Background Hospice teams provide care to terminally ill patients, bereaved people and their families. Care teams are comprised of health and non-health professionals from a range of differing disciplines. Within the modern healthcare arena, we are seeing people with ever increasing complexities (Keeble, Scobie & Hutchings. Support at the end of life: The role of hospice services across the UK. 2022). With a view to tailoring services that meet the needs and preferences of those who use them, it is essential to incorporate community-based agencies. Community-based provision offers expertise, additional support and improves working relations (Care Quality Commission, 2022). Fostering collaborative approaches helps facilitate quality care (Gittell, Godfrey, Thistlethwaite. J Interprof Care. 2013;27(3):210–3).

Aims By the integration of collaborative support from the local community, new services have been allowed to develop and grow. Consequently, this has complemented the existing provision for people that better supports their needs. Understanding the benefits of integrated support is creating a culture for continuous improvement.

Methods A thematic analysis was produced from previous collaborative work covering the past three years (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, et al. J Nurs Educ Pract. 2016;6(5): 100–110). Those involved in this work were from external agencies, other charities, local hospitals, specialist community teams.

Results Themes identified: Connection, Control, Choice, Celebration, Communication, and Community.

Conclusion It has been widely noted that these collaborative partnerships have created a positive given the high number of people attending and positive feedback. Adopting contemporary approaches, embracing the input of expertise, knowledge and skills, and embracing collaborative partnerships can create a culture that encourages cohesion (Karam, Brault, Van Durme, et al. Int J Nurs Stud. 2018; 79(March): 70–83). These results will enable planning toward future collaborative successes.

The catering department is an essential part of hospice care contributing to high quality care. Understanding their organisational needs are important to identify more sustainable and cost-effective ways of providing healthy and nutritious meals for patients, staff and visitors. One group of hospices in south-east England are always looking for new ways to bring fresh, tasty food to the plate as cost-effectively and creatively as possible. Initiatives include:

- Creating kitchen gardens, that will provide fresh, seasonal produce throughout the year.
- Working closely with local community organisations and groups – from suppliers to colleges – to support hospice catering.

The creation of the kitchen gardens supported by volunteer kitchen gardeners means we are able to grow vegetables, fruits and herbs that will be enjoyed year-round. Local business and successful grant applications have supported this project. Working with local colleges we offer work placements for students in our hospice kitchens and various volunteering opportunities throughout the year. We have food donations coming in from various sources, these being from supermarkets and also food producers. The kitchen garden has been a great success. It’s so nice to be able to tell patients that some of the food on their plates has been grown right outside, in the hospice gardens. Working with the community has increased the amount of food donations that come in. You can see the students grow in confidence after the work placements are completed and these students sometimes stay on as volunteers.

Hospices working with their local community (volunteers, local groups and colleges) can enable cost-effective ways to provide nutritious meals for their service users. The success of the kitchen garden prompted a grant application to the Kent Community Foundation for a second kitchen, which has been approved. We have also now secured funding for a third garden.