



FROM FARM TO FORK

Project Evaluation report (2016-2018)



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, Feedback and FoodCycle – two organisations connected by an ambition to repair and rebuild our broken food systems – joined forces to launch a partnership project. “From Farm to Fork” was designed to create a pathway for young people, from our farmers’ field to food projects at the heart of our communities. Along the way, young people would see first-hand the environmental and social consequences of food waste, and learn how they could become part of the solution.

From Farm to Fork, which ran from 2016 to 2018, was part of The Big Lottery Fund’s Our Bright Future programme: an ambitious and innovative partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts which brings together the youth and environmental sectors.

Over the course of those three years, we worked with several thousand young people. We exceeded our initial expectations in terms of the project’s ability to raise awareness and improve knowledge of food waste, and are warmly encouraged by the positive impacts we have made on the wellbeing of both young people and those in our wider communities. Together, our young people rescued a colossal 293 tonnes of fresh fruits and vegetables (which would otherwise have been wasted) from Britain’s farms, and served up an equally staggering 187,899 meals to some of society’s most vulnerable people.

It was, ultimately, a two-way project: for all the effort we have put in, we have learned so much from our project participants in return. We learned, for example, that the paths to employment or further education – the skills, experiences or confidence needed – differ from one young person to the next. These learnings have been invaluable, both in reshaping From Farm to Fork as a project-in-progress, and in informing our future work.

While the issues we set out to tackle were (and remain) serious, a lot of fun was had along the way. This was not by accident, but by design: we wanted to show our young people that the solutions to these problems can be built on values such as friendship, togetherness, sharing and celebration. We hope that the photos in this report capture at least a fraction of the warmth our young people brought to the project.

We were greatly inspired by the drive of so many young people, and their eagerness to tackle urgent environmental and social issues head on. It is a true privilege to have worked with young women such as Kako Black (see case study, page 24) who now plans to create a gleaning network in Australia to fight food waste on the other side of the world, and Gabby Hardy-Gould (case study, page 22) who reflects on the importance of connected communities, and how volunteering allowed her to build new cross-generational friendships.

This report brings together the final results of our project. In our analysis of those results, we reflect on the many successes and learnings, and present also a number of recommendations. We hope that our findings may be useful to other projects, organisations and funders.

From Farm to Fork would not have been possible without the generous support of the National Lottery and The Big Lottery Fund, or the innovative vision that created Our Bright Future. Without the encouragement and guidance of The Wildlife Trust, our project would have been less effective, our experience less rewarding. We are grateful for all their support.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Feedback is a campaign group working to regenerate nature by transforming our food system – by challenging power, catalysing action and empowering people to achieve positive change. FoodCycle is a nationwide charity transforming surplus food into nutritious and tasty meals, with a mission to ensure that no one need go hungry or eat alone. In January 2016, Feedback and FoodCycle launched a three-year joint project 'From Farm to Fork', in order to build the long-term capacity of young people in the UK for improving the efficiency, sustainability and equality of our food system. We set out to engage and train young people aged 16 – 24 to harvest nutritious surplus produce on UK farms, learn about our food system, and gain real-world skills, experience and qualifications in catering. By developing a generation of environmental leaders, our project aimed to make a significant positive contribution to local communities and the green economy.

RATIONALE: WHY IS THIS PROJECT NEEDED?

Food production is the single biggest effect humans have had on the environment. With rising population and increasing consumption, the growing demand for food is responsible for more than 80% of deforestation, 70% of fresh water consumption, and greater than 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions. And yet: a third of the world's food is currently wasted – enough to feed 3 billion people.

In the UK, an estimated 5.8 million people suffer from food poverty and cannot afford a decent diet. Many of those affected by food poverty are also at risk of isolation, eating most or all meals alone and sometimes going weeks without social contact or interaction. These combined problems can affect anyone, but especially those with physical and mental health problems; those with disabilities; older people; people who are unemployed and people from more disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, are more likely to suffer from isolation.

Preventing, reducing and redistributing food waste is one of the easiest and most feasible ways to reduce the environmental impact of our food system whilst increasing food availability where it is needed most.

Young people are the future of our environment and our communities: it is their beliefs and actions that will directly impact the health of our food systems, on which so much depends – from our individual and collective wellbeing, to the flourishing of wildlife and our planet.

ACTIVITIES

From Farm to Fork encompassed two primary sets of activities, with the aim of forming connections between these activities where possible. Feedback's Gleaning Network programme offered young people the chance to experience day-volunteering on a farm, gleaning (harvesting) fruits and vegetables that would otherwise go to waste. Through FoodCycle's community kitchens, young volunteers worked as part of a team, using surplus food to prepare and cook a nutritious three-course meal for beneficiaries from the local community.



Volunteer on a Gleaning day



A volunteer on a Gleaning day

In addition to the primary activities, we created a range of additional opportunities to engage, train and empower our young participants. These included: running a series of interactive and educational workshops, providing toolkits to inspire creative challenges around the themes of sustainable food, offering additional volunteering opportunities through community growing projects, and co-designing and delivering food-based events such as Disco Soups.

For the purposes of evaluation, we grouped these activities into the following four categories:

Gleaning

Gleaning in the field

Coming together in teams, young volunteers roll up their sleeves and stroll into action on Britain's farms and orchards to rescue nutritious, delicious produce that would otherwise be destined for waste. Each gleaning day is an opportunity to see first-hand the scale of food waste, to learn about wider issues of food production and sustainability, and to become part of the solution: each apple, pear and pumpkin gleaned from the fields is sent to FoodCycle and other charities, where they will be transformed into meals for those at need.

Urban Harvesting

This is the same concept as gleaning, only transferred to an inner-city environment: bringing together teams of friendly volunteers to visit residents who have fruits trees in their garden, to rescue delicious apples, pears and plums and distribute these fruits to charities and community groups in the local area.

FoodCycle Volunteering

Through volunteering in FoodCycle projects, young people learn practical skills such as cooking and how to prepare a nutritious meal, gain an insight into the issues of food waste, build connections in their communities and make new friends, all the while helping to tackle social isolation.

FoodCycle Project Leaders

Each FoodCycle hub offers a variety of enhanced volunteering opportunities for those young people looking to take on a greater degree of responsibility over a longer term, and to gain deeper skills and experience. Roles available include Cooking Project Leader, Hosting Project Leader, Team Coordination Project Leader and others.

Workshops and Events

Disco Soups

A party with a purpose, Disco Soups bring together diverse audiences, and create engagement with food waste issues in new and creative ways. Putting young people in the driving seat to create, plan, organise and host these events provides them with new skills and increases their confidence.

Come Dine Sustainably

Young people host a dinner party with a difference, with the purpose of exploring sustainable food issues over the dinner table. A tool kit and games are provided to ensure all attendees increase their knowledge on food waste, whilst having a physically and mentally nourishing evening.

Food Surplus cooking class

Young people help develop recipes and demonstrations, focusing on engaging others with, and reducing overall, food waste. Young people present to a variety of audiences, therefore gaining skills and confidence, and increasing their knowledge of food waste.

NCS interactive-educational workshops

The NCS Enterprise Challenge tasks young people to learn about a real-world issue, in this case food waste, and offer a solution. Young people work in teams to research and develop their idea, they increase their awareness of food waste and gain skills and confidence by presenting to a large group.

FoodCycle Annual Conference

A two-day conference for FoodCycle's project leaders, full of training and workshops on topics of leadership, food waste, working with guests and managing volunteers.

Community Growing project

In partnership with NCS, Feedback hosts young people at a community garden in Manchester, where they learn about growing food to eat, the benefits of short supply chains and the local food economy. Tasks include raising awareness and support for the community vegetable garden, which increases their confidence and provides new skills, whilst just spending time in the garden improves wellbeing.

Youth Remedial Justice

Young men undertaking remedial justice take on tasks such as gardening and joinery for the community garden, seeing the impact they have on the garden increases their confidence and well-being.



Pears collected on a Feedback gleaning day

OUTCOMES

From Farm to Fork set out to achieve the following outcomes:

1. By the end of the project we will have engaged around 4,200 young people in training and volunteering opportunities. Around 60% of those young people surveyed will report enhanced knowledge, skills and self-esteem, having worked as a team to harvest and/or cook delicious food for members of the wider community.
2. Around 60% of those Young people surveyed will have increased employability skills, particularly in the Green Economy, and will report that they feel they have greater opportunity to secure paid work as a result.
3. The natural environment will be enhanced as around 60% of young people surveyed improve their knowledge of the problem of food waste and the importance of reducing food waste at farm and consumer level.
4. Social cohesion will be improved as around 60% of young people surveyed in the FoodCycle Hubs, where people affected by poverty and social isolation are able to come together to enjoy a nutritious meal alongside those volunteers who prepared it, feel they better understand their communities and are better connected.
5. Around 3 million portions of fruit and vegetables will be provided to charities and community groups and around 81,000 meals will be served to communities around Hubs, improving the health and wellbeing of users. Around 65% of users surveyed will report that their wellbeing has improved as a result of their involvement of the project.



Fruit salads made by FoodCycle Cambridge

Achieving Impact: our Theory of Change

ACTIVITIES /OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,200 young people engaged in training and volunteering opportunities, either harvesting (gleaning days at farm with Feedback) or cooking food (FoodCycle kitchens) for wider community • 81,000 meals will be served to communities and people in need. • 270 young volunteers will access enhanced or accredited training • 650 young people will attend awareness-raising environmental events • 45 young people will attend Entrepreneurship Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 245 tonnes or (3 million portions) of food will be diverted from waste and 5.3 million portions of fruit and vegetables will be provided to charities and community groups • Young people have improved knowledge of food waste and the importance of reducing food waste at farm and consumer level • Young people improve confidence and self-esteem • Young people improve their cooking knowledge, organisational and team working/management skills and increase their employability • Members of community feel less isolated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people have a better understanding of and increased connection to their communities • Young people draw upon their project experiences, employability skills and knowledge of the Green Economy to secure employment or further education opportunities • Young people change their attitudes and practices towards food waste • Wellbeing is improved in both young people (through participating in the project) and members of the community (through increased access to healthy food) • Wider awareness is raised about social isolation and community cohesion • Wider awareness is raised about food waste and the environment (and learning will be used to try to influence policy)



We are passionate about our winter crops, but I can't see a way forward at the moment, I can't stand to see them in the field going to waste, so I'm just going to chop them up.



Geoff Philpott (The Times, 2017)

METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

From Farm to Fork was monitored and evaluated using the following:

- questionnaires completed by project participants (our young people)
- case studies of project participants, completed by Feedback and FoodCycle staff
- project case studies conducted by the programme evaluator, ERS: one in 2017, one in 2018.
- feedback provided by organisations we have worked with, for example NCS
- case studies of activities, completed by Feedback and FoodCycle staff
- annual questionnaires completed by FoodCycle guests

In addition, internal project reviews were carried out on a regular basis by project staff. For example, Feedback and FoodCycle's project directors met on a quarterly basis; Feedback's regional team assembled for an internal project review twice-per-year; all of FoodCycle's project leaders attended an annual conference.

SHARE, LEARN, IMPROVE

From Farm to Fork ran over a course of three years. During that time, we learned a great deal about monitoring and evaluation – both in general, and in specific regard to working with young people. We learned about different approaches and techniques (what worked and what didn't), and how consistency needs to be balanced with flexibility. We learned that monitoring, done correctly, takes time and effort; but that the results, when analysed with an effective approach to evaluation, can become an essential tool in shaping a project and honing its impact. We learned, too, that monitoring can enhance engagement with volunteers – how conducting surveys in-person, for example, can provide the context for many thought-provoking (and fun) conversations.

Some of our learnings came from interactions with other OBF projects – we found the Share, Learn and Improve sessions very useful – and further learnings came from working with ERS, the programme evaluator, for whose help and support we are grateful. Perhaps most importantly, we learned many things through trial and error: in other words, we learned by making mistakes.

We hope that our learnings can be helpful to other projects, within the OBF programme and beyond. For this reason we have compiled a list of recommendations in the table below, with each recommendation reflecting a learning made during the course of our project.

EVOLUTION OF OUR METHODOLOGY

The most significant change we made over the course of our project was to the participant questionnaires. Results from these questionnaires in years 1 and 2 were disappointing, with response rates much lower than expected. Our analysis, both internally and through discussions with participants (talking to a sample of young people who had completed

questionnaires, and some who had not), revealed a number of “issues” and proved instrumental in helping us to revise both the content and delivery of the questionnaires. For example, the length of the surveys was seen as a disincentive (too many questions). The timing of the surveys, in terms of when young people were asked to complete them, was also an important learning. Further detail on these learnings is presented in the sections below.



Foodcycle Finsbury Park pop-up fine dining event

Because From Farm to Fork is a partnership project between two organisations, encompassing a varied range of activities, it was initially thought that we needed to agree on a single one-size-fits-all questionnaire for all activities. Perhaps not surprisingly, this proved difficult. Ultimately we realised it was not necessary; that instead, what was needed was a common ‘core set’ of questions – i.e. those relevant to the outcomes and impacts.

Improvements made to questionnaires

Following a review toward the end of our project’s second year, we decided to redesign the questionnaires and implement a new strategy for dissemination. Changes included:

- Reducing the number of questions; making the questionnaires quicker and easier to complete
- Ensuring that questions were aligned with the project’s outcomes and impacts
- Re-phrasing questions where previous wording had been unclear or ambiguous, or had required further explanation
- Changing the timing of when questionnaires were issued to participants (see below)
- Offering appealing incentives for completion of questionnaires

Deployment of questionnaires

There are a few key differences in the primary activities offered by FROM FARM TO FORK’S two partner organisations, Feedback and FoodCycle, which are relevant to the way in which data was collected. The differences generally relate to the predicted length of participants’ engagement with the project, and can be summarised as follows:

- Each FoodCycle Project runs a recurring weekly session. In each project (location) these sessions occur at the same date and time each week. It is therefore possible for participants to sign-up for multiple sessions well in advance, and to embed attendance into their routine.
- By contrast, Feedback activities are notably different, tending to be sporadic or one-off: for example, gleaning days usually happen only 1-3 times per year at each farm, and the lead-time (advanced notice that can be given to potential volunteers) is much shorter – 1 to 2 weeks at most.
- Therefore, participants involved in FoodCycle activities are more likely to have sustained engagement with the project over a longer period of time.



Volunteer from new FoodCycle Byker hub

For these reasons, it was decided that Feedback and FoodCycle would adopt different strategies to the deployment of questionnaires.

FoodCycle issued participant questionnaires on an annual basis, aiming to allow volunteers to reflect on the overall term of their engagement. In years 1 & 2, these surveys were issued during the summer, when it was thought participants would have more free time available to complete them. However, it was later realised that for many young people, summer is not the ideal time. This was especially true for FoodCycle's student volunteers, who tend to volunteer at FoodCycle in the city/town where their university is based, and therefore during term time; in summer they return 'home' and are less likely to be involved in the project. In year 3, FoodCycle switched the timing of their survey, moving it from mid-summer to November. This delivered a marked improvement in the response rate.

Feedback initially, in years 1 and 2, took a dual approach to issuing questionnaires. After each gleaning day (or other activity), participating volunteers were sent a thank you email which contained a link to an online survey. Then, in December, an end-of-year round-up email was sent to all volunteers, which again linked to the online survey. The problem with both of these approaches is that they were "after the fact" and led to a low response rate. In Year 3 Feedback switched to a new strategy, which involved:

1. Introducing paper forms, in preference to the online survey
2. Presenting these paper forms to volunteers at the end of each gleaning/activity day, and asking them to be completed on the spot. This is a good example of where short questionnaires are especially effective.
3. During activities where we were able to deploy an additional staff member – we made this a priority in year 3 – participants were given the option of completing the survey via a question-and-answer session with the additional staff member (as opposed to completing the forms themselves).

As with the revised strategy deployed by FoodCycle, the result here was a very strong increase in the response rate.

Presentation of our data, results and findings

Year 3 results as standalone data

Due to the considerable changes to the surveys, it has not been possible to fully align the data collected in years 1 and 2 with the data from year 3. However, because the response rate in the first two years was low, we do not feel this is a material problem. For the purposes of this project evaluation report, we will proceed in the next section – Results, Findings and Analysis – by looking at year 3's results as standalone data. While this entails presenting the final year's results in isolation of data from previous years, we believe this is in many ways an advantage – as it more accurately reflects the effectiveness of the project in its 'final form'. Because From Farm to Fork is a three-year project (in contrast to the majority of OBF projects which run over five years), a significant portion of our efforts in years 1 and 2 were necessarily taken-up with the implementation of the project, along with the trial and error of, for example, recruiting and retaining young people.

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Relationship between activities and outcomes/impact

While our project's primary activities were intended to be effective in delivering against multiple project outcomes, some auxiliary activities were designed to achieve a narrower range of outcomes. For example, our series of class-based workshops with NCS groups focused primarily on one outcome, raising awareness of food waste, and were not intended to e.g. teach new skills or enhance a participant's wellbeing.

The table below lists each of the 5 primary outcomes, and the activities which corresponded to those outcomes (FoodCycle PL = FoodCycle Project Leader).

OUTCOME	ACTIVITIES RELEVANT TO THIS OUTCOME	TOTAL NO. RESPONDENTS
Increased Awareness of Food Waste	All activities	606
Learning New Skills	Gleaning, FoodCycle PL, FoodCycle Volunteers	377
Enhanced Wellbeing	Gleaning, FoodCycle PL, FoodCycle Volunteers	377
Improved Self-Esteem	Gleaning, FoodCycle PL, FoodCycle Volunteers	377
Increased connection to Community	FoodCycle PL, FoodCycle Volunteers	187

Learnings and Recommendations

At the conclusion of our three-year project, it has been important to reflect on the key learnings. These learnings will be invaluable in informing Feedback and FoodCycle's future work. We hope also that they can be useful to other organisations.

Take the time to establish a clear monitoring and evaluation framework

In our project, the final-version framework for monitoring and evaluation was only implemented in the later stages. While there are some legitimate reasons for this delay – for example, it took more time than anticipated to align the approaches of the two partner organisations – on reflection, these need not have precluded the implementation of a framework. By establishing a core set of common questions (as we eventually did), we would have been able to collect a dataset that was consistent across the life of the project.

Questionnaires and Surveys: 3 is the magic number

Based on our experience, we propose that there are three important elements in the successful use of questionnaires: content, timing and delivery.

- Good content is, first and foremost, about relevance. Questions which help to measure the project's effectiveness, relevant to the intended outcomes, should be given prominence. Other questions should be carefully considered: what value do they add? From Farm to Fork's early questionnaires contained several superfluous questions and were therefore longer than they needed to be, which in turn may have discouraged some participants from completing them



Volunteer on a Gleaning day

- Timing is perhaps the most important element. Where participants are expected to engage with projects/activities on a short-term or sporadic basis, questionnaires should ideally be completed on the same day – i.e. at the end of the activity. Where participants engage over a longer-term, it may be more feasible to use an annual or quarterly survey. In these cases, consideration should be given to the participants' wider circumstances – e.g. if working with students, holidays and exam periods are not the best time to issue surveys.
- There is no right or wrong way to deliver or disseminate a survey. However, we certainly found that, in some cases, face-to-face engagement with participants worked well. Not only did this allow project staff more opportunity to talk through the survey and respond to questions (e.g. “what do you mean by wellbeing?”); it also triggered some interesting conversations and comments, beyond the immediate scope of the questionnaire.

Case Studies are the best means of gathering valuable insights

One highly positive output of From Farm to Fork has been the qualitative data we have gathered through case studies. We would certainly encourage any other projects, within or outside of OBF, to give sufficient priority to conducting participant case studies. Our view is that this is a rewarding process for both parties. For the organisation, it is a chance to gain insights and feedback that may not be captured in the more quantitative approaches (such as surveys), and which can be very helpful in shaping the project; case studies can also be inspiring, and offer a reminder of “why we do what we do”. For the participant featured in the case study, it is an opportunity to reflect on learnings and experiences, which can amplify the sense of contribution.

Generally speaking, our process has been to conduct case studies at the end of each project year, either face-to-face or via a telephone interview. One recommendation to further improve this case study process, especially for participants who engage on a long-term basis, would be to conduct a series of interviews throughout their journey, to demonstrate the gradual developments, changes or improvements at different stages.



FoodCycle Dalston volunteer

RESULTS

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS

Activities & Outputs

- 3,690 young people engaged on volunteering opportunities
- 163 gleaning days
- 23 new FoodCycle projects opened throughout the country
- 293 tonnes of fruits and vegetables gleaned and redistributed; 187,899 meals served to guests at FoodCycle projects
- 58 farmers involved in the project through hosting gleaning days
- 1,031 young people attended awareness-raising environmental events
- 511 young people attended Enterprise Workshops

Outcomes & Impacts

Of the young people surveyed:

- 71% had improved their knowledge of the problem of food waste and the need to reduce this
- 61% had enhanced their physical and/or mental wellbeing
- 59% felt more connected to their community
- 32% gained new skills relevant to employment or further education, and 30% reported improved confidence or self-esteem

And

- 83% of FoodCycle guests are now eating more fruits and vegetables (since coming to FoodCycle); 60% say that the takeaway meals provided by FoodCycle help them eat more fruit and vegetables at home.
- Wider awareness has been raised about food waste and the environment, driving behaviour change and informing policy
- Wider awareness has been raised about social isolation, and stronger connections have been formed within communities

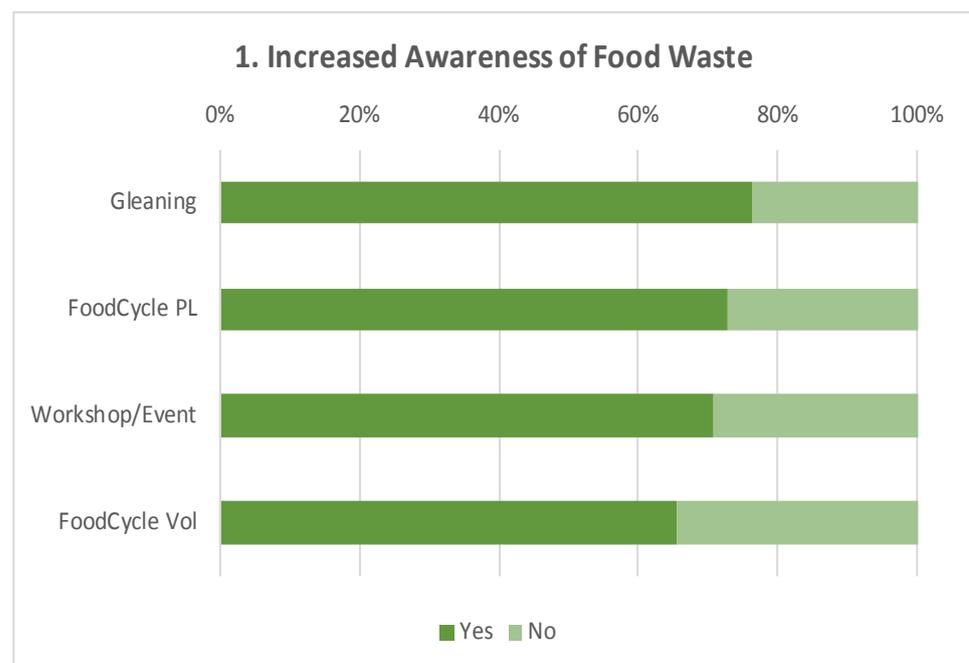
YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE CHANGED THEIR ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES TOWARDS FOOD WASTE

‘It made me worry about how much food could’ve been wasted potentially... with supermarkets being so picky about the shapes of the products, that leads to big amounts going to waste. This makes you want to change your behaviour as a consumer as this is why the supermarkets are predominantly acting this way!’ Wassim, a student at Brighton & Hove Sixth Form College, following his gleaning experience at a Sussex farm.

From Farm to Fork set out first and foremost to ensure that young people were aware of the issue of food waste. (As one young volunteer said during their first gleaning day: “this wasn’t even on my radar!”). This meant being able to give our project participants an insight into the scale of food waste - to recognise it as a problem far greater than the teabags and banana skins in their kitchen bins - and its consequences: both its devastating impact on our environment and the natural world, and the injustice of good food being wasted while so many people were faced with the prospect of going hungry. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we wanted to inspire young people to take action: to show them that change is possible, and that they can be part of the solution.

For these reasons, food waste – the problem, the scale, the consequences, and the solutions – was the connecting thread, or threads, that ran through all of our project activities.

Of the 606 young people surveyed, 71% said they had increased their awareness of the problem of food waste and the need to reduce this. Gleaning Volunteers were most likely to report a positive impact (76%): this broadly aligned with our expectations, as gleaning days give volunteers a singular, straightforward and rewarding mission - to rescue, with your own hands, good food that would otherwise go to waste. This result was closely followed by FoodCycle Project Leaders (73%) and participants at our workshops and events (71%).



One possible interpretation of the overall result is that our starting point (the baseline awareness) is low. It might be concluded that for many young people, food waste – to borrow the words of our aforementioned volunteer – is simply not on the radar. However, our findings also demonstrate that young people, once ‘exposed’ to food waste, are quick to recognise this as a serious and senseless issue. Perhaps another young volunteer put it best, and most unequivocally: “food waste is crazy!”

Importantly, From Farm to Fork successfully enabled young people to experience the possibilities of transforming problems into solutions. To know that the food being rescued would be used to provide meals for people at risk of going hungry was a powerful incentive: 83% of young people who volunteered at FoodCycle cited ‘helping to reduce food poverty’ as a motivating factor.

For us, a key learning, and a very positive takeaway, has been the willingness and effectiveness of young people in influencing their peers about food waste. Some of our favourite examples included:

- At Writhlington High School, seven sixth-formers ran a series of assemblies on food waste, created a lesson for year 7 and 8 pupils, then hosted a quiz, film viewing and Disco Soup event for 40-50 students and teachers. They researched the issues and created resources to engage other students.
- Using our ‘Come Dine Sustainably’ event format and toolkit, Isobella and friends in Bristol created a meal from a range of ‘planet-positive’ ingredients, including many items of food that would otherwise have been wasted, alongside items with a low carbon footprint, low food miles, etc. “Everyone was really impressed and proud of how inventive they had been, and the joy that it is to share wholesome, home-made food with friends. I firmly believe that seeds were planted that evening, and that each person left feeling inspired, well-nourished and encouraged to cook from scratch and from scraps, and better understand the journey their food has taken before it gets to the plate.”
- A student group at UWE (University of West England) hosted a stall and then a Disco Soup event, with a range of activities from the students and other student campaigns, e.g. vegan society. To encourage attendance and participation, the students gamified the activities and offered the chance to win prizes. As Heather, Feedback’s West England coordinator, said: “It was clear that the students knew exactly how to incentivise and engage their peers better than we did and it made the event a real success!”

So many of the young people we worked with expressed a sense of satisfaction at having been part of the solution. “Muddy but fun and worthwhile,” as one gleaner said – suggesting that to some young volunteers, even the English weather was no obstacle in the drive to tackle food waste.

Case Study

Hermione Beckitt, 20, Gleaning volunteer, West England



At her previous school, Hermione was part of the Green Team and worked with the catering team to reduce food waste. She is now a student at the University of Bristol, and signed up to become a Gleaning Ambassador in 2017: this allowed Hermione to transform her interest and passion about food waste into action, recruiting students to volunteer on gleaning days, Disco Soups and other events.

Hermione says “I’d never heard of Gleaning before but loved the idea of rescuing food that would otherwise go to waste for charities. I’ve been to three of the gleaning days apple picking at a farm in Gloucestershire. Each time I was shocked at how many apples were left on the trees that would never reach supermarket shelves. I managed to get four of my friends to come along on different days. The days have been really fun and a great way to meet new people whilst connecting with nature. I learnt why the food waste problems occur at the farms and how the supermarkets play a role in this.”

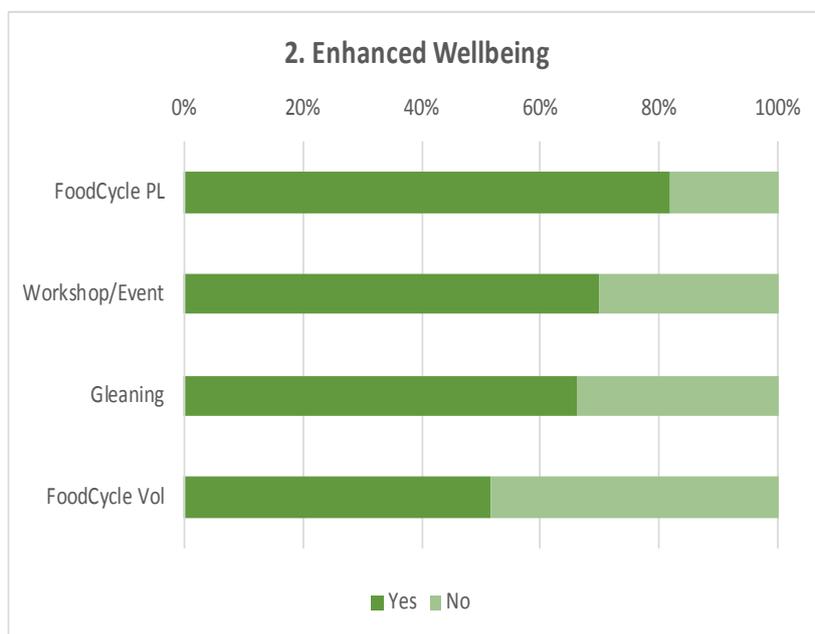
As well as having been an excellent ambassador for the project, Hermione has clearly been inspired by her gleaning experience to make her own life more sustainable. She says: “Although I was very conscious of food waste before I did gleaning, being at the heart of food production really brought it home as it connects what you eat with where it comes from. This has made me even more careful to produce as little waste as possible and I try to buy only seasonal fruit and veg grown in the UK to help support British farmers.”

› YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE ENHANCED THEIR WELLBEING

If the notion of wellbeing is notoriously difficult to define on paper, it is equally difficult to understand what activities or interventions might help to ‘improve’ wellbeing in any given individual or group. Perhaps the only thing that can be known for certain is that, when it comes to wellbeing, there can never be a one-size-fits-all approach. For this reason, it was important to us that our project, from the outset, included a wide variety of activities. As we entered the project’s third year, and were able to reflect on volunteer feedback and internal project evaluations, we sought to broaden the range of activities even further.

While the sample size of our project is relatively small, we believe the findings provide some useful indicators regarding how volunteering can impact positively on wellbeing.

Of the 377 people surveyed, 61% said their wellbeing had been enhanced by participating in activities through the From Farm to Fork Project. FoodCycle Project Leaders overwhelmingly reported a positive impact (82%), while participating in a workshop/event or attending a gleaning day returned 70% and 66% respectively. Short term FoodCycle volunteers had a lower proportion of enhanced wellbeing, with 52%.



The most significant increases in wellbeing were reported by FoodCycle Project Leaders, from which we might draw two conclusions. First, Project Leaders tend to engage with the project over the longest period of time, as the role requires a degree of commitment and also confers responsibility. It would stand to reason that some aspects of wellbeing, especially those that result from new friendships and regular interaction with other people, increase gradually over a period of time. Some project leaders also spoke of the ‘sense of reward’ that accrued from their volunteering. Second, due to the structured and well-supported nature of the role, Project Leaders were most likely to develop new skills – which seemed to correlate, to some extent, with enhanced wellbeing. As one Project Leader commented: “the leadership and management side of it has built my confidence as well. I’ve gained organisation and communication skills too. It just makes me feel happier. After you finish a shift it’s a really fulfilling feeling!”

On the other side of the fence, so to speak, were our gleaners. While gleaning volunteers (compared for example with FoodCycle project leaders) generally have less sustained engagement with the project – gleaning days occur only so many times per year – and have fewer opportunities to develop structured skills, they nevertheless reported a 66% increase in wellbeing. The rationale for this appears to be encouragingly straightforward: in numerous quotes and case studies, gleaning volunteers tend to attribute increased wellbeing to spending time outdoors and the reward of ‘hands on’ work, as well as meeting new people.

From Farm to Fork has helped us to realise/confirm the potential of our projects in helping young people enhance their wellbeing. Throughout 2018, we have also achieved successes working with more young people from socially marginalised backgrounds. The benefits that these people experience are very important: wellbeing increases in people affected by mental health problems are more likely to have a significant impact on someone’s life. We are keen to explore how we might develop this potential further, for example through collaborating with social-and-horticultural therapy practitioners in gleaning, food growing

and farm-based activities (including city farms). Some good examples of activities developed within From Farm to Fork, and which could be further developed, include:

- The gardening and food growing workshops we ran as part of the Remedi Restorative Justice programme in Manchester. Josephine Payne, Feedback's Gleaning Coordinator (North), said: "We wanted to engage young men in activities that will improve confidence and wellbeing, whilst increasing attendance and overall attitudes to Restorative Justice. The response has been good and the young people have openly discussed their enjoyment. Having a structured project with tangible outcomes allows them to see real change and improvement to the site due to their efforts and attendance: you often hear how they feel good after a session and want to carry on attending after they finish their RJ sessions."
- Drop-in cook & eat lessons - demonstrating how to make meals using 'surplus' ingredients such as gleaned vegetables - with young people at risk of homelessness at the Clocktower Sanctuary in Brighton. Young people were given the choice of helping with the cooking and food preparation (as a learning activity), or simply enjoying a good meal.

In conclusion: while we have identified areas for improvement and further development, we are satisfied that many of our activities seem to have had a positive impact on young people's wellbeing, both in the short term and long term. Furthermore, we believe that the findings of From Farm to Fork in this regard are straightforward and easy to replicate: offer young people the chance to learn new skills and to meet new people; create structured roles and the opportunities for sustained engagement; help young people reconnect with nature through spending time outdoors (ideally with the added benefit of light exercise).



Apples from Feedback's Hackney Urban Harvesting useProject being used at Foodcycle Islington

Case Study

Billie Turner, Gleaning volunteer, 23, Sussex

Billie caught the gleaning 'bug' and was a regular volunteer throughout the 2017 and 2018 harvest season, most times coming with friends she'd met in college. Her first glean involved cycling on a warm September day from her hometown of Lewes to a nearby farm, to help with a sweet corn harvest. On that day, the gleaning volunteers rescued a staggering five tonnes of fresh and delicious corn.

The initial motivation to glean was to be outdoors in a fun and productive way, however she soon realised that as well as helping to overcome challenges to her own wellbeing, the sense of helping others was gratifying. Having struggled with insomnia and sleep anxiety, Billie found the activity of gleaning to be therapeutic in several regards. She explains "the productivity [of gleaning] is so beneficial mentally and mental wellbeing is massively boosted by being outside and gleaning. There are tonnes of things that being outside and being active in this way can help with, which I really found. I really loved being active and being outside in harvest times, in those long sunny September days. And you really see the impact you're making and you go home and are like ****satisfied sigh**** feeling really refreshed but also tired. Going out gleaning made me feel I had purpose whilst also benefiting from the freshness of nature; and being in touch with that was a real boost of confidence and left me feeling very satisfied and relaxed."

Now living in Brighton, Billie remains active with and committed to the Gleaning Network, which she balances alongside her work and other voluntary commitments.

Delicious cooked food. It has helped me always eat more healthy. I hated vegetables but FoodCycle cooked them differently. I fell in love with vegetables!

A guest at FoodCycle Dalston..



Billie on a Gleaning day with friends

INCREASES TO WELLBEING HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WITHIN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Each FoodCycle project aims to bring communities together, to reduce hunger and to tackle loneliness, each of which are crucial to our wellbeing. To this end, we pride ourselves in creating warm and welcoming environments that facilitate conversations and socialising, and producing nutritious, balanced meals packed full of veggies.

From Farm to Fork's young Project Leaders and volunteers played a pivotal role in addressing these issues. Everything our young people did – from welcoming guests on arrival and conversing with them, to preparing, cooking and sharing the food – was key to helping the members of our communities toward better wellbeing.

With loneliness an undeniable issue for our guests – 72% said that they are sometimes or often lonely – we were pleased to find that 77% of guests reported making new friends since coming to FoodCycle, thereby taking an important step towards tackling social isolation and loneliness.

There have been very positive impacts on physical health, not only short-term (through the meals provided at FoodCycle) but potentially long-term through influencing positive changes in diet beyond the weekly communal meals. 83% of guests say they eat more fruit and vegetables since coming to FoodCycle, and 60% of our guests use their take-away meals to help them eat more fruit and vegetables at home. Through our surveys we know that 35% of guests self-disclose to having a long-term health condition, and therefore a balanced diet may be especially important to their health and wellbeing.

Beyond FoodCycle's kitchens and out in the fields, we were able to further extend our community reach through gleaning: on certain gleaning days we invited community groups to work alongside, and interact with, our regular groups of young volunteers. Examples include A Band Of Brothers (ABOB), a Sussex-based charity mentoring young men with behavioural and addiction problems; a refugee family integration project; and several groups tackling social isolation and loneliness.

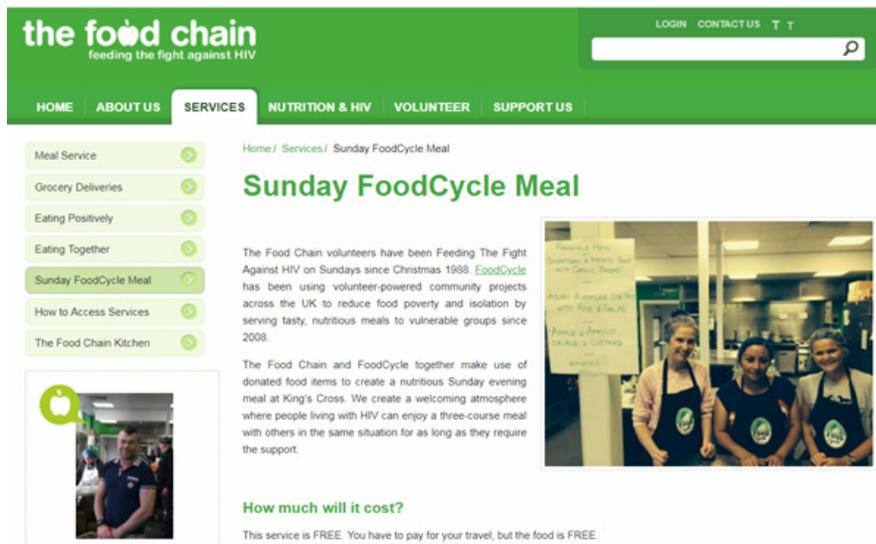
The huge boost to wellbeing within these groups was clear – one of the ABOB coordinators said: "we were delighted to have this opportunity to connect with nature and the wider community at the apple gleaning day. Our men left feeling fulfilled and enriched by the coming together in a common cause." Furthermore, on the gleaning day in question we used a portion of the gleaned fruit to make apple juice, utilizing an old apple-press on the farm. This was then distributed to several of the aforementioned community groups, telling the story of food waste and the diverse forces that came together to create it in a unique, memorable way.



Pear Gleaning

Case Study

FoodCycle LSE partners with The Food Chain to provide a weekly communal meal every Sunday in Kings Cross. The Food Chain exists to ensure people living with HIV in London can access the nutrition they need to get well, stay well and lead healthy, independent lives. Often stigmatised, those with living with HIV can not only access free balanced meals from the weekly closed-group meal; they can meet people who share their condition and socialise without fear of judgement.



The screenshot shows the website for 'the food chain' with the tagline 'feeding the fight against HIV'. The navigation menu includes HOME, ABOUT US, SERVICES, NUTRITION & HIV, VOLUNTEER, and SUPPORT US. The main content area is titled 'Sunday FoodCycle Meal' and includes a breadcrumb trail: Home / Services / Sunday FoodCycle Meal. The text describes the service as a volunteer-powered community project that provides free meals to people living with HIV. A photo shows three volunteers in aprons standing in a kitchen.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MORE STRONGLY CONNECTED TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

“It makes me feel immensely proud to have contributed so much to the local community. We may not be saving the world each week but over the hours I have committed I have seen vast changes in people. When one individual tells you that during their darkest period of their lives FoodCycle offered hope for them; to get out the house, have something to look forward to and provoke them to change their life around - that is priceless.” – Calum Blair, FoodCycle Liverpool.

A key component of a FoodCycle meal is the social aspect that comes from bringing together volunteers and guests of varying backgrounds who can share their different experiences. Prior to volunteering with a FoodCycle project, 40% of our young people stated that they wanted to help strengthen their local community and 49% wanted to meet new people. FoodCycle meals therefore cater to the existing desire from young people to engage with their local communities.

After volunteering with FoodCycle, 78% of young people had a greater understanding of the levels of food poverty and loneliness that people in their community face. The communal

meals provide the opportunity for young people to sit down with the guests to learn about their lived experiences. The meals also create a space for building connections and inter-generational friendships that may otherwise not have occurred. One young person surveyed stated about their experience.

"I believe it is a very positive thing to be able to volunteer with FoodCycle, which seems to stick to the purity and simplicity of its main social goals. It gives people the chance to come face to face with the issues some people in their community struggle with, and creates the possibility for interaction with other volunteers, and with those cared for. These exchanges are very wholesome and give more hope, especially to my generation which should build the future."

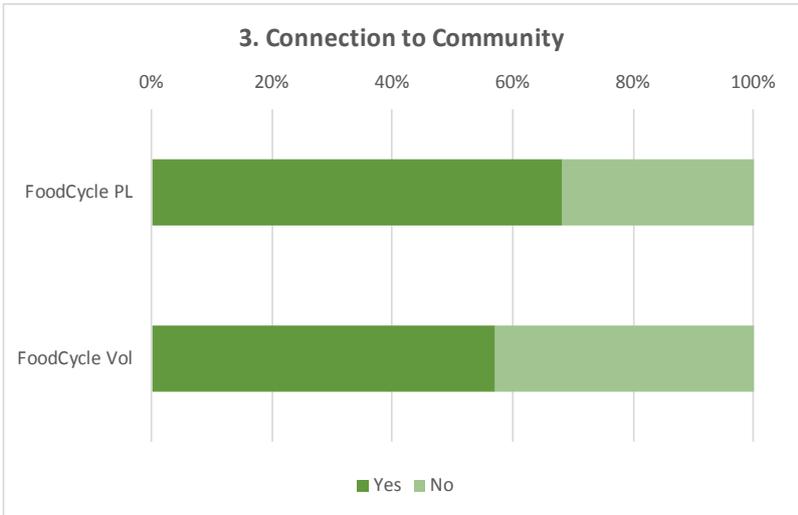


Callum at FoodCycle Liverpool at Christmas at the front in the middle)

At the end of From Farm to Fork 59% of young people felt more connected to their community. It is not just the sharing of meals with guests that creates community connections. Volunteers are also tasked with the collection of the surplus food needed for the meals from local businesses and retailers, where there are opportunities to engage with the wider community who do not attend the meals but are a part of creating them. FoodCycle also run one off events, for example our Pumpkin Soup Event, where our volunteers get to work alongside other charities and organisations who are also involved with tackling the problems of food waste.



Cabbage Gleaning



Case Study

Gabby Hardy-Gould, 23, FoodCycle Project Leader, Norwich

“FoodCycle is a great place to meet new people outside of university, especially people from the local community. I decided to become a project leader because of the warm and welcoming nature of FoodCycle. I wanted to give people that same feeling of being really welcome as well as doing something that gave me responsibility.

I’m a cooking project leader which involves inducting new volunteers, organising what to cook, gathering ideas, and cooking! I’m also involved with our communications and PR so I write our newsletter and run our social media accounts. It’s helped me to develop so many different skills.

The thing I most enjoy about my role is meeting new volunteers and guests, seeing people you’ve seen before and just sitting down to eat altogether. It’s a great way to meet new people, especially as a student, because it gets you out of the university bubble and you end up making friendships with people you wouldn’t usually meet. I’ve made friends with ladies in their 40s and men in their 70s! I’m able to put a smile on people faces and know that there are people look forward to seeing me and I look forward to seeing them.”



Gabby at FoodCycle Norwich with the rest of the team, front and centre

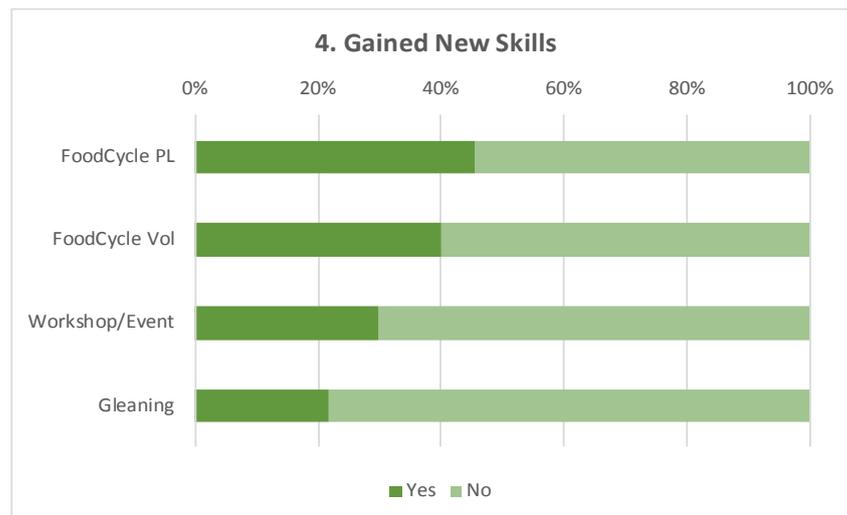
YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE GAINED EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS TO HELP THEM TOWARD EMPLOYMENT IN THE GREEN ECONOMY

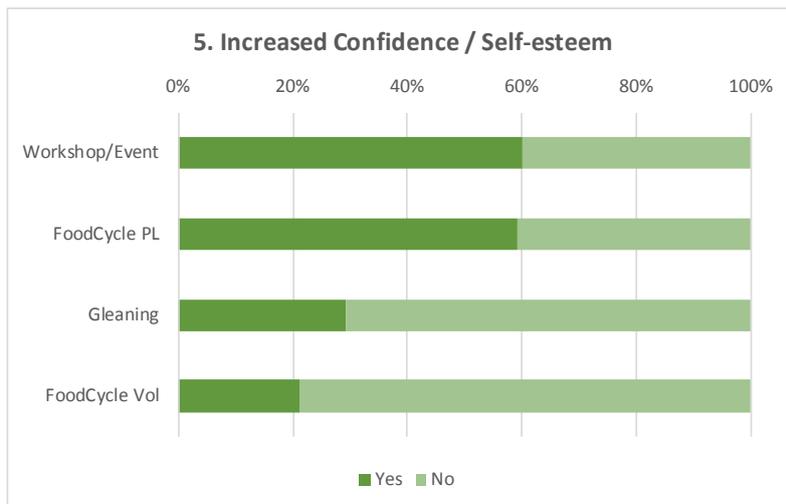
In a job interview with a London based environmental education charity, Hannah Fitchett was asked “what’s one thing you do that makes you stand out?” She replied to say she was an active gleaning volunteer and was currently making a film about gleaning. Her

interviewees were impressed to the extent that they offered her the job and signed-up themselves to come gleaning during the charity's volunteering days. Please see our short video interview with Hannah, and her friend Billie, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkARWTepZHs&t=5s>

Many of the young people we worked with were all too aware of the challenges the future held for them, especially when it came to finding secure and meaningful work. This concern did not limit itself to those currently out of work, or in otherwise disadvantaged circumstances; uncertainty about future prospects extended across the spectrum and included even (some might say especially, given the potential debt burden) those young people fortunate enough to have gained a place at university.

Of the 377 young people surveyed, 32% said they had gained new skills relevant to employment and 30% reported an improvement in their self-esteem. There were some notable difference in types of activity/engagement. Young people who participated in FoodCycle projects scored higher in gaining new skills, with 45% for Project Leaders and 40% for Volunteers; in contrast, participants at our workshops and events scored 30%, and gleaning volunteers 22%. One explanation for the difference in these results is length of engagement: volunteering and leadership opportunities with FoodCycle are regular and generally longer-term, whereas gleaning days, workshops and events tend to be sporadic, one-off or short-term. Young people who participate in FoodCycle projects therefore have more time over which to develop skills. Another explanation, borne out through our conversations with young people, is that the "skills" acquired at gleaning days – for example, learning to harvest produce – were not always perceived by young people as having direct relevance to their employability. This seemed to vary between groups, with university students generally seeing value in volunteering experience on environmental projects; for those outside of higher education, it is possible that accredited or otherwise 'tangible' skills were deemed more useful.





Case Study

Kako Black, 22, Feedback Volunteer and Project Assistant, London and UK-wide

Kako Black, an Australian student on a one-year placement at Warwick university volunteered regularly at Feedback over a period of 6 months. During this time she attended several Gleaning days and events, and assisted on several projects through which she learned about Feedback’s work and food waste.

“Even though I was someone who identified as being passionate about food waste, and concerned about food sustainability, I had never been to a commercial fruit farm before attending a glean with Feedback. I realised that I had been engaging with the issue of food waste from a single perspective (as a consumer) and that there were so many other ways to get involved – including, and importantly, at farm level.

I was aware of the big facts, the shocking facts – one third of food produced globally goes to waste, wasted food could feed 3 billion people a year – but these only sunk in when I saw waste in-person, on a manageable scale.

Sometimes the scale of the issue feels overwhelming. And it is literally overwhelming – the demands that our current food systems are putting on our planet are unsustainable. But unlike many other global issues, food sustainability is something we can all take direct action on. We all eat. We all have the capacity to make significant changes and tangible impact on reducing waste. What Feedback has taught me is that these actions are not the only way to get involved. It is also vital that we expand our perspectives and move away from solely consumer impacts to learn about and change our food system. We are not just food



Kako on a leek Glean

consumers, but food citizens.”

Inspired by Feedback’s UK Gleaning Network, Kako has now set up a Gleaning Network in her hometown in Australia, where she returned in spring 2018. Feedback were happy to assist in offering her advice and support for this endeavour and we look forward to hearing of their progress in the future!

WIDER AWARENESS HAS BEEN RAISED ABOUT FOOD WASTE AND THE ENVIRONMENT, DRIVING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE AND INFORMING POLICY

The past three years have seen huge changes in awareness of, and attitude towards, food waste. This has led to behaviour change at the individual level right through to wider public policy changes implemented across the UK.

For several years now, Feedback and our allies have called for transparency in food waste monitoring and reporting – arguing that what is not measured cannot be tackled. In 2018 we finally saw a major step forward, with supermarkets and other food businesses (89 UK companies in total) committing to publish their food waste data by September 2019, and pledging to halve food waste by 2030.

The government has put food waste at the forefront the agenda, appointing Ben Elliot as the first ever ‘Food Waste Champion’ in 2018 and allocating £15m for the food waste fund to provide financial support for the redistribution of surplus produce across the country. Large numbers of councils around the UK have run campaigns to change the behaviour of their constituents surrounding household food waste and Defra has imminent plans to implement country-wide food waste collections, raising awareness to how much food is wasted.

Many supermarkets have now launched ‘wonky veg’ ranges in an attempt to reduce the amount of food rejected (unnecessarily and unjustifiably) for cosmetic reasons. Feedback continued to monitor supermarkets and exert pressure to do better, and in early 2018 we published our report “Farmers Talk Food Waste: Supermarkets’ role in crop waste on UK farms”. This was the result of Feedback having built a network of farming allies, and having gained their trust: all of which was only made possible by our gleaning coordinators and young volunteers, recruited and engaged through the Our Bright Future programme. Another example of our influence is Tesco’s decision in 2018, following Feedback’s recommendation, to remove best before dates on packaged fruits and vegetables; several supermarkets are now aiming for zero edible food waste.

Organisations working to combat food waste through using or distributing surplus have massively increased in number and size. To name just a few, these include the apps OLIO, Karma, Too Good To Go, and the companies Rubies in the Rubble, Snact and Toast Ale. We have heard from several volunteers that, as a result of volunteering on From Farm to Fork, they have gone onto use engage with these other initiatives.

The media has continued to expose food waste on all levels of the food system. Working with Feedback’s Gleaning Network, the Sunday Times published a full-page article in 2017 uncovering – and ultimately preventing – huge levels of edible food waste on a farm in Kent (case study below). This created an immediate reaction from several supermarkets who



Gleaning corn

pledged to buy the glut, preventing the produce from being ploughed back into the ground. High-profile celebrities have also helped to highlight food waste issues – such as chef Jamie Oliver, who featured gleaning and food waste in his TV show 'Friday Night Feast'.

Case Study

Kent farmer Geoff Philpott and his family are long-time supporters of Feedback and The Gleaning Network. It was Geoff's father who hosted Feedback's first ever gleaning day, as long ago as 2012; since then Geoff has invited us back every year, happy to see our eager volunteers harvest any surplus crops to help people in need. It's a relationship that works both ways: Geoff knows that Feedback are always at the end of the phone, and ready to hear of any issues concerning farming, food and food waste.

In 2017, Geoff called Feedback to tell us there was a huge glut of cauliflowers, which should have been of interest to UK supermarkets - a fantastic bounty of local, nutritious veg. However, not only were the supermarkets being unresponsive to this opportunity: they were refusing to buy extra British crop while still importing large amounts of cauliflowers from Spain. We linked Geoff with the Sunday Times, and an article featuring him (and quoting Feedback) appeared in March 2017, in which he described how he was having to waste £60,000 of cauliflowers. Nearby farmer Trevor Bradley reported wasting 25,000 cauliflowers a week because the market cannot absorb them. Immediately following the article, Tesco pledged to buy an extra 220,000 caulis, selling them at a discount of 79p. Aldi soon followed suit, cutting prices to 29p per cauli, estimating this would shift an extra 500,000 caulis. In total, as many as 720,000 cauliflowers, equivalent to 414 tonnes, may have been sold, eaten and enjoyed... where only weeks earlier they were destined to be wasted.



WIDER AWARENESS HAS BEEN RAISED ABOUT SOCIAL ISOLATION, AND STRONGER CONNECTIONS HAVE BEEN FORMED WITHIN COMMUNITIES

FoodCycle are incredibly proud of the community meals we produce across the country every day; these meals improve the wellbeing of both our volunteers and guests, with 79% of guests agreeing that they feel more involved in their community after attending a FoodCycle meal. Reducing social isolation and improving community cohesion are key goals for us; we aim to achieve them by ensuring our volunteers come away with an understanding of what can give rise to social isolation, and prioritise maximising the immediate positive impacts that our guests benefit from, simply by having a conversation.

The venues we partner with to host the meals are a key component in the success of our events - by joining forces with them and sharing our achievements, we can further embed FoodCycle into local community spaces, ensuring a long term impact on people's lives.

We are always keen to work with local partner organisations as this helps to foster a greater sense of community cohesion as well as increasing our network and access to hard-to-reach community members. While we often advertise our meals on general platforms like 'Next Meal' and council websites, we have longstanding partnerships in various locations, including:

FoodCycle Islington – work in partnership with Mind Islington and run services at their centre. A Mind staff member is always present to provide support for our guests. Through collaborating with Mind, guests can benefit from both the community meal and the social and mental health support.

FoodCycle Dalston – works with a community organisation called Ourmala, who provide support for asylum seekers and refugee mothers, many of whom have experienced violent and sexual abuse throughout their journeys to the UK. Often these women can feel very isolated in an unfamiliar country, so our meals provide a space for mums and children to meet and play in a safe and supportive environment.

We also seek to put social isolation and highlight the importance of community cohesion with our local MPs and councillors. We invite representatives to our meals and larger events to create further community integration and provide a platform and space for our guests and volunteers to voice the issues that are affecting them the most.

Recently, the Mayor and Mayoress volunteered for four weeks at FoodCycle Cambridge at our Cambridge Barnwell venue. They helped with the cooking and hosting and were able to spend time socialising with their local community members. In one of our newer projects, FoodCycle Sutton, MP Andrew Mitchell and local councillor David Allen both publicly pledged their support. In our Norwood Junction project, Sarah Jones, the MP for Croydon, wore her hair net with pride and got stuck in with volunteering whilst championing the importance of building local communities.

Support from local public faces are key for spreading our message and for the success of our campaigns. In Portsmouth, a local councillor took part in our Holiday Hunger Campaign to understand what it is like living on the breadline. She later wrote about her experience, helping to highlight why services like our community meals are a vital to people within her own community living in poverty.

Case Study

We try and shout about our successes whenever we can, as we know this is a great way to raise awareness about tackling social isolation, as well as a celebrating the great work our teams do to build communities. For our 100th meal at our Finsbury Park Project, we invited Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour party and MP to Islington, to come along and see us in action. This enabled FoodCycle's CEO to talk to Jeremy directly about importance of bringing communities together, not only in his constituency of Islington, but across the whole of the UK.

<http://islingtonlife.london/discover-islington/blog/serving-up-a-milestone/>

> AN EYE-WATERING AMOUNT OF FOOD HAS BEEN SAVED... AND TRANSFORMED INTO MOUTH-WATERING MEALS

From Farm to Fork has been truly successful in saving a vast amount of food that would otherwise have been wasted, and in creating warm and nutritious meals for some of society's most vulnerable people.

- We gleaned and redistributed 293 tonnes of fruits and vegetables. This is equal to a whopping 3,673,725 portions of fruit and veg.
- Throughout all FoodCycle projects we served a total of 187,899 meals, including 47,078 takeaway meals.
- A grand total of 602 tonnes of food was saved throughout the project, saving an equivalent of 2499.42 CO2 emissions.

23 new FoodCycle Projects opened throughout the country. In addition, the project funding enabled us to further embed existing FoodCycle Projects in their regions, ensuring they continue to provide nourishing meals and a welcoming space to their local community for many years to come.

The food that we gleaned and rescued was received and used by a wide range of charities and community groups throughout the UK (in addition to FoodCycle). Beneficiary organisations included: FareShare, Community Food Enterprise, The Felix Project, City Harvest, The Real Junk Food Project and many more.

PROJECT LEGACY

From Farm to Fork was designed to be a three-year project, completing in January 2019. Over the course of those three years we have realised that young people – with their energy and enthusiasm, their eagerness to learn and to take action, their willingness to engage their peers – have a vital role to play in our work and our campaigns. We have realised, too, that young people need more opportunities to learn (beyond the limited confines of mainstream education), more pathways to skills and experience, and sometimes a helping hand towards better health and wellbeing. These are two very good reasons why, though From Farm to Fork may have formally concluded, our work with young people will carry on.

Feedback will continue to run The Gleaning Network, and in 2019 announced an exciting new phase of its development: “Community-led gleaning”, through which we will train and support local community groups to setup and run their own gleaning initiatives. We have already had interest from several groups, including one student-run project and one youth cooperative. FoodCycle will continue to run their core programme, open new projects in new locations, and further develop their outreach and skills offering to young people.

In addition to continuing those core activities, there are a number of avenues through which we build on the momentum and success of From Farm to Fork. Some of these already exist as up-and-running projects. Others are ideas we hope to realise or develop in the near future.

Here we list just some of these projects, activities and drawing-board ideas.

Developing skills and self esteem

We are currently exploring a number of ideas – both in regard to new projects, and to enhance the offering of existing projects. These include:

- Agricultural roots-to-work schemes for young people. The current political climate has led to increased cases of labour shortages on farms, and our farming contacts are keen to explore long-term solutions. At the same time, many farmers report increased difficulty in attracting young British workers. Further research is required, but we believe it may be possible to develop a programme which “transforms two problems into one solution.”
- A broader range of experiential learning on gleaning days, with structured activities such as in-field cookery classes using gleaned produce and workshops around alternative food systems
- Teaching entrepreneurship skills through food preservation/processing. Already we have two projects underway which could deliver against this objective: our Regional Food Economy in Liverpool and the north west, and our FLAVOUR project in Sussex.
- An expansion of our programme of co-hosting events with young people, such as “Come Dine Sustainably” and Disco Soups.

Increasing knowledge of food waste

Where From Farm to Fork confirmed the effectiveness of our projects in raising awareness of food waste, we now wish to focus on translating awareness into sustained behaviour change. To do this, in 2019 Feedback will launch a 2-3 year “Food Citizenship” pilot, empowering participants to take an active role in the food system, build a more sustainable local food economy, and influence their peers. Working initially in Buckinghamshire, in year one we focus on two distinct groups: secondary-age children, and local community groups. Further to the completion of a successful pilot, we hope to roll-out Food Citizenship as a nationwide programme.

Enhancing wellbeing and connections to community

From Farm to Fork has helped us to realise the potential of our projects in helping young people enhance their wellbeing and connections to their community. Throughout 2018, we have also achieved successes working with more young people from socially marginalised backgrounds. We are keen to explore how we might develop this potential further, for example through collaborating with social-and-horticultural therapy practitioners in gleaning, food growing and farm-based activities (including city farms). Some good examples of activities developed within From Farm to Fork, and which could be further developed, include:

- The gardening and food growing workshops we ran as part of the Remedi Restorative Justice programme in Manchester. Josephine Payne, Feedback’s Gleaning Coordinator (North), said: “We wanted to engage young men in activities that will improve confidence and wellbeing...having a structured project with tangible outcomes allows them to see real change and improvement to the site due to their efforts and attendance”
- Drop-in cook & eat lessons - demonstrating how to make meals using ‘surplus’ ingredients such as gleaned vegetables - with young people at risk of homelessness at the Clocktower Sanctuary in Brighton. Young people were given the choice of helping with the cooking and food preparation (as a learning activity), or simply sharing a nutritious meal within their community.

CONCLUSION

From Fark to Form has engaged thousands of young people, increasing their awareness of urgent environmental and social issues and enabling them to become part of the solution – through volunteering in and co-creating projects, through acquiring knowledge and confidence to influence their peers, and through building new networks.

At the time of publishing this report, the UK's political climate is more uncertain than ever, presenting great concerns for the future of our young people, our communities and our environment. However, this may equally be a time of opportunity. For example: as British farmers face the prospect of growing labour shortages, which could only lead to an increase in food waste, there is surely scope for innovative training programmes and progressive policies that create pathways into agricultural work for young people. Equally, as austerity continues to fracture our communities and sponsor the rise of foodbanks, could a return to 'regional food economies', spearheaded by innovations such as youth-led food cooperatives (a key aim of Student Eats, a fellow Our Bright Future project), be the key to renewed food security, stronger communities and shared prosperity?

If we truly care about young people's "wellbeing" – rather than this being simply a buzzword we roll out whenever it serves a political agenda – there must be investment in solutions. These solutions are neither mysterious nor complex: young people, as we have seen in this project, can benefit hugely simply through a closer connection with the countryside, with nature, with wildlife; by experiences that allow them to get outdoors and work with their hands. But those experiences will only be there if we protect that countryside from degradation.

From Farm to Fork has demonstrated that young people are quick and eager to learn about these issues – and ready to take action. They care about their planet. They care about their communities. They care about their future. So let's empower young people to protect what is rightly theirs.

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