



News Release

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England's poorest areas are fast food hotspots

- New figures show higher concentrations of fast food outlets in England's most deprived communities
- Public Health England is encouraging local authorities to consider restricting the number of fast food outlets – including near schools, parks and other areas where children gather

New figures from Public Health England (PHE) reveal England's poorest areas are fast food hotspots, with around a third of outlets – including chip shops, burger bars and pizza places – found in the most deprived communities*.

The data also suggests fast food outlets account for more than a quarter (26%) of all eateries in England.

The local environment has a major influence on our behaviours and streets crowded with fast food outlets can influence our food choices – many of these currently have no or little nutrition information in-store. Children exposed to these outlets, whether out with friends or on their way home from school, may find it more difficult to choose healthier options.

The new figures also show a variation in the number of fast food outlets across England, ranging from zero in some wards to over 100 in others.

Many local authorities across England have taken action to address their food environment and PHE is encouraging them to learn from each other. At least 40 areas have developed policies to restrict the growth of new takeaways and fast food outlets, and PHE has helped develop stronger planning guidance† to support other areas in doing this.

Some have developed 'healthier zones' to help tackle childhood obesity by limiting the number of outlets in areas with high concentrations of fast food outlets, high levels of deprivation, or where children gather – including near schools, community centres, parks, playgrounds and other open spaces.

While not all fast food is unhealthy, it is typically higher in salt, calories and saturated fat, all of which can cause serious health problems when consumed too often and in large quantities.

* 32% of outlets classified as fast food are located in the most deprived 20% of areas

† PHE worked with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to strengthen planning practice guidance to help local authorities create healthier local environments, such as restricting fast food outlets e.g. within 400 metres of places where children gather, including schools, community centres and playgrounds: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-and-wellbeing>

Children with excess weight are consuming up to 500 extra calories per day, so creating healthier environments could play an important role in tackling obesity and health inequalities.

Over a third of children in England are overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school – this figure is even higher in some deprived communities. This increases their risk of being overweight or obese adults and suffering preventable diseases including type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

Dr Alison Tedstone, chief nutritionist at Public Health England, said:

“It’s not surprising some children find it difficult to resist the lure of fast food outlets when many neighbourhoods are saturated with them.

“Local authorities have the power to help shape our environment and support people in making healthier choices. They need to question whether these fast food hotspots are compatible with their work to help families and young children live healthier lives.”

Food outlets can make a contribution to our high streets. However, with the impact of obesity on local authority social care budgets estimated at £352 million per year, encouraging healthier choices can make a positive difference.

As part of its work to improve the local food environment, PHE supports local authorities’ work with small businesses to provide healthier options¹. This can be through using less salt, sugar and saturated fat in their products, as well as offering customers smaller portions and promoting healthier alternatives. Some areas have healthy catering schemes to recognise and support local retailers who are making such changes.[‡]

The Department of Health and Social Care recently announced the second chapter of its childhood obesity plan, including a trailblazer programme to help local authorities learn from each other. Another significant measure is a consultation on mandatory calorie labelling in the out of home sector, to help people make informed choices when eating out. These bold steps were announced as part of government’s ambition of halving childhood obesity by 2030.

PHE plays a significant role in achieving this ambition. It has challenged major players in the food industry to remove 20% of calories from popular foods – including chips, burgers and pizzas – by 2024. This is in addition to its challenge to industry to reduce sugar in everyday products by 20% by 2020. With a quarter of our calories coming from food consumed outside the home, restaurants including fast food outlets and takeaways are expected to play their part.

As part of its One You campaign, PHE has also helped consumers find healthier options by partnering with major high street retailers, where millions of people buy their food every day.

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Notes to Editors

For further information contact:

[‡] Examples of healthy catering schemes include the [Healthier Catering Commitment](#) in London and the [Healthier Options Takeaway](#) scheme in Nottinghamshire

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1. PHE exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through advocacy, partnerships, world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. For more information on PHE visit www.gov.uk/phe or follow us on Twitter @PHE_uk
2. PHE's analysis of fast food outlets in England is published here: [<insert link>](#)
3. In this analysis 'fast food' refers to energy dense food that is available quickly, therefore it covers a range of outlets that include, but are not limited to, burger bars, kebab and chicken shops, chip shops and pizza outlets.
4. The density of fast food outlets in local authorities varies across England. The density of fast food outlets in local authorities ranges from 26 to 258 per 100,000 population, with the average across England being 96.5.
5. This analysis uses the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) data which can be found here: <https://fhrscsvs.blob.core.windows.net/web/index.html>
6. The data is a specific snapshot at a point in time (31/12/2017) and counts and rates may alter slightly over time as fast food outlets open and close. There is a known error in the FHRS data for Bury (notified 19/6/2018), therefore data for Bury has been removed from the tables for local authority and ward.
7. Data for City of London has been excluded from the chart as it has a very small resident population but a high density of fast food outlets. This results in an abnormally high rate of fast food outlets per 100,000 population. In the map therefore, to prevent unhelpful distortion of the overall picture, City of London has been given the value of the next highest local authority density of fast food outlets.
8. All food outlets classified in the dataset as 'takeaways/sandwich shops' are included along with 8 major chains, included on the basis of market share in the fast food market. Most fast food outlets are independent companies with only one or two outlets.
9. Mobile caterers, other catering premises and restaurants/cafes/canteens are included on the basis of a key word search for any of these words: burger, chicken, chip, fish bar, pizza, kebab, India, China, Chinese.
10. It is likely that the data here does not show the complete picture for fast food outlets. Many of the outlets that could be considered 'fast food' are likely to be multi-functional; sit-down and eat in, takeaway and home delivery. As a result, businesses may have been recorded under the category of restaurant or café and may not have been included here despite selling similar types of food to those included in this analysis.
11. The government's [Childhood obesity: a plan for action, chapter 2](#) was published on 25 June 2018
12. The LGA publication [Healthy weight, healthy futures: local action to tackle childhood obesity](#) gives examples of local authorities taking positive action to address childhood obesity, including working with local businesses to provide healthier options.
13. For more information on PHE's calorie reduction programme visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/calorie-reduction-the-scope-and-ambition-for-action>
14. For more information on PHE's sugar reduction programme visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-report-on-first-year-progress>
15. Total Eateries include the following categories: Mobile caterer, Other catering premises, Restaurant/Cafe/Canteen, Takeaway/sandwich shop and selected businesses outside these groups.

Table 1: Proportion of eateries that are fast food	
Total Eateries	207,617
Total Fast food	53,333
Percentage of eateries that are fast food	26%

16. For those outlets where deprivation decile can be provided 17% of outlets we have classified as fast food are located in the most deprived 10% of areas. 32% of outlets we have classified as fast food are located in the most deprived 20% of areas. 1,873 fast food outlets out of 53,333 cannot be assigned to a deprivation decile.

Table 2: Proportion of fast food outlets by IMD 2015 deprivation decile		
Deprivation decile (IMD 2015)	Count of fast food outlets	Percentage of fast food outlets

1 - most deprived	8872	17%
2	7712	15%
3	7488	15%
4	6304	12%
5	5123	10%
6	4509	9%
7	3941	8%
8	3128	6%
9	2611	5%
10 - least deprived	1772	3%

¹ [Encouraging healthier 'out of home' food provision](#)