



# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

## YOUNG PEOPLE



## London Borough of Hounslow

### Grow For The Future

Hounslow Council has launched the UK's first-ever policy to transform wasteland into new allotments, community gardens and orchards to grow food in a cost-of-living crisis and pair them with local schools to teach urban children in often deprived areas about healthy living, sustainability and biodiversity.

Up to 27-acres of wasteland have been identified in the first phase of Grow for the Future which will help tackle the enormous demand for allotments and growing spaces since the pandemic and allow residents to cultivate their own fresh produce in the face of rocketing food costs.

For the first time ever in the UK, the Council will look to pair each new site with a local school and dedicate a portion of it to teach urban children in often deprived areas about where their food comes from, the importance of good nutrition and how to live healthy lives.



People-centred councils  
driving social innovation  
putting people first

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The food grown by the schools can also be donated to support children who are going hungry at a time when the cost of food is soaring, and over 100,000 children in England may be missing out on free school meals.

As a first-of-its-kind policy, Hounslow Council was able to advocate for it in the national media including the [BBC](#), [i](#), [Independent](#) and the [Evening Standard](#) among over 200 outlets, calling on councils across the country to provide space for state school kids in urban environments to receive the same opportunities children in the countryside and in private schools often receive.

This helped to win backing from the government and the Greater London Authority, with £165,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

Hounslow Council now hopes that the government's support for this grassroots policy will encourage councils across the country to come forward with similar initiatives.

Support for Grow for The Future has also come from the Downton Abbey actor [Jim Carter OBE](#) who has urged Britain's councils to follow Hounslow's lead so kids can get more green time and less screen time following the pandemic.

The Emmy-nominated actor is a patron of Greenfingers, a charity creating magical gardens for children's hospices, alongside his wife Imelda Staunton. He recently gave evidence to the House of Lords Horticulture Select Committee arguing that gardening should be taught in schools to get children outside where they can get their hands dirty.

**Jim Carter said:**

*"I am delighted to add my wholehearted support to Hounslow Council's Grow for the Future initiative. The brilliance of this project lies in its simplicity. Take unused wasteland and utilise it for the benefit of young people who have little or no access to outside space.*

*"I urge all local councils to take a lead from Hounslow and to introduce similar initiatives in their own boroughs. This is an idea whose time has come. Grow for the Future."*

Hounslow Council expects to be able to create 500 new spaces for food growing from the first phase alone and then bring online four new sites per year.

The first orchard project is already transforming an underused, empty space in Westmacott Drive Open Space in Feltham.

The wildflower meadow will be seeded, and fruit trees alongside raspberry and blackberry bushes will be planted in the upcoming season. Local school children are collaborating with the activities including growing sunflowers for the new site.

The second orchard project will open up a neglected Cranford space currently targeted by fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour where new fruit trees and bushes will be planted.



Both sites are now coming into bloom and a third site will see new allotments brought to Hatton.

**Cllr Salman Shaheen, Cabinet Member for Parking, Parks & Leisure on Hounslow Council, said:**

*“It is a scandal that in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain, children are going to school hungry and families are forced to choose between heating and eating.*

*“Grow for the Future will provide hundreds of new growing spaces for Hounslow’s residents to put food on their plates. Land once going to waste will be repurposed to educate children on leading healthy lives and how to grow nutritious fruit and veg. And what our schools grow, they can donate to feed vulnerable children missing out on free school meals as the cost-of-living crisis bites.*

*“I want to give everyone in urban environments, young and old, so often disconnected from nature, the opportunity to cultivate land they can call their own and understand where our food comes from. To learn, and grow, for the future.”*

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