

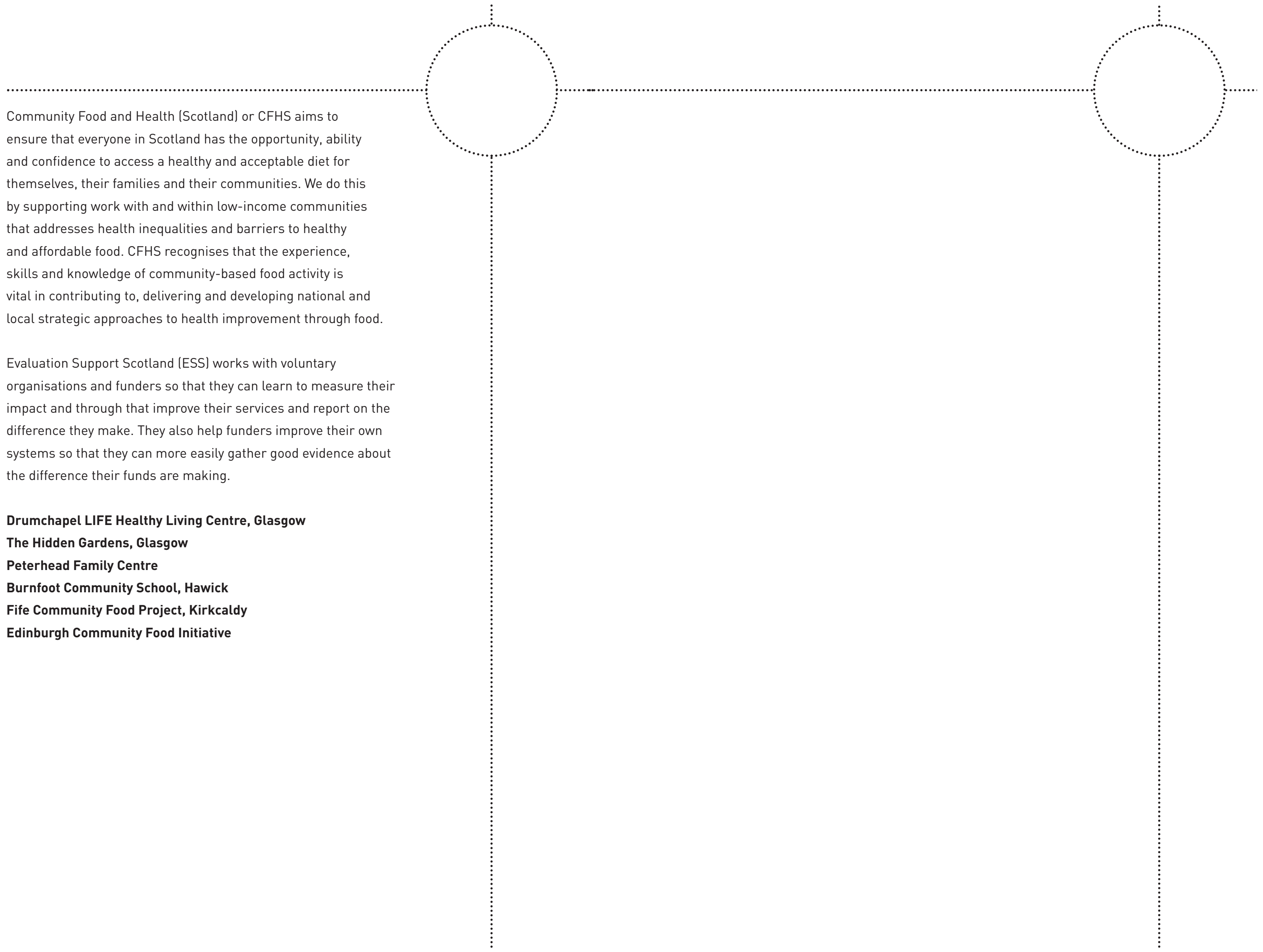
**STAGE ONE** INTERIM REPORT

# Early Years **Self-evaluation** Collaborative



Involving  
Community Food  
and Health (Scotland),  
Evaluation Support  
Scotland and six  
community food and  
health projects.



A decorative graphic consisting of a horizontal dotted line with two large circles at its ends. From each circle, a vertical dotted line extends downwards. The text is positioned to the left of the left circle.

Community Food and Health (Scotland) or CFHS aims to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the opportunity, ability and confidence to access a healthy and acceptable diet for themselves, their families and their communities. We do this by supporting work with and within low-income communities that addresses health inequalities and barriers to healthy and affordable food. CFHS recognises that the experience, skills and knowledge of community-based food activity is vital in contributing to, delivering and developing national and local strategic approaches to health improvement through food.

Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) works with voluntary organisations and funders so that they can learn to measure their impact and through that improve their services and report on the difference they make. They also help funders improve their own systems so that they can more easily gather good evidence about the difference their funds are making.

**Drumchapel LIFE Healthy Living Centre, Glasgow**

**The Hidden Gardens, Glasgow**

**Peterhead Family Centre**

**Burnfoot Community School, Hawick**

**Fife Community Food Project, Kirkcaldy**

**Edinburgh Community Food Initiative**

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>page 4</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>page 5</b>
<b>Policy context</b>	<b>page 6</b>
<b>Who is involved?</b>	<b>page 7</b>
<b>Learning about evaluation methods</b>	<b>page 8</b>
<b>Using evaluation methods</b>	<b>page 9</b>
<b>Case studies</b>	<b>page 11</b>
<b>Top tips</b>	<b>page 18</b>
<b>What next?</b>	<b>page 19</b>

# Introduction

This report highlights the first stage of a three-stage pilot programme commissioned by CFHS, and led by Evaluation Support Scotland to support six groups to show the impact of their work with parents and children aged 0-5 years.

All the projects deliver a range of activities that address health inequalities as well as access to healthy affordable food.

All the projects work with parents (or carers) and their children together from weaning through to pre-school.

All the groups use community development as an approach that enables people in communities to work together to promote knowledge, skills and confidence, build capacity and take action to tackle issues and concerns relevant to local need and circumstance.

This report outlines why and how the Early Years Self-Evaluation Collaborative was set up, gives some examples of the current policy context that have implications on early years work, and details of the projects involved.

A summary of the evaluation process and methods used, a set of six case studies, and some **top tips** highlight the range of approaches used by the participating projects, and how applying evaluation processes to their work will help them provide evidence to demonstrate their effectiveness.

## Background

Discussions with and feedback from a range of community-based food and health projects working with parents and children have highlighted the benefits of the various approaches they use to improve access to healthy food for children and their parents.

The effort to engage and support these groups is also reflected in the frequency of applications to our small grant scheme for assistance with developing and sustaining work with parents and children, and is also evident through the demand to share experiences through a wide range of networking events facilitated by CFHS.

This demand together with feedback from a roundtable discussion, a Sustain Food Access Network UK Liaison event, plus feedback from small grant recipients led CFHS to discuss with ESS the best way to raise the profile of this work and have its impact better appreciated by planners and policy makers.

The first stage of a proposed longer-term project has now been undertaken, CFHS having commissioned ESS to support a number of projects that work with parents and children (aged 0-5) to improve their self-evaluation skills.

The six diverse projects were recruited from a base group of 33 projects that were involved in either the discussions mentioned above or were small grant recipients in the last two years.

This 'Early Years Self-evaluation Collaborative' supports participants to:

- collect better evidence for their own learning;
- show the difference they are making; and
- influence others on the benefits of community-based work with parents and children (aged 0-5) that addresses local needs and national priorities.

Stage Two of the project will involve how to use the information that has been gathered, and a further interim report from this stage will be available at the end of October. The final stage will complete in early summer 2009 and a joint publication between CFHS, ESS and the six projects will be published at that time.

It is anticipated that the learning and practice from this will be relevant to all community-based food and health projects working with parents and children.

## Policy Context

The Scottish Government's vision of a 'Healthier Scotland' relies on the contribution of many partners delivering outcomes on health improvement including the community and voluntary sector.

Priority is being given to early years across a range of emerging policy statements and guidance, for example:

A **National Policy for Food and Drink** for Scotland is currently being developed which will take into account all aspects of food, from health and education to the economy and tourism, sourcing more Scottish food through public procurement, and making healthier food more accessible to all in Scotland. The next steps towards this policy were announced in June.  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Food-Industry](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Food-Industry)

A related joint action plan for diet, physical activity and obesity, **Healthy Eating, Active Lives**, was also launched in June and includes action on Early Years (infant and maternal nutrition). [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/20155902/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/20155902/0)

The '**Better Health, Better Care**' **Action Plan** launched in January 2008 already sets out actions for Early Years and tackling health inequalities in deprived communities.  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/11103453/9](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/11103453/9)

A joint policy statement from the Scottish Government and CoSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) sets out their vision for an **Early Years Framework**. This framework has a focus from pre-conception, through pregnancy, birth and up to the age of eight, and is based on evidence-based approaches to supporting children and families.

A final framework document is due to be published in autumn 2008.  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/03/14121428/6](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/03/14121428/6)

The Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities reported on its findings to the Scottish Government in June. **Equally Well** highlights children as a priority area, particularly early years, and an implementation plan is to be in place by the end of 2008.  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/25104032/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/25104032/0)

## Who is involved?

**The six participating projects are:**

Food Dragons

**Drumchapel LIFE Healthy Living Centre, Glasgow**

Parent and Toddler Group

**The Hidden Gardens, Glasgow**

Confidence to Cook Group

**Peterhead Family Centre**

Blend for Baby

**Burnfoot Community School, Hawick**

Fair Isle Mums Breakfast Club

**Fife Community Food Project, Kirkcaldy**

Little Leithers

**Edinburgh Community Food Initiative**

All of the projects base their approach on the importance of involving parents and their children together in a range of food and health activities such as growing food, shopping and cooking sessions, and across diverse settings: a healthy living centre working in partnership with local nursery schools, a greenspace and community resource, a family centre, a community school, a region wide community food project and city based community food initiative.

Using this approach the projects aim to influence and sustain better nutrition in the home. This is seen as core to their activity where both parents and children gain knowledge, skills and confidence and can engage with food together.

Methods used within a project setting can also be brought into the home and used by parents with their other children, or by mothers who are expecting or planning a pregnancy, to impact positively on their nutrition.

The work of those involved in this collaborative seeks to develop skills, knowledge and confidence.

The case studies from page 11 highlight that in addition to these opportunities, the parent and children groups can:

- socialise with other people and other communities new to them;
- develop stronger parenting skills;
- increase their involvement in their own development and learning;
- learn about nutrition, food safety and hygiene; and
- develop relationships with local shops thus increasing demand for fresh produce in their local communities.

## Learning about self-evaluation methods

**An introductory workshop** was facilitated by ESS in November 2007 to help participants demystify previously held ideas and experiences of evaluation.

This clear introduction to evaluation supported participants to examine and clarify the aims and outcomes of their work, so that they could then begin to plan and develop evaluation systems to show the effectiveness of the work and the approaches they are using with parents and children.

The session also looked at creative ways of collecting information and involving their colleagues, and the parents and children in the evaluation process.

This first workshop was complemented by one-to-one site visits facilitating more focused support to assess and review current and evolving evaluation systems, as well as talk through how information would be collected.

**A second workshop** took place in early March 2008 to review how the learning was being applied so far. This also included the opportunity for participants to share practice and experiences of their food and health activities in a supportive environment. Peer reflection and enquiry was used to review learning and this was then fed back to participants.

The second session also included a short 'Participatory Appraisal'<sup>1</sup> taster session. This gave participants additional ideas on how to involve others in the process of collecting information by using visual or active techniques to evaluate their work and activities.

In preparation for this interim report, guidance on gathering information and learning for case studies to showcase how the support has been applied during this first stage was also provided.

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<sup>1</sup> Participatory Appraisal approaches and methods use visual or active techniques to engage with people, find out their opinions, involve them in decision making and take actions that respond to local needs.



## Using the evaluation methods

The collaborative is using many resources, methods and tools to evaluate their work.

**Peterhead Family Centre** described how the **Weavers Triangle**<sup>2</sup>, a tool to plan aims and activities and identify outcomes, has helped it to have clear aims and objectives from the start that it can monitor and discuss regularly. Having a more fluid approach to evaluation has meant that it can really focus on the difference the **Confidence to Cook** group is making.

**Edinburgh Community Food Initiative** reported that telephone surveys (baseline and follow-up) although having both advantages and disadvantages, worked well to collect information from the parent group. Having no central meeting or drop-in point meant meeting parents individually or in groups was difficult. It was also felt that the telephone interviews did not capture body language or other visual cues, but access to the parents was easier by telephone, and so far they have been happy to participate in interviews. A computer statistics package was used to analyse the responses from the telephone interviews and has helped to identify emerging themes, patterns of behaviour and also gaps where work needs to be targeted better. This information was then used to organise the information into graphs and charts for more visual impact.

**The Hidden Gardens** has been using photography to capture images of activities to show evidence of outcomes. Parents were given cameras to allow them to take their own photographs and become involved in this activity, and this has been very empowering for the parents.

Corresponding text describing the photos lets the images tell their story. Case studies of parents and children involved over a period of time can be used to help illustrate and evidence outcomes. Simple feedback charts and sticky dots are also used for parents and children to voice their opinions about activities.

**Burnfoot Community School** also found that taking photos was very useful to help evidence and evaluate their work with weaning groups. Photos were used to capture baseline information from initial contact with the groups. During and following three weeks of input, photos were then reviewed to assess progress and change. Comments were also jotted down from the sessions that are matched to the images.

Photos also proved useful as memory aids when parents were asked “Do you remember doing this? What did you learn?” and feedback was recorded to evidence outcomes. The photos were also used in fun activities such as quizzes to illustrate how knowledge is retained.

The parents were also encouraged to make and keep food diaries to capture ‘My Life in Food’ in terms of what food means to them and their relationships with food.

**Fife Community Food Project** used sticky fruit images and simple statements to promote inclusion, thus overcoming literacy issues within the group. The group believes it is important not to use written approaches all the time, and to be opportunistic with the use of visual tools to ensure no one is excluded. The materials used were fun to use and acquired very cheaply from art materials stores.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/downloads/WeaversTriangleadaptedfromCES.doc](http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/downloads/WeaversTriangleadaptedfromCES.doc)

Working with other groups, photos were also used to illustrate timelines to show what was happening; to sustain a group's connection with and involvement in activities; to act as prompts for reflection on achievements; and to showcase the work at the end.

**Drumchapel LIFE** also described how it used the **Weavers Triangle** to take a more scientific approach to planning the aims and objectives of its work and how it will embed improved practice into its evaluation processes, as well as learn from its activities.

The programme is carried out when funding is available. This tool will be implemented to help identify activities to assist those involved in the project to collect information to evidence change, as a result of input from the **Food Dragons**. This will involve discussions with the children and parents, small surveys, games, taking photographs and using video.



image from Drumchapel Life

## **Case studies**

Each project submitted a case study as part of Stage One. This gives some background on the project and describes its self-evaluation process.

# Peterhead Family Learning Centre

## Confidence to Cook

### Background

Peterhead Family Centre is a local authority family centre situated in the north east of Scotland. Following the downturn of both fishing and farming industries in the area, unemployment is high and high levels of poverty and deprivation prevail. Complex and interrelated social and economic issues are identified in Peterhead with overcrowding and housing issues being a major issue. Problems relating to health, debt, drug and alcohol abuse are reported.

The family centre provides a supportive, remedial service to families with children in the town and outlying areas. The majority of the families supported by the family centre have children under the age of eight. The centre aims to support and guide parents to develop and maintain strong parenting skills and positive relationships with their families.

The **Confidence to Cook** group was set up to help parents provide healthy and nutritious food for their families. The aim of the group is to provide information on nutrition and healthy eating in a non-threatening and engaging way. The group also aims to experiment with new recipes, talk about budgeting and hygiene as part of the overall concept. At the end of the session service users are given a recipe pack for further use.

**evaluation process:** the first group we ran six mums were invited to come along. On evaluation at the end of the six weeks, it was felt that the group had probably been too big for the mums to get the best from experimenting with recipes and using the kitchen facilities. We decided the next group we offered would be for three mums. This proved to be more successful and a lot of learning was gained from the group. The individuals concerned got to know one another very well and were able to share what they found difficult while cooking for their family.

Initially our evaluation process was to ask the mums at the end of the six weeks what they had liked/disliked about the cooking group. This was normally done verbally and not at all efficient. The feedback we got tended to be about how satisfied the parents were with the way the sessions had been run and didn't tell us about the difference the sessions were making. We had some idea of the difficulties they were having but not how we had improved things.

**learning:** our evaluation process has developed considerably over the last few months since participating in the self-evaluation collaborative. The **Weavers Triangle** has been a useful tool which has enabled us to have a good overview of our work. Being able to link theory to practice makes the evaluation at the end easier to do. We realised that to plan well and have clear aims and objectives from the beginning is important in the evaluation process.

Have our evaluation skills developed? Yes! We now see the benefit of continually evaluating what we are doing throughout a piece of work rather than just meeting to evaluate what we have done at the end of a project. The course has certainly helped us create a much more fluent approach to the process of evaluation.

Over the past six months we have also learnt the importance of ongoing communication. We meet regularly to discuss how the **Confidence to Cook** group is progressing. We also regularly monitor how we are fulfilling the aims and objectives of the group which we set at the beginning of the process. Using the **Weavers Triangle**, writing down what our aims and objectives are and revisiting them regularly have been an asset to our self-evaluation process.

# Edinburgh Community Food Initiative Little Leithers Voucher Scheme

**evaluation process:** before joining the self-evaluation collaborative, a baseline questionnaire was carried out with each family, in order to assess shopping, cooking and eating habits. Spreadsheets were also set up to monitor the use of the vouchers in each shop and to monitor how much money each shop was making.

We now realise that these spreadsheets are also useful forms of evaluation as we can look back and see what foods were more popular than others with the families which has helped us increase shop sales by better catering to the families likes and dislikes. Following our discussions with the self-evaluation collaborative, we are also using the spreadsheets to create visual representations of these figures in graphs and charts.

**learning:** since the work began we have learned to not always rely on questionnaires for evaluation, and, when we do, we have a much better idea how to tease out the relevant information. The ability to obtain information in this way has meant that the follow-up questionnaires have taken on the form of informal one-to-one interviews by telephone, with written questions guiding the process. Support with evaluation has also made us realise the benefit of additional information, for example, the positive knock-on effects of the voucher scheme to other community members using the shops. The suggestion of using one of the shops as a case study, to show the positive effects of the scheme was followed through. The fishmonger showed not only increased sales, but also that the wider local community were picking up Little Leithers fish recipes from the shop. The voucher families were also using the shop for more than just what was on their vouchers.

Support with evaluation also reassured us that using the monthly sales figures was a good way of displaying the uptake and success of the voucher scheme. We have found the input and time to focus on evaluation to be vital in helping us to redirect the evaluation process- from not just using questionnaires constantly, but to thinking out of the box and recognising the knock-on effects of the scheme.



## Background

The voucher scheme is one section of the Little Leithers project, funded by the Community Regeneration Fund and managed by Edinburgh Community Food Initiative. Twenty families from the regeneration area of Leith were selected to take part. The criteria for all of the families were: to have children under the age of 5; live in the correct regeneration area; and be entitled to milk token vouchers or receive Healthy Start vouchers.

Each recruited family receives a sheet of eight vouchers, alongside simple recipes, every month for use in local shops - fishmongers, butchers, halal butchers, fruit and vegetable co-op and greengrocers.

The aim of the voucher scheme is to encourage families from low socio-economic backgrounds to use local shops and to eat and cook more with fresh ingredients.

# The Hidden Gardens Parent and Toddler Group

## Background

The Hidden Gardens is a greenspace and community resource in Pollokshields, Glasgow.

The Hidden Gardens' key aims are: to increase cultural exchange and integration by creating a common ground where people from different faiths and backgrounds can come together; and to improve the quality of life for participants by creating opportunities for them to improve their health and develop new skills.



In response to identified local need it established a weekly Parent and Toddler Group that functions on a drop-in basis. The group is facilitated by staff who play a crucial role in supporting parents, co-ordinating activities, and bringing in health professionals to provide additional advice sessions. During 2007, 33 parents attended the group on a regular basis with their children (45% were from a black or minority ethnic background).

**evaluation process:** securing the sustainability of the group (particularly funding for staff) has been challenging and we are at the stage where we need to more clearly demonstrate the impact of this work. Feedback suggests that the group has been a lifeline to many isolated parents, offering access to peer support, improving their confidence in doing activities at home with their children and also offering one of the only opportunities for families from different cultural backgrounds to socialise. But the question was how to measure these benefits more effectively? Due to the drop-in nature of the group and lack of focused time for discussion with parents we have found traditional evaluation methods quite difficult. Questionnaires were off-putting to participants and the outcomes we were trying to measure against were too broad (e.g. improved health and wellbeing).

**learning:** through our participation in the 'self-evaluation collaborative' with CFHS and ESS, we have started making changes to how we gather evidence. Some key changes have been:

- Making our outcomes more specific and measurable, and involving parents in this process through regular focus groups. This has helped empower them to take more ownership of the group and prevents the feeling that evaluation is being 'done to them'.
- Learning how to ask the right questions in determining what activities we should do to achieve outcomes, e.g. 'What would make you feel more confident as a parent?' This led to potty training, healthy eating and creative play being identified as areas in which parents would most like to improve their skills.
- Keeping evaluation simple and interactive, e.g. taking photos of activities each week and then asking parents to put a sticky dot on the ones they have tried at home.
- Sampling participants rather than trying to capture feedback from everyone, e.g. through case studies with parents that are happy to talk about what difference the group has made for them (and their children).
- Getting parents to take photos during the group that demonstrate outcomes, e.g. improved confidence doing activities that they have never tried before or positive interaction between parents and children.

# Burnfoot Community School Blend for Baby

**evaluation process:** the major challenge for us was to consider the best way in which to evaluate the project, without 'scaring' the mums with too much paperwork, but still providing clear evidence of evaluation. Our experiences during evaluation workshops allowed us to look at the collection of evidence in a more creative way:

- Our baseline information was collected by taking photos of what each mum bought - a method we had not considered previously but which provided us with a simple, visual piece of evidence. This exercise was repeated at the end of the project to evaluate what the mums had learned and if their shopping skills had changed.
- Information was also collected through discussion and was recorded as 'soundbites', the challenge for us there being when to record the information, during the discussion or after (we opted for after as we did not want to stop the flow of the discussion by taking notes!)
- We also asked parents to record their 'life in food' by cutting out pictures of food and sticking them on a folder, a relaxed and fun activity that still provided us with valuable information.
- Finally we undertook a small written evaluation using a questionnaire which was kept simple and straightforward.

**learning:** through our work as part of the self-evaluation collaborative we have been encouraged to explore different uses and timings of evaluation. We have become more creative in trying different types of evaluation, e.g., using photographic evidence and giving the group practical cut and stick activities. We believe that the skills we are developing in this area will make us feel more comfortable and confident in building flexibility into future planning. In particular early and ongoing information gathering will empower participants. This will allow us to better meet the needs of the community.

## Background

Burnfoot Community School sits on the edge of the town of Hawick in the Scottish Borders, within a community which faces many challenges. As a Community School it realises the importance of working in the community, and therefore provides a number of opportunities for families, including a number of activities to encourage healthy family eating through the Flying Start Project, e.g., Blend for Baby, Tasty Tuck, Flying Start to a Healthy Pack Lunch.

Blend for Baby is a six week project, an offshoot of a larger plan to welcome parents and children in the 0-3 age range into school. It has been delivered in partnership with the Borders Healthy Living Network, with input from other health professionals. The group of nine mums have met weekly with a crèche provided. The initial aim has been to look at food nutrition and hygiene in relation to the weaning stage and to do this in a 'user-friendly' practical way.



One of its identified outcomes has been to improve food shopping skills. As a creative means of collecting baseline information, it took the group to a local supermarket. Each mum was given £5 to spend and asked to buy foods they would normally buy for their baby. This was then followed by three weeks of learning. Mums then got another £5 to buy food to bring along for a 'Ready Steady Cook for Baby' session.

# Fife Community Food Project Fair Isle Mums Breakfast Club

## Background

The aim of Fife Community Food Project (FCFP) is to improve access to and uptake of a healthy diet within disadvantaged areas of Fife to improve health and wellbeing.

Five young mums who attended cookery classes provided by FCFP and passed elementary food hygiene certificates volunteered to run a breakfast club. The aim of the group is to encourage the mums to make long-term changes in their eating habits which could also have an impact on their families' diet.



This was seen as starting the journey to encourage the mums to eat breakfast so that they can become more positive role models for the children.

FCFP has funded the start-up cost of the club with a one-off grant and continues to provide support. Ongoing costs are met by the mums who attend the sessions. The club runs on a Friday morning from 9 am to 10.30 am at Fair Isle Primary School where their children attend. The club started in December 2007 initially as a four-week pilot project.

**evaluation process:** baseline information was gathered at the first session which also helped gather evidence to identify the need to take this work forward. The 12 mums were asked if they ate breakfast, how often, what they ate and how they would want a breakfast club to work. They were then asked to note their responses on Post-it notes and place these on flipchart paper. The results of the exercise were grouped. There was a concern that gathering information in this way was not inclusive as two persons in the group had literacy issues. Their views were not recorded.

I had applied to be involved in the self evaluation collaborative to learn how to improve evaluation skills. Learning from the collaborative has helped me to be more flexible about how to gather information, by using different methods and tools. Following discussion through individual support during a site visit from ESS I decided that when using a similar exercise as mentioned above I would include methods to ensure that mums with literacy difficulties could make their views known and have them recorded. I am also planning to take photos during the sessions and record comments made by the mums in a diary format. This will ensure a more informal method of collecting information which will hopefully be more comfortable for the participants. Together these methods will help illustrate the benefits of attending the group.

When the breakfast club restarted in the new school term I wanted to evaluate if there had been any changes and benefits to the participants. I returned with my post-it notes and flipcharts but to make it more inclusive I also brought pictures of fruit and smiley face stickers for everyone to use. The mums used these different methods to record how often they had breakfast and what they had prepared to eat. This was more successful in collecting information for evaluation.

**learning:** using the **Weavers Triangle** has helped to plan the aims of the group, identify the outcomes and plan activities. My understanding of how to collect information about the changes experienced by the mums who attended has developed. I was able to create a toolbox of different methods of collecting information to ensure everyone could participate in evaluation. Using more flexible methods will result in being able to look at the wider picture of the benefits of the groups in the future.



# Drumchapel LIFE Food Dragons Project

**evaluation process:** together with Evaluation Support Scotland, we have developed a framework for better monitoring and evaluation of the project and further tracking of how the learning is being used to benefit families involved. It is hoped we can, in collaboration with project partners and parents, employ this framework in future sessions.

Because the project is not ongoing, but instead programmes of sessions are carried out when funding is available, the new framework for evaluation will be implemented as new sessions are planned.

We used the Weavers Triangle as a tool to plan our aims, objectives and activities; 'Healthier Families', with the desired outcomes of the project to improve the mainstreaming of healthy eating in local nurseries. To capture 'indicators', which are signs that the outcomes are happening, we have developed some ideas about how we will collect this information.

This will involve:

- collecting baseline information of existing healthy eating activities within nurseries through discussion and small surveys
- developing games for children using visual images
- collecting observations using photography and video, of how children react and interact around food, food preparation and their parents
- nursery staff engaging with children about their eating habits at home to measure the difference the input from the programme is making.

**learning:** as a result of our involvement with the self-evaluation collaborative it has allowed us to refocus some of our thoughts and efforts to improve our evaluation process. We feel much more confident now about embarking on a new approach to evidence gathering and analysis which is more scientific than our previous attempts. This will give us the evidence which can allow celebration of the positive benefits of the project. We expect these to be observations of change in eating behaviour of both children and parents, children having increased knowledge about healthy eating and families cooking from scratch at home.

## Background

The Food Dragons project, now in existence for around three years, has worked alongside staff in five nurseries in the Drumchapel area of Glasgow. It recognised a gap in getting healthy eating messages home to families, while children in education settings were often exposed to this information and indeed to healthier food choices. The project's purpose has been to take simple messages about a healthier diet to children and their parents and to support them to develop basic food preparation skills, which it is hoped, they can use at home together. The 'dragons', cartoon characters with food related names, were developed to interest the children.

Over a period of two days, activities are delivered to each child and parent group which includes making visual shopping lists, shopping at a local supermarket and preparing and cooking simple meals with help from teachers, parents, a chef and shop staff.

While the project to date has had an overwhelming reception from all quarters and has produced significant outcomes, both expected and unexpected, it recognised that it needed to take a more scientific approach in better defining outcomes, indicators and methodology for gathering supporting evidence.

# Top Tips

**A summary of key learning points about evaluation from Stage One:**

## Methods and collecting information

- Consider what you need to ask before collecting information and continually refer back to your outcomes to ensure that you show the benefits of your work.
- Informal one-to-one or group interviews should be considered alongside questionnaires to guide discussion.
- Consider using creative approaches to collect better quality information to ensure the all views are included and recorded.
- Take photos to illustrate baseline and outcome information. Taking photos and recording participant's comments in a diary can also strengthen the image to show the difference your work has made.
- Consider what other knowledge from the information you have collected can tell you, for example: ECFI placed data in a spreadsheet which told them what food items were purchased in shops and helped to identify more accurately the needs of the families receiving vouchers. (Analysis of and reporting on outcomes will be covered in more depth in stage two of the self-evaluation collaborative and will describe how this information can be illustrated visually).

## Process

- Integrate the evaluation process into work on a continuous basis and not just at the end of a programme of activity. This can help decision-making about activities and can show how the needs of a community can be met to achieve outcomes.

## Case Studies

- Consider writing a case study about an aspect of evaluation information to help illustrate the positive benefits of an approach or a piece of work. A case study to illustrate an individual sample of participants' experience can be very powerful.

## Outcomes

- Consider using tools such as the Weavers Triangle to plan aims and activities when seeking to clarify or identify outcomes of activities.
- When identifying outcomes, it is crucial to ensure that they can be measured and demonstrated effectively.
- Involving participants in determining activities will contribute towards achieving outcomes.

## Empowering communities

- Use evaluation methods that are simple and interactive for participants to make it easier for them to be involved.
- Encourage participants to take their own photos to show the impact of activities. These can be taken at home to show how their learning and confidence is changing.

## What next?

The six projects have based their involvement in the collaborative around their recognition of the importance of having the capacity to show the difference their work is making. The practicalities of developing this process since the beginning of the collaborative have been challenging for a range of reasons. For some this has required some creative planning and implementation with involvement from other partners or supports where there have been staff shortages and insecurities around projects continuing during periods of transition. Coupled with that, new and emerging policies relevant to food, health improvement and health inequalities as outlined previously has led the projects to examine and re-examine their contribution to national priority outcomes.

Despite this continuing changing environment, all the projects continue in their determination to show the impact of their work with parents and children in low-income communities across Scotland.

Stage Two of the Early Years Self-evaluation Collaborative which will focus on using and analysing evaluation information gathered to report on outcomes is now underway and a report on this activity will be available in the autumn.

## Signposts

Information about the services and resources available from Evaluation Support Scotland can be downloaded from [www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk](http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)

[Fruitful Participation](#) is a CFHS publication that gives readers a snapshot of how engaging with local people and involving them in decision-making and taking action can lead to more effective food and health activities. It also provides background information on participatory approaches of involving people and policy information that promotes community engagement. It can be downloaded from [www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk](http://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk) or contact CFHS for a hard copy.





**community  
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(scotland)



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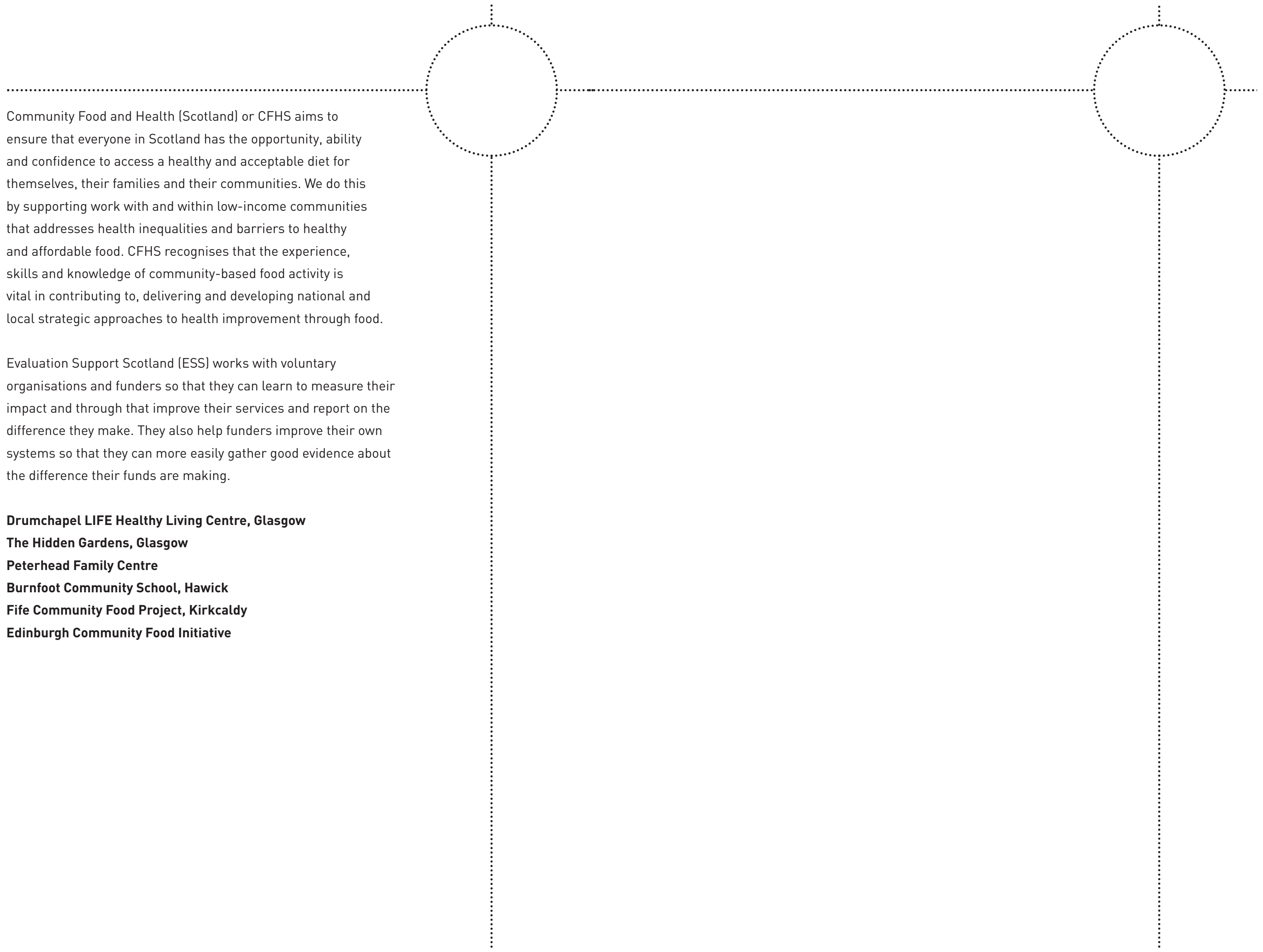
[www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk](http://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk)



**the hidden gardens**

Peterhead Family Centre

Burnfoot Community School

A decorative graphic consisting of a horizontal dotted line with two large circles at its ends. From each circle, a vertical dotted line extends downwards. The text is positioned to the left of the left circle.

Community Food and Health (Scotland) or CFHS aims to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the opportunity, ability and confidence to access a healthy and acceptable diet for themselves, their families and their communities. We do this by supporting work with and within low-income communities that addresses health inequalities and barriers to healthy and affordable food. CFHS recognises that the experience, skills and knowledge of community-based food activity is vital in contributing to, delivering and developing national and local strategic approaches to health improvement through food.

Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) works with voluntary organisations and funders so that they can learn to measure their impact and through that improve their services and report on the difference they make. They also help funders improve their own systems so that they can more easily gather good evidence about the difference their funds are making.

**Drumchapel LIFE Healthy Living Centre, Glasgow**

**The Hidden Gardens, Glasgow**

**Peterhead Family Centre**

**Burnfoot Community School, Hawick**

**Fife Community Food Project, Kirkcaldy**

**Edinburgh Community Food Initiative**