



Public Sector Food Procurement Supply Chains leading to School Meals: The Case of Yorkshire



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Executive summary

Utilising public procurement as a way to transform the sustainability of the food system holds great potential, especially when focussing on school meals supplied by local authority catering services. This transformative change can impact young people far into their futures, sparking their interest in this topic and teaching them fundamental and valuable lessons about food, sustainability and health from a young age. To fully harness this opportunity, unpacking and mapping out public food procurement supply chains that lead to school meals is crucial. Learning about the factors that shape and influence this part of the food system, as well as how each of the members of the supply chains influence and interact with each other is key. Learning about the barriers, enablers and contracts that dictate how the system works leads to a deeper understanding that allows for relevant and important solutions to be formed. Our current knowledge of how public food procurement works is limited so this research aimed to address this gap in knowledge.

When undertaking research in this area, a key aim was to not only gain knowledge from existing research and literature, but also to learn first-hand from members of the supply chain and beyond what it is like to procure from and supply to the public sector. This allowed for insight to be gained into not just how the current system works but how well it works, from a range of perspectives. Therefore, interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders to gain insight into the interconnections between each of the members of these supply chains and learn about their current practices and future targets.

These stakeholders included:

- The Department for Education
- Local Authority Procurement Managers
- Local Authority Catering Managers
- School Catering Managers and Chefs
- Members of the National Farmers Unions
- Headteachers
- School Business Managers
- Members of some Yorkshire Networks such as GROW Yorkshire, Deliciously Yorkshire and ACRE.
- Regenerative Farmers

Understanding some of the main barriers and enablers for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) supplying to the public sector and for local authorities procuring from SMEs was key. This helps not only to identify and recognise the current difficulties that prevent transformative change, but enables the formulation of effective and considered solutions. DEFRA developed a set of proposed changes to public sector food and catering policy, including the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF). These proposed changes were put out for consultation to find out how useful they could be in making it easier for local SMEs to tender and to add weight to social and environmental criteria in tenders. This is recommendation 13 in the National Food Strategy and also promised in the Defra Food Strategy white paper. A contribution was submitted from FixOurFood in September 2022 based on this work's research findings.

An example of an enabler for local authorities in procuring from more SMEs is the positive influence and encouragement that organisations such as the Soil Association provide. In contrast to this, one barrier that SMEs can have in supplying to the public sector is the time-, staff- and overall resource limitation they often face, making it more difficult to complete tender applications at the same level that large-scale organisations with dedicated tendering teams might do. Moreover, with local authorities such as North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) procuring food for school meals in a way that deals with one supplier per category of food, these contracts can prove to be too demanding for SMEs to fulfil. This can be in terms of both the quantity of food required, the range and also consistency in supply.

To address this, a recommendation that emerged from this research was for local authorities to split the tender contracts into smaller lots and to provide support to SMEs when completing tendering applications. However, this itself can prove difficult for some larger local authorities to implement, such as NYCC who are responsible for schools in the whole district of North Yorkshire that are signed up to school catering services. Therefore, identifying additional ways to overcome these barriers was needed. One solution that does not seem to significantly increase the workload of local authorities is the introduction of dynamic procurement platforms. These platforms provide a place for SMEs and local businesses to supply to, and for local authorities to procure from.

Executive summary

Having one platform for multiple suppliers allows their supplies to be aggregated whilst local authorities are still able to source from just one place. Dynamic procurement pilots have been carried out in Bath and North East Somerset and produced promising results.

This research identified that fundamentally, local authorities lie at the heart of many public sector food supply chains into school meals. With local authorities being able to write their own tendering bids and specify terms, whilst also often being responsible for designing school food menus, their decisions impact the whole school food system. Current supply chains into public procurement are dominated by price, and lack in traceability in terms of provenance, and therefore social and environmental sustainability credentials. Enabling local businesses and SMEs to enter these supply chains could challenge these issues. Implementing practices and systems that allow local authorities to procure more sustainably not only promotes and supports suppliers that are implementing sustainable practices but this positive impact directly increases school children's accessibility to healthy, sustainable food.

Due to the 3 month duration of this project, an in-depth case study of North Yorkshire took place, as opposed to learning about the finer details and specific decisions made by each local authority in Yorkshire. North Yorkshire Education Service's catering services, NYES Catering, are responsible for the strategic objectives and plan for how they want the contracts to work, including the delivery of the catering services and the development of the menus. North Yorkshire County Council, NYCC, enables those deliverables to be met by the procurements, tenders and supplier contracts they put in place.

From a procurement perspective, NYCC do not have any influence over the menus/ food items. This is fully determined by NYES catering. [1] NYCC uses one supplier per food category and it is possible for private catering companies to bid on local authority contracts. For example, Bidfood and Brakes were not previously particularly interested in applying to work with North Yorkshire Local Authority due to challenges associated with their geographical area. However, this has recently changed now that they are more aware of the financial opportunities that come with supplying large local authorities. [1]

Around 40% of schools are supplied by local authorities, around 40% buy into a contract with a private provider and around 20% have in-house catering. A school's decision to either use local authority's catering services or a private caterer can vary as it can be difficult to pin down an 'ideal' contract. One contract that works for one school will not necessarily work for another. Whether a school is signed up to public sector catering services or not is decided by the individual schools. It is worth noting that other types of schools such as academies and academic trusts have a different way of procuring food. In these cases, it may be more relevant to research the role of contracting authorities in the supply chains as opposed to local authorities.

In 2015, a scaled up dynamic procurement model was piloted in schools signed up to Bath and North East Somerset Council's catering services. Through the implementation of this model, this pilot was able to deliver over 2 million meals into the region's primary schools whilst reducing both financial and environmental costs associated with the contract. Overall, this led to both environmental and financial cost reductions and provided a successful example of a transformed supply chain that can benefit all of its members.

Gaining a deeper understanding of public procurement supply chains to increase the sustainability of the food system, not only requires learning about what needs to be improved but how that can realistically happen. The identified range of solutions to overcome current barriers in the food system appear to be promising. This does not mean that implementing these transformative changes will be easy, but it does mean that it will lead to positive change.

While this research directly fed into the Government's Buying Standards consultation, it also provides the rapid evidence needed to further research and impact activities conducted by FixOurFood, a UKRI funded Programme of Food System Transformation based at the University of York.

Research aims

The aims guiding the research presented in this report are listed below

1. Learn how to transform the UK food system to a regenerative food system that optimises human and planetary health
2. Unpack and map out public-sector food procurement supply chains to learn about how they work in settings such as schools
3. Identify the barriers and enablers in place that hinder and help the development of more local, sustainable food systems. This includes the barriers and enablers of both supplying to and buying from the public sector, as well as the barriers and enablers of introducing more SMEs and sustainable practices to the public sector.
4. Evidence synthesis on school food procurement and its current supply chains, regulations and practices
5. Identify the capacity for more local and sustainable supply from SMEs
6. Discuss how best to access food procurement officers (school catering managers, council officers) to ask these questions
7. Research the implications of the new government buying standards for schools and contribute to the consultation on the government buying standards

Research setting - background information

Yorkshire

The county of Yorkshire can be subdivided into five regions:

- North Yorkshire
- East Yorkshire
- South Yorkshire
- West Yorkshire
- York

Geographically, York could be classed as being in North Yorkshire but from a county perspective, the city of York is its own entity. [1]

North Yorkshire comprises seven districts:

- Craven
- Hambleton
- Richmondshire
- Ryedale
- Selby
- Harrogate
- Scarborough

West Yorkshire comprises five districts:

- Bradford
- Calderdale
- Kirklees
- Leeds
- Wakefield

East Yorkshire comprises four districts:

- East Riding of Yorkshire
- Hull
- North East Lincolnshire
- North Lincolnshire

South Yorkshire comprises four districts:

- Barnsley
- Doncaster
- Rotherham
- Sheffield

Figure 1 below illustrates these regions of Yorkshire using a colour coded system where orange represents North Yorkshire, blue represents East Yorkshire, green represents South Yorkshire and yellow represents West Yorkshire. The city of York, as shown in red, is its own entity.

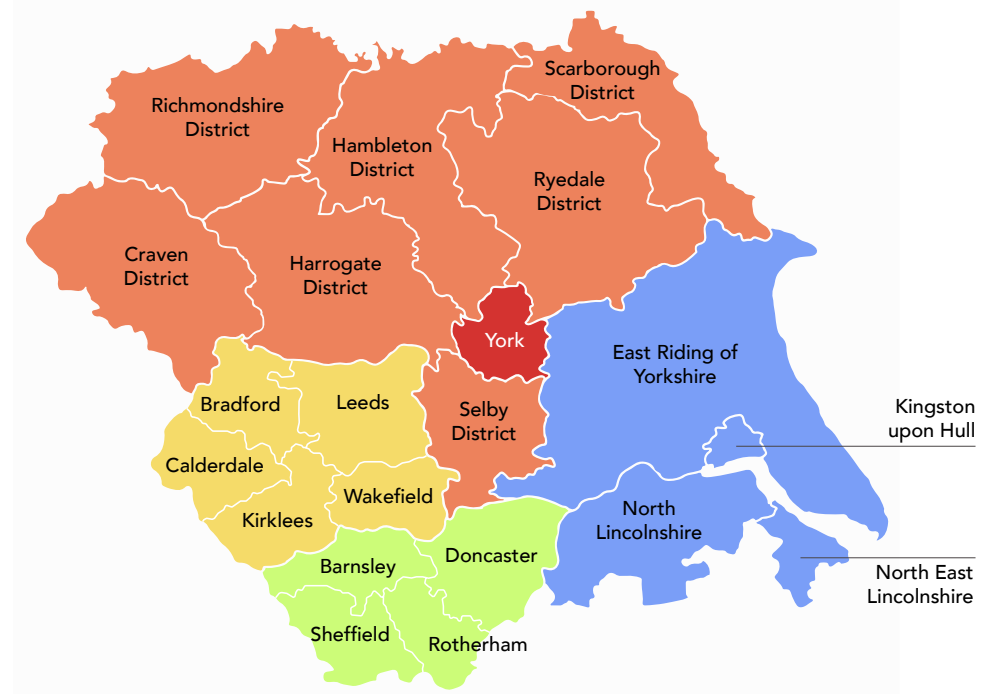


Figure 1: This diagram has been created as a part of this research and it displays the different regions in the county of Yorkshire. It is colour coded to differentiate between the regions of North Yorkshire, East Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and the City of York.

Research setting - background information

Public food procurement

Procurement takes place at an intersection between production and consumption and therefore has the potential to impact many other activities and outputs in the chain such as:

- Diet health and food culture
- The local economy
- Environmental outcomes
- Improved standards in the wider private sector
- Animal welfare
- Biodiversity [2]

England's public sector spends around £2 billion per year on food and catering services. [3] This represents approximately 5.5% of UK food service sector sales. This food and range of catering services is carried out in schools, hospitals, armed forces, central and local government, government agencies, prisons and courts. [4] The power of purchase could be better utilised to contribute to the transformation of the food system and its impact on the environment.

Policy change holds great potential for regional capacity building. It has the potential to shorten supply chains and introduce more sustainable forms of food production and consumption. In particular, it could encourage different, and better types of food, with more diverse and dynamic forms of sourcing – produced with less damaging impact on the environment. Whilst these current changes on public procurement open up great opportunities to localise supply chains and to build a community of food practice around public food procurement in Yorkshire, any efforts for change also needs to take into consideration the needs and constraints of buying institutions and small size suppliers. [5]

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

The UK government definition of small and medium sizes enterprises, SMEs, encompasses micro- (less than 10 employees and an annual turnover under €2 million), small- (less than 50 employees and an annual turnover under €10 million) and medium-sized businesses (less than 250 employees and an annual turnover under €50 million). [6]

According to research done in FixOurFood, “up until now, regulation did not purposefully encourage UK public service to access products from local SMEs which represents barriers not only to the UK economy, but also to healthier and more sustainable diets.” [5] DEFRA is driving a consultation to change public sector and catering policy. With organisations, researchers and individuals being able to contribute, an aim of the consultation is to support more sustainable and healthier food and catering as well as encourage public institutions to buy from SMEs. [7]

FixOurFood has established a Yorkshire Anchor Institutions Platform, which is a group of key local and nationwide organisations from across the public, private and third sector. The aim of this collaboration is to harness their collective efforts and procure more food from SMEs in Yorkshire.

Supply chains

The UK's food supply chains are highly complex. There is no one-type-fits-all approach to procuring food and this is reflected in the wide array of types of supply chain that exist. A single supply chain can include many of the following members:

- Primary producers (for example, farming, fishing)
- Food manufacturers (for example, factories, process plants, mills, refineries, production plants)
- Logistics (for example, storage, distribution centres, transportation, ports)
- Wholesale and retail (for example, wholesalers, supermarkets, local businesses, food banks and other community food assets)
- Food services (for example, restaurants, cafes and caterers)
- The government
- Local authorities
- Schools

According to the UK Food Security Report 2021, "every element of the supply chain, from food manufacturing to retailers, relies on physical infrastructure (buildings, vehicles, machines, power and data connections); digital infrastructure (the digital technologies that provide the cyber foundation for information technology and operations); human infrastructure (the skilled people who work in the supply chain and their working relationships with each other) and economic infrastructure (the system of finance, contracts and agreements that allow businesses to make money and operate productively.) As a result of these many members and their dependencies on each other, problems arising anywhere in this system can cause disruption to the supply of food." [8] There can be ~10,000 contractual arrangements at any one time with at least 100s of suppliers, just for supplying school food across the country alone.

It is a fractured and complicated market. [9] The processes that are included in a specific supply chain can be heavily dependent on the product itself. For example, food producers may supply to larger food wholesalers/retailers, as they commonly have the required storage or freezing capacities. For example, New Forest Ice Cream and Hampshire's egg supplier, Fluffetts Farm, are distributed through Bidfood because Bidfood has the freezing capacity to store the thousands of pots of ice-cream required for schools. Moreover, since Bidfood are already scheduled to travel to the schools that the SMEs are looking to supply to, this helps with the efficiency of distribution and logistics.

When researching the supply chains that lead to school meals in the public sector, it was found that local authorities are responsible for the procurement contracts and the sourcing of school meal ingredients. Therefore, local authorities can be considered to stand at the heart of each supply chain, with schools being served their meals and suppliers needing to meet their terms. More information about each member's role is detailed in the section titled 'Members of School Food Procurement Supply Chains'.

Local and short supply chains

Understanding and optimising the benefits of implementing short supply chains - as opposed to, or in conjunction with local supply chains - can help to reduce their carbon impact, benefit the local economy and make them more resilient. Examples of areas of innovation and short supply chains can be found in the 'Areas of innovation' section.

There are a range of forms of Short Food Supply Chains. One of the shortest and simplest is direct sales from the food producer to the end-consumer. These supply chains can be set up through selling food on-farm, selling at farmers' markets, organising delivery schemes and community-supported agriculture (CSA), where consumers financially support local growers by purchasing a 'subscription' to their fresh produce.

A recent report on the benefits of local food by the New Economics Foundation estimates that for every £1 spent in the local food network Growing Communities in London, a further £3.70 is generated in social, economic and environmental value. This is as a result of the money being reinvested into the local community as opposed to somewhere else. [10]

Just-in-time supply chains - food security

Just-in-time service models are a type of supply chain that depend on products arriving 'just-in-time' at each following stage in a supply chain. Whilst this approach can have its benefits and although it can work when everything is running smoothly and supply and demand is undisturbed, if there is a peak in demand or a disruption in supply (as seen from the COVID pandemic) just-in-time supply chains can struggle.

The 2021 UK Food Security Report states that "sourcing and supplying food to consumers in the UK is dependent on a complex and interacting web of systems." The report reviews the efficiency and resilience of systems when considering transporting, storing, manufacturing, and selling food along the supply chain. This report also describes the potential vulnerabilities and weaknesses associated with the 'just-in-time' supply chains underlying the modern food system. Food security means a supply chain that is consistently able to deliver adequate quantities of food, both through preparing for disruption and having the capacity and flexibility to respond effectively to unexpected problems. According to this report, "notable risks" to a supply chain stem from its "dependence upon other critical sectors including energy, transportation, borders, labour, key inputs (chemicals, additives and ingredients), and data communications" Cyber attacks should also be carefully dealt with as they can pose significant threats. [8]

Members of School Food Procurement Supply Chains

This section lays out the members involved in public sector food supply chains that lead to school meals and their roles, responsibilities and how they influence and impact each other.

Figure 2 below lays out each members' role. The impact and influence of members on each other can be followed through the use of arrows. Black arrows represent a contract that is in place between the corresponding members of the supply chain. The coloured arrows represent the flow of product. Since the movement of products through a supply chain often requires distribution services, each coloured arrow passes through distributors before moving to the next step.

In some cases, food producers may have their own processing facilities and do not need an external food processor for example. In cases like these, additional arrows have been included to show the flow of product from one member to one further down the supply chain that seemingly skips a step in the chain, when in fact, it is just that multiple supply chain steps have been undertaken at one facility or by one organisation. Another reason for the apparent skipping of steps can be due to the fact that some foods do not need to pass through all members of the supply chain to reach the consumer.

Additionally, in some cases, members of the supply chain may have their own distribution services in place. Since distribution services are still a part of the supply chain in these cases but they are just not run by external organisations or facilities, all arrows are still shown to travel through the distribution stage.

It is also important to note that some members of the supply chain can hold contracts and organise flows of product between organisations that come under the same category as them. For example, a certain local authority food supplier may subcontract-out their work to other suppliers. This information was not explicitly included in the diagram so it should be assumed that in some supply chains, products are passed between a member and another member of the same type before being passed onto the next stage.

The dotted lines between the government and the local authority, and the local authority and the local authority catering service represent flows of information. There are no contracts or flows of products between these members of the supply chains but there is the passing of information or standards which can be a crucial factor in determining what a supply chain may look like. For example, the government is not involved in deciding which suppliers the local authority chooses to work with but they do set the School Food Standards which the local authority must follow.

Supply chains

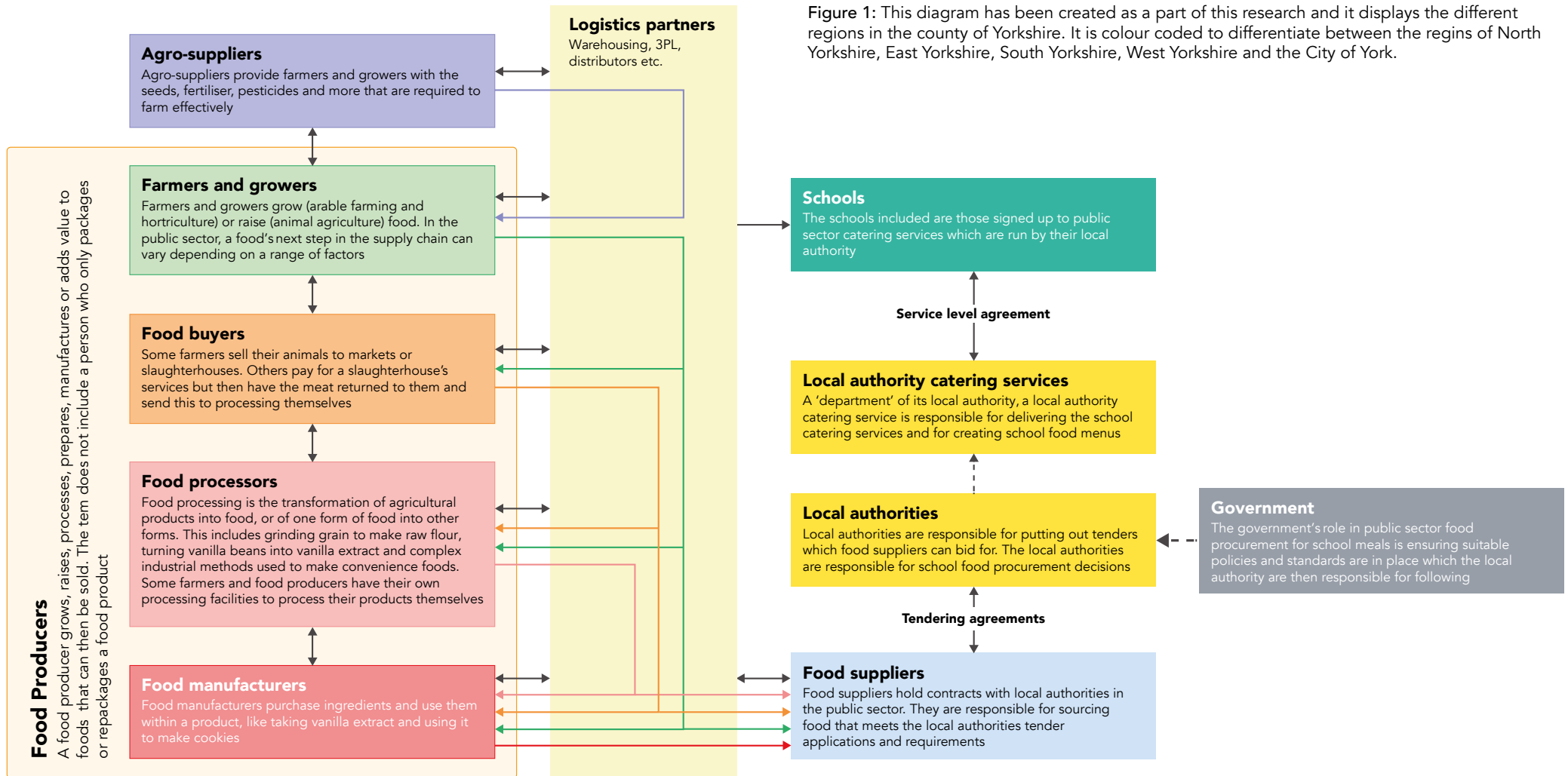


Figure 1: This diagram has been created as a part of this research and it displays the different regions in the county of Yorkshire. It is colour coded to differentiate between the regions of North Yorkshire, East Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and the City of York.

The Government's role in school food procurement

This section explains the government's role in the public sector food supply chain leading to school meals. Public sector school food procurement contracts are handled at local authority levels rather than being contracted centrally in government so it is the role of local authorities to appoint suppliers for school meals. The government's role is to set standards, guidelines and policies that the local authority must abide by. Examples of these include nutritional requirements and the school food standards (2015). [1]

The Department for Education (DfE) is involved in the school food standards regulations, which include the terms surrounding free school meals. It is the role of the DfE to ensure that the students who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) receive them. No direct input to the development of contracts is taken by the DfE. The DfE can provide support to people that are thinking of setting up a contract - e.g. for schools doing it for the first time - however the DfE doesn't tell schools what to do. [9] The DfE's contribution to a contract is through their payments for free school meals. Schools don't contract for FSM. Instead, they contract for meals and their funding includes the money that the DfE gives them, plus the money that parents and guardians have provided as payment. The DfE pays for ~ 50% of meals in primary schools due to the universally free infant school meals. [9] Central government provides the funding for free school meals. Parents pay money to the school which is passed on to local authority catering (e.g. NYES) to cover the costs of running the service. This includes staffing, ingredients insurance etc. The provision of services or systems to support the running of the service is covered at a local authority level – which is ultimately given by the Central Government as part of the budget. [1]

Government standards

School Food Standards, 2015

In 2015, as part of the School Food Plan, the DfE set out the School Food Standards to help when planning and providing food in schools. [11] It explains how legislation applies to food provided within schools in England and sets out the requirements for school lunches provided to registered pupils. These school food standards are to ensure that food provided to pupils in school is nutritious and of high quality; to promote good nutritional health in all pupils; protect those who are nutritionally vulnerable and to promote good eating behaviour." [12][13] The standards specify the nutrient and food-based requirements of school meals, including limits on high salt, sugar and fat, frequencies of servings of fruit and veg, dairy, meat and fish etc. [11] According to the independent School Food Plan, the new school food standards are designed to make it easier for school cooks to create imaginative, flexible and nutritious menus" and are "welcomed by the Save Our Standards Campaign, and by Jamie Oliver". [14] These standards became mandatory in all maintained schools, and new academies and free schools from January 2015, with "Governors responsible for ensuring these are being met." [13][12]

Government standards

School Food Standards, 2015

- The full school food standards and accompanying guidance can be found [here](#) and also more below:

[School Food Standards: resources for schools](#)

This link contains the following documents:

- [School food standards practical guide](#)
- [Checklist for headteachers](#)
- [School food: guidance for governors](#)
- [Preparing varied and tasty menus](#)
- [Portion sizes and food groups](#)
- [Allergy guidance for schools](#)
- [Preparing for food supply chain changes](#)
- [Checklist for school lunches](#)
- [Checklist for school food other than lunch](#)
- [Creating a culture and ethos of healthy eating](#)
- [School food standards poster](#)

These new standards include:

- One or more portions of vegetables or salad as an accompaniment every day
- At least three different fruits, and three different vegetables each week
- An emphasis on wholegrain foods in place of refined carbohydrates
- An emphasis on making water the drink of choice
- Limiting fruit juice portions to 150ml
- Restricting the amount of added sugars or honey in other drinks to five percent
- No more than two portions a week of food that has been deep-fried, batter-coated or breadcrumb-coated.
- No more than two portions of food which include pastry each week. [13]

From September 2014, every child in reception, year 1 and year 2 in state-funded schools is entitled to a FSM. Further information is available at 'Free School Meals, Guidance for local guidance for schools and local authorities.' [12]

Soil Association's FFL (Food For Life)

The School Food Standards regulations must be followed by all relevant institutions. However, the Food For Life programme encourages schools to go beyond these standards. The awards scheme that this program runs, in which organisations can achieve bronze, silver and gold standards, can act as an incentive and it can encourage organisations to consider a range of sustainability aspects. [11]

According to the Food for Life website, "the Soil Association's Food for Life Served Here" award is cited within the new school food standards as a framework that helps cooks and caterers to show they meet the school food standards as well as demonstrate their commitment to serving fresh, traceable, sustainably sourced food. Meeting these standards is part of the FFL (food for life run by the soil association) award criteria, so by achieving an award, you are also demonstrating that you are meeting these new standards." [13] The requirements to meet each of the bronze, silver and gold standards can be found on the Food For Life website.

A school can apply for the Food For Life School award and will be awarded the relevant standard if they meet the requirements. School caterers can also receive these awards and a school cannot have a higher level award than their school's caterer. [13] The schools and local authorities that have been awarded the Soil Association's Food For Life awards can be found on the Food For Life website.

Government buying standards for food and catering services

Since 2011, central Government departments, their executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies in England must comply with the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF) when buying goods and services. Moreover, since 2014, they must also use the Balanced Scorecard methodology, as per the Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 10/14. This includes NHS hospitals (patient, staff and visitor catering), the armed forces and HM Prison and Probation Service. The wider public sector in England, such as local government, is also encouraged to apply these standards but it is not compulsory. [15] [7] [16] The GBSF standards include a set of minimum mandatory standards for inclusion in tender specifications and contract performance conditions. According to the Government's website, "having these "baseline" standards assists public sector procurers in buying food and catering services that are nutritious and sustainably produced, achieving real value for money". [15] [17] [16] These standards can be found in the Government Buying Standard for food and catering services Guidance. They do include a section that explains how SMEs are to be included in public procurement. However, due to the barriers that many SMEs face, as explained in the 'Barriers' section of this report, this can still be quite a challenging process.

In response to the EFRA Select Committee and Henry Dimbleby's independent National Food Strategy Report, DEFRA are seeking views on whether there is support for making public sector food and catering policy mandatory across all public sector organisations in England. [7]

Government buying standards for food and catering services

The nutrition standards within the GBSF were recently reviewed, updated and published in July 2021 alongside supporting technical guidance. [17] The other standards relating to social, economic and environmental sustainability and animal welfare had not been updated since 2014. Therefore, leading on from the National Food Strategy, new Government Buying Food Standards for these remaining sections were put out for consultation and a contribution was submitted on behalf of FixOurFood in September 2022 based on this work's research findings. These updated standards have been designed to provide more flexibility for procurement officers to:

- Promote procurement of local, sustainable, healthier food and catering.
- Open up public sector supply chains to a wider range of companies, particularly SMEs.
- Increase transparency of food supply chains to drive continuous improvement and build our understanding of what is bought, served, sold and wasted in the public sector.
- Provide guidance and standards that:
 - are simple and engaging
 - reflect the latest scientific evidence and national sustainability priorities
 - clearly align with broader Government policies

According to a statement provided by DEFRA, inconsistent procurement standards and approaches mean that the public sector fails to use its “purchasing power” and “fails to give a clear and consistent signal to the market of what it’s looking for”. Suppliers may then “perceive the public procurement process to be confusing”, which “makes it difficult for new entrants and SMEs to access the market”. [16]

Crown Commercial’s role

The Crown Commercial service (CCS) is the commercial/buying arm of the government. They provide a number of frameworks that local authorities can use when procuring goods. It is up to the local authority as to whether they use these CCS frameworks or whether they use their own. [1] A framework comprises a description of common public sector requirements, a list of suppliers who have been evaluated as capable of delivering the requirements, and standardised contract terms. Frameworks are often divided into lots, typically by product or service type. You can buy from a framework in various ways, such as running a further competition among suppliers. CCS’s service is free to use for public sector and third sector organisations, for example, local authorities, charities and housing associations. [18]

According to CCS’s website, there are multiple advantages to buying through CCS. These have been listed below:

- Buyers get competitive prices because suppliers can sell large volumes of their products and services to UK public sector organisations as though they were supplying a single customer. Therefore, a buyer can tap into their national buying power which can allow them to save money.
- CCS vets and reviews suppliers regularly. This saves buyers time finding suppliers and checking their reliability
- There are a large number of suppliers from multinational companies to SMEs
- Contracts include performance management, obliging suppliers to improve value and service over time
- Contracts comply with public sector procurement regulations
- Standardised contract terms reduce administration
- Free to use for public sector and third sector organisations
- Benefit from commercial expertise and industry knowledge [18]

Agro-suppliers

These members are critical to all food supply chains as they supply seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, farming equipment etc to farmers and food producers. Promote procurement of local, sustainable, healthier food and catering.

Food producers

Food producers include farmers and growers and they are responsible for growing produce and/or raising animals on a wide range of types of farms.

With regards to animal agriculture, some farmers sell their live animals at markets and some others may sell their live animals to slaughterhouses. Therefore, in each of these cases, farmers may be unaware of where their products eventually end up. Therefore, there are farmers that supply to the public sector that aren't unaware of it themselves. The retail market and the out of home market or the food service market differ greatly. For example, for a member in Yorkshire signing a contract to supply milk to a supermarket, the flow of product is different within the public sector as the public sector may source a contract caterer to buy that food who may be working with a wholesaler. This wholesaler may be working with a processor and the processor could then be buying the product. Therefore, a food producer can be multiple steps away from where their product ends up. In the public sector, food producers know what they have produced but there is currently no data on what public sector bodies are buying.

For each food producer, the process of supplying to the public sector can look very different, depending on the size of the farm, the connections they have, the logistics and distribution services they have in place and much more. Logistics is a very important factor in the public sector. Sometimes, a food producer not having distribution services in place can be a large enough barrier with regards to supplying the public sector that discourages them from doing so completely. For example, a hospital may only have the ability to hold two day's worth of fresh food. A school might only have the ability to hold one day of fresh food and actually it may only be possible for deliveries to be set up twice a week.

Therefore, if a wholesaler can distribute food accordingly, it can be the difference between a supply chain being effective and problematic. It makes or breaks contracts because meeting a customer's logistic requirements can be imperative.

With regards to setting up contracts with local authorities to supply food, it is usually the suppliers that have bought food from food producers that go through the tendering process as there are logistical challenges for food producers around doing this directly. Therefore, some food producers supply into a processor or a vegetable packer for example. Despite the challenges, there are also those that do directly contract with contracting authorities and they are called nominated suppliers. In the public sector, the wholesale market is very important. If big contracts are in place, big contract caterers may be used who could themselves be buying from a wholesaler or another business. More information can be found about the tendering process in the section of this report titled 'Tendering, Frameworks and Contracts'.

Food processors

Food processing is the process of taking a raw product and turning it into an ingredient, like turning vanilla beans into vanilla extract or turning wheat into bread. Some foods do not need to go through a food processor.

Food manufacturers

Food manufacturers purchase ingredients and use them within a product, such as taking vanilla extract and using it to make cookies.

Food wholesalers/distributors

In the public sector, a range of distributors are used. Large scale organisations that supply many ingredients may arrange the collection of ingredients and offer delivery straight to schools since many local authority catering services do not have freezing or storing facilities. In addition, it is helpful to pass the products between fewer hands due to the short shelf life of some foods.

Local Authorities, Local Authority caterers and Local Authority suppliers

Mick Garratt County Hall CC BY-SA 2.0

General information:

The specific relationships between local authorities and each school, caterer and supplier can vary from authority to authority. Therefore, some general information that applies to all local authorities has been included below and a section for each individual authority which links them to their local authority caterer and their suppliers has been included in the sections below that are titled 'North Yorkshire', 'West Yorkshire', 'East Yorkshire' and 'South Yorkshire'.

Local authorities are key members of public sector school meals supply chains. They work with public sector suppliers to organise the procurement of school meal ingredients and they work with public sector caterers and schools to ensure these meals are delivered effectively. The public sector caterers are essentially a department of the local authority and they are responsible for the menu development and delivery of the school meals. Different authorities may have different setups. For example, North Yorkshire County Council, NYCC, has a trading division called North Yorkshire Education Service (NYES) which includes NYES Catering. Other authorities may have the equivalent of both of these, of just one or of neither. The public sector suppliers are outside organisations that are hired through a tendering process. [1] This is explained in more detail in the 'Tendering, Frameworks and Contracts' section. Whether a school is signed up to public sector catering services or not is decided by the individual schools. It is worth noting that other types of schools such as academies and academic trusts have a different way of procuring food. In these cases, it may be more relevant to research the role of contracting authorities in the supply chains as opposed to local authorities.

The county of Yorkshire can be subdivided into North Yorkshire, East Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and the City of York as shown in Figure 1. Whilst district- and borough-level councils exist within North Yorkshire, it is NYCC that is responsible for the school catering services in the public sector for the whole of North Yorkshire and also some schools in the city of York.

Whilst district- and borough-level councils exist within North Yorkshire, it is NYCC that is responsible for the school catering services in the public sector for the whole of North Yorkshire and also some schools in the city of York. The City of York does not provide public sector school food catering services. [19] However, East, South and West Yorkshire have local authorities (unitary authorities and metropolitan districts) that are responsible for organising public school food and catering services in the regions within each of these subdivisions.

East Yorkshire's schools are run by one of:

- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Hull City Council
- North Lincolnshire Council
- North East Lincolnshire Council

South Yorkshire's schools are run by one of:

- Barnsley Council
- Doncaster Council
- Rotherham Council
- Sheffield City Council

West Yorkshire schools are run by one of:

- Bradford Council
- Calderdale Council
- Kirklees Council
- Leeds City Council
- Wakefield Council

Local Authorities, Local Authority caterers and Local Authority suppliers

There are 14 local authorities across Yorkshire that organise school catering services. [20] With regards to sourcing local food and achieving awards such as the Food For Life awards with the Soil Association, some local authorities seem to prioritise this and others do not. [21] Some local authority caterers choose to develop sub-contracts to help them meet the requirements or demands of their local authority contract. For example, a meat provider may work with other supply chain members such as slaughterhouses, production processors, manufacturers, and distributors.

Covering both public and private sectors in England, various types of firms supply school meal contracts. The main types have been included in the Table 1 below, along with a selection of examples of each type

Out of public sector catering, schools can choose to use private suppliers. When schools buy goods or services, the UK government specifies a very detailed procurement process that must be followed. This process includes planning the schools' procurement processes and writing the goods and services specification. In addition, the four main options that schools have in selecting suppliers are discussed.

These options consist of direct selection of a supplier from a framework, running a mini-competition between suppliers on a framework, running your own procurement for lower-value tenders and running your own procurement for high-value and EU tenders. It also explains how schools can manage, review, renew and end contracts. [22] [11] It is possible for private catering companies to bid on contracts through local authorities. For example, Bidfood and Brakes were not previously particularly interested in applying to work with North Yorkshire Local Authority due to their geographical area.

However, this has recently changed now that they are more aware of the financial opportunities that come with supplying large local authorities. [1]

Type of Firm:	Examples:	Notes:
Large multi-service corporations	Some of these corporations offer 'complete service solutions' to public sector clients across a range of functions including maintenance, social care, cleaning etc, as well as catering such as Compass Group, and others are specialised in catering services such as Caterlink and Taylor Shaw. [11]	
	Compass Group	Currently supplies West Sussex County Council schools contract. They claim that over 80% of the food and drink they buy is British and comes from local and small to medium enterprises. [11]
	Caterlink	Currently supplies Gloucestershire County Council school contracts. [11]
	Taylor Shaw	Currently supplies Durham County Council school contracts. [11]
Large food service firms	These firms specialise in food and catering, but to hospitality and retail sectors as well as public sector. [11]	
	Brakes	Deliver ingredients (including ingredients packaged in their own packaging) to schools. They also offer school-plan compliance menus. They also supply hotels, businesses, restaurants, care homes etc. [11]
Local SMEs	They specialise in particular types of products (e.g. bakeries, fruit and veg wholesalers, dairies). SMEs may still feature in procurement arrangements operated by multiservice corporations and foodservice firms, as these larger firms may source specific goods/produce from SMEs. However, information is lacking on how typical this is, and how the negotiation/supply process works in such arrangements (e.g. whether formal subcontracting takes place)." [11]	
	The Organic Pantry	A regenerative farmer that sells produce to schools in Nottinghamshire

Table 1: This table highlights various types of firms that supply school meal contracts along with a selection of examples of each type.

Tendering, frameworks and contracts

Signature _____

Date _____

In the public sector, when a local authority wants to hire a food supplier, they must put out a tender. In short, tendering is an opportunity for suppliers to 'bid' on a contract, by submitting a combination of pricing and responses to quality questions. These types of rules and regulations are not mandatory in the private sector. When tendering, set frameworks can be used (e.g. from CCS or the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation, YPO) or local authorities can choose to use their own. Framework agreements are arrangements that a local authority or a public sector buying organisation makes with suppliers of goods, works or services. It sets the terms under which purchases can be made from a supplier during the lifetime of the agreement. Each framework has guidelines to be followed by the local authority to select suppliers and place orders. Contracting authorities, whether local authorities or individual schools, begin by planning for their procurement needs and writing a goods and services specification. They then choose which arrangement they will follow to select suppliers (e.g. open procedure, framework agreement, or mixture of these according to the value of the tender). [11]

One of the main choices of local authorities in public procurement is to determine whether the works, supplies or services that are the subject matter of the procurement are to be acquired by using one contract or by using a number of separate contracts or "lots". According to a report written by Sigma, a joint initiative between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU), the decision about whether to divide contracts into lots is not an easy one. "Savings derived from economies of scale may promote the use of a single contract, while the diversity resulting from multiple contracts or lots can enhance competition and increase efficiency". [23]

A number of reasons, some of which are interrelated, for the adoption of a procedure to divide a contract into lots include:

- promoting SMEs and new entrants to the market
- promoting tender participation
- fostering competition in the market
- avoiding single-supplier dependency therefore building in some diversity and resilience
- spreading risk

Decisions on whether and how to split a contract into lots must be made on a case-by-case basis. [23] Having said this, according to NYCC who only have one supplier per food group, working with multiple suppliers is resource intensive for contract management and for implementation.

Suppliers write bids which are submitted to the local authority. The e-notification service Find a Tender (FTS) is used to post and view public sector procurement notices. [24] Local Authorities are governed by the Public Contract regulations, which states that anything over a certain threshold has to be formally tendered. [1] For example, if the spend with a supplier is less than £25,000 then NYES Catering can enter into any agreement with that supplier. They could do this by direct awarding or they can invite a small number of suppliers to quote. If the whole life costs between £25,000 to £177,000 then a formal bid process must be run. This could take the form of running a competition under an already established framework agreement or they could conduct an open bid process.

Tendering, frameworks and contracts

If the whole life costs are over £177,000 this is when the Public Contract Regulation 2015 (PCR) comes into force. i.e., their legal requirement. Any quotes/bids under £177,000 can be advertised for a time period that is appropriate. This is normally 2-4 weeks depending on the complexity. If the quotes/bids are over £177,000 then the PCRs set the timescales depending on the process conducted, but normally it cannot be less than 30 days. [1]

Each supplier has a contract in place. For the procurement process, it starts with the commissioning side of what it is the local authority needs, and then it moves on to what outcomes they're trying to deliver. They look at pre-market engagement to find suppliers that can provide what they need. Next, they go out to procurement through a formal tendering process, which is either through an open tender in their own right or through a competition that is run through an existing public sector framework. In this case, a quality price questionnaire will be looked at which has a number of quality questions. These questions ensure it is 'Red Tractor', it is from UK/British products etc if required, and that the health and safety and remaining priorities when providing food to schools are met. [1]

Whilst the tender is out to market, there is the opportunity for suppliers to raise questions to the local authority. The tendering pack, which includes the questionnaire, the specification, and the draft terms and conditions that are being proposed (which are drafted by legal services, not procurement) is then ready to be commented on.[1]

The full contract consists of the following sections [1] :

- Declaration
- Specification
- This contains the deliverables and provides the local authorities with the flexibility to state what they want, how they want it, how often it's there, and to what estimated volumes of food are anticipated.
- What is it the local authority is trying to achieve? Is the food sustainably sourced? Are the fish being farmed? Where is the harvesting coming from?
- Pricing Schedule
- This is usually based on the 'basket of goods', as explained below
- Contract Terms
- This section would state what can be done to rectify a situation if something went wrong
- Copy of the suppliers written tender response.

Together, these documents make the contract. As a part of the pricing schedule, a 'basket of goods' is priced up by the supplier and it is based on the previous year's volume. The local authority will list every item and include details such as the number of kilos of carrots, chicken, meat, sandwiches etc bought and the supplier will put in their unit price for each. The price of the whole basket is then calculated. The local authority can then assess the price of the basket and compare it to other suppliers' prices to find the lowest price. A local authority's basket of goods can contain hundreds of items.

Tendering, frameworks and contracts

If specific requirements around foods are not listed, suppliers won't have set a price for it in the basket of goods. Therefore, if they are able to supply it after having won the contract, the supplier is able to mark up the price of the food. Therefore, local authorities try to be very careful to list all of their requirements in the agreed tender documents. Everything that has a specific requirement, such as Soil Association awards, Red Tractor certifications and even the sizes of potatoes, needs to be included in the tender documents. Moreover, if a local authority chose a supplier without stating a required product specification, and the supplier is then unable to supply it, they may have wasted time and resources in the tendering process as the local authority would need to find a new supplier. Once the tender has been awarded, terms can no longer be negotiated so everything that happens needs to happen at the tendering stage.

When these contracts are set up by the local authority, they are able to determine how long they are. The standard is around 3-4 years to get stability and to give the suppliers a fair chance to represent their services. [1] Moreover, any more frequent changes of contract would be resource intensive as tendering processes would have to happen more frequently. Local authorities can have the choice to offer one-year extensions to contracts. If the local authority is using an already established framework agreement, for example for pre-packed sandwiches, the framework agreement may govern how long the contract can be. Usually, it is set in place for four years and an extension beyond the life of the framework may not be possible, or they may only be possible by a certain amount.

Terms and conditions are included as part of the tendering exercise, and they cover all eventualities from basic contract terms to the legal side of governance and standards including how contracts can be terminated, and who can terminate contracts and exit policies.

Contracts longer than four years are not usually set up as local authorities may want to change their terms. For example, if they were to decide that they would like to specify that the food is Food for Life accredited, they would need to state this in a new tender. [1]

When the tenders go back to the local authorities, they are evaluated again on the quality and price. They would need to have met supplier thresholds and had the accepted combination of scoring and pricing terms. The Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) or the Most Advantageous Tender (MET) can be used as ways to judge how strong an application is and to decide on which supplier will win a contract. [1]

Next, the local authority mobilises with that supplier and the contract is established. It is a very fluid approach, but the corporate contract regulations constrain what is allowed. [1] Suppliers are asked to hold their tendered pricing for up to 3 months, with the option to review on a quarterly basis. NYCC's procurement manager stated that local authorities understand that food can be a buoyant market, so they allow changes in price. Suppliers do need to provide a cost breakdown to show why the unit price has increased. If the price for one product jumps up in price, the supplier and the school catering service can work together to source either a different brand or in extreme cases change menus to exclude that product. [1]

Tendering, frameworks and contracts

DISCOUNT PLANNING VEGETABLES PRICE RETAIL SERVICE PROCUREMENT DEAL COMPANY MARKETING AGREEMENT FINANCE COOPERATION COMMUNICATION FINANCE

Recent changes in tendering

With the introduction of Public Contracts Regulations which came into effect in February 2015, tendering is now meant to be a simpler process than it used to be. [25] According to Hudson Succeed Tendering Support, this means two things:

- “The changes enable buyers to run tender opportunities faster, with less red tape. There’s a greater focus on getting the right company and best tender in accordance with sound commercial practice.
- The buyer must follow the procedures laid down in the Public Contracts Regulations before awarding a contract to suppliers when they are tendering for a contract to provide supplies, services or works for government departments or bodies.”

They state that both of these are great for an organisation looking to supply to the public sector because:

- “It means there are more tender opportunities available more of the time.
- Every tender must be unbiased, which means a fair fight across quality and price tender assessments.
- The tender process is similar no matter which governmental client you bid for. This means that once you know how it works, you can tender for business across every government department, body and business area” [25]

Some companies, such as [Tender Consultants](#), offer a service that helps businesses complete tender applications and offer virtual learning environments dedicated to bid writing courses.

Payment Terms and Rules

As of 2015, the Government mandates that companies within its supply chain must pay contractors and sub-contractors within 30 days.

This is as a result of [The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) Chapter 9 clause - 113. This should include any subcontracts or pass-through payments from the main supplier.

However, this can be hard to manage so local authorities can state this as an expectation within their tender specification. [1] The government’s payment terms can often be more flexible and accommodating for small businesses.

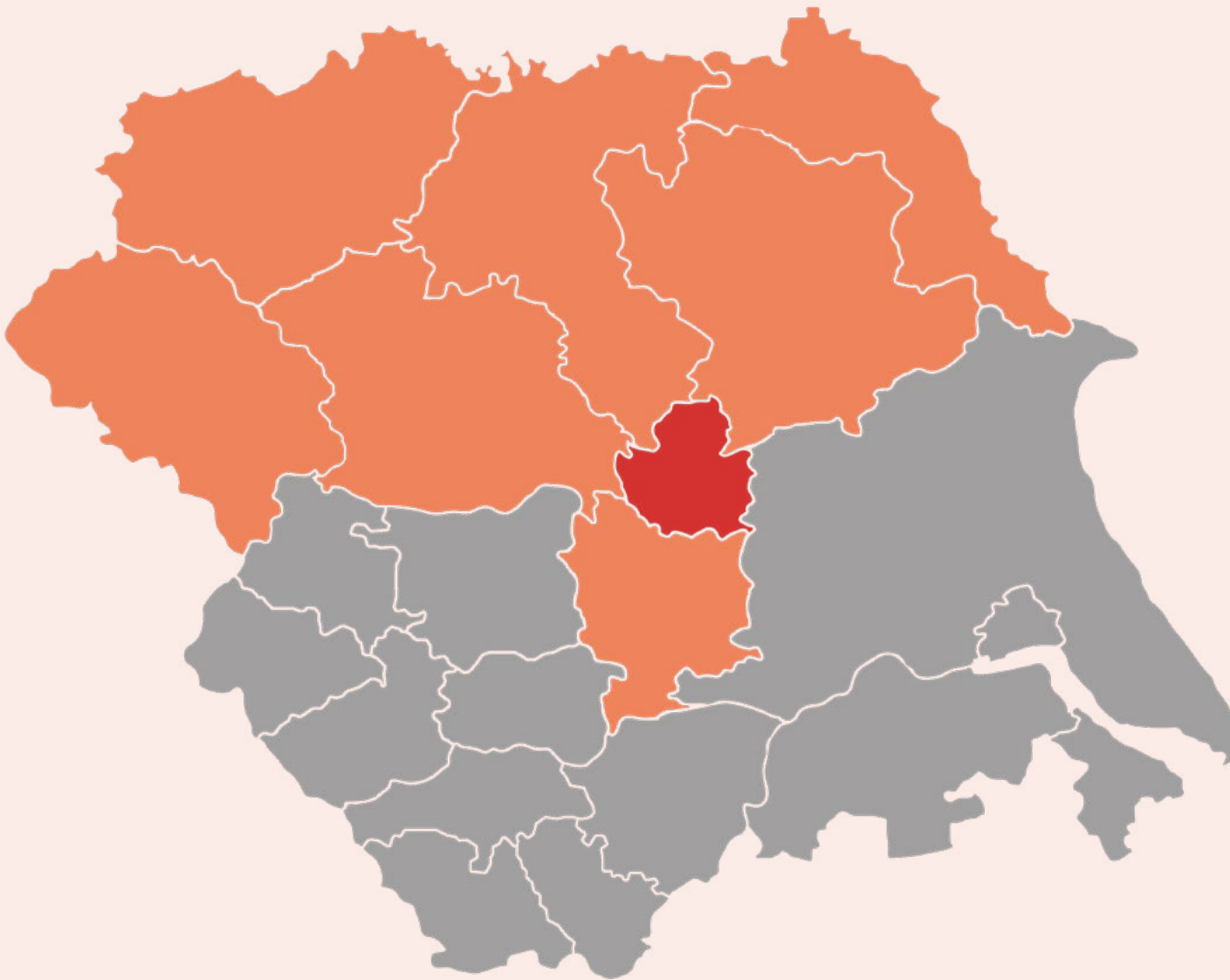
North Yorkshire

To illustrate how local authorities are involved in public procurement school food supply chains, North Yorkshire was used as an in-depth case study since school catering in this region is organised on a county level rather than a district level.

North Yorkshire comprises 8 regions, each of which has their own district or borough council:

- North Yorkshire County Council, NYCC
- Craven District Council
- Hambleton District Council
- Harrogate Borough Council
- Richmondshire District Council
- Ryedale District Council
- Scarborough Borough Council
- Selby District Council

Despite this, the public procurement and catering services for school meals in the public sector is organised by the county council of North Yorkshire, NYCC, for the whole of North Yorkshire.



North Yorkshire County Council, NYCC, and North Yorkshire Education Services, NYES

Overview

North Yorkshire Education Services, NYES, is a council department responsible for the traded services to schools and to other authorities. NYES Catering is one of the deliverers of services in NYES that provides school meals to local authority-maintained schools that have opted into local authority catering. This includes more than 240 educational sites in and around Yorkshire. [26] NYES Catering are responsible for the strategic objectives and plan for how they want the contracts to work, including the delivery of the catering services and the development of the menus. NYCC enables those deliverables to be met by the procurements, tenders and supplier contracts they put in place. From a procurement perspective, NYCC do not have any influence over the menus/food items. This is fully determined by NYES catering. [1]

NYCC devolved schools' budgets to the schools in the 1980's which gave schools the freedom to manage their own contracts and requirements. This means that schools can choose to either source from NYES Catering or seek alternative arrangements. Around 80% of all local authority-maintained schools are signed up to the service. [1] An example of a school that uses NYES Catering is Osmotherley Primary School

Menus

NYES's menus are fully compliant to the School Food Standards and they are accredited by the Soil Association Food for Life Bronze Award, meaning they only use free-range eggs, meat that is Red Tractor, and fish that is caught sustainably. [26] According to NYES's website, 75% of their food is produced daily in a school kitchen and fruits and vegetables are sourced regionally where possible. Meals are prepared safely in clean, hygienic kitchens by trained catering staff following the HACCP Food Safety Management System.

When a school opts into the service, the meal plans are put in place but there can be a two-way discussion on which menus the school feels are most appropriate. If the school has a day of celebration, for example, they may plan to organise a few adjustments to the menu for that day. However, on typical days, the menu is set by the catering service and it is run through a nutritional analysis and other checks. The schools do have some say as to what is served but it could be said that part of NYES's service is their expertise on deciding what is best to serve. [26]

Tendering and contracts

NYCC tendering is just for the food itself. The catering services (staff) are chosen through a recruitment process. [1] NYES staff are employed and NYCC provides them with the ingredients for their meal plans. In NYCC, the food contracts cover:

- Ambient,
- Fruit & Veg,
- Pre-Packed Sandwiches,
- Meat and
- Frozen.

Other spend that might not be accounted for is rogue spend but this is unknown. Some also have a vending machine/coffee drinks/healthy snacks contract. Each one of these areas has a contract in place since NYCC has one supplier per food category. Each of these suppliers is allowed to subcontract out some of their demand but NYCC only directly works with one supplier per food category.

When they establish a contract, they don't usually have multiple suppliers providing the same products. They have distinct areas and contracts to give each supplier the reassurance that they are not sourcing products elsewhere – though it should be noted that the contracts do not have any exclusivity clauses within them, so they could source a certain food from one of their other suppliers if the original supplier didn't have a certain product or had trouble sourcing an item.

In addition, NYCC doesn't guarantee any volumes of spend with suppliers as this is a customer led requirement. NYES traded service could gain or lose customers throughout the lifetime of that contract. Within the tender documents, NYCC would highlight previous volumes of spend but with a strong caveat that we don't guarantee the same volume of spend in the upcoming period.

NYES Catering do have regular meetings with the suppliers and they may introduce new items to the menu naturally throughout the contract but this doesn't/shouldn't blur the lines between their different contracts and suppliers. For example, their fresh meat provider wouldn't be offering pre-prepared sandwiches as NYCC already has a contract in place for that food category. [1]

NYCC tends to put in place contracts that are at least four years. The only time they change from that duration is if the framework they're using says they can't or that it should be longer.

On average, across all our food contracts, they spend about four to five million pounds a year. [1]

How NYCC decides who wins the tender/contract

NNYCC chooses which supplier will win each contract based on who best meets the specification at the right price. NYCC uses Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) criteria which means that they are evaluating them on both price and quality. Price/Quality is included within the tender documents as a legal requirement.

An example of this is a split of 60% price and 40% quality. [1]

- **Quality evaluations**

Questions will be set in relation to quality, such as account management, raising a complaint and logistic handling. Each question is scored out of 10 with set and published evaluation methodology as below. Also, each question is given a weighting to indicate which points are most important.

This can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2: This table displays NYCC's quality evaluation scoring criteria when choosing suppliers through the tendering process

Invitation to tender (open) - scoring criteria

Answers to questions should be scored between 0-10 points using the following criteria

Score	Score standards	
10	Excellent answer	Shows a comprehensive understanding of the contract and the ability to apply and deliver all the required standards to a high level. Excellent response with detailed examples/supporting evidence
8	Good answer	Shows an above basic - reasonable understanding of the contract and the ability to apply and deliver all the required standards to an above basic level. Provides good level of detail/examples as supporting evidence
6	Acceptable answer	Shows a basic - reasonable understanding of the contract and the ability to apply and deliver all the required standards to a basic level. Lacks sufficient detail/examples to award a higher mark
4	Poor answer	Shows a less than basic understanding of the contract and that only some of the required standards could be applied and delivered
2	Very poor answer	Shows little understanding of the contract and that none of the required standards could be applied and delivered
0	No answer or unacceptable answer given	No response to the question or the response is not considered relevant. The response is unconvincing, flawed or otherwise unacceptable. Response fails to demonstrate an understanding of the Council's requirements

When the quality is set at 40%, questions could be formatted as shown in Table 3 below.

Question	Weighting	Max score
Please describe how you maintain/reduce and monitor your carbon footprint and ensure that the delivery schedules are as efficient as possible	20%	10
Please outline your complaint handling and escalation process	10%	10
Please detail how you ensure the products you source are obtained ethically	10%	10

Table 2: This table shows how questions that are asked in the tendering process may be weighted based on a set quality percentage level.

The consensus panel agrees a score from 0 – 10 from the criteria and this is then converted into a percentage based on the weighting.

Price evaluations

For price, NYCC uses the standard differential model to assign a pro-rata score which is calculated as follows:

Lowest price received / suppliers price * price weighting = pro-rata % score.

For example, if the price is set at 60%:

Supplier	Price submitted	Calculation	Price score
Supplier 1	£2,000	1500/2000*60%	45%
Supplier 2	£1,500	1500/1500*60%	60%
Supplier 3	£5,000	1500/5000*60%	18%

At the end of the consensus, the evaluation scores for the quality and price are added together and the supplier that has been ranked 1 is deemed the most economically advantageous supplier.

Depending on the price-to-quality split, it is very possible that the lowest price might not win if their quality is poor. NYCC are looking for the balance between these two aspects.

Suppliers and Logistics

NYCC suppliers are listed on a contract register. At the moment, NYCC has one supplier per food category, as detailed above. [1]:

- Tiffin - Pre-packed Sandwiches
- Miller Foods - Meat and Frozen
- Paynes Foods - Fruit and Veg

In North Yorkshire, the school meal ingredients travel straight from the supplier to the school. NYCC/NYES don't have any warehousing or storage facilities so the suppliers will organise and work out how many drops are required. The food will go straight from their distributor to their warehouse and then straight to the school. This helps to reduce the number of hands the food has passed through, which is an important factor considering the potentially limited shelf life of some foods. [1]

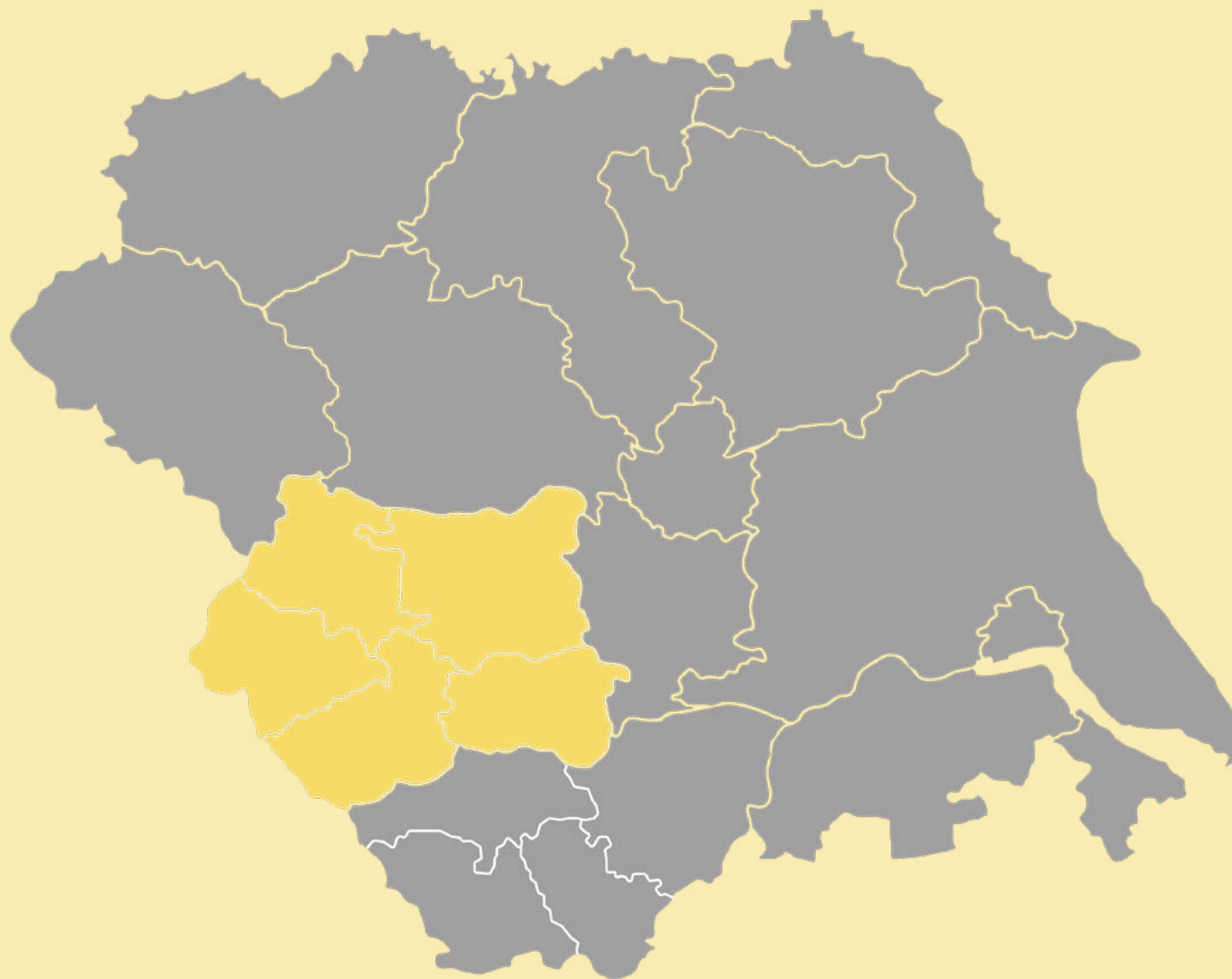
Transparency

For the meat category, traceability with regards to country of origin is a requirement. When procuring food in general, NYCC does not actively say that they would prefer to procure Spanish tomatoes over Italian tomatoes, for example. They would just state that they want tomatoes in a certain size and the supplier can determine the origin. NYCC's standards may include using British beef or free-range eggs, but those eggs could come from within the EU for example.

Never-the-less, NYCC must stand by any statements it makes. For example, if they state that they will use British beef or Red Tractor approved foods as a part of their unique selling points, USPs, they must abide by that. According to the procurement manager at NYCC, cheese seems to be a product that is cheaper to buy from the EU rather than from within the UK.

In addition, they said that it may be slightly harder to track where the frozen food has come from. For example, to find where frozen chips have come from would require going to the tier two or tier three supplier to find out. Currently, NYCC does not give suppliers any more 'points' at the tendering phase if they state that the food has come from a local farm.

It can be difficult to be non-discriminatory with regards to choosing more local food. Transparency in NYCC also means that the suppliers that they work with can be - and have been - shared openly. [1]



West Yorkshire

Each of the five local councils within West Yorkshire are responsible for the catering within schools under their responsibility. [27]

Bradford Council and Education Catering Service, ECS

According to Bradford Council's website, they provide catering services at most of the primary schools in the district and the percentage of children eating school meals in the Bradford Council district is higher than the national average. More information can be found on the Council's website. [28]

Guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Bradford District's Sustainable Development Partnership, SDP, has formed 11 work streams which are currently working to develop sustainability-minded, commercial, investable initiatives within the district, some of which also link directly to the Economic Recovery Plan. [29]

Bradford's Education Contract Services (ECS) has been cited as a pioneering example of good practice for improving the nutritional value of school meals while maintaining low costs. According to the 'Sustainable Consumption Round Table' report, ECS has done so by shortening supply chains, providing seasonal food from fresh ingredients and using local suppliers. This is explained in more detail on page 51 of [*Sustainable Consumption Round Table: Double dividend? Promoting good nutrition and sustainable consumption through healthy school meals.*](#) [30]

Calderdale Council

At the time of writing, the only information that was able to be found was through the Calderdale Council website.

Kirklees Council

At the time of writing, the only information that was able to be found was the Kirklees Council website.

Leeds City Council and Catering Leeds

Catering Leeds is Leeds City Council's schools catering service. According to their website, their meat is supplied by a local butcher who sources meat from areas such as Spenborough, Bradford, Sheffield, and East Yorkshire. Their fresh food and vegetables are sourced from local growers such as Poskitts, Edward Baarda and Triffitt Nurseries and their eggs are all free range and come from East Yorkshire. They also state that they support local businesses and reduce the number of food miles travelled. An example of a school that is supplied by Catering Leeds is Shakespeare primary and nursery. [31]

As is with NYCC, Leeds City Council is responsible for the school meal food procurement and dealing with supplier contracts and it is the role of Catering Leeds to deliver the catering services and to develop the menus. Responsibilities also include all operational aspects including sourcing, menu planning, cooking, training, staffing, finance, H&S and hygiene. Catering Leeds uses schools' kitchens to prepare meals and they recruit and manage the catering staff. They work with corporate procurement and follow all legal restrictions and financial rules with regards to the sourcing of ingredients and they specify full traceability where possible.

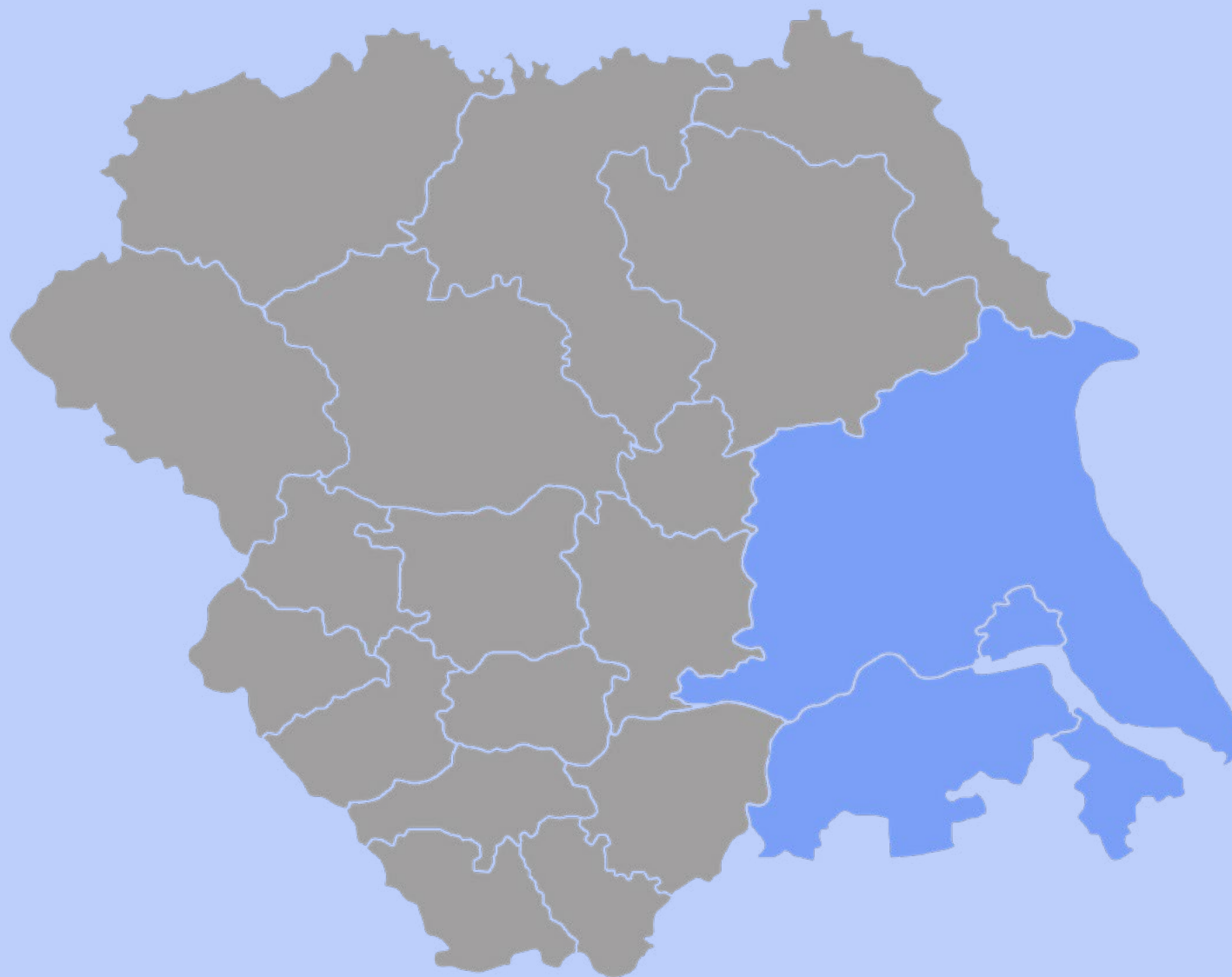
Despite working with some local suppliers for many years and having developed good relationships, they still have to go through rigorous procurement processes. With regards to inputs from the school and the school children, Catering Leeds consult with all their schools and work with children as well so they can have an influence on what is served if they would like to.

Wakefield Council and ENGIE

The catering services that Wakefield Council provide are currently delivered and billed by ENGIE/ISS. ENGIE now delivers and bills directly, but ENGIE continues to use ISS as their exclusive provider. The menus are developed by their local Wakefield Food Development Team and nutritionist to ensure that, as a minimum, they meet the nutritional standards associated with the Food for Life Served Here Bronze accreditation. They have school partnership managers available to guide schools through the process of selecting their service requirements, signing up to the framework and talking schools through the different options and Service Level Agreements.

More information can be found through the following links:

- <https://tradedservices.wakefield.gov.uk/Services/4575> (click for link)
- <https://www.tradedservices.wakefield.gov.uk/Services/4669> (click for link)
- <https://www.feedinghungryminds.co.uk/contact-us/> (click for link)



East Yorkshire

Each of the individual four local authorities are responsible for the catering within schools under their responsibility.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council and East Riding Catering Services

East Riding Catering service is part of East Riding of Yorkshire Council and they provide school meals to schools in East Riding. [32] An example of one of their menus can be found by downloading the links on this page. Some more information, in the form of a booklet, can be found here. According to this booklet, "in recent years, emphasis has been placed on sourcing local produce where possible; this helps to support local sustainability and to reduce the carbon footprint of food. The school meals and procurement teams are in consultation with various suppliers with a view to further increasing our locally sourced produce where possible."

Hull City Council

At the time of writing, information regarding access to free school meals was all that could be found.

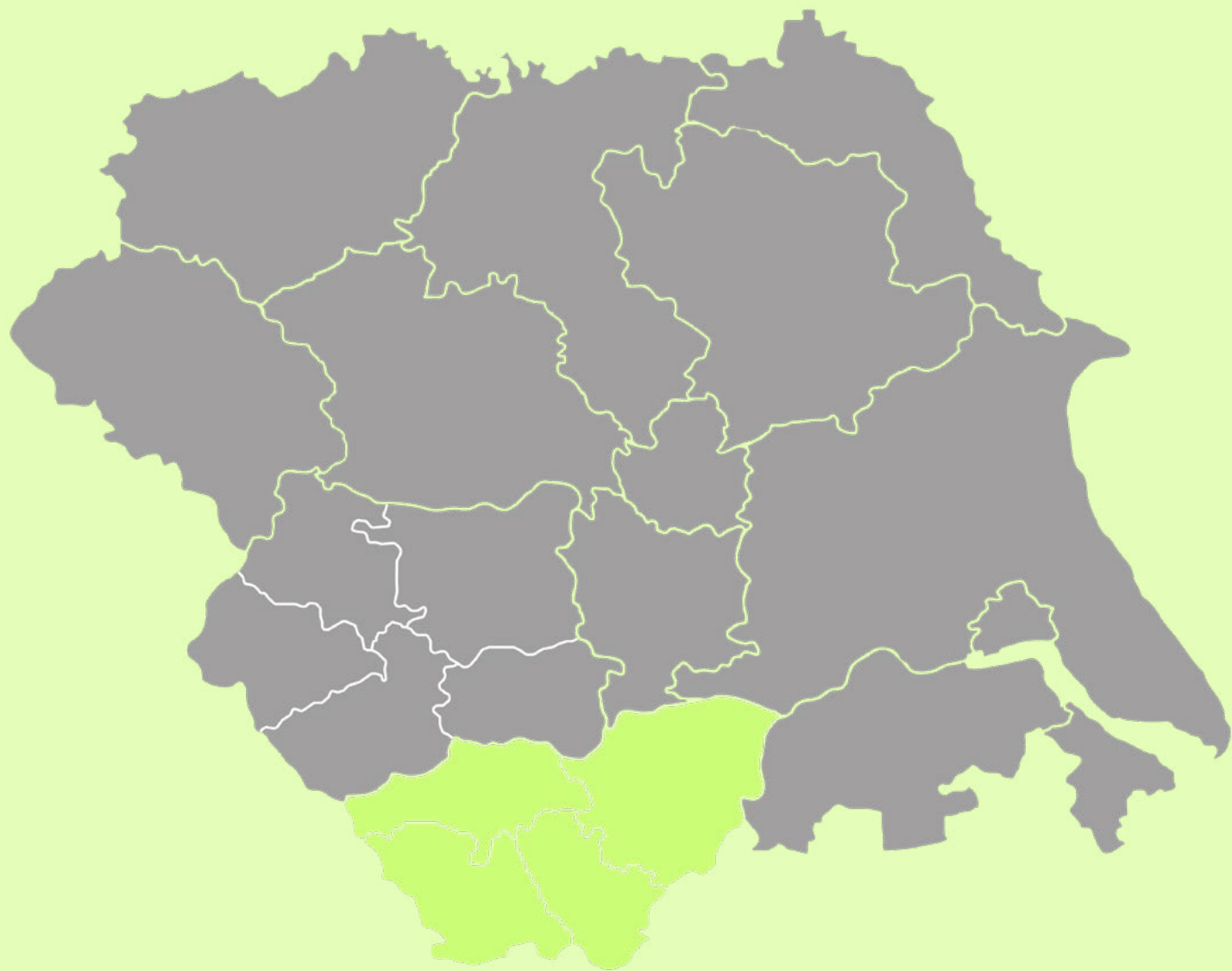
North East Lincolnshire Council

At the time of writing, North East Lincolnshire Council's meal selector was the only information that could be found. Parents and students can use this if their school is signed up to their public sector catering service. [33] Chartwells may supply their catering services as the following information was found on their website: "Chartwell are excited to have teamed up with the International Charity, Mary's Meals, in partnership with our sister company within the Compass Group, Chartwells, for an exciting and ethical school meal initiative aimed at increasing and sustaining the number of children having nutritious and healthy school meals in your school." [33]

North Lincolnshire Council and Schools Catering Service

The Schools Catering Service provides over 10,000 freshly cooked meals each day in 77 schools across North Lincolnshire. They also provide school meals to several schools outside North Lincolnshire. According to their website, the quality of the food they supply is important to them. Many of their products are quality assured, carrying the Red Tractor mark, MsC mark or quality beef/pork mark. Their eggs are sourced from the East Riding of Yorkshire and are all free range. They only purchase class 1 fruit and vegetables and all suppliers are rigorously checked before they can supply them. They use local suppliers for more than a third of their food buying, which can total over £0.5 million per year.

According to their website, they state that they serve healthy, nutritionally balanced meals that are freshly prepared daily by their staff. They also state that they listen to their customers' likes and dislikes such that new recipes don't make it onto menus unless customers give their seal of approval. They state that they work closely with head teachers to help schools achieve their objectives and transform their pupil's lunchtimes. Their menus offer a combination of both traditional and international meals, which are served with fresh vegetables, salads, fruit and home baked products. They meet the government's standards on school food and are tailored to each school. [34]



South Yorkshire

Each of the individual four local authorities are responsible for the catering within schools under their responsibility. [35]

Barnsley Council

Barnsley Council's website states that they buy their meat fresh from Yorkshire farms, milk and free-range eggs from farms around the borough, seasonal fruit and vegetables locally, and bread from Barnsley. [36] It also states that they are conscious that their purchasing decisions can have significant environmental and social impacts, so they state that they support responsible procurement, looking beyond the usual parameters of price, quality, functionality and availability. Their website also states that they consider issues such as 'food miles', packaging, conditions in which the food has been grown, and other ethical factors. [36]

South Yorkshire

Doncaster Council

According to their website, their catering teams provide around 18,500 meals in 71 schools throughout Doncaster and they have Bronze Food for Life accreditation for their menus. The service works closely with schools and can provide classroom support with nutritional talks and food sampling. [37]

Rotherham Council

ARiverside Catering supplies meals for 66 primary schools across the borough. Although they work primarily with Local Authority schools and Multi Academy Trusts, they also work with standalone schools. They achieved Bronze Certification under the Food for Life Served Here Award. [38]

Sheffield City Council

Taylor Shaw Catering supplies the council's school food catering service. They cater all over the UK in primary schools, secondary schools and colleges. Taylor Shaw is an Elior company, one of the major international contract food organisations, operating in 15 countries with 120,000 employees and serving 4.4 million customers every day in 23,000 sites. Schools have the choice whether to sign up for public sector catering or not. The schools that use the public catering service can be found [here](#) and the schools that don't use the public catering service can be found [here](#). [39]

There are 63 publicly funded schools currently in operation in York and 2106 in Yorkshire (1774 primary + 332 secondary)[40], which include community and voluntary controlled schools that are maintained by the local authority, as well as academies that are often run together within a group of academies – called a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). [40] [41]

Schools that are run by the public sector can choose whether they would also like their catering services provided by the local authority or whether they would like to hire private caterers. In England, all children in Reception, Years 1 and Year 2 are entitled to a free school meal. If parents or guardians receive some benefits, their child may be entitled to free school meals in all years. [42] Compliance with the School Food Standards is mandatory for all maintained schools (including academies and free schools). [7]

Around 40% of schools are supplied by the local authority, 40% buy into a contract with a private provider and 20% have in house catering. A school's decision to either go with the local authority's catering service or a private caterer can vary as it can be difficult to pin down the 'ideal' contract. One contract that works for one school will not necessarily work for another. [9] Regarding the meals on offer, it can be in formats such as a 3-week-rota chosen by the local authority catering service. If the school has a good relationship with the council and if the school can see that there is a food that will be served in the coming months that they know their children are not going to like, there can be some flexibility in getting in contact to see if it can be changed to something different. An example of a menu provided in a school using public sector catering services can be found here on the North Yorkshire website. [42]

Having said this, the menu is generally set by the catering service, which is run through all the nutritional analysis and food systems and therefore is said to also include the catering service's expertise and nutritional guidance. [1]

When asked about the catering service's suppliers and other procurement information, one headteacher that was interviewed wasn't able to answer many questions, highlighting the amount of school food procurement decision making often handled at a school level when compared to at a local authority level. When asked about why the school uses the local authority's catering services, they stated that they provide 'good value for money', 'a good fixed rate', and that they had built a good relationship with the council so they said 'why fix what's not broken'. With schools having to focus on so many other areas of school life, outsourcing the catering to the council can be a way of handling their intense workloads.

Service Level Agreements, SLAs

Schools that have signed up to catering services with their local authority enter into a Service Level Agreement. Usually, contracts are set up between local authorities and academies. [43] A service-level agreement (SLA) defines the level of service you expect from a vendor. The metrics by which service is measured are laid out, as well as remedies or penalties should agreed-on service levels not be achieved. [1] The SLA records a common understanding about services, priorities, responsibilities, guarantees and warranties and are binding contracts that public sector bodies can often use without creating legal relations. [44]

For schools that choose to have private catering services, they may have more flexibility with regards to the food on offer and where it has come from. This type of private catering service can be run by a team of people that are part of a larger organisation or instead, could be made up of individuals hired by the school. When the catering managers are individuals who are enthused and have the time to carefully consider their options with regards to school meal procurement, food can be sourced from local, even regenerative, farmers. [45] For example, one supply chain that was brought to attention during this research is of a regenerative farmer in Yorkshire who supplies food directly to schools.

Barriers, Enablers and Recommendations

This project investigated the barriers and enablers that make it easier and more difficult for public sector organisations to procure from SMEs and local suppliers. In addition, current barriers and enablers for suppliers, farmers and food producers when supplying the public sector were also identified.

Supplying the Public Sector

Table 4 below identifies the enablers, barriers and recommendations for members of the supply chain that supply the public sector. This includes food producers and food suppliers.

Enablers	
According to Strength 2 Food's research, "the UK Government itself has played a strong role with a launch of policy drives and provision of extra funding to support implementation of recommendations." [11]	
"Third sector organisations and charitable pressure groups are influential. On a national scale, particularly significant amongst these is the Soil Association (the main UK organic certification body), which has developed the Food For Life programme. On a regional/local scale, multitude of groups/bodies e.g. parent councils, local growers' associations pushing for change/improvement." [11]	
Contracting authorities running 'supplier open days' or 'meet the buyer' events can help them to connect with new food producers.	
The Government Buying Standards consultation and the National Food Strategy are working to increase the inclusion of SMEs in the public sector.	
City-wide food partnerships such as in Leeds can shine a light on how public procurement can play a role in being more sustainable.	
Barriers	Recommendations to overcome the barriers
<p>SMEs' lack of resources</p> <p>The number of available staff in an SME to work on a tender/bid can be insufficient considering the amount of work required. Sometimes, a whole team would be needed to work on public sector bids as they may be worth ~£1,000,000 each and haven't been sufficiently split down.</p>	<p>Split the contracts down so that they are manageable for SME staff to work on. Also provide support to SMEs in completing tender applications. Moreover, it should be ensured that the financial terms are agreeable with SME businesses. Introducing a dynamic purchasing platform also provides a potential solution to this issue.</p>

Barriers, Enablers and Recommendations

Barriers	Recommendations to overcome the barriers
<p>SMEs' lack of expertise in completing tendering applications</p> <p>The tendering application process in itself is tailored towards large enterprises. SMEs have limited experience of completing tendering applications, unlike many larger organisations. Specific contract requirements such as insurance levels, qualifications or knowledge of how to develop modern anti-slavery policies, for example, can create barriers for SMEs. Lack of confidence in completing a tendering application can also put-off SMEs from doing so.</p>	<p>Tendering applications should be simplified, both in terms of the complexity of language used and the time it takes to complete one. Additional support should be provided to SMEs when completing tendering applications.</p>
<p>Lack of processing facilities</p> <p>SMEs can lack the required processing facilities to turn their produce into a format that the public sector will buy. For example, in a school setting, it is important that the food appeals to the children so, for example, breaded fish is preferred over non-breaded fish. However, this means the fish supplier has to have the breaded facilities to access the contract. Sometimes processing also leads to increased allergens such as pea protein in products like frozen potatoes, which can lead to a reduced capacity for use in public sector contracts. [21]</p>	
<p>Minimum order challenges</p> <p>SMEs can lack the ability to provide the necessary volume or range of foods for a public sector bid on their own.</p>	<p>If bids were broken down into smaller lots, SMEs would more often be able to meet the minimum order requirements of the bids. However, this can be difficult for large local authorities to carry out. Scaling up the dynamic procurement model that was piloted in Bath and North East Somerset Council's schools could be a way of overcoming this barrier. It would allow for SMEs and local businesses to supply to the public sector by having their stock added to a dynamic procurement platform which is then used by the public sector to fulfil their procurement needs.</p>
<p>Box-ticking procedures</p> <p>Policies and procedures that need to be in place to tick a box can present problems for some SMEs if they cannot afford or do not have the time to put these in place - especially if the success of the application is not guaranteed.</p>	<p>Change the wording on tender agreements to say 'if you were successful, could you put this in place' rather than it needing to be in place before they know if they have won the bid.</p>

Barriers, Enablers and Recommendations

Barriers	Recommendations to overcome the barriers
<p>Audits</p> <p>The public sector may want to audit the SMES and their records which can be onerous for a small business. Moreover, the accumulation of each of these barriers means that some SMEs don't even bother trying.</p>	
<p>Standards</p> <p>The public sector standards can be unreasonably high such that the farmers and primary producers are squeezed on every margin. For example, wonky veg that is not acceptable etc.</p>	
<p>Distribution Services</p> <p>If a food producer does not have distribution services in place, it can be a large enough barrier to completely discourage them from trying to supply to the public sector. For example, a hospital may only have the ability to hold two day's worth of fresh food. A school might only have the ability to hold one day of fresh food and it may only be possible for deliveries to be set up twice a week. Therefore, if a wholesaler can distribute food accordingly, it can be the difference between a supply chain being effective and problematic. It makes or breaks contracts because meeting a customer's needs is imperative.</p>	

Table 2: This table shows how questions that are asked in the tendering process may be weighted based on a set quality percentage level.

Buying from the Public Sector

Table 5 below identifies the enablers, barriers and recommendations for members of the supply chain that buy from the public sector. This includes schools.

Enablers	
<p>Good value for money Local authority catering services can provide a service that is good value for money and which can stay at a fair fixed rate.</p>	
<p>More convenient Outsourcing catering tasks and responsibilities to a local authority can dramatically reduce the hassle involved for a school. This option often means that the school is buying a package or service, which includes the nutritional aspects, staffing and menus, as well as ticking all the boxes that they need for school meal administration. This can mean that the schools are spending more than they would if they were to do it themselves, but a lot of schools just do not have the capacity to take on this additional responsibility. Choosing to use local authority catering services can also stop suppliers from contacting them aggressively, because it has all been dealt with by the council. Private suppliers (such as brakes and bidfood) are able to - and do - bid for contracts to work with local authorities directly. Schools have the choice to be independently run, i.e. they have their own staff, but this comes with a lot of governance and compliance issues. For example, they have to check with suppliers whether the relevant insurances are in place, how they are handling the food and where the food is coming from. Moreover, the contracts in place between local authorities and their suppliers mean that if the suppliers make mistakes, there are solid contractual terms that allow for the administration of terminations for example. This can give schools an additional layer of protection. This is also relevant to food allergens. Local authorities can choose to buy pre-packed sandwiches that already list the ingredients and any allergens on the packaging. [1]</p>	
Barriers	Recommendations to overcome the barriers
<p>Lack of input Schools often do not have input into their local authority's' suppliers. Therefore, they do not have input into the sustainability of the suppliers or the sustainability of the resulting supply chain.</p>	<p>Speak with their local authorities to discuss what is possible regarding additional input in choosing suppliers and foods served.</p>
<p>Limited capacity of staff Schools do not always have the capacity to be considering or questioning where the school food comes from. Some headteachers have said that they work with the local council as its good value for money and 'don't fix what isn't broken'. Therefore, the lack of time and capacity for headteachers can lead to a lack of understanding about the importance of school food and the role it can play in helping their students as well as their role in conversing with their local authorities.</p>	<p>Add extra training to explain how transformational healthy nutritious food can be in a school - both in terms of mental wellbeing and concentration as well as physical health and good eating habits.</p>

Table 5: This table identifies the enablers, barriers and recommendations for members of the supply chain that buy from the public sector

Making more sustainable choices

Table 6 below identifies the enablers, barriers and subsequent recommendations for members of supply chains looking to make more sustainable procurement and buying decisions.

Enablers
<p>Inspired and educated school children (and parents) can help to drive demand for more sustainable produce. Parents can choose more sustainable food listed on the school meal ordering systems.</p>
<p>Policy must be enabling. When large-scale food producers, governmental policies and local authorities are on board, change is driven from the top down. Implementing policies that prioritise sustainability allow for companies implementing these policies to be successful - and prioritised. In addition, with local authorities defining and designing tenders for school food procurement, they are able to specify minimum sustainability criteria and requirements in the catering contract, such as sourcing from local suppliers, encouraging healthy and nutritionally balanced food and applying for different sustainability certificates and accreditations.</p>
<p>Communications and additional training around changes in food, menus and sustainability can help catering managers, procurement managers and chefs transition to sustainable cooking and buying practices.</p>
<p>When fully utilised, the school curriculum can be an enabler to a more sustainable public sector by engaging with children to teach them the importance and the role of school food.</p>
<p>The public contract regulations are being reviewed. Therefore, in the next 24 months, local authorities will have brand new rules. The 'procurement green paper' is supposed to help local authorities have more flexibility when it comes to positively discriminating local economy and local suppliers. Currently, they can't discriminate, which means that when they put out a tender, they can't treat a national provider any differently to a local provider. The new regulations should help local authorities to be a bit more flexible, including in terms of breaking down some of those larger baskets into smaller items. This can be more attractive and fulfilling through the local economy or local suppliers. [1]</p>

Making more sustainable choices

Barriers	Recommendations to overcome the barriers
<p>Structural and investment obstacles can impact the ability of bidders to meet awarding criteria (e.g. setting emissions reductions targets, but giving no option other than landfill for local waste disposal) [45]</p>	
<p>Cost is a driver for schools. They are responsible for their budgets so they want the best they can for the budgets they have. Going direct to a local farmer could mean using up to a dozen suppliers/farmers whereas a larger company may be able to draw from a number of resources. Also, where schools can get food for the lowest price can vary week by week - especially at the moment where food prices are being hit by inflation (in varying amounts).</p>	<p>A member of the Department for Education recommends being able to have substitutions. He says that if a school is tied to a number of local suppliers and they put their prices up, then you are stuck with a non-optimum contract. His view is for a school to diversify and see where they can get a hedge against those fluctuations.</p>
<p>Those in the public sector can find it easier to outsource everything to one company rather than go to multiple smaller suppliers since not only does the procurement of the food itself need to be sorted but the governance around food procurement, safety, waste management and more.</p>	
<p>It can be significantly more work for local authorities to work with multiple SMEs rather than a few large organisations. Significantly more tender applications would be required to meet the required demands when each supplier has more of a limited range, quantity or consistency that they are able to provide. If the value of a local authority's spend is significant, they will be governed by PCRs (public contract regulations), meaning that unless they put in a contract that has multiple suppliers, which can be hard to manage, they have to always go to tender, which isn't helpful to an SME or local element, because they tend to bulk things up as a county-wide or regional provision [1]</p>	<p>A way to overcome this barrier may be to implement a dynamic procurement platform as this can allow smaller suppliers' supplies to be aggregated</p>

Making more sustainable choices

Barriers	Recommendations to overcome the barriers
<p>According to Love British Food, one of two major products that Hampshire County Council still sources from outside the UK is Alaskan pollock, but they are actively looking for UK alternatives and tender this contract every year rather than the usual three. The product is used for fish fingers and the council does not compromise on quality. An apprentice buyer for Hampshire County Council, explains: "Most fish fingers are made from minced fish, but we will only buy fish fingers made from fillet. There is a big difference in taste and texture and we want to make sure our kids have the best. It has presented a problem sourcing it in the UK, but we are working with a supplier in Grimsby, who already makes gluten-free battered pollock for us, on developing a fillet fish finger as well." [21]</p> <p>Similarly, their ice cream supplier, New Forest Ice Cream, had to become completely nut-free before they could supply Hampshire schools. These case studies provide examples of how complex implementing changes can be.</p>	
<p>A barrier for local authorities can be that the central government sometimes states that changes must be made quickly. However, due to the required processes that local authorities have to go through, changes can take significantly longer. [1]</p>	<p>Some members of local authorities feel it would be helpful for the government to gain a deeper understanding of some of the impacts of their decisions.</p>
<p>Capacity of suppliers</p> <p>The capacity of suppliers can be a barrier to implementing more sustainable practices. For example, North Yorkshire is a vastly rural County. If a supplier needs to deliver to Scarborough, they may not want to be in the Dales with a very small village school that may only be getting a couple of items twice a week. Therefore, the sheer size and scale of one organisation catering for a large region can cause issues. [1]</p>	

Making more sustainable choices

Barriers	Recommendations to overcome the barriers
<p>Barriers to trade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities may not have storage facilities. If this is the case, it can mean that they are not able to buy food in advance. This can lead to a just-in-time supply chain as well as missed opportunities with buying products that may otherwise have to be binned etc. Pricing in a volatile market can be difficult. At NYCC for example, pricing is reviewed on a three-monthly cycle. Sourcing certain items can be difficult at times. For example, getting wheat grain and oils without Ukraine being able to farm and trade is difficult. 	
<p>Setting the terms of a tender at the beginning and not being allowed (by law) to deviate from them once they are in place is very inflexible for the catering service. For example, NYCC states that if they were smaller in size, they believe they would better have access to local suppliers and have a bit more flexibility. But the sheer size and the amount they spend can really define what they can do. [1]</p>	

Table 6: This table identifies the enablers, barriers and recommendations for members of supply chains looking to make more sustainable procurement and buying decisions

Recommendations

Table 7 below summarises recommendations that organisations and other researchers have identified for creating more sustainable procurement practices.

Love British Food [21]	Setting the terms of a tender at the beginning and not being allowed (by law) to deviate from them once they are in place is very inflexible for the catering service. For example, NYCC states that if they were smaller in size, they believe they would better have access to local suppliers and have a bit more flexibility.
	Learn from prisons to develop school farms as well as digital platforms that can educate children on nutrition.
	Recognise the Safe and Local Supplier Approval, SALSA, accreditation.
	Benchmark the current situation and focus on improving on that through measurement with Food For Life Served Here, FFLSH.
	Work more closely with local suppliers on developing products and processing needed.
	Provide more support for suppliers through an equivalent of the Supplier Development Programme Scotland.
	Enthuse suppliers about the benefits of working with the public sector through Meet the Buyer events.
	Take a long-term view of school catering as an investment for the future through good, nutritional food and an education on how to eat, and a short-term view of public sector catering as an opportunity to enrich the local area.

Recommendations

Strategic guide for public sector food procurement (Strength2Food) [45]	Actions for stakeholders	Environmental: Reduce carbon emissions	(i) switch from landfill waste disposal to anaerobic digestion.
			(ii) reduce amounts of ruminant meat in the menu.
			(iii) ensure efficient delivery logistics. This could mean localising the supply base, but not always. Emissions reduction is equally possible by making use of piggybacking, backhaul, distribution hubs, lower emissions vehicle fleets, etc. Individual local suppliers who deliver items in isolation from other delivery rounds result in a high emissions burden.
			(iv) pay attention to the agricultural practices behind the foods used in the menus.
		Economic:	Increase the budget spend on suppliers in the local area, including by specifying minimum volumes of local products in contract tenders, and defining stringent boundaries for 'local' areas.
			Pay catering staff the living wage.
			Foster connections between stakeholders to encourage local spending. This is a particularly important point for catering services that are very urban or in areas with a limited local supply base.
		Social:	Localise the supply chain to support good communication and relationship development between stakeholders.
		Nutritional:	Ensure a robust standards regime for nutritional analysis.
			Have active monitoring and implementation processes.
			Engage with customers in menu design and testing.
			Improve canteen environments and staff interactions.

Recommendations

Strategic guide for public sector food procurement (Strength2Food) [45]	Actions for public food procurement policymakers	Promote quality and sustainability measures in public procurement contracts (e.g. SMEs, social enterprises, green initiatives/targets, etc.).
		Employ a holistic approach to procurement policy making (e.g. integrate nutritional policies with environmental policies).
		Integrate procurement policies with economic and structural policies (e.g. commitment to avoid landfill, prioritise dining environment in design and resourcing of new public buildings).
		Encourage 'vertical' collaboration between stakeholders to maximise opportunities for local economic and social benefits, (e.g. encourage suppliers to host school field trips and collaborate in menu innovation; incentivise wholesalers to act as intermediaries in bringing more small, local producers into the supply chain).
		Integrate catering services into wider school life.
		Encourage 'horizontal' collaboration between stakeholders at the same tier in the supply chain. (e.g. collaboration between small suppliers to jointly bid for contracts, collaboration between schools to tender joint contracts).
		Develop policies which recognise the value of catering staff across the sustainability pillars (e.g. their role in producing appetising meals; reducing plate waste, reducing carbon emissions and nutritional and financial losses, their contribution to local economic goals, contribution to education and curriculum development).
	Actions for contracting authorities	Remove structural and investment obstacles that impact the ability of bidders to meet awarding criteria (e.g. setting emissions reductions targets, but giving no option other than landfill for local waste disposal).
		Integrate procurement and catering decision-making.
		Re-think budget allocation for food procurement and catering activities in line with their ability to impact multiple economic development goals, carbon reduction goals and community building goals (e.g. source funding from a wider base than education or facilities budgets).
		Allocate budgets to take account of the future savings that come from a great meals service (e.g. related to emissions reduction, health improvements, etc.).

Recommendations

Strategic guide for public sector food procurement (Strength2Food) [45]	Actions for contracting authorities	Link municipal goals (e.g. supporting local economy) with contract awarding criteria and include targets and Key Performance Indicators to encourage and reward performance improvements that increase the probability that the authority's ambition is realised in practice.
		Maintain communication with contract holders to confirm that criteria are being met.
		When the contracting authority is an individual school, consider collaborating with other schools. Devolving procurement responsibility to individual schools can encourage risk-averse, low-change behaviours.
	Actions for caterers	Expand the vision of the meals service and staff to include contribution to education, curriculum and wider school life (e.g. breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, school holiday clubs).
		Consider the impact that the meals service can have on the wider community e.g. suppliers involved in school field trips, hosting community events, parent/family cookery classes, tastings, etc.
		Properly recognise and reward the ability of catering staff to positively impact the environmental, local economy and nutritional benefits of the service, including by reducing food waste and increasing meal uptake.
		Facilitate engagement with pupils/parents in menu design and planning, and operational issues, such as canteen design, management and lunchtime supervision.
		Adhere to a robust nutritional standards framework, or develop improvements to existing ones, and employ professional nutritionists in menu design.
		Discourage child refusal of fruit and vegetables at the service counter, and look for ways of increasing their consumption through menu developments.
		Where possible, switch from landfill food waste disposal to digester, composting, etc.
		Explore possibilities for reducing plastic waste (e.g. avoiding plastic cutlery, using jugs of water not cartons/bottles, preparing yoghurt on site, not packaging cut fruit in plastic wrapping).

Recommendations

Others	Make certain government suggestions mandatory.
	Promote quality and sustainability measures in public procurement contracts (e.g. SMEs, social enterprises, green initiatives/targets, etc.).
	Employ a holistic approach to procurement policy making (e.g. integrate nutritional policies with environmental policies).
	Integrate procurement policies with economic and structural policies (e.g. commitment to avoid landfill, prioritise dining environment in design and resourcing of new public buildings).

Table 7: This table summarises recommendations that organisations and other researchers have identified for creating more sustainable procurement practices.



Examples of Innovation and Action

Dynamic food procurement

Dynamic Food Procurement is a new way of procuring and providing food from a digital platform that can enable SME producers to access a market previously difficult to penetrate. It allows procurers to buy products from multiple smaller suppliers rather than one large supplier, in turn enabling shorter, more transparent food supply chains. One of its key purposes is to allow the supply of smaller suppliers to be aggregated so that together, they are able to meet the higher demands that come with supplying the public sector, with regards to both quantities and varieties of foods. Dynamic food procurement can support local authorities' access to great local products whilst delivering lower costs for higher social and environmental standards. The 2021 National Food Strategy recommends UK wide implementation of Dynamic Food Procurement. [46]

A dynamic procurement system can lead to a more robust supply chain due to it not being dependent on one supplier and the potentially difficult logistics associated with just-in-time supply chains and the practical realities that can be associated with such a system. [47]

Another purpose of implementing dynamic food procurement systems is to reduce the administration and red tape around tendering for different public sector contracts. This can act as a barrier to producers and put off suppliers. When using a dynamic procurement platform, a local producer would only need to sign up to the platform once. If they were to sign up to contribute to the supply of food for a local school one month, they wouldn't need to sign up again if a tender were to come out the following month regarding the supplying of a local hospital, for example. This can transform the tendering process into one that is more transparent, flexible and simple - especially for SMEs. [47] As another example, the Ministry of Defence can order 10,000 eggs. The dynamic procurement platform can assess the egg producers that are signed up to the platform based on their standards, pricing and quality and the platform could then split the order for 10,000 eggs across 20 suppliers. Procurers get a single invoice and delivery and it can be invisible to them that eggs have come from 20 places.

Bath and North East Somerset pilot:

A scaled up dynamic procurement model was piloted in schools that are signed up to Bath and North East Somerset Council's catering services. Through the implementation of this model, this pilot was able to deliver over 2 million meals into the region's primary schools whilst reducing both financial and environmental costs associated with the contract. Overall, this led to both environmental and financial cost reductions. [48]

The Crown Commercial Service were initially planning on providing a governmental opportunity to develop the pilot's work in the Southwest with the Southwest food hub. However, around one year ago, they stepped back from that commercial solution and decided not to deliver it. This was primarily as a consequence of the current challenges in the market. Therefore, the startup company DPUK was set up in the Southwest to try to continue this work. More information about the pilot run in Bath and North East Somerset, as well as more information on dynamic food procurement can be found through the following links:

- [Principles of Dynamic Food Procurement](#)
- [Case Study Document](#)
- [Dynamic Food Procurement Presentation](#)
- [Bath and North East Somerset Pilot - Dynamic Food Procurement Overview](#)
- [What Are We Doing? | Bath and North East Somerset](#)
- [Dynamic Procurement in Bath and North East Somerset Infographic](#)

Dynamic Purchasing UK, DPUK, is a business that delivers and supports dynamic procurement systems in the UK. [49] It is working with Anchor Institutions like local authorities, schools and hospitals to form buying organisations capable of dynamic food procurement. The dynamic food board is a board of individual stakeholders who support the principles of dynamic procurement and promote it. This board includes DPUK. Equilibrium Markets is a technology platform that can support the implementation of dynamic procurement systems. [50]

Examples of Innovation and Action

Councils and Public Catering Services

Multiple councils and public sector catering services are implementing innovative practices. Examples of these are included below.

Serving low-emission meals:

- Oxford, Cambridge City and Lewisham Councils: Meals served at events that are catered for by the Oxford Council, including party events, are all plant-based meals and therefore lower in emissions than more traditional meals. Cambridge City and Lewisham Councils have also decided to serve only plant-based meals at events.
- West Sussex Town Haywards Heath: Haywards Heath was the first town in Europe to sign the Plant Based Treaty as a commitment to helping the climate.

Brighton And Hove Council

- Brighton & Hove City Council Good Food Standards [51]
- In November 2020, Brighton & Hove became the first UK location to receive the prestigious Gold Sustainable Food Place Award
- The council states that it is committed to ensuring public food and catering procurement meets the government's Buying Standards as well as delivering and meeting its commitments made in the city-wide food strategy "Brighton & Hove Food Strategy Action Plan – 2018 to 2023"

Bradford Council

- Bradford has created a Sustainable Development Partnership to "help Bradford develop and realise its ambition of becoming a thriving and inclusive sustainable District." [29]

Preston Council

- Preston Council has taken new approaches to transform their economy to one where 'wealth produced locally was controlled by those who produced it, not by distant shareholders. [52]

Durham County Council Pilot:

- Two schools were studied in Durham County, 'TownSchool' and 'VillageSchool'. According to Strength2Food's research, "TownSchool represented a more mainstream chain, in which sourcing of milk and meat is regional rather than local, and not organic. VillageSchool represented a short/local and organic chain, in which all milk and meat is sourced locally and with organic certification. 'SchoolCater' subcontracted the supply of fresh produce, groceries, meat and processed/frozen good to relevant first-tier suppliers who delivered them directly to the schools - in turn these first-tier suppliers sourced items from next tier wholesalers, processors and/or farmers, at least some of whom were located in the region." [53]

Short Farmer-to-School Supply Chains

Some farmers and food producers have set up supply chains that allow them to sell their produce directly to schools. Examples of these have been included below.

- The Organic Pantry in Tadcaster, Yorkshire supplies schools in Nottinghamshire with food for their students' school meals, creating a direct supply chain from farmer to school.
- A farmer from just outside of Sheffield supplies fresh milk directly to the University of Sheffield. They are also a food processor as they can process their product for ice cream.

Examples of Innovation and Action

Love British Food Public Sector Working Groups

Love British Food has been asked by industry leaders to set up two working groups to lead the delivery of more British and local food supply chains in the public sector. The groups feature a range of people in public sector catering. The aim of the working groups is to encourage more schools and NHS Trusts to run a British Food Fortnight menu during the national food celebrations. [21]

Food for Life

The Food for Life scheme is run by the Soil Association. Following their terms are not compulsory like the school food standards from the government. However, many schools and local authorities have met the terms of their various awards and have subsequently been awarded either Bronze, Silver or Gold Food For Life Awards. [11] These awards can provide encouragement to schools and local authorities to implement improved procurement practices.



Outcomes of this work

Ensuring that this work could be helpful to others was paramount. Therefore, it was crucial that the outcomes of this work were able to reach a range of citizens, stakeholders and more. In addition to this report, the outcomes of this research included contributing to the government's consultation on their buying standards and contributing to a Local Supply Chain research workshop with local growers and producers. Moreover, informative resources were also created which comprised a summary presentation video on the research findings and an animation.

Summary Presentation

A presentation video has been created to summarise the research laid out in this report. To play this video, please click [here](#).

Consultation

The findings and conclusions drawn from this research were able to be utilised when contributing to the Government's Buying Standards consultation. This consultation aims to help the public sector's purchasing power be a source of positive change in the food system. A set of proposed changes were provided and a list of questions based on these changes were answered as FixOurFood's contribution. More information about this consultation can be found at the following links:

- [Overview of Consultation inc. link to online form:](#)
- [Detailed document explaining proposals \(29 pages\):](#)
- [Seeking views on possible changes to public sector food and catering policy \(39 pages\).](#)

Supply Chain Workshop

As a result of this research done in public procurement, supply chains and school meals, contributions fed into FixOurFood's Design Lab workshop and a presentation was given.

Public Procurement Resources and Information

Throughout the course of this research, a list of useful literature relating to public sector food procurement, school food and sustainable food procurement methods was formulated. This is shown below.

- [Public-sector procurement overview, UK Gov.](#)
- [Sustainable Food Procurement Tyndall Centre report](#)
- [Public Procurement of food in the South West: Opportunities and barriers to relocalising food supply](#)
- [‘Sustainable school food procurement in England: when there is a will, there is a way’ study](#)
- [Smarter Food Procurement in the Public Sector](#)
- [What would a transformational approach to food public procurement look like?](#)
- [Innovative Solutions to Public Food Procurement](#)
- [UK Food System Mapped](#)
- [Public food procurement for sustainable food systems and healthy diets - Volume 1](#)
- [Greening the Realm: Sustainable Food Chains and the Public Plate](#)
- [Healthy Diets From Sustainable Food Systems](#)
- [Methods and Indicators for Measuring the Social, Environmental and Economic Impacts of Food Quality Schemes, Short Food Supply Chains and Varying Public Sector Food Procurement Policies](#)

Strengthening European Food Chain Sustainability by Quality and Procurement Policy:

- [Qualitative Assessment of Motivations, Practices and organisational development of short supply chains](#)
- [Evaluation of environmental, economic and social impacts of different models of PSFP in a school context](#)
- [Strategic Guide for Public Sector Food Procurement: Strength2Food](#)
- [A plan for public procurement produced by the Government](#)
- [Grow Yorkshire Webinar link: \(inc. speakers from CCS, FixOurFood and more\)](#)
- [National Food Strategy](#)
- [Public Sector Food and Catering - a guide for SMEs. DEFRA](#)
- [Smarter Food Procurement - NAO](#)
- [DEFRA’s Public Sector Procurement of Food Report](#)
- [Procuring for change: An exploration of the innovation potential of sustainable food procurement](#)
- [Public food procurement as a game changer for food system transformation](#)
- [Small and Medium Sized Businesses Action Plan written by the Government](#)

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With a new FixOurFood PhD program having started that focuses on public procurement and school meals, this research can continue to be utilised and may be further developed in the coming years.

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