

Co-producing policies for transforming the UK food system: a review of approaches

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The FoodSEqual Policy Research

Grounded on the principles of research co-production, aim of the FoodSEqual Policy research has been to (co-)map, assess, co-design and inform policy solutions for and with local communities experiencing food inequalities.

During the three stages of the FoodSEqual policy work, we have engaged with key stakeholder groups, worked closely with local community partners and their community researchers, and collaborated with local authorities to co-design policy research methods and outputs, co-produce policy interventions, policy briefs and evaluation reports that are grounded on local community experiences, voices and needs.

Community Policy Recommendations

At our community policy workshops, local residents provided their own policy recommendations for changing the food system:

- Support food advertising with positive public health outcomes.
- Extend criteria for Free School Meals and Healthy Start.
- Subsidise local farmers to grow food for local communities.
- Make supermarket offers healthy.
- Enhance food education in school curriculum. Embed cooking and growing. Make it accessible for all pupils.
- Tax unhealthy additives so manufacturers reduce amount in their food products.
- Financially support community centres for their face to face services and social connections.
- Reduce fruit and veg packaging to reduce wasted food.
- Engage local citizens in policy meetings about food system change

The community policy recommendations have led to our co-produced policy briefs and our Foodtopia video game.

PLAY FOODTOPIA!
Our game to learn about
Community Food Policy
Recommendations



Mapping the Policy Landscape

Our research, based on interviews and workshops with a total of 35 stakeholders across government, industry, and civil society, mapped the complex landscape of UK food policy. We identified a range of policies that are frequently discussed, debated, and contested in relation to their impact on sustainability, health and (in)equality.

a) Sustainability:

"[there is] very good evidence to show that healthy diets are more sustainable diets and not just in terms of emissions, but other environmental indicators as well" (Representative of National Government Department)

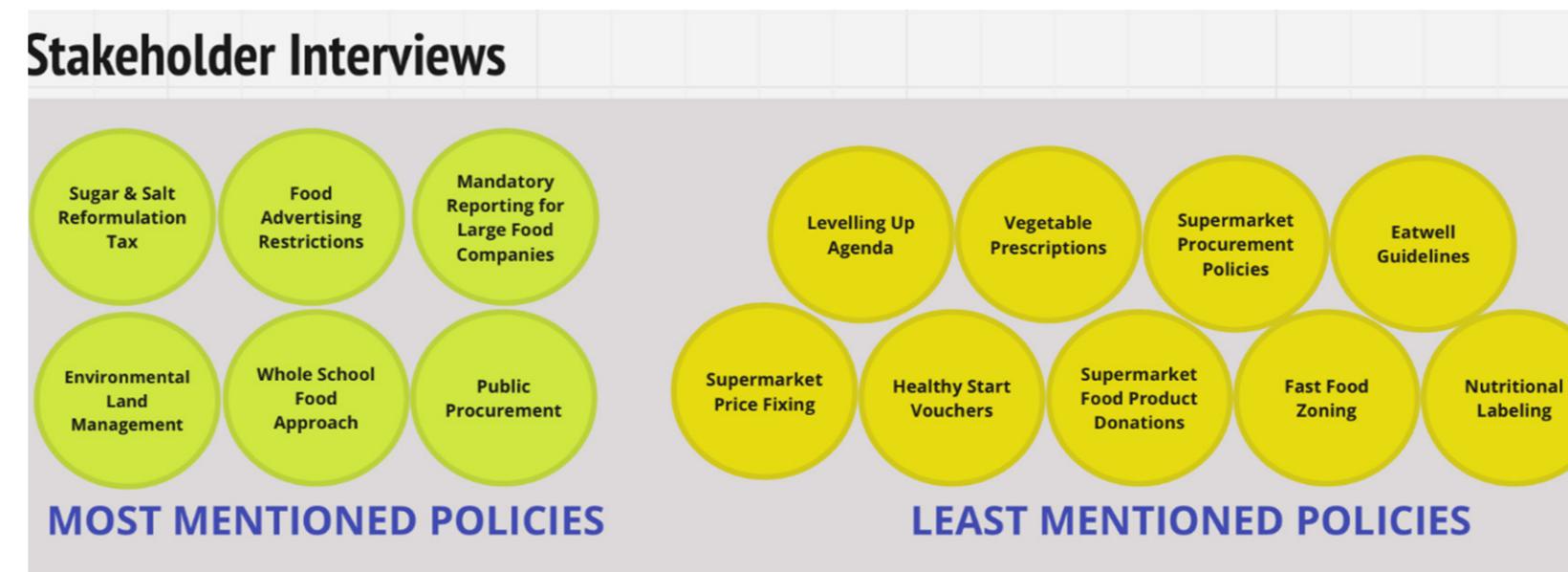
b) Health:

"the more sustainable choice and the healthier choice... [should] become the standard choice or, you know, the obvious choice" (Representative of Supermarket)

c) Equality:

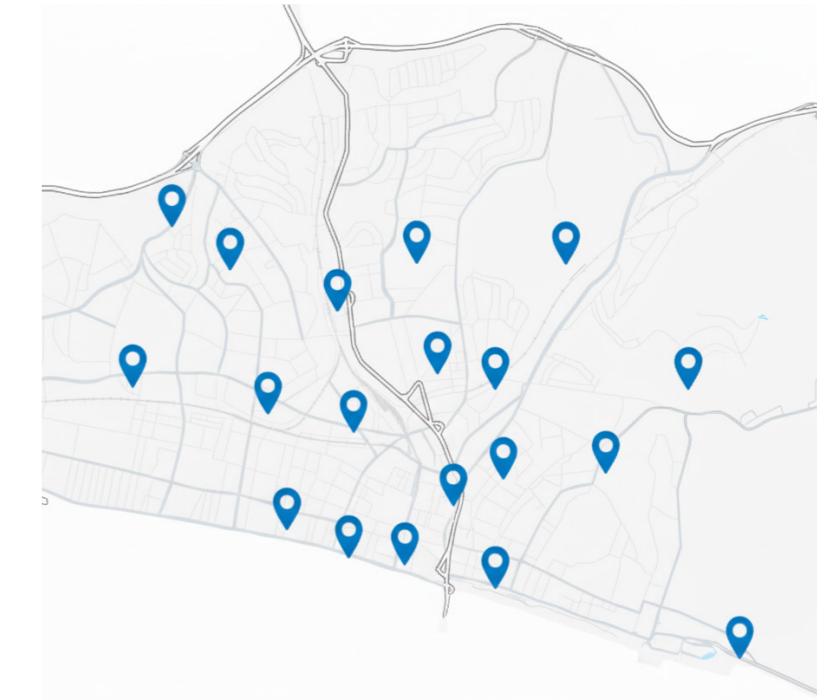
"One of the problems in this country is we have underpriced food for underpaid people"

"Calorie for calorie, junk food is cheaper. The new nutrition. And poor people buy food that fills them up. It gives them sufficient calories to keep going" (Food Policy Expert)

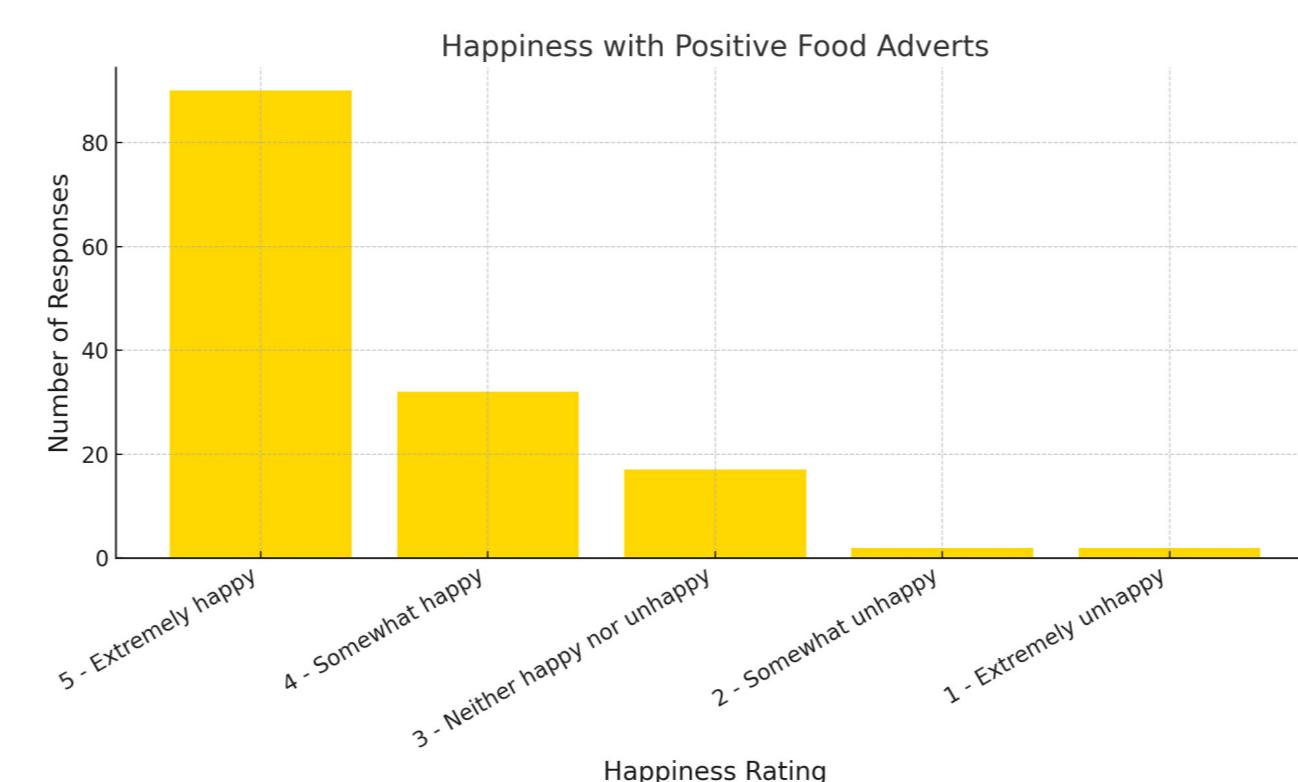


Evaluating Positive Food Advertising in Brighton and Hove

Based on local community recommendations, with the support of Brighton and Hove council, digital adverts for the Healthy Start scheme were displayed across Brighton and Hove bus stops. In collaboration with Brighton and Hove Partnership, we surveyed 207 residents at bus stops in Brighton & Hove to evaluate this policy intervention. The public has a strong appetite for positive, healthy food advertising, and the NHS logo generated significant trust (87%). However, visibility was a key challenge, with only 25% of participants recalling the ad. Some findings highlight that: a) Clarity Drives Action; b) Ensure Digital Inclusion (non-digital alternatives); c) Maximise Visibility; d) Multi-Channel Approach; e) Leverage on Trusted Institutions.



Emphasis on Positive Food Advertisement



HELP US BY SHARING YOUR VIEWS ABOUT DIFFERENT FOOD POLICY OPTIONS



Publications:

- Psarikidou, K., Ayala-Villalobos, P., Blair, A., Taylor, S., Lewis, M., Moore, E., Magee, C., & Fricker, R. (2025). Assessing the Impact of Bus Stop Advertising for Healthy Start Scheme Awareness in Brighton and Hove, Evaluation Report.
- Psarikidou, K., Lloyd-Evans, S., Bennet, T., Zischka, L., Unis, N., Anderson, J., Douglan, P., Butcher, V., Diouri, B., Aschcroft, L., Clare, S., Duval, S. (2025) Accessing Local Food in Whitley Reading: The Voice of the community, Policy@Sussex, February, 2025, University of Sussex Policy Briefing Series.
- Psarikidou, K., Taylor, S., Roughton, M., Dowbiggin-Lamb, N., & Martin, S. (2024). Policies for Transforming UK's food system: insights from Brighton and Hove's local community, Policy@Sussex, June 2024, University of Sussex Policy Briefing Series.

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