



Terms of Reference (TOR)

Name of Group	Food Cumberland Partnership Steering Group
Purpose	A sustainable food system can be defined as a “food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised. This means that; (i) it is profitable throughout (economic sustainability), (ii) it has broad-based benefits for society (social sustainability), and (iii) it has a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment (environmental sustainability)”¹. Partners across Cumberland are working together to support the development of a sustainable food system across the region. This is crucial for ensuring the ongoing production and distribution of healthy and nutritious food, safeguarding the natural environment, supporting biodiversity and climate goals, strengthening the local economy, creating a more equitable society and improving health and wellbeing. The Food Cumberland Partnership provides a collaborative forum through which organisations, communities and individuals can work together to create a healthier, fairer, more sustainable and resilient food system. The purpose of the Partnership is to: • Bring together a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure a collaborative, whole-system approach to food system change. • Identify and coordinate sustainable food system activities across Cumberland, identifying gaps, reducing duplication and sharing learning and good practice. • Support collaboration and knowledge exchange between local, regional and national partners. • Identify, develop and share examples of good practice from across the country. • Facilitate and support locally led sustainable food initiatives across Cumberland. • Develop, implement and review a shared Food Strategy and Action Plan. • Champion food as a key contributor to improved health, environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and community wellbeing. • Safeguard the long-term sustainability and impact of the Partnership and its programme of work.
Vision and aims	Cumberland will be a region where nutritious, tasty, and affordable food is available to all, across both our rural and urban communities. The local food economy will be inclusive, resilient, sustainable, and fair for everyone involved, ultimately reducing health inequalities. It will support local food enterprises, and

¹ [Sustainable food systems: Concept and framework \(fao.org\)](https://www.fao.org/publications/defaultcard/collection/en/c/13607)

	the food available will have a low environmental impact, increased animal welfare and support the people who grow/ create / sell it. The Partnership recognises that food is connected to many of the major opportunities and challenges facing Cumberland, including health inequalities, poverty, climate change, biodiversity loss, economic resilience and community wellbeing. Through collaborative action, the Partnership will support a food system that delivers benefits for people, communities, the economy and the environment. Long-term Outcomes The following outcomes will be achieved: • Increased understanding of the local food system and the effects it has on citizens, nutrition, health and the environment • Reduction of food insecurity by improving access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food • Anchor institution policies, plans and strategies increasingly recognise and support food justice and the right to food. • Improved food education and provisions for children and young people • Increased opportunities for community growing, cooking, sharing and learning about food. • A thriving local food economy that promotes fair employment, resilience and sustainability • Reduced greenhouse gas emissions from the local food system and increased availability of locally grown seasonal produce • Greater participation from underrepresented communities in shaping and benefiting from the food system. • A more equitable food system that contributes to reducing social, economic and health inequalities. • Improved health and wellbeing outcomes across Cumberland. The Partnership will develop and maintain a shared Action Plan which will be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure progress is being made against agreed outcomes and priorities. Learning will be shared locally, regionally and nationally to inform future action.
Partnership Values	The Food Cumberland Partnership is committed to working collaboratively to create a healthier, fairer and more sustainable food system for Cumberland. The following values underpin how the Partnership works, makes decisions and engages with communities and partners. Collaboration We recognise that no single organisation, sector or community can deliver food system change alone. We will work together across organisational and sector boundaries, sharing knowledge, expertise and resources to achieve common goals. Inclusion

	We value the diversity of Cumberland's communities and are committed to creating a welcoming environment where people feel able to participate, contribute and influence decisions. We recognise the importance of ensuring that a wide range of voices, experiences and perspectives are represented in our work. Equity and Social Justice We are committed to ensuring that food system change benefits all communities fairly and equitably. We will actively seek to understand and address inequalities, barriers and structural disadvantages that affect people's ability to access healthy food and participate in shaping the food system. Community-Led Action We believe that communities hold valuable knowledge, skills and experience. We will work alongside communities to support locally led solutions and ensure that lived experience informs the Partnership's priorities, decisions and actions. Sustainability We will take a whole-system approach that balances environmental, social, cultural and economic considerations. We are committed to protecting and enhancing the natural environment while supporting a resilient local food economy and improving health and wellbeing. Respect We will treat one another with honesty, openness and respect. We value constructive challenge, recognise different perspectives and seek to build trust through positive and supportive relationships. Transparency and Accountability We will operate openly and transparently, sharing information, progress, learning and challenges wherever possible. We will take collective responsibility for delivering agreed actions and achieving meaningful outcomes. Evidence-Informed and Learning-Focused We are committed to using evidence, lived experience and community insight to inform our decisions. We will reflect on our progress, learn from successes and challenges, and continually adapt and improve our approach. Ambition We are ambitious for Cumberland and its communities. We will champion innovative and transformative approaches that contribute to a fairer, healthier and more sustainable food system for current and future generations.
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Anti-Racism and Social Justice	The Partnership recognises that inequalities within the food system are both a cause and consequence of wider social, economic, health and environmental inequalities. Creating a fair, sustainable and resilient food system therefore requires action to address these inequalities and ensure that all communities can influence and benefit from food system change. The Partnership is committed to ensuring that food system change benefits all communities fairly and equitably. Equality, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and

	social justice are embedded within the Partnership's governance arrangements, ways of working, decision-making processes and delivery activities. The Partnership will actively work to identify and address structural barriers that limit participation, access, influence and opportunity within the food system. This includes recognising the impacts of poverty, discrimination, racism, geography, disability, age, gender, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and other factors that shape people's experiences of food and their ability to participate in shaping solutions. The Partnership is committed to: • Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment where diverse voices, perspectives and experiences are valued and respected. • Ensuring that people with lived experience of food insecurity, health inequalities and other food-related challenges have meaningful opportunities to influence priorities, decisions and actions. • Working alongside diverse communities, community researchers, lived experience representatives and partner organisations, including Anti-Racist Cumbria, to understand community needs, strengths and aspirations. • Seeking representation from communities that are often underrepresented in food system decision-making. • Ensuring participation is accessible, meaningful and proportionate. • Recognising and challenging systemic racism, discrimination and inequality where they exist within the food system and associated institutions. • Promoting fairness and equity in access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food. • Considering how the benefits, opportunities and resources arising from food system interventions are distributed across communities and seeking to ensure that no community is left behind. The Partnership acknowledges that achieving equitable outcomes may require different levels of support, investment and engagement for different communities and places. As such, the Partnership will seek not only equality of opportunity but equity of outcome wherever possible. Progress on equality, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and social justice will form part of the Partnership's annual reflection and planning process. The Partnership will regularly review who is participating in, influencing and benefiting from its work and take action where gaps or inequalities are identified.
Governance and Ways of Working	The Partnership operates through shared leadership, mutual accountability and collective responsibility. The Partnership will use a rolling chair arrangement to encourage broad participation, shared ownership and distributed leadership across members. The Partnership will seek to make decisions through consensus. Members will work collaboratively to explore issues, develop solutions and agree actions that reflect the Partnership's collective ambitions and values. Where consensus cannot immediately be reached, proposals may be referred for further discussion, refinement or consultation before decisions are made.

	Workstream Groups Workstream Groups will be established to lead and coordinate priority areas of activity. Workstream Groups will: • Develop and deliver agreed areas of work. • Engage relevant stakeholders, communities and partners. • Identify opportunities, challenges and emerging priorities. • Monitor progress against agreed objectives. • Develop recommendations and proposals. • Make decisions within their agreed remit. • Report regularly to the Partnership on progress, achievements, risks and opportunities. Workstream Groups will be responsible for driving delivery and action across the Partnership and ensuring momentum is maintained between Partnership meetings. Reporting and Accountability The Partnership will report progress through agreed governance arrangements, including relevant boards, networks, funders and stakeholders as required. The Partnership will operate transparently and will seek to share progress, impact, learning and opportunities with members, communities and wider stakeholders wherever possible.
Impact Assessment and Learning	The Partnership is committed to evidence-informed decision making and continuous improvement. A Combined Impact Assessment approach will be used when developing, implementing and reviewing strategies, programmes, policies and actions. This approach will consider: • Equality impacts. • Health and wellbeing impacts. • Socio-economic impacts. • Environmental and climate impacts. The findings of impact assessments will be used to identify opportunities to reduce inequalities, maximise positive outcomes and minimise unintended negative consequences. The Partnership will maintain an annual cycle of reflection, learning and planning. This will include: • Reviewing progress against the Strategic Framework and Action Plan. • Reflecting on achievements, challenges and lessons learned. • Reviewing evidence, intelligence and community feedback. • Assessing equality, health, socio-economic and environmental impacts. • Identifying emerging risks, opportunities and priorities. • Agreeing work priorities and actions for the forthcoming year.
Membership	Membership is open to organisations, groups and individuals who support the Partnership's vision, aims and values and who are committed to working

	collaboratively to create a healthier, fairer and more sustainable food system across Cumberland. The Partnership will seek to maintain a broad, diverse and representative membership that reflects the communities, sectors, interests and lived experiences that make up the Cumberland food system.
Review	These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually as part of the Partnership's reflection and planning cycle to ensure they remain relevant, inclusive and fit for purpose. Amendments will be agreed by consensus through the Partnership.

Next Review: December 2026