



Food for Life Lancashire

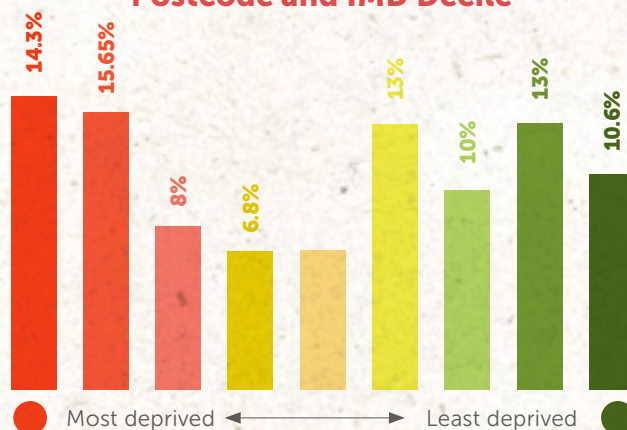


June 2025 – July 2026

Commissioned by Lancashire County Council, Food for Life Lancashire works with primary schools to champion a whole school approach to food, increasing the knowledge and accessibility of healthy and sustainable food as well as contributing to reducing childhood obesity and health inequalities.



All Enrolled
Postcode and IMD Decile



Food for Life numbers as of 20th July 2026

161 Settings enrolled

61 schools this contract year

24 face-to-face training sessions delivered for school staff this contract year – 67 teaching staff attended face to face training days this year, learning how to:

- Plan a school food event
- Set up and deliver cooking a club
- Set up and deliver a growing club
- Build curriculum confidence in the outdoors
- Teach cooking and growing outdoors
- Plan their own growing space



28 Bronze Awards



6 Silver Awards

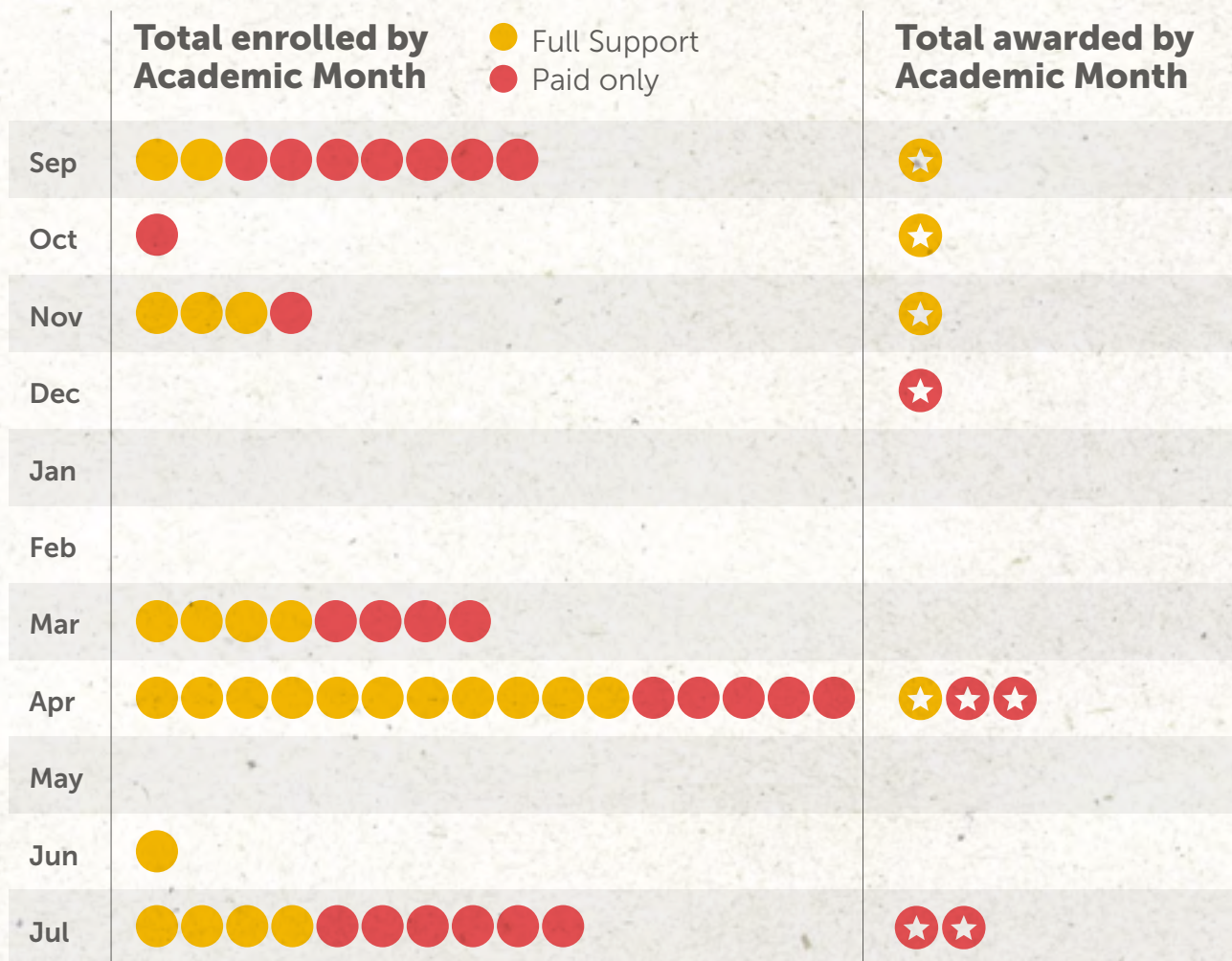


1 Gold Award*



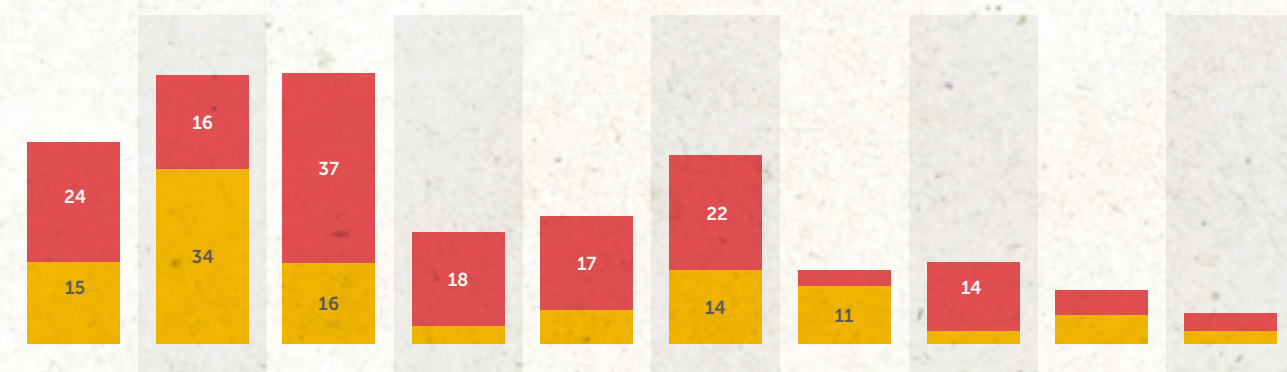
Food for Life isn't a standalone topic - it's a living part of school life. ”

**Shelley Swire, Teacher,
Nelson St Philips**

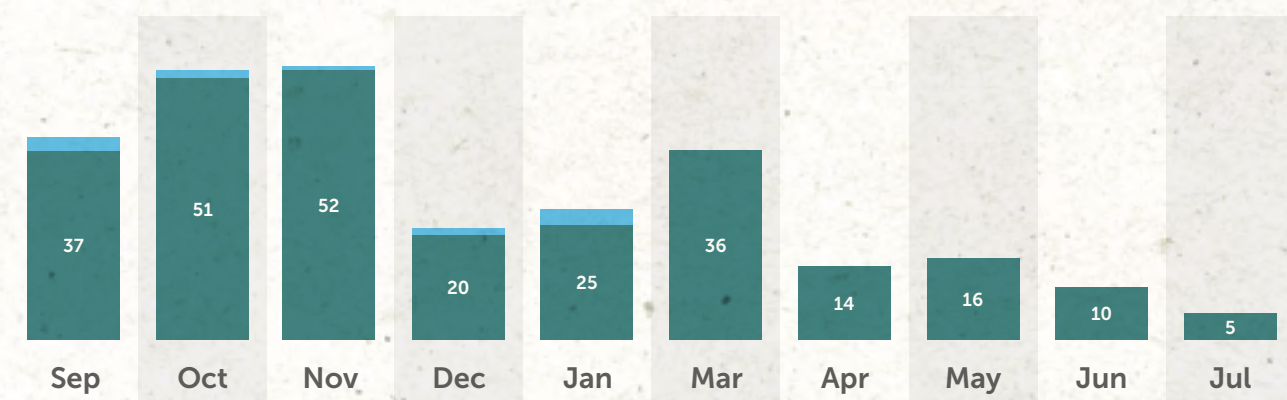


Total criteria completed by Academic Month

Commission Level ● Full Support ● Paid only



Best Practice ● No ● Yes



Impact in Practice:



Food for Life days

Following on from the successful pilot of a Food for Life Day at Nelson St Phillips last year, this year the Food for Life team have supported three further schools to host their own Food for Life Day to further embed a positive food culture across the whole school and beyond into the local community.

A Food for Life Day sees the whole school dedicate a day (or half day) plus after school activities, to the Food for Life programme. Stepping away from the usual timetable, the aim of the day is to immerse staff, pupils and families in the core elements of the Food for Life programme such as growing, cooking, easy tips and support on how to bring in more healthy eating into everyday life. The day starts at lunchtime with a focus on food waste and meal monitoring, then moves outside for growing and classroom cooking activities. After school, parents and carers are invited to get a hands-on experience of the breadth of recipes, activities, and skills learnt through the Food for Life programme.

These Food for Life days show that the schools are committed to devoting time in their timetables to cooking and growing and helping the wider school community learn about a range of healthy and sustainable food topics across the curriculum.



Growing and Cooking Workshop Series

This year the Food for Life Local Programme team introduced a new series to help the pupils gain confidence and knowledge around cooking and growing at school.

Rooted in the Food for Life ethos, this 10-week training course placed children at the centre of practical, hands-on learning. Piloted in two primary schools Scotforth St Paul's Primary School in Lancaster and Whittlefield Primary School in Burnley, the sessions were designed to follow the journey from seed to plate through hands-on growing, cooking and shared food experiences.

Through growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing food, pupils gained a deeper understanding and engagement of where food comes from and how fresh ingredients can be transformed into

healthy, enjoyable meals. Alongside this, they developed teamwork, communication skills and confidence, discovering that good food is not just something we eat, but something we can grow, prepare, share and enjoy together.

The impact of this project extended beyond the school day, supporting family engagement and helping children develop positive relationships with food that can last well into the future.

See full details in case study below.

Outdoor Learning – Teacher training

One of the core objectives of the Food for Life programme is to build knowledge, skills and capacity, as well as create ownership and agency.

The programme does this through a range of activities, including face-to-face training for school staff.

This year we have trained 27 teaching staff over two face-to-face sessions on outdoor learning this year. Every activity linked to the curriculum, recognising valuable connections to Design and Technology, science and wider wellbeing objectives. The Food for Life team also demonstrated how each activity supports schools to progress their Food for Life award journey, i.e. children participating in cooking food and learning how to grow and harvest food.

“

We're exploring growing & cooking, but this training has given us the confidence to bring it all together. ”

(Lancashire primary school teacher)

See pg XX for case study on the cooking and growing workshop series.



A day in the life of Food for Life Lancashire:

At the heart of Food for Life Lancashire is a team working side-by-side with schools to make good food part of everyday life, from the classroom to the playground, the kitchen to the growing space.

As the feet on the ground, Food for Life Lancashire is a small, experienced team of two experts in food, nutrition and education, who know first-hand how a whole-school approach to food can shift culture, build confidence and create lasting change.

The team covers the entirety of Lancashire, supporting the 161 enrolled schools with day-to-day enquiries, assisting schools through their awards journey by helping implement and evidence actions, and working with target schools to build upon enrolments. They create and facilitate training sessions, practical guidance and building up trusted relationships; bringing cooking, growing and food education to life in ways that are meaningful, accessible and rooted in each school community.

As a vital part of the local food system work, the Food for Life Lancashire team are actively supporting the Lancaster Food Partnership bid for Gold Sustainable Food Places, further embedding the 'beyond the school gates' approach to school, and wider, food system changes across Lancashire.

Building on the national picture, the Lancashire team work closely with the Soil Association Food communications team to ensure the work within Lancashire is amplified beyond the area, via newsletters, case studies, blogs, social media posts, press releases and reports, to connect the work to ongoing conversation around national food systems and policy, and the wider work of the Soil Association.

“

One of the biggest rewards to our work is seeing the Food for Life ethos become visible: a blank patch of ground transformed into a thriving growing space; children harvesting, cooking and tasting food they have nurtured themselves; families engaging with healthy, sustainable food; and schools building a culture where good food is grown, cooked, shared and celebrated together. ”

Libby Shaw – Food for Life Lancashire – Local Programme Manager



Food for Life Champions

Embedding Food for Life across a school setting is not something that happens by accident or overnight, it takes passion and dedication, often from an inspirational school's Food for Life lead. In recognition of this, we have introduced Food for Life Champions, for those who are leading the way and have gone above and beyond for their school and community in the way they have adopted the Food for Life programme framework and principles. This year Food for Life Lancashire identified two Food for Life champions, Faye Mitchell and Shelley Swire, both extremely inspiring teachers who have been the driving force to make real positive change around food in their school. Impacting not only the children but the wider school community. See pg XX and XX for spotlight case studies with Faye and Shelley.



What's next for Food for Life in Lancashire?

Over the lifespan of the programme to-date we have seen a good level of awarded settings and are starting to see that with the length of time invested more schools are progressing from bronze to silver award as the programme matures.

In this final year of this currently funded programme, the main priority will be to support all the enrolled settings to progress as far through the awards as possible by offering incentives and promotion of their achievements.

For the 61 newly enrolled settings, the ambition is to work through the framework to embed a positive food culture across the whole setting through free growing/cooking starter kits and training such as our most popular face-to-face 'Inspires!' and Teaching Cooking Confidently training days.

We will continue to promote the work of Food for Life Lancashire through termly newsletters and termly toolkits and highlighting achievements and what's on through our social media channels.

Please contact Libby Shaw-Davies:
lshawdavies@soilassociation.org
or Louise Barron:
lbarron@soilassociation.org for more info.

Food for Life Lancashire updates and news:
www.foodforlife.org.uk/blogs
Foodforlife.org.uk



The background is a deep magenta color with a subtle, grainy texture. It is decorated with various abstract shapes and patterns in shades of orange, blue, and yellow. These include a large orange brush-like shape in the top left, a blue mushroom-like shape in the top right, a yellow fork-like shape in the middle right, a yellow comb-like shape in the bottom left, and a yellow leaf-like shape in the bottom right. There are also several small circles and dots in blue and yellow scattered throughout.

Case Studies

Food for Life Lancashire:

Delivering a series of growing & cooking sessions to primary school children

A project to explore the impact of delivering a series of growing and cooking sessions by the Food for Life Lancashire programme team to the same group of primary school children.

This is a summary of how pupils at Scotforth St Paul's Primary School in Lancaster and Whittlefield Primary School in Burnley followed the journey from seed to plate through hands-on growing, cooking and shared food experiences.

Overview

Pupils at Scotforth St Paul's Primary School and Whittlefield Primary School took part in a series of Food for Life learning sessions, combining growing and cooking activities over approximately ten weeks. The same group of children participated throughout, enabling them to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence over time while experiencing every stage of the food journey.

Rooted in the Food for Life ethos, each growing and cooking session placed children at the centre of practical, hands-on learning. Through growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing food, pupils gained a deeper understanding and engagement of where food comes from and how fresh ingredients can be transformed into healthy, enjoyable meals. Alongside this, they developed teamwork, communication skills and confidence, discovering that good food is not just something we eat, but something we can grow, prepare, share and enjoy together.





Planting the Seeds

The growing programme began with pupils exploring their school growing spaces and considering what they wanted to grow. They cleared areas, weeded beds, prepared pots and **began to see their outdoor environment as a place for discovery, responsibility and care.**



Children sowed peas in pots, planted wildflowers, sprouted broad beans in bags and created salad boxes containing spring onions, spinach, radish, lettuce and mustard cress seeds to take home and share with their families. They also made seed tape using carrot and beetroot seeds, learning how simple preparation can support successful planting later in the season.

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increasingly
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independent**

As the sessions progressed, pupils became increasingly confident and independent. They learned how to split herbs including mint, basil, parsley, spring onions and oregano, creating new plants to pot up, take home and add to their school's raised beds and containers. Through these practical activities, **children developed growing skills while learning patience, observation and the importance of caring for living things.**

By the end of the growing sessions, pupils had taken ownership of their growing spaces and were proud of the plants and produce they had nurtured. Many were eager to share their new knowledge with family members and continue growing at home.



From Garden to Kitchen

The following term the same children moved onto a series of cooking sessions using Food for Life cooking resources - again delivered by the Food for Life Lancashire team. **Because pupils had already spent time growing and caring for plants, they were able to make meaningful connections between the foods they had planted, the ingredients they could harvest and the meals they could prepare.**

The first recipe was flatbreads with pea and mint dip, providing a direct link to the peas and herbs children had grown. In the following weeks, pupils prepared vegetable noodle pots, Aloo Tikki potato cakes, a simple, quick and healthy air fryer meal, plus beetroot and chocolate brownies. Each session gave the children opportunities to explore familiar ingredients in new and exciting ways.

As their confidence grew, **the children developed practical kitchen skills including safe knife techniques, food preparation and basic cooking methods.**

They worked collaboratively in small groups, taking turns, sharing responsibilities and supporting one another to achieve a shared outcome.

The cooking sessions also encouraged children to try new foods and broaden their tastes. Many pupils showed a willingness to sample ingredients they had previously avoided and were often surprised by the results. Discussions about healthy eating, food origins and ingredients became more meaningful because children could draw on their own experiences of growing and preparing food themselves.





The cooking sessions also encouraged children to try new foods and broaden their tastes. **Many pupils showed a willingness to sample ingredients they had previously avoided and were often surprised by the results.** Discussions about healthy eating, food origins and ingredients became more meaningful because children could draw on their own experiences of growing and preparing food themselves.

Most importantly, **pupils experienced the full journey of food: planting a seed, nurturing a plant, watching it flourish, preparing ingredients, creating recipes and enjoying food together.** Taking plants and recipes home also helped extend learning beyond the school gates, encouraging conversations and shared experiences with family members.

This practical, enjoyable journey reflects the heart of Food for Life: helping children build lasting connections with food, nature and their community while developing skills that can stay with them throughout their lives.



What Changed for Pupils?

Through sustained engagement across both the growing and cooking sessions, the children;

- Developed practical growing and cooking skills through hands-on, seasonal learning.
 - Increased their confidence in preparing food, following recipes and using kitchen equipment safely.
 - Became more willing to try new foods and discuss ingredients and healthy eating.
 - Strengthened their understanding of the journey from seed to plate through first-hand experience.
 - Demonstrated greater independence, responsibility and care when working with plants and food.
 - Shared their learning at home through plants, produce and recipes, extending the impact to families.
 - Built teamwork, communication and social skills through collaborative growing, cooking and eating activities.
 - Developed a stronger connection with food, nature and where food comes from.
- 

Challenges

Despite the overwhelmingly positive sessions, several challenges were identified, including limited kitchen facilities, securing staff support during sessions, maintaining consistent attendance across all activities, and broadening participation beyond years four and five.

Fortunately, the Food for Life programme team helped overcome facility limitations by providing essential equipment, including portable hobs.

Why it matters

This project demonstrates the value of connecting growing and cooking through a sustained programme of learning. By engaging the same group of children throughout the journey from seed to plate, pupils were able to build knowledge, skills and confidence over time rather than through isolated activities.

The programme brought together growing, cooking, healthy eating and community connection in a way that was practical, memorable and enjoyable.

Through real experiences with soil, seeds, fresh ingredients and shared meals, children developed a deeper understanding of food and where it comes from, while gaining the confidence to make, taste and share healthy food.

The impact of this project extended beyond the school day, supporting family engagement and helping children develop positive relationships with food that can last well into the future.



Pupil Voice

**"I have really loved this club. Thank you so much Libby and the volunteer who helped - I really enjoyed it."
Year 4 pupil**

**"It was brilliant. Can we do it again? Please come back next year."
Year 5 pupil**



**"I didn't think I'd enjoy it as much as this!
Year 4 pupil**

**"This session is my favourite time of this week."
Year 4 pupil**



**"It was good to cook stuff that we had grown. My pea plant was massive!"
Year 5 pupil**

**"I love being outside in the school garden and being given responsibility for it."
Year 5 pupil**

**"I didn't think I would like the beetroot brownies, but they were really good!"
Year 5 pupil**

Food for Life School Days



Across Lancashire, more schools are dedicating whole days to their Food for Life programme, giving pupils, staff and families the chance to step away from the usual timetable and immerse themselves in growing, cooking and healthy eating.

At Nelson St Philip's Primary School, a Bronze Food for Life School, their second annual Food for Life Day was packed with hands-on activities.

Parents joined cooking workshops alongside their children, creating healthy potato fritters, while classes prepared a range of nutritious dishes using Food for Life recipes.



"Food for Life isn't a standalone topic - it's a living part of school life."

Shelley Swire, Teacher, Nelson St Philips

The school's SNAG (School Nutrition Action Group) took centre stage as taste testers and food champions, helping to monitor school lunches and reduce food waste. Pupils then headed outdoors to plant vegetables and salad crops in the school garden, growing ingredients they will later use in their cooking lessons.

Other Lancashire schools are embracing the approach too. West End Primary held its first Food for Life Day, while Helmshore Primary combined cooking, growing and composting activities, **helping children understand where food comes from and how it supports both health and the environment.**

These dedicated Food for Life Days demonstrate the lasting impact of the programme. By embedding growing, cooking and healthy eating into everyday school life, schools are creating positive experiences that inspire healthier choices, strengthen communities and support progress towards their Food for Life award.



A Day of Outdoor Learning Training for Lancashire Teachers



As part of the Food for Life programme, Lancashire primary schools can access funded training designed to support growing, cooking and healthy learning across their school community.

During the final half term of the academic year, a group of enthusiastic Lancashire primary teachers came together for a day of immersive outdoor learning in the beautiful grounds of Food for Life school, All Saints' Primary School in Accrington.

Delivered by the Food for Life training and programme team, the day focused on practical, curriculum-linked activities that can be easily adapted and delivered within school outdoor spaces.

The training began with a simple but valuable mapping exercise, encouraging teachers to view their outdoor spaces through the eyes of their pupils and recognise the potential of their grounds as an extension of the classroom.



"I now realise how much potential our school outdoor space has for outdoor learning. Involving the children in this simple mapping exercise will really help bring it to life!"

Lancashire Primary School Teacher

Teachers explored a range of resources and hands-on activities, from creating nature trails to investigating soil through science based learning. The emphasis throughout was on practical approaches that could be taken straight back into the classroom.

The group also put their cooking skills to the test, challenging the idea that noodle pots need to be ultra-processed and packed with additives. Using fresh vegetables, herbs and seasonings, teachers created their own healthy, customised noodle pots.

Outdoor cooking proved to be a particular highlight! The teachers discovered just how easy it is to make delicious campfire flatbreads using only two ingredients.

To accompany them, the group made their own butter, experiencing first-hand how simple food preparation activities can be used to engage children in learning.

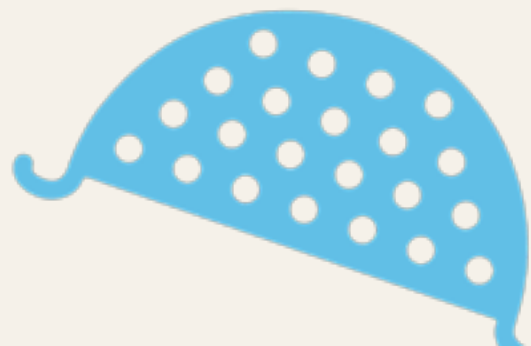
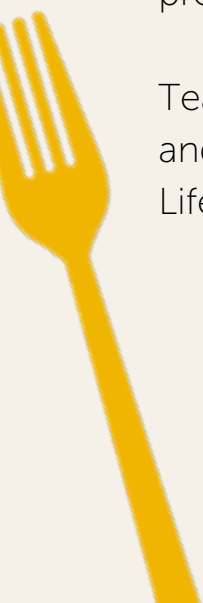


“We’re exploring growing & cooking, but this training has given us the confidence to bring it all together.”

Lancashire Primary Teacher

Every activity linked to the curriculum, recognising valuable connections to Design and Technology, science and wider wellbeing objectives. The Food for Life team also demonstrated how each activity supports schools to progress their Food for Life award journey.

Teachers left feeling inspired and equipped with practical ideas, resources and confidence to enhance outdoor learning and support their Food for Life journey.



Growing Change:

Food for Life Teacher Spotlight



Faye Mitchell, Park Primary, Colne

What inspired you to get involved with the Food for Life programme?

We wanted to build on our outdoor learning offer and develop the children's life skills. Food for Life provided the perfect framework, guiding us through every stage of the journey - from planting and growing to harvesting, cooking and learning practical skills along the way. It was exactly the support we needed.



Looking back, what are you most proud of achieving through your Food for Life journey?

It's not one big achievement, but lots of magical moments along the way. Seeing the children recognise vegetables they had grown themselves was incredibly rewarding. Watching them excitedly taste foods such as peas and green beans for the first time showed just how powerful hands-on food education can be.

How have the children benefited from the Food for Life activities?

We've seen a real shift in children's attitudes towards healthy lifestyles. Taking ownership of the school garden has boosted their confidence, engagement and wellbeing.

The impact has extended beyond school too. Initially, few families took home produce from the garden because they lacked confidence in cooking it - so we introduced parent cooking sessions. Now, families regularly share photos of meals they've made together, and parents actively ask when produce will be available.

Growing Change:

Food for Life Teacher Spotlight



How has being a Food for Life Champion influenced you personally as a teacher?

It's been hugely rewarding. Spending more time outdoors with children allows me to see them learn and thrive in different ways. Some children who find traditional classroom learning challenging truly flourish when they're outside, growing, exploring and learning through experience.

One parent's comment will always stay with me...

“

My child would never eat vegetables, and I couldn't believe it when I watched him pick and eat a pea.

”

Why do you think growing, cooking and good food education are so important for children today?

These are life skills that children will carry with them into adulthood. We've seen a positive impact on both wellbeing and healthy habits, while helping children understand where food comes from and how to prepare it. Growing your own food isn't just healthy - it's empowering, sustainable and cost-effective.

What advice would you give to another teacher or school thinking about starting their Food for Life journey?

Go for it! The children will love it. Our school community has fully embraced Food for Life, and we've developed a team of enthusiastic pupil champions who promote positive food choices every day. The programme gives children meaningful experiences that stay with them.

“

The children have become so invested in their school garden and food projects across the school.

”



Growing Change:

Food for Life Teacher Spotlight



Shelley Swire, Nelson St Phillips CofE Primary

What inspired you to get involved with the Food for Life programme?

After attending the Food for Life free training day, we quickly realised that **Food for Life was exactly what our school needed.** Packed lunches weren't always healthy and school meal uptake was low, so we wanted to create a stronger food culture and help children make healthier choices.

Looking back, what are you most proud of achieving through your Food for Life journey?



Our annual Food for Life Days have become a real highlight, bringing together everything the children learn about growing, cooking and healthy eating. Establishing annual farm visits has also had an impact, helping children understand where food comes from. We've embedded Food for Life throughout the curriculum making learning meaningful and hands-on. Every class now grows its own produce helping children see that food doesn't just come from a supermarket!

How have the children benefited from the Food for Life activities?

The programme has transformed children's understanding of food.

Growing their own produce opened their eyes to where food comes from, while learning about food waste has encouraged them to think more carefully about what they eat.

We've also noticed that children are much more willing to try new foods, whether during lunchtime activities or our Food for Life Days. Their confidence and curiosity around healthy eating have grown

Growing Change:

Food for Life Teacher Spotlight



How has being a Food for Life Champion influenced you personally as a teacher?

Food for Life has helped me see food education as something that should be woven throughout the school year rather than taught as a standalone topic. It has opened up wonderful opportunities for outdoor learning and helped connect the classroom, garden and home. It has also been rewarding seeing the staff team come together to create a positive food culture across the school.



Our School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) also makes me incredibly proud. The children fully embrace their role as healthy eating champions, meeting weekly, leading projects and inspiring their peers.



Why do you think growing, cooking and good food education are so important for children today?

Good food education gives children essential life skills. In a world where highly processed foods are readily available, it's more important than ever that children understand where food comes from and feel confident growing, preparing and enjoying healthy meals. These experiences can shape lifelong habits, while helping them make informed, affordable food choices for the future.



"Food for Life isn't a standalone topic - it's a living part of school life."

What advice would you give to another teacher or school thinking about starting their FFL journey?

Start by getting staff on board and identifying where you'd most like to strengthen your school's food culture. For us, making Food for Life a regular item on our team meeting agenda has helped keep momentum going and goals achievable. Most importantly, make it a whole school effort. The greatest impact comes when everyone is working towards the same vision.

