

Food, Health and Homelessness in Scotland – Mapping Practice, Progress and Impact

Community Food and Health (Scotland)

Appendix 4: Case Studies

**Norma Hurley
William Macdonald
Ian Christie
Lorraine Simpson
Sophie Ellison**

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1 Oasis Project

Project Name	Lomond Trust – Oasis Project’s Gardening and Healthy Eating Project
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Project Timescale/Key Milestones	2006 to present
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Provider/Sector	Voluntary sector – Oasis Project and Clued Up
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Venue and Location	The premises of the Oasis Project, a supported accommodation unit for young people, and Clued Up, a drugs awareness project, both in Kirkcaldy
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Project Background	<p>Oasis staff observed a lack of shopping and healthy eating skills among the project’s residents. For example, some residents used the project’s kitchen facilities to prepare cheap unhealthy food rather than healthier options.</p> <p>As a result, staff recognised the need to develop nutritional awareness and healthy eating skills among the project’s residents.</p> <p>Consequently, in 2006 an Oasis support worker had the idea of introducing a gardening project to allow service users to grow vegetables and learn about healthy eating in the process. Staff converted part of the project’s garden into a vegetable growing area. Residents were encouraged to take part in planting and growing vegetables. The project began offering weekly gardening sessions to residents, supported by project staff. Following each session participants prepare and eat a healthy light meal together. The project further evolved in 2007, when Oasis worked with Clued Up and the local Community Food Development Worker to deliver a weekly cookery class (Cook Club) at Clued Up’s premises.</p> <p>The gardening sessions and Cook Club are currently on-going.</p>
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Key Aims and Objectives

The project aims to ensure that service users learn about healthy eating from 'seed to plate' (that is, helping service users to grow their own vegetables, and providing guidance in how to use them and other ingredients to prepare healthy meals). The project's objectives are to :

- improve service users' knowledge of healthy eating and how to use healthy ingredients;
- improve service users' independent living skills;
- improve service users' gardening skills;
- provide opportunities for social interaction; and
- provide a therapeutic activity for service users.

Target Group(s)	Young homeless people aged 16-25
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Recruitment/Engagement of Service Users

Service users are residents at the Oasis project and/or service users of Clued Up. Five to seven service users regularly take part in the gardening sessions, and four in the Cook Club.

Types of Food, Health and Homelessness activities

Service users grow vegetables in the garden at the Oasis project. At the beginning of the project, a tutor from Elmwood College led a weekly session with service users in gardening skills at Oasis's garden for seven weeks.

There is one formal session of gardening per week, after which service users prepare and eat a healthy light meal together. Service users also assist Oasis's staff to maintain the garden outside of these formal sessions.

Service users also attend the Cook Club at Clued Up, led by the local Community Food Development Worker. This aims to improve service users' knowledge and awareness of how to prepare healthy meals, and includes guidance on buying the necessary ingredients and following healthy recipes.

In addition, project staff discuss healthy living and eating issues with residents through group and one-to-one work at Oasis.

Resources Used

One of Oasis's support workers takes responsibility for maintaining the garden, assisted by residents on an informal basis (that is, gardening is not a formal part of their care plan).

The project also uses kitchen facilities at Oasis and Clued Up.



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Partnership Working

Partnership working has been central to the delivery of the project. Oasis, Clued Up and the local Community Food Development Worker are all committed to promoting awareness of healthy eating among their service users. They work together to identify service users suitable for the gardening project and Cook Club, and share resources to ensure that service users learn about healthy eating 'from seed to plate'.

Elmwood College was another important partner, and provided a gardening skills course at Oasis's garden.

Outcomes and Impact for Learners

Below is a summary of the impact of the project on service users, based on the views of a group of five service users, the observations of project staff and the outcomes monitored by project staff through service users' individual support plans.

Improved independent living skills - increased knowledge of how to eat healthily on a budget, and the importance of a healthy diet

Project staff observed an increased awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and knowledge of how to eat healthily among service users. However, project staff recognise that the long term impact of this may not become apparent until the service user moves into his or her own tenancy, when he or she will put these independent living skills into practice to sustain his or her tenancy.

Service users reported the following.

- Increased awareness of how to eat healthily. One service user said "the project helped me to eat healthily" and another said "(the project) taught me that healthy food can be frozen and saved for later."
- Increased awareness that healthy food can be tasty and affordable. One service user said "(the course taught me that) healthy food is tasty and enjoyable" although it can be "more expensive" than less healthy alternatives.
- Increased knowledge of how and where to access affordable healthy food. One service user said "healthy food can be more expensive, but it depends where and what you buy... there's always a deal on cheap fruit at Aldi's."
- Increased knowledge of how to prepare healthy meals. One service user said "I now eat more healthily" and another said "I used to eat cheap food until I came here - the project has taught me what a proper meal is."

Outcomes and Impact for Learners *cont'd*

Improved gardening skills

Service users reported an improvement in their gardening skills, and an increased awareness of the ease of growing vegetables.

Social interaction

Service users valued the social opportunities that the project, and cooking in general offer. Their comments included:

- "I like eating in a room with people, because I don't like to cook for myself."
- "I enjoy a family meal it's what I'm used to."
- "I've made new friends."
- "Cooking for my pals helped me to settle into my house."

Project staff commented that service users also developed team working skills through working with each other in the garden.

Therapeutic activity

Project staff observed a reduction in challenging behaviour and greater calmness among service users during and after gardening. Gardening gave service users a purpose and motivation to do something productive when they may otherwise have been doing little else. Indeed, one service user noted that she enjoyed gardening because she "could take her frustration out on it".

Key Transition Points for Learners

A key transition point will occur when service users move from supported accommodation into independent tenancies. One service user we spoke to has already made this transition, and noted that cooking meals for her friends, using the skills gained through this project, helped her to settle into her house.

Innovative Approaches and Good Practice

The project displays several examples of good practice, including:

- Effective and committed partnership working
- Increasing service users' knowledge and awareness of healthy eating issues 'from seed to plate'.
- Providing a relaxing environment where service users feel comfortable to talk to project staff about other issues that affect their lives.



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Additional benefits/outcomes

The project achieved the following additional outcomes.

- The project offers service users an enjoyable, informal and relaxing activity that gives them a distraction from their day-to-day lives. Project staff noted that this gave them a chance to engage with service users in a relaxed, informal and non-judgemental environment. This made service users more relaxed than they would normally be in more formal encounters with staff, and more willing to talk with project staff while gardening or cooking about other issues that affect their lives.
- One service user moved on to a full time cookery course. Although she did not complete this course, project staff feel that this still represents significant progress in this service user's life.
- Service users were highly committed to and enthusiastic about the project, and showed a high level of reliability. The service users – who are leading chaotic lives – made sure they were regularly available for gardening. For one this meant attending the gardening session at the expense of picking up his methadone prescription later than planned.

Lessons Learned

The project identified the following lessons learned.

- The project could achieve more if staff could spend more time on it. For example, the project had intended to prepare more substantial meals after gardening sessions, but in reality could only prepare a light meal (usually sandwiches). This was, however, augmented by the Cook Club at Clued Up. In addition, project staff would like to have formal gardening sessions more frequently, but this is not possible due to staff time and travel requirements for service users who were not Oasis residents.
- Providing a safe environment where service users feel comfortable is important to allow them to take on board healthy eating messages, and to talk about other issues that affect their lives.
- The commitment of service users, partners and staff is crucial.

Sustainability and Future Activities

The garden and weekly gardening sessions will continue for at least as long as the Oasis support worker with responsibility for maintaining the garden remains in post, but further activities depend on future funding. Other plans for the garden include using gardening to develop employability skills (by supporting service users to move on to employment or training using their gardening skills) and to improve relations between the Oasis Project and residents in the nearby community, for example by doing gardening work in community green areas or in the gardens of older or disabled people who cannot maintain them themselves.

Clued Up will continue to host Cook Club.



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Costs and Funding

Lloyds TSB provided initial funding for garden equipment including sheds and tools. CFHS funded further equipment such as a generator, and the sessions with a tutor from Elmwood College.

The Cook Club, hosted at Clued Up, is funded by the Fife Community Food Project, a project developed by Fife Council, NHS Fife and Working for Environmental Community Action Now (WECAN), a voluntary organisation.



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2 Quarriers Stay Project

Project Name	Quarriers Stay Project – Cookery Course
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Project Timescale/Key Milestones	The project began in March 2008 and finished in August 2008.
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Provider/Sector	Voluntary sector
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Venue and Location	Quarriers Stay Project, Barrhead and Portofino Catering's Training Kitchen in Drumchapel
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Project Background

Project staff noticed that young people who accessed the Stay Project often had unhealthy diets (which had a negative impact on their dental and physical wellbeing) and perceived healthy food to be too expensive for them to buy.

As a result, staff introduced a project to raise awareness of healthy eating among service users.

Key Aims and Objectives

The project aimed to:

- introduce healthy food and cooking to service users; and
- raise awareness that it need not be expensive to eat healthily.

Target Group(s)	Young people aged 16-25 who are affected by homelessness.
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Recruitment/Engagement of Service Users

Self-referral or via the Social Work Homeless Team. Ten service users took part in the cookery course.

Types of Food, Health and Homelessness activities

The Quarriers Stay Project provides advice and information on food and health, and independent living skills development (including budgeting for food, meal planning, food hygiene and safety awareness, home management and social skills).

The project received funding from CFHS to offer two sets of four-week professional cookery lessons to young people receiving support from the Stay Project. The project provided cookery packs (including essential equipment and pantry items such as pots, knives, cutlery and other utensils) to the service users following the course, along with a book containing recipes for all the meals they had prepared during the course. At the end of the course, the project ran a celebration lunch, where service users cooked for their friends, family, project staff and funders.

Types of Food, Health and Homelessness activities *cont'd*

As a follow up to the cookery course, the project also arranged for six service users to undertake Food Hygiene Certificate training.

In addition, the project provides general food and health advice and support (including food hygiene, shopping and budgeting skills) through individual housing support for young people in their first tenancy, and meals are prepared as a group activity in the project's premises in Barrhead.

Resources Used

The project was delivered by the Stay Project's existing staff in partnership with Portofino Catering (which delivered the cookery classes) and a freelance tutor who led the Food Hygiene Certificate training.

Partnership Working

The project worked effectively with Portofino Catering and a Food Hygiene Certificate tutor.

East Renfrewshire Council also assisted the project in identifying a mobile training kitchen provider (although the provider identified subsequently could not deliver the project).

The project hired a people carrier from Pollok Young People's Project to transport the service users to the training kitchen.

Outcomes and Impact for Learners

Below is a summary of the impact of the project on service users, based on the views of a group of five service users, the observations of project staff and comments made by service users on evaluation forms at the end of the course.

Introduce healthy food and cooking to service users

Project staff feel that the Cookery Course achieved what they had intended it to. They feel the cookery course demonstrated the importance of using fresh, healthy produce, and the importance of food hygiene.

Service users reported that they had learned a great deal about how to eat healthily and the importance of a balanced diet:

- The course taught them that fresh, healthy food tastes better than tinned or processed food, and showed them how to prepare healthy meals. As service users said:

“I learned a lot about healthy eating.”

“It made me eat vegetables – I was never a veg person!”

“(I learned that) if you cook veg in different ways they taste different.”

“I still go to the takeaway, but not as much!”

“It made me realise how quick and easy it is to prepare a meal for myself.”

- The course provided inspiration to try new things:

“The course gave me confidence in trying new things.”

“The course gives you more get up and go - instead of using the microwave, I’ll start cooking.”

“The course broadened our horizons.”

“Since finishing the course I have prepared two dishes which I learned while attending the course.”



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Outcomes and Impact for Learners *cont'd*

- Increased confidence in cooking:

“I never had much confidence in cooking – this gives you more.”

“The course gave me confidence in how to follow recipes.”

Raise awareness that it need not be expensive to eat healthily

The project appears to have had some success in showing service users that it is possible to eat healthily on a budget. Service users' comments include the following:

“(I will use the knowledge I gained) to cook on a budget.”

“I realised cooking can be easy and cheap.”

“(the course has helped me) to make fresh meals and shop economically.”

However, service users we spoke to felt that healthy food is expensive, and this along with the perishability of fresh food, are the main barriers to eating healthily. One said that the recipes included in the cookery book given to service users at the end of the course were too expensive and required some ingredients that could only be purchased from specialist shops such as Chinese supermarkets. However, one service user commented that the recipes are “inexpensive and simple” and another two recognised that healthy food is more affordable if bought in bulk and frozen if necessary.

Key Transition Points for Learners

Using the skills gained from the course on a day-to-day basis, particularly when moving from supported accommodation to an independent tenancy.



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Innovative Approaches and Good Practice

By providing cookery packs and a recipe book the project aimed to help service users to put what they learned into practice and acted as an incentive to sign up for and complete the course.

The project benefitted from working with partners who had a good approach to working with young people affected by homelessness. Project staff felt that although it can be difficult to gain the trust of these young people, the partners involved in delivering the Cookery Course and Food Hygiene Certificate worked well with the young people and showed them respect and patience. As a project staff member said, "having good people who can communicate well with young people is paramount". A service user commented that the chef was "kind and supportive" and another said that he "made it fun and enjoyable."

Service users were involved in the funding application for the Cookery Course, to ensure that the course met their needs. This had the added benefit of giving them a 'winning feeling' when the application was successful.

The celebration lunch gave service users the chance to show off what they had learned to project staff and funders.

Additional benefits/outcomes

Therapeutic nature of cooking

Service users commented that the cookery course, and cooking in general, has a therapeutic value, in that it can act as a distraction to their problems, "takes you away from everything else" and "de-stresses you."

Social interaction

Service users valued cooking and eating meals as a social event to look forward to. Service users also commented that this "social support makes up for a lack of family support", and that this was one of their reasons for signing up for the cookery course.

Increased self-esteem and general self-confidence

Service users commented that eating something tasty that they have made, and receiving compliments from others on the dish, "gives you a boost" and "a sense of achievement."

Service users enjoyed cooking, were keen to participate and were relaxed and chatty at their celebration lunch. Service users gained a sense of achievement on completion of the course and were eager to tell Stay Project staff about the food they had made. One service user joined Quarriers' VIP Group (a group of young service users that has a say on how the project is run) as a result of the confidence gained through taking part in the cooking course and mixing with other Quarriers service users.

Additional benefits/outcomes cont'd

Raised aspirations

Some service users have expressed an interest in pursuing a career in cookery. One has gone on to college to study a food-related course and another now works in a café.

Improved personal hygiene

Project staff have observed an improvement in service users' personal hygiene, and feel that this is due to the lessons that service users learned while completing the Food Hygiene Certificate.

A new environment

Project staff feel that it was beneficial for service users to travel away from their usual surroundings to take part in the course. As one service user said "the course was very good as it was away from Barrhead."

Lessons Learned

It is important to involve partners and providers who communicate well with vulnerable young people. The chef who led the cookery classes had a good rapport with the service users and made them feel at ease.

More could have been achieved over a longer timescale

The need for flexibility – the project had originally arranged for a provider to deliver the cookery courses in Barrhead using a mobile kitchen. However, the provider subsequently reneged on this agreement, which necessitated the use of Portofino Catering's training kitchen in Drumchapel.

Service users found the course worthwhile and enjoyable, but had some suggestions for improvement:

- Service users would like more support in how and where to buy affordable healthy food by, for example, staff taking them to the shops.
- The course should be longer and cover more varied recipes.

Sustainability and Future Activities

There is a slight surplus in the funding, so the project will provide some young people with the opportunity to attend an advanced food and hygiene course.

To encourage young people to use the skills that they learned during the course on a day-to-day basis, the project will run a group activity on Tuesdays which gives young people a chance to prepare and eat a meal together. In addition, the Stay Project will continue to give young people advice on independent living, budgeting and shopping skills as part of its core remit.



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Sustainability and Future Activities *cont'd*

The exact nature of what the project can offer in the future is uncertain as it will move to a new residential unit being constructed by East Renfrewshire Council in the near future. Currently the project is unsure of the exact facilities it will have in its new premises, which makes it difficult to plan its activities.

Costs and Funding

The cookery course was funded entirely by a CFHS grant (£3,180).

The main costs were hiring the training kitchen, chef and Food Hygiene Certificate tutor, transport to and from Drumchapel and purchasing the materials included in the cookery packs given to service users on completion of the course.

3 Edinburgh Cyrenians

Project Name	Edinburgh Cyrenians – Good Food in Tackling Homelessness Programme (including FareShare)
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Project Timescale/Key Milestones	The Good Food programme has been running in Edinburgh since 2000. The Fareshare project was established in October 1999 and became operational during March 2000.
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Provider/Sector	Voluntary Sector (working with the private sector)
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Venue and Location	Edinburgh Cyrenians Good Food Distribution Warehouse – Leith, Edinburgh
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Project Background	
<p>Fareshare is a national UK charity that has been supporting communities to address food waste and relieve food poverty since 1993. The aims of the charity are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to redistribute surplus products from the food and drink industry to disadvantaged people in the community; • to promote healthy eating awareness and skills; and • to provide training and education such as essential life skills and employability skills which assist disadvantaged people to move towards independence and employment. <p>Edinburgh Cyrenians have been running the Edinburgh and Lothians franchise of the Fareshare project since 1999 and are distributing food on a regular basis to homelessness projects across Edinburgh and the Lothians. In 2004, they launched the Good Food in Tackling Homelessness programme, which incorporates a range of innovative activities around food such as education and training, key skills development and the sharing of information and good practice.</p>	



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Key Aims and Objectives

According to staff, the overall aims of the project are to support homeless people or those who are at risk of homelessness through:

- Redistributing good quality surplus food to homelessness projects, creating the opportunity to increase the nutritional value of meals provided to individuals who often have issues with health and homelessness.
- Supporting people to work towards an independent lifestyle through teaching basic cookery skills and information on food safety, nutrition and budgeting. The classes also aim to build confidence of participants and increase social skills of participants to reduce social exclusion.
- Providing training and education around warehousing and logistics to enable volunteers and trainees to increase their skills and confidence and take steps from being the 'helped to the helper'. The project encourages social inclusion and skills development as steps to employment for supported volunteers and trainees.

Target Group(s)

The programme aims to assist homeless people, those at risk of homelessness or those who have experienced homelessness.

The Food Redistribution Project (FareShare) redistributes surplus food from wholesalers and retailers to over thirty homelessness projects throughout the Lothian area. People with personal experience of homelessness are encouraged to volunteer. According to staff, over 80% of volunteering hours are contributed by people who have issues with homelessness or other complex needs.

The Cooking at Home classes are aimed at people moving from supported accommodation into their own independent tenancy, as well as individuals who have issues regarding for example addiction, repeat offending and/or mental health.

Recruitment/Engagement of Service Users

Cyrenians staff state that the project has a very good reputation amongst homelessness and volunteer services and that they can evidence progress for some of the most vulnerable members of the community. Subsequently staff from services specifically working in this field provide referrals to them on a regular basis.

Staff emphasise that they are willing to accept volunteers with a range of backgrounds – including serious criminal convictions – and often receive word-of-mouth referrals from existing volunteers or trainees and organisations such as the Volunteer Centre.

Types of Food, Health and Homelessness activities

Edinburgh Cyrenians have been running the Fareshare project since 1999 and are distributing food on a regular basis to over 30 homelessness organisations and projects throughout the Lothians. The project states that approximately a third of the food they distribute is in the form of fresh fruit and vegetables. Volunteers and trainees are involved in warehouse roles such as sorting, storing, packing and delivering food supplies. The project encourages social inclusion and skill development as steps to employment for supported volunteers and trainees.

The Cooking at Home classes cater for a maximum of four people and teach basic cookery skills and information on food safety, nutrition and budgeting. The Cyrenians receive referrals for service users to attend their classes from homelessness, mental health and other organisations working with individuals whose vulnerabilities might include addiction, repeat offending or mental health issues.

Edinburgh Cyrenians also shares their learning around food, health and homelessness with other organisations, for example through their annual food conference and study tours.

In the last year, the Good Food in Tackling Homelessness programme delivered 118 cooking classes, involved volunteers and trainees in contributing over 9,000 hours of work, and received 467 tons of food from 27 companies. The redistributed food contributed to an estimated three quarters of a million meals.

Resources Used

Edinburgh Cyrenians have a dedicated food distribution warehouse, together with two delivery vans, a forklift truck, refrigeration units and offices. They have also built a dedicated training kitchen and training room within the Good Food depot.

Partnership Working

Edinburgh Cyrenian's Good Food in Tackling Homelessness programme works with a wide range of private, public and voluntary sector partners.

- Surplus food and drink are donated by organisations such as Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's, Pret a Manger, Aldi, Bartletts, Kettle Fife, Ford Bakeries, Kraft, Wiseman and Greggs.
- The Fareshare programme currently delivers to over 30 different homelessness projects across Edinburgh and the Lothians;
- The Cyrenians receive referrals for service users to attend Cooking at Home classes and for volunteers and trainees from organisations working in the field of homelessness and social exclusion, and also with volunteer organisations such as the Edinburgh Volunteer Centre as well as through their website.



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Outcomes and Impact for Learners

Below is a summary of the impact on service users and staff of the project, based on the views of four participants as well as the input of project staff.

Introducing healthy food and meal preparation to volunteer staff and service users

“When people are homeless and have low self esteem, food is the last thing for them. Some people don’t really eat at all”

“I used to eat once a day – or just drank [alcohol]. If it wasn’t for Cyrenians, I would be dead”

“When I eat healthy food, I feel better, I feel motivated.”

“Before, when I was living in a hostel, I used to just eat pot noodles. I eat a lot more fruit now”

“Before classes, people often lack very basic skills such as how to peel an orange, chop an onion or even how to turn on a cooker”

“In the future, I’m going to learn how to cook Italian food.”

“If it was up to me, I would have a garden and grow my own food”

Social interaction aspects of preparing and eating meals

“It is all about building people’s self esteem and confidence”

“It feels good to sit down with other people and catch up”

“When you cook food for everyone and they like it.. I feel really proud”

“Cooking my own food helps me to keep busy at home”

“The highlight of the year is the Christmas dinner”

“A lot of it is about getting away from negative influences and drugs. This is a very supportive environment”

“For people who have never been homeless, they get a new perspective on what it’s like and the difficulties that people face”

“I had a lot of trouble controlling my temper [before] and used to keep everything inside. Now I can communicate with other people and say how I feel.”

According to staff, the “Cooking at Home” classes have demonstrated success in assisting participants to develop not only their cooking skills and understanding of food hygiene, nutrition and budgeting, but also their social skills and confidence. Staff further state that the classes are valued by other organisations, who refer service users to them on a regular basis.



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Key Transition Points for Service Users and Volunteer Staff

One of the key transition points for volunteers and trainees is when their lives become more stable and they are regularly attending the project. Staff stated that for some homeless people, this can be a big achievement and a 'reason to get up in the morning' and progress from being the 'helped to the helper'.

A further key transition point is when supported volunteers and trainees are able to move onto paid employment. Cyrenians staff noted the importance of this step and stated that in future, they are looking to expand activities in this area.

For those attending "Cooking at Home" classes, a key transition point is when they move into their own tenancy. Cooking classes are designed to provide skills to these people to help them cope with preparing their own meals on a day to day basis.

Innovative Approaches and Good Practice

By working with a range of private sector partners, the Fareshare programme is able to redistribute surplus food that would have otherwise ended up as landfill. They also help provide meals to homeless and marginalised people throughout Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Cyrenians have built up a strong network of organisations and capitalise on this through distribution of newsletters and holding events to share learning and good practice in the local area.

Staff stated that their open door policy, even towards those with serious criminal convictions, means that they provide opportunities for individuals who are often excluded from volunteering. However, they acknowledge that there can be very limited opportunities for some individuals to volunteer due to their backgrounds.

Each year the Project organises three social events in addition to a Christmas meal, when staff and volunteers prepare and eat a meal together and enjoy a visit from Father Christmas. Two volunteers stated that this is a highlight for them and makes Christmas a positive experience.

Lessons Learned

- Staff noted that by providing fresh fruit and vegetables to homelessness projects they are able to encourage these hostels to prepare and cook their own food, which increase the skills of staff and potentially service users as well. The provision of food allows organisations to re-direct their finances to other priority areas within their organisations.
- Meals provide a positive environment for staff and homeless people to sit down together and socialise. Staff state that this makes a big difference to confidence levels and social skills amongst the client group.
- Cooking lessons need to be tailored to the ability of the service users. For example some service users lack basic skills such as knowing how to chop an onion or how to peel an orange. Others have very low literacy or lack of confidence. For example, one service user stated that they found it hard to turn on a gas cooker whilst another felt uncomfortable about using a knife. Staff note that they aim to teach each individual at a level that they are comfortable with and start with small steps to build their confidence.
- By establishing a professional setup that complies with legislation and guidelines on food preparation and storage, staff were able to build trust and subsequently relationships with partners, which has allowed them to expand.

Sustainability and Future Activities

Edinburgh Cyrenians are planning to expand their Good Food programme in a number of ways in the future, including:

- developing links with other private food wholesalers and retailers to increase available surplus food for redistribution;
- establishing core funding and increasing the number of projects that they can distribute to;
- increasing training sessions in food safety and hygiene to service users and staff from other organisations. The project has recently been accredited as a teaching centre for food safety and hygiene by REHIS (Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland);
- developing closer links with organisations working in the field of homelessness and social exclusion to provide training, newsletters and information; and
- increasing the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables as a proportion of food distributed.



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Costs and Funding

The Good Food project has annual operating costs of approximately £220,000 per year. The City of Edinburgh Council is currently providing core funding for the project up to March 2009, with NHS Lothian also contributing. In addition, several voluntary organisations such as the Rotary Club have made donations, as have private businesses and individuals.

4 Dundee Women's Aid

Project Name	Dundee Women's Aid and Dundee Healthy Living Initiative - Independent Living Skills Group.
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Project Timescale/Key Milestones	The first eight week course began in August 2008 and staff plan to run the course three to four times per year.
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Provider/Sector	Voluntary sector (working with the public sector).
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Venue and Location	Menziesshill Community Centre, Orleans Place, Dundee.
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Project Background
<p>Staff at Dundee Women's Aid identified that women they were engaging with through their refuge and outreach service had experienced a range of traumatic events such as domestic violence and loss of their home. These women often experienced other issues such as isolation and very low confidence, and were lacking social skills and life skills to help them cope on a day to day basis.</p> <p>The organisation therefore applied for funding to develop an independent living skills course to prevent and alleviate homelessness amongst women in Dundee and to help them move towards and cope with an independent tenancy.</p> <p>Staff gave every service user a questionnaire through their refuge, follow-on service and outreach service, asking whether they would be interested in learning about any of a range of topics and used this feedback to design a weekly course that incorporated lessons on food and cooking with other topics such as benefits and personal safety.</p> <p>Dundee Women's Aid are currently working with the Dundee Healthy Living Initiative to deliver the course. The Healthy Living Initiative uses a community development approach with the aim to reduce health inequalities in the most deprived communities in Dundee.</p>

Key Aims and Objectives
<p>The key aims of the Independent Living Skills Group project are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make women aware of the importance of food and how what they're eating affects them and their children in terms of physical and mental health; • help women to incorporate healthy living into their day-to-day lives in a way that is sustainable and affordable; and • provide opportunities for women to develop life and social skills and to engage with other services and forms of support.

Target Group(s)

The specific target group is women who are currently engaged with Dundee Women's Aid that are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Recruitment/Engagement of Service Users

For the first presentation of the course, Dundee Women's Aid invited women who had responded to the questionnaire and stated that they would be interested in the living skills course.

Staff recognised that many women have no private transport and often have children but no available childcare. These act as barriers to women participating in the course. Therefore staff collect women before classes and provide a crèche during classes. Staff stated that participants sometimes feel unable to cope with coming to classes on their own or are scared to leave the house. Therefore, when they come to collect them, they also provide encouragement and assistance with getting children ready. They feel that this approach is a success and note that no one has dropped out of the course.

Types of Food, Health and Homelessness activities

The course consists of eight weekly sessions of several hours each held in a kitchen at the community centre. The first half focuses on learning about and preparing food. Service users learn new recipes each week and then prepare them with the help of tutors, as a group activity. After this, staff and service users, together with their children, sit down together to eat their meal and socialise.

Learning is very informal with tutors working and eating side by side with participants. Tutors discuss the health benefits of different types of food, food hygiene, how to cook and how to budget. Other activities covered in the classes include growing herbs and arts and crafts.

The second half of the session involves a guest speaker from a range of agencies to talk to participants and answer any questions. These speakers provide opportunities for women to get information and advice or to engage with other services.

Resources Used

The project makes use of a communal kitchen at the Menzieshill Community Centre. The centre also has crèche facilities available for children during classes.

Staff from the Dundee Healthy Living initiative teach the cooking component of the class, whilst staff from Dundee Women's Aid use transport to collect and drop off women and their children and provide support and assistance during classes.

Partnership Working

Staff from Dundee Women's Aid note that there is a lot of co-ordination of services to make the classes happen, but that this is also a strength of the project as they are able to provide a range of services to women.

In addition to the Menzieshill Community Centre and the Dundee Healthy Living Initiative, Dundee Women's Aid works with a range of other organisations. Working for Families provides the crèche facilities for women during classes. Women register with the scheme and receive childcare benefits. Guest speakers during the second half of lessons include members from the NHS Health and Homelessness team, an advisor on smoking cessation, a Community Safety Worker and a Benefits Advisor from JobCentre Plus.

Outcomes and Impact for Learners

Below is a summary of the impact of the project on service users, based on the views of a group of five service users and the observations of project staff.

Awareness of the link between eating and physical and mental health and the benefits of healthy food

Participants demonstrated good awareness of the link between food and health, for example, eating poorly was cited as leading to:

"putting on weight", "high cholesterol", "high blood pressure", "bad moods"

Examples of healthy eating included:

"making homemade meals from scratch", "using raw ingredients", "eating oily fish", "Eating fresh fruit and vegetables", "not putting loads of salt on food", "having cake but in moderation and only every once in a while"

"I realise now that the healthy option is just as tasty as anything you can buy"

"The kids should be learning this at school. I think they've got to start somewhere"

The social benefits of cooking

The tutors and staff from Dundee Women's Aid said that the women had become much more social during the course and that the group "had really gelled together". Participants gave several examples of changes in their home life:

"Just lately - I've got a 14 year old son and I've been getting him down to help peel the potatoes ...it's the only time we interact and have conversations...It's good"

"It's fun cooking in the kitchen together and the chat between everybody"

"It's the only time that we all sit down together like a family"



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Outcomes and Impact for Learners cont'd

Increased confidence and ability

All interviewees stated that they felt either more confident or much more confident about preparing their own meals. For example:

"[My cooking] is better since the classes. I learned how to make rice pudding. I wouldn't even have attempted making rice pudding [before]"

"If there's a recipe to follow and you know what you're doing then it is easier"

"I think a recipe to start with and then once you've done something you don't need the recipe"

"You don't have to follow the recipe exactly – you can add other things"

"I tried that recipe at home – it was really good"

Key Transition Points for Learners

Key transition points for learners centre around becoming more independent. For some women this may include being confident enough to prepare their own meals at home, whilst for others a transition point may be to feel confident enough to be able to move out of the refuge and sustain an independent tenancy.

Innovative Approaches and Good Practice

Staff from Dundee Women's Aid stated the importance of co-ordinating services to remove any barriers to participation and provide women with the opportunities to be a part of the learning. Learning is informal and directed by the group. Tutors state that they try to avoid giving too many instructions or asking too many questions and instead try to allow the group to work at its own pace and discuss and learn together.

Participants are provided with the recipes at the end of the class for the meals they have prepared, and are encouraged to try making them at home. At the end of the course, tutors provide staff with a set of basic cooking implements to help them prepare their meals.

Classes focus on raising participant's confidence through encouraging them wherever possible. Staff also introduce participants to a range of other services and courses of relevance without pressuring them, so that they are able to access these if and when they feel comfortable.



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Lessons Learned

According to Dundee Women's Aid staff, one of the main lessons learned is the benefit of presenting classes in an informal, group-based environment where participants choose what they want to learn. It is felt that this approach works particularly well in terms of raising women's confidence and encouraging them to, "come out of their shells" and speak with other people. Staff suggested that after taking part in this course, some women may be more likely to go on to further courses.

Staff felt strongly that providing transport and childcare was crucial to engaging women and getting them to attend classes. Noting the low levels of confidence and isolation experienced by many women, staff said it was important to provide constant encouragement to learners to help keep them going.

Staff from Dundee Women's Aid discussed using this approach in other courses they run, such as on domestic abuse.

Sustainability and Future Activities

Dundee Women's Aid are planning to run the course three to four times over the course of one year, after which they will assess its progress.

Costs and Funding

The Dundee Healthy Living Initiative is currently funded through the Fairer Scotland Fund and the NHS