

Background

The most recent obesity statistics from the [Northern Ireland Health Survey](#) stated 26% of children aged 2-15 were classified as overweight (20%) or obese (6%). It was also reported that in 2022/23 the percentage of year 8 pupils in the most deprived areas affected by obesity was 94% higher in the least deprived areas. Such health disparities may be driven by dietary intake and nutritional status. The [National Diet and Nutrition Survey](#) reported that between 2012-2017 children aged 11-18 in Northern Ireland, exceeded recommended intakes for saturated fats, trans fats and free sugars, and had low average intakes of fibre, vitamin A, vitamin D, folate, iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium, iodine, selenium and zinc.

In Northern Ireland the FSA have the remit for dietary health and are committed to ensuring food is healthier and more sustainable as outlined in the [FSA Strategy 2022-2027](#).

Listed below are the external policies and strategies that this project proposal links to

- Department for Health's '[A Fitter Future for All](#)' obesity prevention strategic framework (FSA are named delivery partners for Outcome 26 'Councils should consider, and be supported where appropriate, to undertake Health Impact Assessments on relevant Planning Applications related to unhealthy Take Away or Fast Food establishments near schools or other child-focussed settings' and Outcome 13 'Continue to implement, support and evaluate the Food in Schools Policy across all schools, in order to create a healthy food environment which supports children and young people to make healthy food choices.').
- [Draft Programme for Government](#) (particularly outcome 4 'we all enjoy long, healthy active lives').
- [Making Life Better](#) and its associated outcomes (Empowering Healthy Living and Developing Collaboration).
- NI draft food strategy which seeks to engage with the wider food system and food procurement.

Systematic reviews investigating the relationship between the community food environment and diet-related health outcomes have reported that the availability and less distance to unhealthy food outlets was associated with increased fast food consumption and higher body mass index ([Atanasova et al. 2022](#); [Pineda et al. 2024](#)). Research in England has indicated that those in impoverished areas may have a less healthy food environment. In 2017, Public Health England (now the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)) conducted [research](#) investigating the relationship between the density of fast food outlets and deprivation by local authority. This project utilised data from the FSA's [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme](#) (FHRS) to create the density of fast-food outlets map. The fast-food outlets map was then compared to [English indices of deprivation](#) in 2015. This research showed that local authorities with a higher deprivation score have a greater density of fast-food outlets. To the FSA's knowledge, there is no current research mapping the density of fast-food outlets in Northern Ireland.

The FSA requires a research contractor to map the density of fast-food outlets in Northern Ireland utilising data from the FHRS, and to investigate the relationship between fast-food outlets density and deprivation. If possible, the contractor should also investigate the relationship between fast-food outlets density and proximity to secondary schools. All tender bids must range between £0 to £42,000 (Excluding VAT). All proposed deliverables must be complete by March 2025.

Research objectives

1. To map the density of fast-food outlets in Northern Ireland and in district council areas using the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme per 100,000 population.
2. To investigate the relationship between the density of fast-food outlets in Northern Ireland and in district council areas to deprivation.
3. To investigate the relationship between the density and proximity of fast-food outlets in Northern Ireland and in district council areas to secondary schools (this objective is subject to the availability of secondary data).

Proposed databases

The FSA proposes that the following databases are used as a basis for the data analysis (proposals including alternative readily available databases are welcome):

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

All businesses that serve food in Northern Ireland are subject to inspections resulting in a food hygiene rating. A new rating is given each time a business is inspected by a food safety officer from the business's district council. The time between inspections varies from six months for the highest risk businesses to two years for lower risk businesses. An online [database](#) list all food hygiene ratings of eligible businesses and can be used to create an up-to-date list of food businesses in Northern Ireland. Results through using the search function of the database are based on food businesses names. Results can be filtered based on location (street, town, postcode, country or district councils), business type and hygiene rating.

The Northern Ireland Census 2021

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 2021 [Census data](#) includes estimates of the number of households and usual residents for Data Zones, Super Data Zones and District Electoral Areas in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

In order to assess the level of deprivation in an area, the latest Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation measures (NIMDM2017) combines 7 distinct types (or domains) of deprivation to produce an overall multiple deprivation measure rank. An online [tool](#) can provide the overall multiple deprivation measure rank as well the 7 distinct types of deprivation for each postcode. Domains of particular interest for this project include the Multiple Deprivation Measure, the Income Deprivation Domain and the Health & Disability Deprivation.

Secondary schools in Northern Ireland

The Education Authority published a [list](#) of post-primary schools in Northern Ireland in 2022.