



A SHARED LEARNING AGENDA

A collaboration between FEAST With Us
and Camden Food Partnership
Organisations

MAY 2024



CAMDEN
FOOD
PARTNERSHIP



FEAST
— With Us —

TABLE OF CONTENTS



- I. Acronyms and abbreviations
- II. Executive summary

- 1 Background
- 2 Aim
- 3 Organisation Introduction
 - 3.1 Refugee Community Kitchen
 - 3.2 Calthorpe Community Garden
 - 3.3 Cooperation Town
 - 3.4 Foodscape
- 4. Summary of Key Findings/Recommendations
 - 4.1 Delivering Access to Good Food
 - 4.1.1 Sustainability
 - 4.1.2 Nutrition & Food Surplus
 - 4.2 Collaboration and Partnerships
 - 4.3 Community and Volunteers
 - 4.3.1 Systemic Organisation
 - 4.3.2 Volunteers
 - 4.4 Next Steps
- 5. References



I. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CFP: Camden Food Partnership

FEAST: FEAST With Us

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Camden Food Partnership (CFP), formerly the Camden Food Poverty Alliance, brings together a variety of organisations and council departments with the goal of transforming the local food system, addressing not only food insecurity but also the underlying issues within the food system itself.

To support the CFP action plan and improve the nutrition offer among organisations offering food services in Camden, FEAST With Us (FEAST) has created this shared learning agenda and a video to showcase best practices from four organisations that are part of the CFP network. These organisations participated in short interviews performed in December 2023 and January 2024.



This shared learning agenda aims to consolidate key ideas and shed light on shared challenges and strategies prevalent among organisations in the CFP. Topics such as sustainability, nutrition, collaboration, partnerships, community, and volunteerism are explored to inspire cohesive and systematic approaches. By fostering collaboration and community connections, the CFP endeavours to enhance food security in Camden and promote a more sustainable food system.

This shared learning agenda was produced by the CFP Coordinator, FEAST's Healthy Eating on a Budget Coordinator, and Volunteer and Community Partnerships Coordinator.

Together, they pooled their expertise in nutrition, affordable diets, Camden's food provision landscape, and shared organisational values.



With Thanks To

We would like to extend a thank you to the project's volunteers, Frank Lopez, Ana-Maria Udriste and William Potts, and participating CFP members, Janie Mac, Steve Stavrindies, Mila Campoy, Shiri Shalmy and Michael Thorpe.

1. BACKGROUND

The CFP helps to improve food security for Camden residents. In 2023, the CFP established a set of tangible actions aiming to steer partnership members towards sustainable, accessible and nutritious food provision in the borough. This action framework places emphasis on collaboration between member organisations and the local community and as a result strives for a transformation of the local food system. By fostering collaboration among member organisations and engaging the local community, the CFP seeks to go beyond merely alleviating food poverty.

This multi-stakeholder approach is dedicated to tackling the root causes of food insecurity and building a resilient, equitable food system in Camden. The Partnership offers support for like-minded organisations and encourages knowledge-sharing for a strengthened network. Considering the large number of individual organisations across Camden, it is important to recognise that multi-stakeholder, collaborative approaches are far more effective at tackling large-scale food system challenges than isolated and disjointed services.



FEAST With Us has been hosting the CFP since 2022. The CFP Coordinator leads partnership's projects and initiatives, supports organisations and implements the Action Plan. Enhancing this collaborative journey, FEAST, along with their Healthy Eating on a Budget Programme Coordinator, has facilitated the production of a dynamic short video.



This video highlights the commendable efforts of four organisations dedicated to providing nutritious food, showcasing their impactful work in the community. This project responds to actions 4, “**Achieve a healthy, balanced food offer**”, and 5, “**Optimising the uptake of existing services that focus on nutrition and food as a connector**” in the CFP Action Plan. This project is an opportunity to share best practices for overcoming challenges, providing healthy food and building community in Camden.

The focus on nutrition and healthy food follows research conducted by the CFP Coordinator and Camden Council's Community Partnerships team, who visited 14 food provision services in the borough and recorded case study evidence to highlight their current needs and challenges. Of the organisations the Community Partnerships team visited, it was reported that approximately 900 households are being supported with food packages each week; 450 individuals are attending community meals; and 370 people volunteer their time to support these services

A myriad of experienced challenges were presented from Camden Council, but a number of recurring themes included:

Implementing sustainable food models

Accessing surplus food

Difficulties recruiting, supporting and retaining staff and volunteers

Long-term planning

Building partnerships with VCS organisations

The same organisations expressed some involvement, past or present, in various food offers, including cooking sessions, food growing and community meals. However, a lack of wraparound support was identified, with many services only reaching the second rung of the Food Ladder. Despite this, organisations recognised the importance of

climbing this Food Ladder and engage service users with additional internal programmes. With this in mind, the present video project tackles objectives 4 and 5 in the CFP Action Plan, while addressing some of the predominant concerns within food provision services across Camden.

2. AIM

A shared learning agenda has been created, aimed at inspiring different members of the CFP network to share what works for them to achieve a nutritional offer. This report and a corresponding video aim to encourage collaboration between CFP organisations, facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experience, and offers of support to optimise existing services focusing on nutrition. It is an opportunity to share best practices for overcoming challenges, providing healthy food, and building community in Camden.

3. ORGANISATION INTRODUCTION

3.1 Refugee Community Kitchen



Refugee Community Kitchen transform surplus food, that would have been otherwise wasted, into nutritious meals for displaced people. Their pop-up meal provision services offer warming, healthy meals as well as a space to build community and provide additional support services, such as medical and legal advice. Their team of volunteer cooks work together in the RCK kitchen to create delicious, culturally appropriate meals, package them for delivery and serve them in public spaces.

<https://refugeecommunitykitchen.org/>

3.2 Calthorpe Community Garden

Calthorpe Community Garden offers a social hub for the local community to gather and partake in horticulture, sports and support. They organise programmes for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, and have a diverse range of activities that people of all ages can join such as lunch clubs, arts and crafts and celebratory events.

They aim to improve their offers as the organisation continues to develop, but maintain their values of sustainability, wellbeing and food growing as they do so.



<https://www.calthorpecommunitygarden.org.uk/>

3.3 Cooperation Town

Cooperation Town has established a network of small, independent cooperative communities. Cooperatives use collective buying between members of local communities to purchase food in bulk for a lower cost and, in addition, get free supermarket surplus. By doing this, they save up to 40% of what they would have spent weekly on food shopping.

The cooperatives are owned by the members who decide what to buy, there are no volunteers. Cooperation Town have a vision to see community-led cooperatives on every street and are on a mission to provide the necessary support and resources to make this happen.



<https://cooperation.town/>



3.4 Foodscape

Foodscape's aim is to provide low-cost access to healthy food, encourage sustainable growing practices and provide educational and social opportunities. They offer growing plots to its members so they can access nutritious, seasonal and fresh produce.

For a small monthly fee, Foodscape members have agency to grow their own food, access growing education and workshops, and attend social activities to connect with the Foodscape community. Foodscape's team of farmers provide support to their members, tending to plot when necessary and share growing advice and tips.

<https://foodscape.ecol>



4. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The four organisations participating in this shared learning agenda provided a comprehensive account of their learnings, barriers and hopes for the future while addressing the recurring challenges identified in the preceding research.

The key findings below are an expression of their mission and are designed to serve as a platform for collaboration with other organisations.

4.1 Delivering Access to Good Food

4.1.1 Sustainability

Sustainability is a fundamental principle guiding the efforts of the CFP. Within the partnership, organisations approach sustainability in unique ways, embodying a commitment to environmental responsibility, community resilience, and equitable access to nutritious food.

Prioritising sustainability not only addresses immediate food insecurity but also lays the groundwork for a resilient, equitable food system. By promoting environmental conservation, public health, and economic stability, sustainable food systems contribute to long-term community well-being and support broader efforts for healthier, more equitable societies.



Calthorpe Community Garden

Calthorpe's approach to sustainability is illustrated by its **closed-loop food system**, operating on the principles of a circular economy. This system ensures that resources are used and reused in a continuous loop, minimising waste and maximising efficiency. For instance, food waste generated in their kitchen is composted and utilised to fertilise the vegetables grown in the garden. By growing their own food and composting kitchen waste to nourish their vegetable crops, Calthorpe minimises waste and fosters self-sufficiency. Moreover, this approach serves as an educational tool for volunteers, who learn about the interconnectedness of food systems and the importance of environmental responsibility.

Calthorpe's engagement with volunteers in composting, cooking, and food growing activities serves as a platform for **educating the community** about sustainable living practices. Through practical, experiential learning opportunities, individuals gain valuable skills and knowledge that empower them to make more sustainable choices in their own lives.



Cooperation Town



Cooperation Town's focus on community organising is tightly intertwined with sustainability, particularly in its social and community dimensions. By harnessing collective resources and knowledge, members of Cooperation Town gain access to higher quality and more affordable food options. This collaborative approach fosters social bonds within the community and promotes equitable access to nutritious food.

Cooperation Town's participatory decision-making process ensures that food items are selected based on community needs and preferences. Their emphasis on community-based solutions and collective action contributes to broader sustainability goals by promoting local resilience and community empowerment.

Refugee Community Kitchen

At the Refugee Community Kitchen, sustainability is integrated into every aspect of food provision, **from menu planning to meal distribution**. By minimising food waste and focusing on nutritional standards, the Refugee Community Kitchen ensures that their meals are not only nutritious but also environmentally responsible.

Their commitment to providing choice and dignity to their beneficiaries reflects a holistic understanding of sustainability and contributes to the resilience and well-being of those it serves.



Foodscape



Foodscape is committed to promoting sustainability through urban food growing projects and community engagement. They prioritise environmental responsibility by advocating for zero-waste practices, such as composting organic waste to enrich soil health. Through their urban farming initiatives, Foodscape strengthens the connection between individuals and their food sources, encouraging the consumption of locally grown, seasonal produce.

Their sustainability efforts extend beyond urban farming, as they focus on community education about sustainable living and healthy eating through creative cooking workshops and educational events.

In conclusion, sustainability is not just a goal to strive towards within the CFP; it is the foundation upon which its vision for a better future is built. Through collaborative action, education, and advocacy, the partnership is working to create a more sustainable, inclusive food system that nourishes both people and the planet.

4.1.2 Nutrition & Food Surplus

CFP organisations provide a range of activities focused on food and nutrition to improve the community well-being. Delivering access to good food is a key step in their mission, and it is achieved by combining strategies, such as community knowledge sharing and organised teamwork.

Refugee Kitchen

For founders of the Refugee Community Kitchen, putting systems in place to ensure the maintenance of the level of nutrition, dignity, and choice is essential. Planning their weekly menus ahead allows them to maintain the quality of their meals and control the use of rotational foods. Their strategy of going from pot to mouth in one hour keeps the meals fresh and demonstrates a high level of organisation within the team.



'From pot to mouth in one hour: It's hot, it's fresh and it's easier for us to actually do that and to keep stuff hot for hours and hours'

– Janie, Refugee Community Kitchen

By using a variety of simple ingredients such as fresh and raw vegetables, which are high in water content, soaking the pulses overnight, and adding eggs to their meal, they improve the nutrient and protein profile of the dishes. Taking hot boiled eggs to an outreach service, helps to keep 'the hands warm' of people who receive the meals. It provides them with a highly nutrient dense food to eat, sometimes later, in the middle of the night.

'Having that warm egg, that protein ball in your hand is an amazing thing at the end of the day to take away, because I know that a lot of people who take that egg away, they don't eat it with their meal. That will be in the middle of the night or whenever they wake up cold and they're like, "Oh, I've got an egg."
-Janie, Refugee Community Kitchen



Learning from volunteers is a great approach to sustainable use new ingredients and incorporate them in meals. Being open to new ideas and getting feedback from volunteers and the team, helps to support the production of nutrition meals.

Calthorpe Community Garden

At Calthorpe, many groups of different ethnic background meet together to use food as a connector and build relationships.

Mila, who is the community engagement manager and community nutritionist, combines her knowledge with some of these participants. She listens to them and pays attention to what their recipes include, what they like to eat, and where they source their food. Finally, with this information, she provides guidance and support on nutritious food.

*'In this community lunch we're trying to **educate our members** about the **value of seasonal food** and I think it's important for many different factors. One, is because normally it's cheaper to consume seasonal food or the food of the seasons. And then because we do a lot of food growing on site. So, it's to put the people to keep in touch with what is growing on the season'*

- Mila, Calthorpe Community Gardens



Cooperation Town

In Cooperation Town, the practice of learning from neighbours how to cook certain ingredients, exchanging recipes, and learning from each other how to prepare nutritious food, is integral to their approach of providing good food to the community.

They have developed **the hub model**, which means that the surplus for corporation town members comes into one hub in Camden and then then distributed to the co-ops from there.



Foodscape

The organisation provides a vehicle for people to actively engage in food growing. It raises **awareness of food packaging and food miles** while building educational elements that allow people to understand better how nutrients come from different vegetables and food.

In conclusion, awareness on providing nutritious food, learning from each other, and implementing good practices to achieve it, involves external and internal organisational practices shared by the CFP organisations who are looking to improve the nutritional offer to residents in Camden.





4.2 Collaboration and Partnerships

'There are lots of food organisations across Camden and we all work in different ways'.

~ Shiri, Cooperation Town

Refugee Community Kitchen

Doing outreach services is a strategy that brings collaboration and relationships that aim to create safe spaces and allows other agencies to collaborate together and signpost other services.



Calthorpe Community Garden

Calthorpe Community Gardens prioritise **working in partnership with different organisations** who help to deliver a wide variety of services for residents.

Identifying a problem or gap in their services is fundamental, prompting the need to investigate potential solutions and take action. For example, they noticed that many services or organisations were not open on the weekends, so there were not many activities for older adults. They wanted to create a solution for this but realised that there was another problem attached in that it is harder to get volunteers at the weekend. To find a solution, they communicate and spread the word between organisation and universities to get the support they needed with community members and students who wants to volunteer.

'We try to get other organisations to come and access our service users, because when you've got 180 people in the queue, it's really easy to find people that you need to talk to'

- Janie, Refugee Community Kitchen

'In our recent collaboration with FEAST, we have a opportunity to give our users a fantastic workshop about eating well... we don't need to do all the work, we don't need to hold all the knowledge. There are many different organisations around us that we can share all these knowledge and skills.'

- Mila, Calthorpe Community Gardens



Cooperation Town

Cooperation Town brings to the partnerships the opportunity to support and guide the transition from a food bank to a co-op system. They provide a digital book on their website to support this transition including all the information and steps required.



Foodscape

Foodscape aims to work with local business and community centres to repurpose space into a public-private partnership model. This not only helps thrive local business to thrive but also allows Camden to offer new alternative growth spaces to meet demand.

‘ We can help you to transform an operation that is based on charity and is taking so much time and resources and funding... into a community led sort of operation that is run by the people who are benefiting from the food rather than by you and your volunteers...We're really open to share more widely in Camden’

- Shiri, Cooperation Town

In summary, the stories from different organisations in the CFP underscore the importance of collaboration and partnerships in meeting community needs. From grassroots projects to inventive logistical solutions, these stories show how working together can create healthier, stronger communities. Looking ahead, it's crucial to use these insights to deepen collaborations and tackle systemic challenges for the betterment of residents.

4.3 Community and Volunteers

4.3.1 Systemic Organisation

Navigating the complexities of nutrition challenges requires more than just individual efforts, it requires a cohesive and systematic approach. In this section, we uncover the various strategies and collaborative efforts employed by organisations within the CFP aimed at ensuring access to nutritious food. From grassroots initiatives to logistical innovations, these narratives shed light on the collective endeavour to address nutrition issues and foster a healthier community.



Calthorpe Community Garden

Calthorpe Community Garden adapted its response to community needs during the cost-of-living crisis by **transitioning** their food bank set up in the pandemic to a food co-op.

This shift enabled broader and more sustainable access to healthy food options, showcasing the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in addressing food-related challenges.

Refugee Community Kitchen

At the Refugee Community Kitchen, addressing nutritional needs began with a **grassroots approach**. By rallying community support, they swiftly mobilised resources to provide meals to those in need. The key takeaway was that addressing food insecurity can start with small, community-driven initiatives, demonstrating that with determination and community backing, impactful change is achievable.



Foodscape

Despite challenges such as limited space and growing restrictions, Foodscape continues to innovate and explore creative solutions to increase yields and expand their impact. Through partnerships with local organizations and word-of-mouth promotion, they have **built a strong community network** that supports their mission of promoting sustainable food systems. By empowering individuals to participate in food growing activities and providing an oasis in densely populated areas, Foodscape exemplifies the potential of urban agriculture to transform urban landscapes and promote healthier, more resilient communities.



Cooperation Town

Cooperation Town highlighted logistical hurdles in sourcing surplus food, emphasising the need for innovative solutions like **centralised distribution hubs**. Their approach underscores the significance of collaborative efforts and infrastructure development in overcoming logistical barriers to food access.

Overall, these insights underscore the importance of community-driven initiatives, adaptability, collaboration, and innovation in addressing systemic nutrition challenges at the grassroots level.

4.3.2 Volunteers

Volunteering plays a vital role in the operations of organisations within the CFP, fostering community connections and contributing to the success of various initiatives. In this section, we gain insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with volunteer engagement.

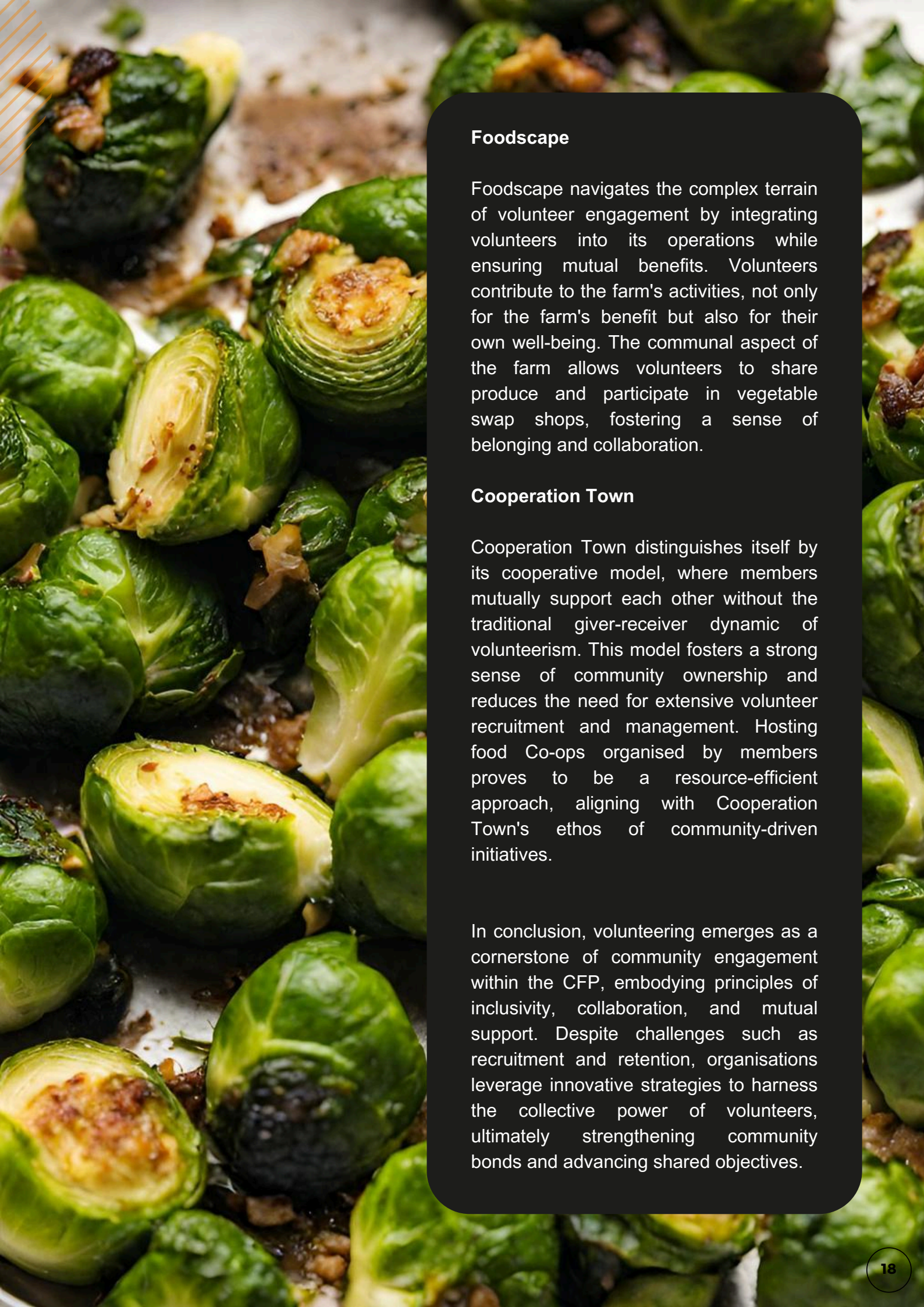
Refugee Community Kitchen

For the Refugee Community Kitchen, volunteering goes beyond just taking part in food preparation; it **cultivates a sense of community** among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Volunteers have become lifelong friends, forming an intergenerational network that extends beyond the kitchen. However, recruiting volunteers from diverse communities remains difficult, reflecting wider societal challenges in available time and resources for volunteering.



Calthorpe Community Garden

At Calthorpe Community Garden, the volunteer base is dynamic, reflecting the evolving needs and demographics of the community. While challenges such as retaining volunteers persist, new approaches, such as merging volunteer groups, enable the garden to thrive. **By embracing creativity**, Calthorpe harnesses the collective energy of volunteers to support its mission.



Foodscape

Foodscape navigates the complex terrain of volunteer engagement by integrating volunteers into its operations while ensuring mutual benefits. Volunteers contribute to the farm's activities, not only for the farm's benefit but also for their own well-being. The communal aspect of the farm allows volunteers to share produce and participate in vegetable swap shops, fostering a sense of belonging and collaboration.

Cooperation Town

Cooperation Town distinguishes itself by its cooperative model, where members mutually support each other without the traditional giver-receiver dynamic of volunteerism. This model fosters a strong sense of community ownership and reduces the need for extensive volunteer recruitment and management. Hosting food Co-ops organised by members proves to be a resource-efficient approach, aligning with Cooperation Town's ethos of community-driven initiatives.

In conclusion, volunteering emerges as a cornerstone of community engagement within the CFP, embodying principles of inclusivity, collaboration, and mutual support. Despite challenges such as recruitment and retention, organisations leverage innovative strategies to harness the collective power of volunteers, ultimately strengthening community bonds and advancing shared objectives.

4.4 Next Steps

Building upon the insights gleaned from this report, the CFP is committed to taking action towards enhancing our local food system. Here's a closer look at our proposed next steps.

Join the Camden Food Partnership

Organisations are invited to join our collective effort by signing up to any of our communication touch points. Sign up by clicking [here](#). Once onboard, dive into our vibrant community. Get involved by:

- **Share Your Insights:** Contribute to our platforms by showcasing your work, sharing best practices, and reflecting on lessons learned.
- **Network and Collaborate:** Engage in Open Discussions to identify synergies and collaboration opportunities with fellow members.
- **Contribute to Working Groups:** Join forces with like-minded partners to address specific challenges within our food system.

Monthly Newsletter

Stay in the loop with the latest news, funding opportunities, events, and training sessions by [subscribing to our monthly newsletter](#). Whether you're an organisation or a resident, it's your go-to resource for all things related to the CFP.

Rise Up

Engage with the partnership by joining our open mailing list, Rise Up. It's a platform where anyone can send and receive emails, making it easy to share news, seek advice, and stay updated with ad hoc announcements and discussions.

Open Discussion

Join us every six weeks for interactive Open Discussions led by the Partnership Coordinator. Connect with other members, share updates, address concerns, and exchange advice in real-time.

Our main aim is to make positive changes in our community. By keeping a close watch on what we're doing and how well it's working, we can make sure we're on the right track. So, let's work together to gather the right information and use it to make our efforts even more effective.

Advocate for Change

We recognise that we cannot solve all these issues alone, even through collaboration. Therefore, it is crucial to leverage our collective knowledge to advocate for policy reforms and legislative measures that support food security, sustainability, and equitable access to nutritious food. By coming together, we aim to raise awareness of key issues, influence decision-making, and drive systemic change at the local, regional, and national levels.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To make sure we're making a real difference, we need to keep a close eye on how things are going. That means improving how we collect and look at data. We want to track things like how much food we're giving out, how involved volunteers are, and what people think about our services. By paying attention to this information, we can make smart decisions that help us do even better in the future.

Upcoming Food Summit

Stay tuned for future opportunities to join us as we brainstorm ways to improve Camden's food system for our communities. With plans for an upcoming food summit, our goal is to improve visibility and accessibility for our community by identifying available services, addressing any gaps in provision, and catering to specific community groups. Additionally, we plan to forge strategic partnerships with local businesses, restaurants, and food vendors to ensure improved food access and affordability for all community members. Stay tuned for updates.

In summary, the CFP is ready to take meaningful action based on the insights gained from this report. We invite organisations to join us in our collaborative efforts and engage with our platforms to share insights and address challenges together. Join us in shaping a brighter future.

With thanks from the Camden Food Partnership.





**COOPERATION
TOWN**

foodscape


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calthorpe
community garden
a green oasis in Kings Cross

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