Food for Life Scotland (FFLS) is funded by the Scottish Government to help local authorities across Scotland get fresh, local, and sustainable food onto school plates. FFLS supports local authorities to achieve the Food for Life Served Here (FFLSH) award for their school meals service. It’s a recognised and respected mark of quality, certified at three levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

As communities across Scotland continue to grapple with uncertainties – from climate change and the impact of the pandemic, to supply chain disruptions and the increased cost of living – the FFLS programme and its focus on improving access to food that’s good for health, good for the environment and good for the local economy, has never been more important. This is particularly true as the award supports councils to deliver on broader objectives for their local areas.

With the community wealth building agenda fast establishing itself, local food strategies being developed across Scotland and the Good Food Nation Bill putting public food at the heart of its ambitions, it is increasingly recognised that the food we buy and how we buy it has the potential to shape: our health and wellbeing; our communities and local economies; and our climate and biodiversity. Public procurement can be used as a powerful tool to drive a transformation in food production and supply. The FFLSH award provides local authorities with a framework to do this via the food that they serve.

It has been a challenging time for catering teams, but with 18 local authorities across Scotland now holding a FFLSH award, this report shows that significant progress has been made and that momentum is building as we work together to build a better food system in Scotland.

We’re delighted to showcase the successes of the FFLS programme in this report, but crucially these successes also belong to our hardworking and valued local authority partners. Shining a spotlight on their achievements, hard won in the most challenging of circumstances, is a real joy. We look forward to continuing to work with public sector catering teams across Scotland in the year ahead.

As part of the Food for Life Scotland programme, Scotland’s local authority award holders are:

- reassuring parents and pupils that their school meals are responsibly sourced and freshly prepared by trained cooks
- improving pupils’ health by putting more fresh fruit and vegetables, fish, and wholegrains on the menu
- protecting the environment for the future by reducing food miles and championing sustainable producers
- supporting a thriving local economy by putting more Scottish food on the table.

Find out more about the Food for Life Served Here standards
FOOD FOR LIFE ACROSS SCOTLAND

HIGHLAND
9,650 BRONZE meals daily in 171 primaries and 59 nurseries (2009)

ARGYLL & BUTE
3,620 BRONZE meals daily in 82 primaries (2014)

INVERCLYDE
3,470 BRONZE meals daily in 20 primaries (2019)

EAST RENFREWSHIRE
6,600 BRONZE meals daily in 23 primaries (2014)

NORTH AYRSHIRE
5,700 GOLD meals daily in 50 primaries, 1 secondary and 7 nurseries (2013)

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE
3,050 BRONZE meals daily in 29 nurseries, 30 primaries, and 2 ASN schools (2021)

GLASGOW
34,000 BRONZE meals daily in 130 primaries and 7 ASN schools (2021)

EAST AYRSHIRE
4,600 GOLD meals daily in 38 primaries and 10 nurseries (2008)

WEST LOTHIAN
7,430 BRONZE meals daily in 67 primaries (2018)

SHETLAND ISLANDS
2,000 BRONZE meals daily in 3 nurseries, 21 primaries, 5 junior highs and 2 secondaries (2021)

ORKNEY ISLANDS
1,810 BRONZE meals daily in 16 primaries, 3 junior highs and 2 secondaries (2020)

MORAY
3,500 BRONZE meals daily in 45 primary schools (2022)

ABERDEENSHIRE
12,540 BRONZE meals daily in 151 primaries and 4 ASN schools (2015)

ABERDEEN CITY
11,040 BRONZE meals daily in 48 primaries and 11 secondaries (2015)

STIRLING
3,140 SILVER meals daily in 38 primaries, 30 nurseries and 1 ASN school (2014)

EDINBURGH CITY
18,870 BRONZE meals daily in 87 primaries, 22 secondaries and 11 ASN schools (2016)

353 SILVER meals daily in 1 primary and 1 secondary (2016)

EAST LOTHIAN
3,550 BRONZE meals daily in 36 primaries (2013)

WEST LOTHIAN
4,030 BRONZE meals daily in 58 primaries (2020)

SCOTTISH BORDERS
1,810 BRONZE meals daily in 16 primaries, 3 junior highs and 2 secondaries (2020)

18 OF 32 LOCAL AUTHORITIES HOLD THE FFLSH AWARD

FFLSH ACCOUNTS FOR 56% OF ALL MEALS SERVED IN SCOTTISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS, 8% IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, 20% IN ASN AND 100% IN JUNIOR HIGH (SHETLAND AND ORKNEY).

26 MILLION
OVER 139,000 FOOD FOR LIFE SERVED HERE SCHOOL MEALS ARE SERVED ACROSS SCOTLAND EVERY DAY. THAT’S 26 MILLION FRESH, LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL MEALS A YEAR ACROSS 1,322 SITES.

480 CATERING STAFF HAVE TAKEN PART IN THE FFLS ONLINE TRAINING IN THE LAST YEAR.

RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT EVERY £1 INVESTED IN FOOD FOR LIFE BRINGS A SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT OF £4.41

OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO HAD TAKEN PART IN ONLINE TRAINING:

99% UNDERSTAND THE FOOD FOR LIFE SERVED HERE AWARD AFTER COMPLETING TRAINING

97% WOULD RECOMMEND TRAINING TO A FRIEND

Read more about all of our local authority award holders

With food systems missing from the official programme, a group of 28 organisations, brought together by Nourish Scotland and including Food for Life Scotland, joined forces to put food firmly back on the agenda. The Recipes for Resilience Food and Climate Zone ran for the full two weeks alongside official COP26 activity.

Food for Life Scotland hosted its event, ‘Connecting Climate Change and School Meals’, which included an afternoon of activities to raise awareness of food seasonality and provenance, and a panel discussion.

The panel brought together stakeholders from across the food supply chain to discuss how we must all play a role in transforming our food system.

Read more on the discussion or watch event

SPEAKERS INCLUDED:

STEFEN SAWERS, HEAD OF CATERING AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

STEPH MARSDEN, TRADING COORDINATOR, LOCAVORE TRADING

DENISE WALTON, PEELHAM FARM, SOIL ASSOCIATION FARMER AMBASSADOR

RYAN MCSHANE, FOOD FOUNDATION YOUNG AMBASSADOR
DISCUSSING THE POWER OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

In March 2022, Food for Life Scotland and Sustainable Food Places co-hosted an online event focused on public food procurement, ‘Put your money where your mouth is: Investing in sustainable regional food systems and communities through public procurement’.

The event brought together organisations working on public food in Scotland and highlighted best practice and innovation in a number of areas relating to food procurement.

At the event’s heart was the idea that public procurement of food has enormous potential to deliver on a range of societal issues from public health and economic development to climate change and biodiversity.

Feedback on the event was overwhelmingly positive, with 100 percent of the respondents to the post event survey agreeing the event was useful and informative, and over 85 percent saying it would influence their work.

“Rather than being “merely shopping”, public food procurement is a hugely powerful tool that can impact our whole society and one that needs to be utilised more in the context of the Good Food Nation Bill, the Scottish Government’s Local Food Strategy and coming legislation on community wealth building.”

SIMON KENTON LAKE,
SUSTAINABLE FOOD PLACES NETWORK

Read more on the discussion or watch event
IMPACT OF FOOD FOR LIFE SCOTLAND ON SCOTTISH SPEND

Food for Life Scotland undertook an analysis of the impact of the FFLSH award for a local authority, looking at how the standards affect the products being purchased.

To comply with FFLSH standards, the authority bought farm assured, Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) products, which had the following impact when comparing the period before and after their award:

- **12%** increase in the proportion of Scottish meat spend
- **5%** increase in spend on Scottish meat products

QMS CERTIFIED PRODUCTS HAD INCREASED BY 12% DUE TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY’S COMMITMENT TO BUYING HIGHER WELFARE MEAT, ALIGNING WITH FFLSH STANDARDS

GOING ORGANIC

To achieve a silver FFLSH award, a minimum of five percent of a local authority’s ingredient spend for school meals must be on organic produce, and to achieve gold, a minimum of 15 percent of ingredient spend must be on organic and at least five percent on free range pork and poultry.

This not only means that young people are eating high quality, nutritious produce that is better for their health, it also means that public procurement is supporting producers who use environmentally-friendly farming methods and support biodiversity.

LOCAVORE

Glasgow-based Locavore Trading started supplying schools in East and North Ayrshire in September 2021 with ambient organic food, including staples such as flour, macaroni, pulses and their own-branded chopped tomatoes. The contract will support Locavore to advance their plans to create a more sustainable food system for Scotland, as well as support local farmers and producers such as Mungoswells Flour Mill.

Choosing organic means supporting more sustainable land management, which tackles the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Supporting local progressive businesses like ours also means keeping more money in the local economy and supporting more local jobs. Our research on our impact on the economy found that for every £1 spent with Locavore it is worth £2.36 overall to Scotland’s economy.

STEPH MARSDEN, LOCAVORE CIC

Read more about FFLS’s work with Scottish supply chains
MOSSGIEL ORGANIC FARM

In 2021, East Ayrshire Council (EAC), proud holders of the FFLSH Gold award, announced that Mossgiel Organic Farm had been contracted to supply fresh, organic milk to all schools across the local authority area. This is a bold step towards revolutionising public sector food and has set a new benchmark for school meals.

The FFLS team introduced Mossgiel Organic Farm to representatives from EAC and our Supply Chain Officer arranged for, and accompanied, the EAC team to visit the farm in October 2019. The FFLS team continued to support the farm and EAC throughout the tendering process until the contract was awarded in August 2021.

Mossgiel Organic Farm, based in Mauchline, has started serving their milk via vending machines in schools so pupils can refill their personal beakers. This will result in the council using 400,000 fewer single use plastic bottles per year. Milk is being delivered in electric vans to reduce their carbon footprint, with the company aspiring to be completely carbon neutral by 2025.

“It’s fantastic to see a scheme where local people are supplying local schools. This creates jobs and opportunities and benefits everyone involved. The tender to East Ayrshire wasn’t about just chasing another contract. It was about doing something for our community and proving that ethical companies can win large scale contracts.”

BRYCE CUNNINGHAM,  
MOSSGIEL ORGANIC FARM

“If a farmer knows they’ll be able to sell their organic produce, they’re far more likely to make the change to sustainable growing techniques. This means we have the power to influence how food is grown.”

MARK HUNTER,  
STRATEGIC LEAD, FOOD AND FACILITIES, EAC
FOOD FOR LIFE SCOTLAND AMBASSADORS

The FFLS team was proud to launch the Food for Life Ambassadors programme in November 2021. Our Menu and Catering Skills team worked with 22 shining stars from FFLS local authorities and catering teams to support them to promote the ‘good food’ cause, act as changemakers within their local communities and share learnings and best practice with their peers.

Over the last few months Food for Life Ambassadors took part in sessions discussing:

- good food: the economic, environmental and health impacts of school food
- what it means to be a food citizen and food leader
- how we can foster a whole school approach to food.

The ambassadors have put action plans together to work towards positive change within their local authorities. These include a range of actions including upgrading their FFLSH awards, and other activities which align with award criteria such as fostering stronger engagement with schools and local communities, raising awareness of FFLSH, setting up growing projects and cooking clubs, piloting the programme in a secondary school and reducing food waste.

“In the sessions for the Food for Life Ambassadors, it was really interesting speaking to the other supervisors and caterers from all over Scotland and learning about how different their schools are and how they work. This networking and discussion provided plenty of food for thought on what we can do ourselves to improve.”

ASHLEY KILPATRICK,
COOK SUPERVISOR AT CAMPIE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND FOOD FOR LIFE SCOTLAND AMBASSADOR, EAST LOTHIAN
CONGRATULATIONS TO
OUR NEW AWARD HOLDERS

MORAY
Moray Council’s catering team achieved the FFLSH Bronze award in January 2022 for its work preparing and serving fresh, local and healthy food from its 45 primary school kitchens.

Around 17,500 meals are served in Moray’s primary schools each week, using locally-sourced ingredients wherever possible, including: milk from Graham’s Dairy; free range eggs from Allaburn; seasonal vegetables from Swansons Fruit and Veg; quality meat from Fraser Brothers Butchers and baked goods from Keith bakery.

“School meals in Moray remain a popular choice for families as we prioritise serving healthy and nutritious meals using responsibly-sourced and ethical ingredients. It’s also important for us to be able to support our local growers and food producers, and we spend around £58k a year with local suppliers for school meal provision.”

ELAINE MCRAE, CATERING MANAGER, MORAY COUNCIL

SHETLAND ISLANDS
In March 2021, Shetland Islands Council received the FFLSH Bronze award for their school meals service across 31 education settings, including early years, primary and secondary schools, serving almost 2,000 freshly prepared, hot meals every day.

The Council works with local suppliers to source local produce, including meat from Shetland-based companies, Hughson Brothers and JW Gray, fresh fish from Blydoit Fish Ltd, and milk from Shetland Farm Dairies.

“This is well-deserved recognition for the work done by our school catering staff. We place great value on providing high-quality school meals, and there are many benefits to providing locally sourced produce too.”

COUNCILLOR GEORGE SMITH
CHAIR OF THE EDUCATION AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE, SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL

School meals in Moray remain a popular choice for families as we prioritise serving healthy and nutritious meals using responsibly-sourced and ethical ingredients. It’s also important for us to be able to support our local growers and food producers, and we spend around £58k a year with local suppliers for school meal provision.”

ELAINE MCRAE, CATERING MANAGER, MORAY COUNCIL
STEPHEN SAWERS, HEAD OF CATERING & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

I first heard about the Food for Life Served Here award when I was working on a service development plan for Glasgow City Council. When I saw the detail of the award criteria, I felt it would be a great enabler in helping us to meet our priorities as a city across health, environment and the economy.

"Obtaining the Bronze Food for Life Served Here award for school meals across the local authority was a very straightforward process and the support and guidance you get from the Soil Association is fantastic. If anyone is considering applying for this award, I would urge them just to go for it!"

STEPHEN SAWERS, HEAD OF CATERING & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

The Council is working with local producers via suppliers such as McLays Foods, based in Glasgow. By buying Scottish produce supply chains are shortened, contributing to inclusive growth in the economy and helping local producers to supply sizeable public sector markets, increasing resilience to future market shocks.

Watch Glasgow City Council’s video on achieving the FFLSH award

GLASGOW
Glasgow City Council, Scotland’s biggest local authority, received the FFLSH Bronze award in September 2021. This means that 34,000 award-winning school meals are now served daily at 137 sites across the city.

The Council is working with local producers via suppliers such as McLays Foods, based in Glasgow. By buying Scottish produce supply chains are shortened, contributing to inclusive growth in the economy and helping local producers to supply sizeable public sector markets, increasing resilience to future market shocks.

SCOTTISH PERCENTAGE SPENDS AT THE GLASGOW COOK FREEZE PRODUCTION UNIT SUPPLYING PUBLIC SECTOR SITES SINCE ACHIEVING THE FFLSH BRONZE AWARD

95% OF BEEF IS SCOTTISH QMS (QUALITY MEAT SCOTLAND FARM ASSURED)

100% OF CHEESE SPEND IS ON SCOTTISH PRODUCE

(ªQ3 2021 spend for cook freeze units supplying council run sites)
The Food for Life programme has made a big difference to the lives of many young people across the country and as Scotland’s largest local authority, Glasgow City Council’s participation will have a huge impact on pupils and local producers.

“It will also contribute to our wider goals of becoming a Good Food Nation, reducing inequality, and achieving net zero emissions by 2045.

“This is well-deserved recognition for the work done by the Council who are not only making sure that they are providing healthy and nutritious meals across their primary schools, but are now able to point to Food for Life as the framework that allows them to do so.

“I would urge other local authorities across Scotland to follow the example set by Glasgow City Council and join them on the journey to making Scotland a Good Food Nation.”

MAIRI GOUGEON, CABINET SECRETARY FOR RURAL AFFAIRS AND ISLANDS
Find out more about Food for Life Scotland: www.soilassociation.org/FFLScotland

@SoilAssocScot

/soilassociationscotland

Soil Association Scotland, 20 Potterrow, Edinburgh EH8 9BL

T: 0131 370 8150