Sustainable Food Places

Impact Report 2024-26

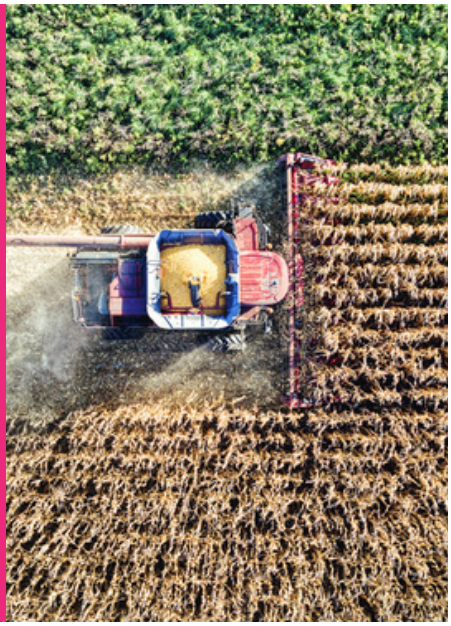


128

food partnerships make up our UK wide network

9500

organisations working together to make food fairer, healthier & more sustainable





88%

of our members have strong collaborative relationships with their local council

1000+

attendees learnt new skills and shared learning at our sessions

£600K

in funding from Defra to SFP Gold Award holders in England

16

new members harnessing our groundbreaking framework; covering a population of 6 million



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Introduction

02 Amplifying the Work of Food Partnerships

02 The Sustainable Food Places Awards

03 Campaigning and Advocacy

04 Accelerating Change

04 Responding to the Needs of Food Partnerships

05 Connecting Food Partnerships

05 Peer Learning & Innovative Training

06 Partnership Spotlight

08 Recommendations



INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Food Places (SFP) uses the power of food to bring places together, so that everyone, everywhere can produce, access and celebrate good food.

To achieve this vision, we amplify, accelerate and connect the work of **food partnerships**. Established over a decade ago, as a pioneering group of just 13 members, we created the framework and model for effective local food partnerships.

Today, our network has grown to more than 120, representing towns, cities, counties and boroughs across the UK and connecting thousands of organisations, businesses and charities, all working to make food fairer, healthier and more sustainable.



"SFP is the ultimate 'how to' organisation - supporting the uniqueness of each food partnership... providing a supportive framework, network and community to help...food partnerships be effective."

Food Partnership Coordinator

128

food partnerships form our UK Wide Network

9500

schools, businesses and organisations connected

60+

awards celebrating places taking a joined-up, holistic approach to food

SFP is coordinated by and benefits from the expertise of five charities— **Food Matters**, **The Soil Association**, **Sustain**, **Food Sense Wales** and **Nourish Scotland**. We utilise the skills of these five innovative food organisations to drive food system change at a policy and delivery level, enhance the work of food partnerships and create a joined-up approach to food across the UK.

We are proud to look back at a successful two years for the SFP programme. During this time, our network has continued to flourish, welcoming 16 new members and achieving a 40% growth in food partnerships having significant impact in their food system. More partnerships than ever are integrating representation and inclusion into their core structures, while government recognition of the importance of our work continues to develop. We have also celebrated excellence across our movement with 23 new SFP awards holders including three gold. Together these achievements, showcase a network growing in scale, influence and on the ground impact.



AMPLIFYING THE WORK OF FOOD PARTNERSHIPS

The Sustainable Food Places Awards

Our awards celebrate the success of over 60 places across the UK, including eight who have now achieved a prestigious SFP Gold Award, recognising exceptional achievement in transforming local food systems. The awards help food partnerships:

- Galvanise their food system through a framework that builds a common purpose
- Gather the evidence for improved food system outcomes for people and planet
- Think progressively about representation

Additionally, they help food partnerships access funding, get support from their local authorities and increase their local and national reputation.

"SFP has given Oxfordshire's food partnership the credibility, framework and goal-setting structure to get council funding, as well as, helping turn a county-wide food strategy into unanimous council policy."- 2026 Gold Award Winner

Worth Their Weight in Gold

SFP Gold awards are invaluable to the 8 members who have developed the effective cross-sector partnership working and significant positive change in their food system required. They draw in new partners locally, create a shared direction and increase buy in from local authorities. The credibility that gold status offers opens practical doors: helping funding applications carry more weight and building legitimacy to drive conversations with statutory partners.

£600k
in funding from DEFRA to SFP Gold Award Places

Importantly, a Gold award demonstrates that an area is a leader in food system development. In England, Defra recently provided £755k in funding to places with Gold awards (4 SFP Gold Awards; 1 Food for Life Served Here Gold accreditation) to test and develop approaches to public sector food procurement. This is a direct result of the awards and highlights how they are an effective quality assurance tool, showcasing how well equipped an area is to implement innovative solutions in their food system. Ultimately, an SFP award creates opportunities for collaboration, improves relationships between sectors and brings places together around a shared goal.

Campaigning and Advocacy

SFP campaigns nationally on behalf of our members and supports them with their local advocacy. This includes our yearly day of celebration and action at Westminster, the development of strategic **reports** on the impact of partnerships and **campaigns**.

We support our members in their local advocacy, through training, workshops and learning resources. For example, supporting partnerships to develop effective relationships with local authorities and robust local action plans. Recently, our **Devolution Toolkit** and accompanying webinar, allowed partnerships to hear directly from strategic authority officers, helping to support effective working with the new mayoral authorities.



"Food Partnerships are transforming how we think about food — they make policy tangible, showing how a healthy society, climate and nature solutions, and economic renewal can be delivered together. "- Olivia Blake MP

Our work advocating for food partnerships and campaigning for better policy on food continues to build momentum and decision makers are taking notice:

- The UK Government recognised local food partnerships as essential to delivering their vision of a more resilient, healthy and sustainable national food system in the **Good Food Cycles** report.
- The Scottish Government celebrated the **convening power of food partnerships in helping deliver its Good Food Nation Plan.**
- The Welsh Government continues its nation wide funding for food partnerships, enabling them **to build capacity and deliver a range of tailored projects.**

Our support has enabled...

88%

of our members to have strong engagement with their local council

68%

of members to engage MPs, councils, mayors & policymakers



ACCELERATING CHANGE

We enable food partnerships to grow and prosper, by supporting the development of new members and building the capacity, skills and confidence of our existing cohort. Beginning in 2011 as a pioneering group of 13, we created our ground breaking framework for food partnerships, and since then we have designed over 30 accessible tools and resources to guide partnerships and help accelerate their work.

"Without SFP our food partnership would have stalled at the beginning and there would be no joined up conversation in our county"
-Food Partnership Coordinator

Responding to the Needs of Partnerships

As we are in constant dialogue with our members, through regular network catch ups, our yearly survey, workshops and through our dedicated working groups, we hear first hand their challenges and successes. This allows us to adapt to their needs, create bespoke workshops and adaptable toolkits, so that they can work effectively and apply innovative solutions:

- Our Civic Food Resilience report, developed alongside our members, is shaping national discussions and local action plans. The report outlines local insight from our members, showcases a clear framework of action and identifies 6 key interventions for government.
- Co-developed with our network, the FAIR Food Framework supports partnerships to take action on inclusion and representation. It Provides a set of principles and a clear structure to address underrepresentation and tackle discrimination in our food system.

"SFP provide valuable knowledge, skills & experience. We would be lost without their guidance and support."- Food Partnership Coordinator

30
Accessible learning resources, supporting partnerships to thrive and accelerate change

16
New members since 2024, harnessing our ground-breaking framework for local impact

CONNECTING FOOD PARTNERSHIPS



50+
Peer learning opportunities

8000+
People connected & informed accross our social channels

1000+
Session attendees learnt new skills and from best practice

Peer Learning and Innovative Training

We support food partnerships to innovate, deliver and inspire, by fostering dialogue, sharing learning and nurturing collaboration. This includes the facilitation of over 50 participatory peer **learning opportunities**, an active **email forum** where partnerships can network and our comprehensive **archive** of over 1200 examples of food partnership activity.

"The peer support facilitated by Sustainable Food Places drives us- the passion, energy and will to see transformation, we need this to communicate across the system."- Food Partnership Coordinator

SFP members are experts in their field, and their work is enhanced when they connect and learn from each other. Our regular workshops and meetings enable this, with topics including engaging young people on food, dignified solutions to food insecurity and food resilience. Partnerships also communicate through our thriving SFP **Rise Up** forum, where members share approaches and opportunities, including how to best utilise Crisis & Resilience Funds and support with local issues including combatting planning applications for fast food outlets near schools.

Additionally, we match partnerships through peer mentoring- connecting new and experienced coordinators and those with similar projects - as well as our thriving national networks in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

80% of our members say that SFP peer support improves their work

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

By championing a whole system approach, food partnerships interweave issues such as health, agriculture, food security, representation and climate to develop solutions that transform food. Below are just a few examples of this innovative work:



OxFarmToFork led by **Good Food Oxfordshire** connects institutions with local farmers and producers through a short, fair, sustainable supply chain - built on collaboration. It supports the creation of new businesses, helps create a sustainable food system and ensures fair compensation for suppliers.

GOOD FOOD OXFORDSHIRE

£580K
worth of sales, back Into the local economy

22
Oxfordshire institutions now signed up

Granite City Good Food Aberdeen led the adoption of Dr Megan Blake's **Food Ladders**, a joined-up approach to tackling food poverty. This enabled local projects to catch those in crisis, help build capacity to enable change and support self-organised action. Providing holistic support to those in food poverty.



GRANITE CITY GOOD FOOD

86%
of organisations surveyed offer multiple support services

TACKLING
the underlying causes of food poverty



Following five years of advocacy, coordination, and groundwork, **Hull Food Partnership** has secured a major milestone in the city's and the UK's food movement, the launch of the **Right to Grow initiative by Hull City Council.** The policy is already **supporting biodiveristy and improving wellbeing.**

HULL FOOD PARTNERSHIP

THE FIRST
city in britain to give people the right to grow

OPPORTUNITIES
to grow food, native plants, wildflowers & fruit trees



Brighton & Hove Food Partnership facilitate The Food Support Network- 61 projects who support people experiencing food insecurity – facilitating collaboration, providing training and bespoke support. Since 2013, they have also coordinated an **annual survey** demonstrating the networks impact:

BRIGHTON & HOVE FOOD PARTNERSHIP

5800
people supported each week

140,000+
volunteer hours each year

Food Cardiff was a founding partner of a procurement **pilot**, aimed at getting local veg into schools during **Food and Fun**. In the summer of 2022, a tonne of locally grown courgettes made their way into 29 schools. The pilot's success led to the development of **Welsh Veg in Schools** who help supply local veg across Wales.



FOOD CARDIFF

IN 2022
Food Cardiff worked with 29 schools on the courgette pilot

→

NOW 100's OF SCHOOLS
work with Food Sense Wales and local food partnerships across the country on Welsh Veg in Schools



BFP partner Community Garden Support works with 35 community gardens and growing groups to save and share locally adapted organic seeds. Through guided learning, visits, and communal harvesting and packing days they have built a seed saving community, known as the Seed It Union, improving local resilience and seed sovereignty.

BELFAST FOOD PARTNERSHIP

500,000 SEEDS
saved including genetically diverse mixes

200 VARIETIES
of seeds shared throughout the network

Food partnerships are essential mechanisms for improving our food system. They build the trust, relationships and legitimacy needed to act as a credible voice in food system governance. While supporting inclusive consultation by creating spaces for dialogue, connecting communities with relevant authorities, and translating diverse perspectives into decision-making processes. All leading to projects- like the above- that deliver big impacts for people, the environment and the economy.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish and Support a Food Partnership in Every Local Authority Area

Solutions to problems in our food system can only result in lasting change if they are developed and delivered collaboratively. Over more than a decade, we have developed a tried and tested framework to achieve this: By forming an inclusive, cross-sector food partnership in an area, public agencies, community organisations, businesses, and academics can collaborate across the local food system to create lasting change by agreeing on priorities and action for their local area.

The Welsh Government has already acknowledged the effectiveness of food partnerships in tackling issues in our food system, and in recognition of this has committed to year-on-year funding and support for food partnerships across Wales. The rest of the UK should follow its lead.

Fund Sustainable Food Places as a Mechanism for Connecting and Supporting Food Partnerships

Our network brings together food partnerships from towns, boroughs, cities and counties across the UK, who are driving innovation and good practice on all aspects of food – health, local economy, environment, community, procurement and tackling food insecurity. SFP has been amplifying, accelerating and connecting this work now for over a decade. Sustained funding for the network beyond 2027, would allow this vital work to continue and ensure local food system work is not completed in isolation but with collaboration, shared effort and innovation.

Utilise the Sustainable Food Places Awards as a Framework for Decision Making

Our awards programme recognises and celebrates the success of places taking an inclusive, joined up and holistic approach to food and achieving significant positive change. Places with engaged, long-standing cross-sector food partnerships are ready partners for government in achieving food systems change and related strategic ambitions.

Defra recently provided £755k in funding to local authorities in places where food partnerships have achieved Gold awards (4 SFP Gold Awards; 1 Food for Life Served Here Gold accreditation) to pilot solutions that would improve public sector food procurement. This highlights how the awards are respected as a quality assurance tool, showcasing how equipped an area is to implement innovative solutions. This approach could be replicated across government and national funders.

FIND OUT MORE



SUSTAINABLE FOOD PLACES

info@sustainablefoodplaces.org

sustainablefoodplaces.org

@sustainablefoodplaces

sustainable food places

@sustainablefoodplaces