White bread ▪ Weetabix ▪ Cornflakes ▪ Cornflakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apples ▪ Oranges ▪ Satsuma or similar ▪ Grapes ▪ Bananas ▪ Broccoli ▪ Onion ▪ Fresh tomatoes ▪ Cucumber ▪ Carrot ▪ Pumpkin ▪ Cabbage ▪ Tinned tomatoes ▪ Unsweetened orange juice ▪ Baked beans ▪ Reduced sugar baked beans ▪ Potatoes ▪ Sweet potatoes ▪ Plantain ▪ Green bananas ▪ Cassava root ▪ Yam ▪ Wholemeal bread ▪ White bread ▪ Weetabix ▪ Cornflakes ▪ Oats

▪ Fresh chicken	▪ Oats	▪ Oats	▪ Wholemeal pasta
▪ Lean minced beef	▪ Wholemeal pasta	▪ Wholemeal pasta	▪ White pasta
▪ Fresh salmon	▪ White pasta	▪ White pasta	▪ Brown rice
▪ Fresh cod	▪ Brown rice	▪ Brown rice	▪ White long grain rice
▪ Fresh eggs	▪ White long grain rice	▪ White long grain rice	▪ Barley
▪ Semi skimmed milk	▪ Cous cous	▪ Cous cous	▪ Cassava flour or gari
▪ Skimmed milk	▪ Fresh chicken	▪ Barley	▪ Maize flour
▪ Low fat plain yoghurt	▪ Lean minced beef	▪ Cassava flour or gari	▪ Fresh chicken
▪ Low fat fruit yoghurt	▪ Fresh cod	▪ Maize flour	▪ Lean minced beef
▪ Unsaturated margarine	▪ Fresh eggs	▪ Fresh chicken	▪ Fresh goat
	▪ Dried red lentils	▪ Lean minced beef	▪ Fresh cod
	▪ Dried green lentils	▪ Fresh goat	▪ Fresh eggs
	▪ Dried chick peas	▪ Fresh cod	▪ Dried red lentils
	▪ Semi skimmed milk	▪ Fresh tilapia	▪ Dried green lentils
	▪ Skimmed milk	▪ Fresh eggs	▪ Dried kidney beans
	▪ Low fat plain yoghurt	▪ Dried red lentils	▪ Dried black eyed beans
	▪ Unsaturated margarine	▪ Dried green lentils	▪ Semi skimmed milk
		▪ Dried kidney beans	▪ Skimmed milk
		▪ Dried black eyed beans	▪ Reduced fat evaporated milk
		▪ Dried chick peas	▪ Low fat plain yoghurt
		▪ Ground nuts	▪ Unsaturated margarine
		▪ Semi skimmed milk	
		▪ Skimmed milk	
		▪ Reduced fat evaporated milk	
		▪ Low fat plain yoghurt	
		▪ Unsaturated margarine	

Below in table 4 are some more ethnic/cultural baskets as used in a similar project in Sandwell.

Table 4 Food baskets used in Sandwell project (Dowler, E., Rex, D., Blair, A., Donkin, A., and Grundy, C. (2001) *Measuring Access to Healthy Food in Sandwell*. Sandwell; Sandwell Health Authority.)

White Groups	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Black (Caribbean)
Apples	Apples	Apples	Apples	Apples
Bananas	Bananas	Bananas	Bananas	Bananas
Oranges	Oranges	Oranges	Oranges	Oranges
Grapes	Grapes	Grapes	Grapes	Grapes
Strawberries	Mango	Mango	Mango	Mango
Satsumas/similar	Strawberries	Strawberries	Jack fruit	Pineapple
Pears	Satsumas/similar	Satsumas/similar	Satsumas/similar	Satsumas/similar
Pure fruit juice	Pure fruit juice	Pears	Pears	Pears
Tinned tomatoes	Tinned tomatoes	Pure fruit juice	Pure fruit juice	Pure fruit juice
Onions	Onions	Tinned tomatoes	Tinned tomatoes	Tinned tomatoes
Fresh tomatoes	Fresh Tomatoes	Onions	Onions	Onions
Carrots	Carrots	Fresh Tomatoes	Fresh Tomatoes	Fresh Tomatoes
Cabbage	Cabbage	Carrots	Carrots	Carrots
Frozen peas	Frozen peas	Cabbage	Cabbage	Cabbage
Lettuce	Lettuce	Frozen peas	Frozen peas	Frozen peas
Cucumber	Cucumber	Lettuce	Lettuce	Lettuce
Peppers	Peppers	Cucumber	Cucumber	Cucumber
Broccoli	Broccoli	Peppers	Cauliflower	Peppers
Spinach	Spinach	Aubergine	Aubergine	Broccoli
Frozen mixed veg	Frozen mixed veg	Spinach	Spinach	Spinach
Mushrooms	Okra	Frozen mixed veg	Okra	Frozen mixed veg
Cauliflower	Mushrooms	Okra	Karella	Okra
Wholemeal bread	Karella	Karella	Pumpkin/Squash	Pumpkin/Squash
White bread	Aubergine	Cauliflower	Wholemeal bread	Brown bread
White pasta	Brown bread	Brown bread	White bread	White bread
Potatoes (old)	White bread	White bread	White pasta	White pasta
Potatoes (new)	White pasta	Potatoes (old)	Potatoes (old)	Potatoes (old)
Cornflakes	Potatoes (old)	Potatoes (new)	Potatoes (new)	Potatoes (new)
Weetabix	Potatoes (new)	Cornflakes	Cornflakes	Cornflakes
Rice (longrain)	Cornflakes	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix
Frozen Chips (<5%fat)	Weetabix	Rice (basmati)	Rice (basmati)	Rice (longrain)
Oats	Rice (basmati)	Frozen Chips (<5%fat)	MB chapatti flour	Frozen Chips (<5%fat)
Plain Flour	MB chapatti flour	MB chapatti flour	Brown rice	Oats
Semi skimmed milk	Plain Flour	Plain Flour	Semi skimmed milk	Plain Flour
Cheddar cheese	Sweet potatoes	Sweet potatoes	Veg. Based cheese	Sweet potatoes
LF fruit yoghurt	Semi skimmed milk	Yam	LF fruit yoghurt	Plantain (green)
Unsaturated spread	Cheddar cheese	Semi skimmed milk	Unsaturated spread	Plantain (ripe)
Olive oil	LF fruit yoghurt	Cheddar cheese	Vegetable oil	Brown rice
Vegetable oil	Unsaturated spread	LF fruit yoghurt	Paneer	Yam
Eggs	Olive oil	Unsaturated spread	Eggs	Semi skimmed milk
Baked beans	Vegetable oil	Vegetable oil	Mung beans	Cheddar cheese
Kidney beans (tinned)	Paneer	Paneer	Kidney beans (dried)	LF fruit yoghurt
Lean beef mince	Eggs	Eggs	Mackerel/Herring	Unsaturated spread
Lean pork chop/fillet	Baked beans	Mung beans (dried)	Chicken (fresh/frozen)H	Olive oil
Chicken (fresh/frozen)	Kidney beans (dried)	Chicken (fresh/frozen)H	Hilsha	Vegetable oil
Cod	Goat	Cod	Tinned sardines	Eggs
Lamb	Lean Pork chop/fillet	Tinned sardines	Salt fish	Baked beans
Fish fingers	Chicken (fresh/frozen)	Salt fish	Lentils	Kidney beans (dried)
Lean carcasse meat	Cod	Lentils	Chick peas	Goat
Tinned salmon	Tinned Sardines	Chick peas (dried)		Lean pork chop/fillet
	Black eye beans	Tinned tuna		Chicken (fresh/frozen)
	Lentils			Cod/Haddock
	Chick peas			Tinned sardines
	Tinned tuna			Salt fish
				Snapper/Mackerel
				Black eye beans
				Tinned Salmon

Preparing for data collection

Be clear as to what information you wish to collect. You may just want to know if certain or a range of food items are available for sale in the shops eg fruit and vegetables. This will be a simpler survey. This will tell you about availability. Be sure you are clear as to how specific you wish to be regarding varieties or brands or specific pack sizes. This is easier than deciding later on that these factors are important and finding that you have not collected them.

If you wish to compare prices then decisions must be made around what prices are to be recorded eg per item or per kg. It may be easier to record the lowest price but this does disregard quality and brands. You may want to collect a range of prices for the same product depending what pack sizes are available. This is a decision you need to make to ensure consistency of the data collected and that everyone is collecting the same information. This is especially so if you have a number of different people collecting data.

Checklist 4 Consider the following when planning to collect information:

- * What brands are available?
- * How much shelf space is occupied by the different foods?
- * The availability of the 'less healthy' options of food items
- * The number or range of different pack sizes available
- * What else?

From this you should design your data-collecting table. See appendix 1 for the one we used in the Hackney project. We would recommend that a registered dietician or registered public health nutritionist is involved in this to help avoid confusion as to the foods to be collected and therefore standardise the data collected. All the data collectors will then need to be trained to make sure data is uniformly collected and again we would recommend professional food worker input at this stage.

Data collecting procedure

A pilot or practice run is useful to let the data collecting team try out some of the collection tools and agree on division of tasks if they are working in pairs e.g. one writing down the availability pack sizes and prices of the food items whilst the other calls them out.

Collecting price data in shops is allowed as this is public data. However it is courteous to inform the shopkeeper prior to collecting the data to avoid any suspicion or confrontation. This may be important if future work is planned with the shopkeepers. An alternative approach is to use a 'mystery shopper' where those collecting the data do not make themselves known to the shops. There are some advantages to this approach but also some disadvantages in that if you are trying to build relationships with local shops then this may alienate them on finding out that the work has been done. Using the mystery shopper may also incur increased financial costs as food items would need to be purchased to avoid suspicion. You may need to restrict the number of food items in your basket depending upon financial resources.

Think of the period during which you will collect the data. Ideally this should be as concentrated as possible to avoid fluctuations in price due to seasonality or special offers in shops or supermarkets.

Results and analyses

You can use an excel table layout as detailed (appendix 2) to insert your data. Adjust the column headings according to the food items you have selected and the type of detail that you recorded. Excel will help add up the totals and do more sophisticated analyses. If you have access to statistical expertise more complex analyses can be carried out. In the Hackney project we devised weekly menus and calculated shopping sequences to buy the menu items (see page 34 of the original Hackney report) but even taking one case and building a story of how an individual might shop helps contribute to the picture. This can be developed as a case study.

As an example, further data can be generated if you have collected both the availability and price data for a range of pack sizes or weights the mean price can be

calculated for each item and a comparison of the range of prices available can be made. You must first convert all prices gathered to the price in £ per kilogramme. You must decide a uniform method of multiplying prices if a certain pack size is not available e.g. in the Hackney project if we wanted a 1 kg pack size and there was only a 500g or a 1.5kg pack on sale we would multiply up the 500g pack since in economies of scale it is often more economical (or cheaper) to buy the larger pack size.

Drawing your maps

In the Hackney project the maps were drawn with the assistance of the Geographical Information System team at the local council (see page 37 of original report). If you have access to such facilities, use them to construct maps which show the most dramatic results. If not see what other software you have available. The NCC radar report documents how this can be done. Remember these are aids to helping you make your case the purpose is not to produce maps per se. We have become aware of a number of projects where the production or mapping of the shops in an area has become the focus without a clear idea of the utility of the process.

What are you going to do next? How to use the results

First of all your findings need to be reported to the whole project team, anyone assisting in the data collecting or who has helped with advice and information. Next think about what you have found out and who might be able to make changes to improve situations that the research has identified as problematic.

In the Hackney project a stakeholder meeting was held to report the findings and to discuss the recommendations that had arisen from the work, to improve and ensure access to food in the areas of Hackney specifically studied.

Invite all interested and potentially influential parties who will be able to identify responsibility to carry out recommendations and actions from your project and who can direct future work and ensure that food access does not get overlooked in areas where it is not yet required as essential official government legislation or information.

Conclusions

So good luck and remember this should be an enjoyable experience and one that contributes to team building and cohesive work, the point made early on is always think of the uses or utility of your research and evaluation work and to what ends others might use your findings?

Think through the following questions at all stages in the process:

Why are you doing this work?

To **What** purpose will it be put?

Where will you focus your activities?

When and **With** what partners will you work and

How will you achieve your aims and objectives?

Appendix 1 Example of data collecting table

Please complete the table as outlined for the products below.

Product	Available		Number of varieties	Cheapest variety of each product and price loose and pre-packaged (please indicate when not available in both)		Any offers? Circle yes or no. if yes give details	
	Please circle yes or no					No	Yes
Apple	Yes	No		Cheapest apple type	Name	No	Yes
				Loose price/kg			
				Pack size + price/kg			
Oranges	Yes	No		Cheapest orange type	Name	No	Yes
				Loose price/kg			
				Pack size + price/kg			
Satsuma or similar	Yes	No		Cheapest Satsuma type	Name	No	Yes
				Loose price/kg			
				Pack size + price/kg			
Grapes	Yes	No		Cheapest grapes type	Name	No	Yes
				Loose price/kg			
				Pack size + price/kg			
Bananas	Yes	No		Cheapest bananas type	Name	No	Yes

				Loose price/kg			
				Pack size + price/kg			
Broccoli	Yes	No		Cheapest broccoli		No	Yes
				Loose price/kg			
				Pack size + price/kg			
Onion	Yes	No		Cheapest onion type	Name	No	Yes
				Loose price/kg			
				Pack size + price/kg			
Fresh tomatoes	Yes	No		Cheapest tomatoes type	Name	No	Yes
				Loose price/kg			
				Pack size + price/kg			

Appendix 2- Excel data form to complete

	Apples available	Apples £/kg	Bananas available	Bananas £/kg	Oranges available	Oranges £/kg	Potatoes available	Potatoes £/kg	Chicken breast available	Chicken breast £/kg	Skimmed milk available	Skimmed milk £/litre
shop 1												
shop 2												
shop 3												
shop 4												
shop 5												
shop 6												
shop 7												
shop 8												