

What you, the Food Businesses of Croydon told us.

The Raft Consultancy have been carrying out a survey for Croydon Business in the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) area to find out what the main business issues you have and if you would be interested in a Food Business Networking Group.

There is an opportunity to improve standards and raise the profile of Croydon Food Businesses so that the people of Croydon and beyond become more aware of the wonderful range of quality food available to them locally.

What you told us

Croydon Business has suggested that there should be a Croydon Food & Drink Group for businesses to network, share ideas and best practice and come together for special workshops and advice. This is what you suggested:

- Establish a Food Group
- Meet together monthly
- Meetings about 2 hours long
- Late afternoon or evenings on weekdays
- Held in the premises of food businesses or known venues in Croydon area
- Meetings led by speaker on a favoured topic
- Develop a food portal

Croydon Business recognises that for a Food Group to be sustainable in the long term, it must ultimately be led by the businesses themselves, so they can set their own agenda and be committed to it. We have been asked to suggest ways of getting this group up and running.

It was essential for us to find out from you whether there was sufficient interest in a specialist Food & Drink networking group, what issues you had, what topics of business interested you most and how you would like the group to operate.

We gathered together data on Food and Drink businesses in the target areas and surveyed the areas to check the data.

We also carried out some detailed questionnaires with owners where available and willing to answer our questions. A number of questionnaires were delivered to businesses too.

From our data, these are the numbers of food and drink businesses

Total number	In target area	In whole Croydon area
Food companies	512	1608
Take aways	152	*
Cafes and restaurants	147	868
Food shops	117	292
Hotels, pubs & clubs	37	203
Retail and wholesale alcohol outlets	22	54
Food manufacturers	9	77
Food suppliers & wholesalers	8	45
Specialist caterers	4	137

*Included in other groups

Many of these businesses overlap with each other. For instance, many restaurants offer a 'take away' service and a number of cafes offer catering and cake making services.

The main business issues highlighted

Competition

Too much competition and not enough customers.

Tight margins and low profits.

Operations

High percentage of restaurants and take aways are closed during the daytime, relying on evening trade. Those that were open at lunchtime suggested that the amount of business at that time was very low.

Parking

Nearly all businesses find that over vigilant parking control is causing problems for them and their customers. There was a desire for some short term parking provision in nearby side roads.

Security and Fear of Violence

This was an issue for most of the food shops and convenience stores interviewed. Most of the owners of these businesses had stories of vandalism and threatening behaviour.

Anti social behaviour

This was felt to be a deterrent to evening trade in some areas.

Compliance with food standards

Legislation on the whole did not present any difficulties to comply with Local Authority EHO Health and Safety requirements.

The more established businesses generally understood food standard requirements.

Local environment

Concerns were expressed in London Road, Norbury; High street, South Norwood; Cherry Orchard Road, East Croydon and Whitehorse Road, Croydon that they felt the local area was 'run down' but the Council Tax that they had to pay was still very high.

Vermin

A couple of the businesses expressed concern about the problems trying to control vermin because of proximity to railway lines or rubbish to the rear of adjacent property.

Staff

Difficulty in recruiting staff of sufficient calibre to communicate effectively with customers. Poor English was cited as a problem and difficulty in training.

A high percentage of the restaurants/ takeaways are family owned and run, often using and relying upon extended family members as staff.

Decline in business

Overall a decline in business in the last two or three years. The demographics of the area is changing.

Fewer families that go out to eat.

The present financial climate is also having a noticeable detrimental effect on business.

Marketing

The majority of businesses rely on passing trade but those outlets that sell take away food or delivery, also do door to door leafleting.

Do you have any other issues?

These are the main areas where there are most food and drink businesses

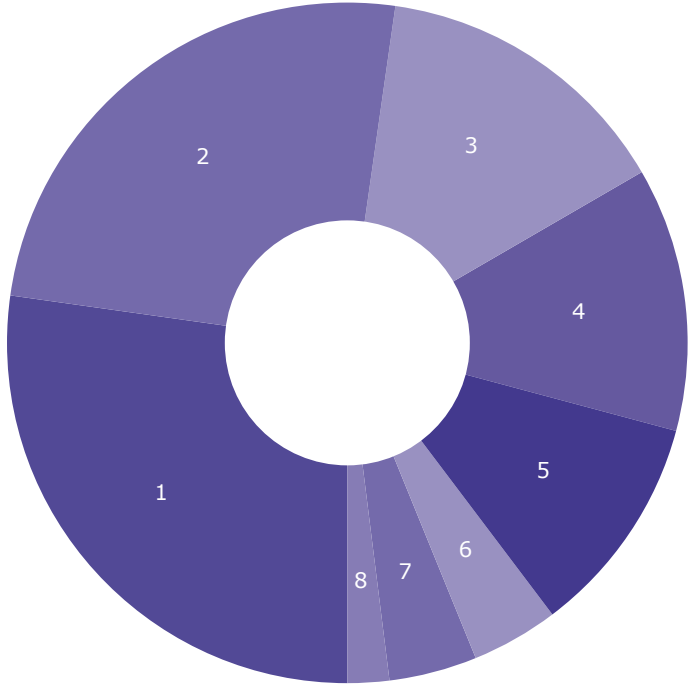
Area	Number of businesses
Lower Addiscombe Road	58
Westow Hill	49
Central Parade, New Addington	16
Purley Way	31
London Road, Thornton Heath	44
High Street, Thornton Heath	31
Whitehorse Road	29
London Road, Croydon	57
Cherry Orchard Road	14
Portland Road/ Penge Road/ S. Norwood Hill/ High St	129
London Road, Norbury	54
Total	512

Map

**Where is your
business?**

We interviewed a total of 48 businesses in detail
This is a breakdown of the types of businesses we interviewed

- 1 Unlicensed restaurants and cafes
- 2 Take-away food shop
- 3 Licensed restaurant
- 4 Retail sale in non-specialised stores with food, beverages or tobacco predominating
- 5 Manufacture of bread; manufacture of fresh pastry goods and cakes
- 6 Retail sale of meat and meat products
- 7 Public houses and bars
- 8 ????



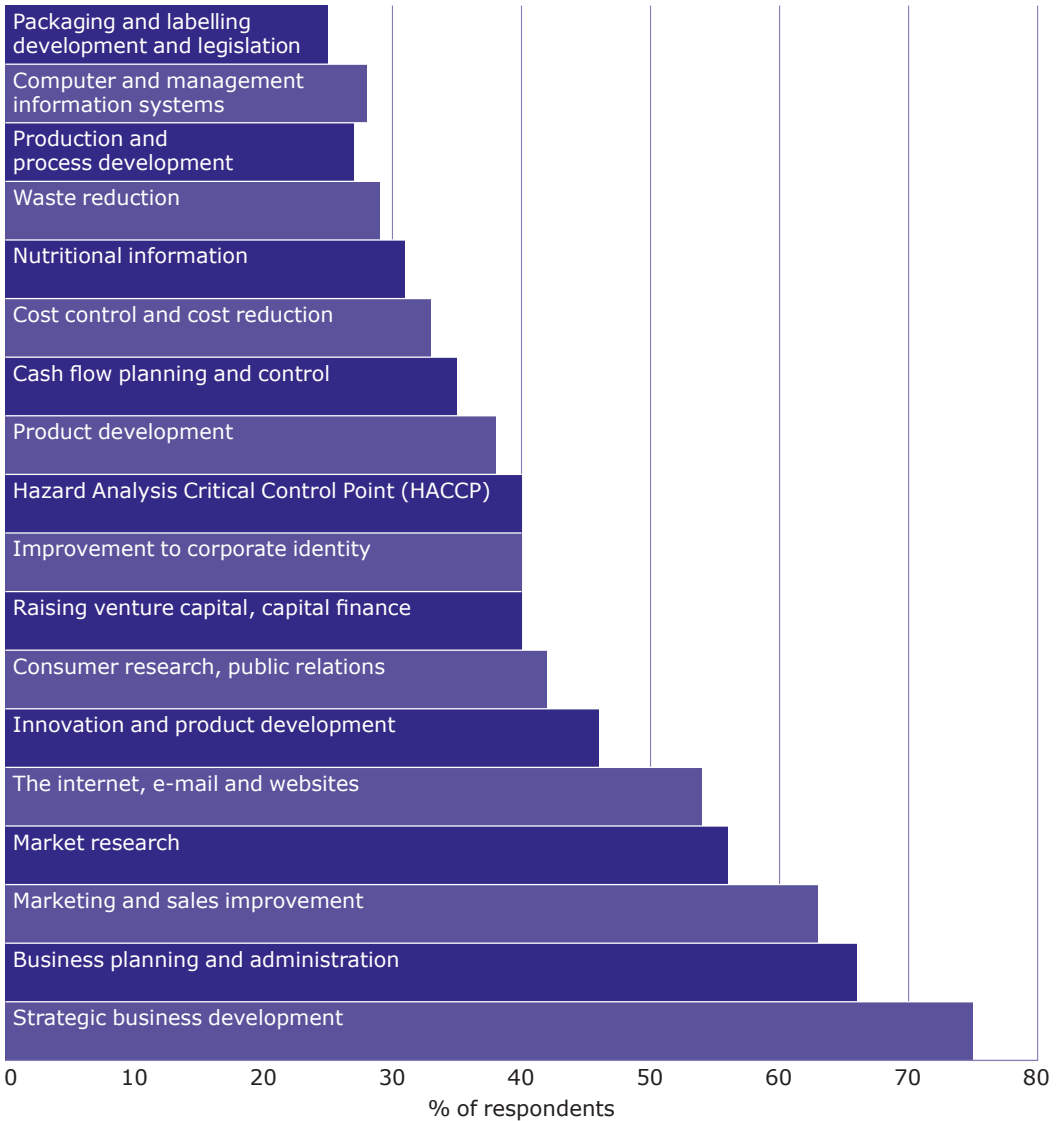
Companies prepared to join a Croydon Food Network Group

A large majority (44 out of 48) of the businesses interviewed indicated that they thought a network would be valuable.

75% said they are keen to join straightaway, with a further 15% who may join if they have the time and like topics being discussed.

Would you like to be included?

Out of a total of 80 options, these were the top topics of interest to food & drink businesses



**Do these interest
you too?**

What Croydon Food businesses wanted and expected from the Group

Good networking
Influencing council policy on rates and parking
Ways of improving business-trade, profitability, better informed staff, customer development, marketing
Legislation –keeping up to date
Government policy regarding food/ business sector
Information to help to move business forward
Mutual support
Exchange ideas
Alliance to collect together to purchase supplies
Public relations
Advertorial
Food Portal
Creating a food cluster
Business support for start-ups and growth companies
Collective marketing and advertising
Healthier approach and emphasis by Croydon Business, focus on social needs, clear direction about well being, support the innovative food businesses
Support to work smarter
B2B development
Specialist training
Sharing best practice

Format of Network

Virtually all of the food companies stated that they would prefer meetings of some format rather than a virtual network, which they didn't feel would work.

Meetings based around a workshop or talk on topics relating to business knowledge development or legislation issues was favoured, with networking as part of the objective.

A monthly meeting with timescale of around two hours on any weekday evening at an easy commutable venue or rotation was favoured.

Venue

Many of those interviewed said that they would be happy to host networking meetings. They agreed that moving around the network member's premises would help them to get to know, understand and learn from each other.

Champions

45% said were also prepared to be champions for a food sector network.

Would you like to join?

**Return the questionnaire.
Tell us know your views.
Let us know if you'd
like to join the Croydon
Food Group.**

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