

Combined Agency Study Tour
North Lanarkshire/West
Lothian/Edinburgh

April 2003



Scottish Community
Diet Project

*Supporting local
communities tackling
inequalities in
diet and health*

Scottish Community Diet Project

Our overriding aim is to improve Scotland's food and health. We do this by supporting work within and with low-income communities that improves access to and take-up of a healthy diet.

Major obstacles being addressed by community-based initiatives are:

AVAILABILITY - increasing access to fruit and vegetables of an acceptable quality and cost

AFFORDABILITY - tackling not only the cost of shopping, but also getting to shops

SKILLS - improving confidence and skills in cooking and shopping

CULTURE - overcoming ingrained habits

We help support low-income communities to:

- identify barriers to a healthy balanced diet
- develop local responses to addressing these barriers, and
- highlight where actions at other levels, or in other sectors, are required

We value the experience, understanding, skills and knowledge within Scotland's communities and their unique contribution to developing and delivering policy and practice at all levels.

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Overview

In Scotland community food initiatives have been working for many years to overcome the barriers to a healthy diet within their communities. Similarly, many policy agencies within and outwith Scotland who are involved in developing food, health and consumer policy have been working to develop policy which will improve the diet of the population. Although these agencies are aware of the role that community food initiatives play, they lack a level of practical understanding of some of the aspects of the operations. This study tour gave participants from the agencies the opportunity to gain a flavour of the real issues that community food initiatives face and how they are overcome.

The study tour aimed to give an insight into how different community food initiatives work in practice and what they deliver to the community they are based in. The study tour was designed so that participants were given the opportunity to meet those people who had direct experience of the initiative.

The feedback from both the participants and the people who work for the initiatives visited was positive. Both groups found the opportunity to get to meet each other rewarding.



Donna, Mike, Lucy, Cathy, Tracey, Orla and Courtney visit Edinburgh Community Food Initiative's warehouse

Approach

The Scottish Community Diet Project (SCDP) has organised study tours as a catalyst for those people working in community settings to find out about other approaches elsewhere. Study tours give participants an opportunity to network and forge their own relationships with similar people and projects. Generally SCDP study tours had given professional staff, lay workers and volunteers the opportunity to visit community food initiatives, regional and national agencies and policy-makers. The SCDP had received a number of requests from agencies who wanted to find out about food in communities, and therefore took the opportunity to design a study tour where a combination of agencies visited enough community food initiatives to enable a comparison to be made.

In order for participants to see how community food initiatives differ in not only their activities and target groups, but also in their approach and scale, visits to ten different community food initiatives were planned over two days. While many of the visits were short, the time was structured so that participants had the opportunity to talk one-to-one with the professional staff, lay workers and volunteers at the initiatives.

The study tour took place in three different areas in the central belt of Scotland. On the first day participants visited North Lanarkshire where the North Lanarkshire Food Federation has been providing support to a number of food co-ops throughout the area by supplying stock from a central warehouse at very low prices. The second day involved the participants travelling to West Lothian to visit initiatives which have benefited from the support of a regional food and health strategy called Eatright. The tour finished in Edinburgh where participants visited the Edinburgh Community Food Initiative warehouse and one of the many food co-ops they supply.

It was important that the community food initiatives did not feel that they were being checked up on, and that the reason they were involved with the study tour was to assist in the agencies' understanding of tackling inequalities in health. With the help of Tommy Murphy, a support worker for North Lanarkshire Food Federation based at North Lanarkshire Council, and Fiona Bayne, the Food and Development Officer for West Lothian Food and Health Action Plan, it was explained to each initiative visited that there was nothing special which needed to be done in preparation for the visit. The Scottish Community Diet Project wrote to all initiatives in advance explaining that any costs which were incurred as a result of the visit would be reimbursed.

A number of agencies, including those with a Scottish and UK remit had already shown interest in visiting Scottish community food initiatives. Other agencies which the SCDP is in touch with on a regular basis were also invited. See page 16 for a list of all the participating agencies.

To aid networking between the agencies all participants were asked to send in information on the structure and remit of their agency, information about how the agency's work plan is determined and relevant documents produced by

the agencies. This information was also passed on to Tommy and Fiona in advance so they could inform the initiatives about the agencies the participants represented. Each community food initiative was given a list of participants and their contact details in case they wanted to contact any particular individual directly.

Participants commented on how the opportunity to visit and meet people who worked in community-based projects had greatly increased their knowledge and understanding of the issues which surround health inequalities. Participants also commented on how they could feed the experience back to the policy-making area of their work. Some community food initiatives felt grateful that the agencies had taken the time to visit them and enjoyed the opportunity to show people who help shape policy what happens in their community.

If you are interested in visiting community food initiatives or would like to know more about how a study tour is organised, then please get in touch with the Scottish Community Diet Project on 0141 226 5261 or visit www.dietproject.org.uk for contact details.



Willie Merritt, the co-ordinator of the Near not Dear, explains how the food co-op has developed over the last five years

Orla from the Food Standards Agency Nutrition Department finds out about how the toast is produced at Harrysmuir Primary School Breakfast Club



Feedback

Both formal and anecdotal feedback was extremely positive. Both those who had participated and those who had been visited felt that they had gained something from the opportunity.

As soon as participants visited the projects and met the people involved they could see the links between the work within communities and their own work in policy development.

"An excellent trip, it would take months of reading to learn as much as I did in two days."

"This tour greatly increased my knowledge of community based projects and I will now be better able to relate the policy making area of my work with how it will affect community groups/projects."

"I will remember the enthusiasm and hard work of people at a local level. When discussing policy issues, I will also remember the problems they had which were:

- *Lack of continuous funding, which lead to problems with planning (especially long term plans e.g. new lease for larger building)*
- *The need for low cost, accessible business and hygiene training, especially for volunteers.*
- *The problems with evaluation of health improvements and so problems accessing funds.*
- *The need for eye catching posters."*

"Both schools had a fun approach to food, so children were not really made aware that they were engaging in 'healthy eating', it was just part of the course."

The people working in community food initiatives also valued the opportunity.

"Really good to be able to show people who work high up in organisations what is happening at ground level."

"Rewarding that people felt it was important to come and visit. A boost for my work."

"Good to meet different agency workers. Same issues being asked about by the agencies as are on the ground."

A full account of the feedback is written up in the evaluation section, page 10.

Initiatives visited

North Lanarkshire

Kirkshaws Neighbourhood Centre

Willie McBride, the centre manager, co-ordinates the activities in this busy centre situated in the South Coatbridge Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP), where the theme is health. A community shop is being built as an extension to the centre to house the food co-op.

Fallside food co-op

A new and small food co-op based in a small community centre in Viewpark at the heart of North Motherwell SIP.

Near Not Dear food co-op

A food co-op which has been established for over five years in North Motherwell. This food co-op has two chest freezers so it can provide frozen ready meals. A number of regular volunteers help out at the food co-op, co-ordinated by Willie Meritt.

Orbiston food co-op

A food co-op based in a busy community centre - also in the North Motherwell SIP area. The food co-op runs one morning per week.

Orbiston community café

A popular community café in a well-used community centre. The café employs people with learning difficulties.

North Lanarkshire Food Federation central store

The central store buys products in bulk and stores them for food co-ops. The centre manager ensures that the produce purchased is delivered on time to food co-ops in the area. The store deals with fresh fruit and vegetables as well as tinned and dried food and cleaning products.

West Lothian

Harrysmuir Primary School breakfast club

The breakfast club at this school has been established for over four years. The music teacher gets involved by encouraging the children to dance, sing and have fun after they have had their breakfast.

West Lothian food and health strategy group

The food and health strategy group for West Lothian is based in Broxburn. A list of members is included on the contacts page.

Kirkhill Primary School fruit tuck shop

The primary school runs a fruit tuck shop during the morning break. The children can select from a wide range of fruit at competitive prices during their break.

Polbeth food co-op

This food co-op is situated in the local health clinic in West Calder, Polbeth. The co-op is staffed by long-term volunteers.

Broxburn family and community development centre

A popular community café in Broxburn with childcare facilities. This project has been going for over ten years and has plans to develop and create an outdoors play area for children.

Craighall day centre

A day centre for adults with a food co-op which serves the clients as well as members of the local community who pop in. The food co-op mainly sells fruit and vegetables supplied by Edinburgh Community Food Initiative.

Edinburgh Community Food Initiative

Edinburgh Community Food Initiative supports a range of projects to improve access to a healthier diet for people living in Edinburgh. They manage a warehouse and several vans which are used to ensure a number of food co-ops across the city are supplied with fresh fruit and vegetables.

Tracey, Cathy, Donna,
Mike and Courtney find out
about the range of fruit and
vegetables at Craighall
Day Centre



Mike discusses the product
range with the Fallside Food
Co-op co-ordinator

Evaluation

What did the agencies who took part think of the experience?

1. Overall what did you think of the study tour?

- *The study tour was excellent - I learned a lot in two days by speaking to the people involved at a local level and at a planning level.*
- *Very enjoyable, informative and extremely humbling! A great snap-shot of community initiatives. This was my first experience of such initiatives and I came away with a good understanding of their workings.*
- *I thought it was excellent and thoroughly enjoyed it.*
- *Good. It served as a useful reminder of the importance of community food initiatives.*
- *An excellent trip, it would take months of reading to learn as much as I did in two days.*

2. Which part of the visit did you most enjoy?

- *I enjoyed many parts of the visit, but was especially impressed by the Kirkshaws Neighbourhood Centre as the community had, over a sustained period of time, improved the environment they live in. This showed me that the social aspects involved in a project are important and can be combined with health improvement. I also enjoyed the breakfast club as the children were having so much fun!*
- *The visits to the schools – breakfast club and tuck shop. Both schools had a fun approach to food, so children were not really made aware that they were engaging in 'healthy eating', it was just part of the course.*
- *I enjoyed visiting the individual initiatives best, actually seeing what was happening on the ground and meeting some of the local people involved.*
- *Difficult to disaggregate the visit. One part fitted well with another and the whole 'package' worked well.*
- *The breakfast club.*

3. Which part of the community study exchange did you find most useful?

- *This tour greatly increased my knowledge of community based projects and I will now be better able to relate the policy making area of my work to how it will affect community groups/projects.*
- *Visits to the central store in North Lanarkshire and the Edinburgh Community Food Initiative were both very informative as they pulled together many of the community based initiatives we visited.*
- *Hard to say because I found it all useful, but I think it's the same as the part I enjoyed most – visiting actual initiatives and meeting the people involved. The networking aspect was also very helpful.*
- *As for question 2, the whole visit was useful. The range of initiatives was important as each one has different issues and to a greater or lesser extent different solutions, but with many common threads.*
- *Meeting others working on different aspects of food and income issues.*

4. What are you going to take away with you?

- *I will remember the enthusiasm and hard work of people at a local level. When discussing policy issues, I will also remember the problems they had which were:*
 - *Lack of continuous funding, which leads to problems with planning (especially long-term plans, e.g. new lease for larger building)*
 - *The need for low-cost, accessible business and hygiene training, especially for volunteers*
 - *The problems with evaluation of health improvements and so problems accessing funds*
 - *The need for eye-catching posters.*
- *The hard work, commitment and ingenuity that goes into projects of this sort despite the funding problems! That real sustainable changes to people's diets and lifestyles are achievable. Good networks established with other participants.*
- *More of a sense of reality about how national policy decisions impact at local level, on people's lives.*
- *A good 'image' of what community food initiatives are, and what some of the issues are that relate to a policy environment.*
- *The importance of concentrating on funding and looking at alternatives to grants.*

5. How could the study tour be improved?

- *I think the tour was very well organised. It was good to be able to compare different approaches and the different sized projects, so would recommend this to be carried forward to any future tours.*
- *The tour fulfilled my expectations. A little less time on the road perhaps, but I recognise in order to get a real feel for the initiatives it's important to get a broad view across communities.*
- *I was conscious at times that we were having to rush off from one thing to the next, and it felt a wee bit pressured at times. I appreciate that you were trying to let us see a variety of different types of initiative, but slightly less tight schedule might have helped.*
- *This tour worked well and no major changes needed. Possibly a short presentation on the historical/industrial context which led to the need for community food initiatives in these areas for those not familiar with the areas.*
- *Could possibly try to visit other types of projects, e.g. cook and eat sessions or box schemes.*

What did those who were visited think of the experience?

1. What was your impression of the visit?

- *Good to meet different agency workers. Same issues being asked about by the agencies as are on the ground.*
- *Really good to be able to show people who work high up in organisations what is happening at ground level.*
- *Good to see people from other areas taking an interest in our work – an opportunity to show what we are doing.*

2. Did you get anything from the visit?

- *Great networking opportunity. Gave us a chance to highlight issues from the bottom up perspective.*
- *Rewarding that people felt it was important to come and visit. A boost for my work.*

- *The satisfaction of being able to show the project. A promotional opportunity.*

3. How could we improve the visit?

- *Disappointed that some agencies didn't take part. Tight for time.*
- *A bit of a rush, felt like I was constantly moving people on.*
- *Disappointed that the Scottish Executive were not represented.*

4. Any other comments you would like to make?

- *I hope we have influenced the participants so they become champions for community food initiatives in their agencies*
- *Would like to know if it was just of interest to them or something that they will actively pursue – was it just something that was nice to see and a bit different? Background information before about the participants would have been useful.*
- *Given plenty of time to organise it and don't think we could have put much more into it.*



Mike, Donna and Courtney eat breakfast at Harrysmuir Primary School

Contact details

Initiatives and organisers

If you want to find out more about the study tour and the experience gained please get in contact with the people who helped make the study tour happen...

Scottish Community Diet Project

Lucy Gillie

c/o Scottish Consumer Council, 100 Queen Street, Glasgow G1 3DN, 0141 226 5261, www.dietproject.org.uk

North Lanarkshire Food Federation

Tommy Murphy

01236 420 600/421 463

Harrysmuir Primary School

Mrs Arlene Black

Head Teacher 01506 434501

Polbeth Food Club

Mrs Sandra Patterson, Co-ordinator,
The Community Clinic, Polbeth Avenue, Polbeth

Broxburn Family and Community Development Centre

Mrs Margaret Graham, Manager

1/3 Henderson Place, Broxburn 01506 858455

Craighall Day Centre

210 Ferry Road, Edinburgh, EH6 6RB 0131 551 2194

Edinburgh Community Food Initiative

Mr Ian Shankland, Manager

22 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5ND 0131 467 7326

West Lothian Food and Health Steering Group

Fiona Bayne,

Food and Health Development Officer,

West Lothian Food and Health Plan

Health Improvement Team, Strathbrock Partnership Centre

189a West Main Street, Broxburn 01506 771848

Mrs Doreen Trainor (Chair)

Primary Care Locality Manager (area1), Strathbrock Partnership Centre,

189a West Main Street, Broxburn, West Lothian EH52 5LH 01506 771841

Mrs Margaret Graham (vice-chair)

Broxburn Family and Community Development Centre, Henderson Place,
Broxburn, West Lothian 01506 858455

Gillian Herbert,
Chief Dietitian, St. John's Hospital Howden, Livingston 01506 419666

Sheilis Mackay,
Service Development Officer (Community Health), West Lothian Council,
Health Improvement Team, Strathbrock Partnership Centre, Broxburn

Anne Logan,
Oral Health Promotion Officer, Howden Health Centre, Howden, Livingston,
01506 418533

Gary Borthwick,
Area School Catering Manager, Environmental Services, West Lothian
Council 01506 777805

Moyra Burns,
Senior Health Promotion Specialist (Food and Health), Lothian Health
Promotion, Deaconess House, 148 the Pleasance, Edinburgh 0131 536 9416

Anne Coia,
Integration Officer, Deans Community High School, Eastwood Park,
Livingston 01506 775994

Jackie Baggott,
School Nursing Service Howden Health Centre, Howden, Livingston
01506 423800

Participating Agencies

For more information about how the study tour impacted on the work of the agencies which participated please get in touch with:

Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming

Food Poverty Project – Network Co-ordinator
Courtney Van de Weyer
courtney@sustainweb.org
020 7837 1228

NHS Health Scotland (formerly Health Education Board for Scotland – HEBS)

Research Specialist: Nutrition
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0131 536 5571

Food Standards Agency UK

Scientific Officer in Nutrition Division
Orla Yeates
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Scottish Consumer Council

Food, Rural, Environment and Transport Policy Manager
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National Consumer Council

Senior Policy Officer
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020 7881 3022

Food Standards Agency Scotland

Policy Advisor
Tracy McKen
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01224 285146

(Evening meal only)

Scottish Executive

Food and Health Co-ordinator
Gillian Kynoch
gillian.kynoch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
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Programme

DAY 1 - Tuesday 1 April 2003

9.30 – 10.00 *Linlithgow*

Checked into Star and Garter Hotel on the High Street, Linlithgow and dropped off bags. Jumped into minibus and set off by 10 am.

11.00 – 11.30 *Kirkshaws Neighbourhood Centre*

Stopped for coffee in the community café and chatted with Willie McBride, the centre manager. The food co-op based within the centre wasn't open as it was in the process of transferring to a community shop. The centre is situated in South Coatbridge Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) where the theme is health.

11.40 *Fallside food co-op*

A new and small food co-op based in a small community centre in Viewpark at the heart of North Motherwell SIP.

12.25 *Near Not Dear food co-op*

A food co-op which has been established for over five years in North Motherwell. This food co-op has two chest freezers so it can provide frozen ready meals. A number of regular volunteers help out at the food co-op.

1.00 *Orbiston food co-op*

A food co-op based in a busy community centre - also in the North Motherwell SIP. The food co-op runs one morning per week.

1.20 *Orbiston community café*

A popular community café in a well-used community centre. The participants stopped for lunch and were joined by the centre manager and Ruth Hamilton who works in the Health Promotion Department of Lanarkshire NHS Board.

2.00 – 3.00 *Central store*

North Lanarkshire Food Federation run a central store which buys products in bulk and stores them for food co-ops. Paul, the centre manager, was there to show us around.

4.00 – 6.00 *Free time*

The minibus dropped off participants at the hotel in Linlithgow.

6.00 – 7.00 *Information sharing*

Before the evening meal participants had some time to informally swap information and reflect on what they had seen during the day.

7.00 – 9.00 *Bar Leo*

Evening meal at Bar Leo on Linlithgow High Street. The group were joined by Gillian Kynoch, the Food and Health Co-ordinator for Scotland.

DAY 2 - Wednesday 2 April 2003

7.30 *Early start*

Participants jumped in the minibus without breakfast.

8 - 8.45 *Breakfast Club*

The breakfast club at Harrysmuir Primary School has been established for over four years. An opportunity to taste the breakfast and meet the kids.

9.00 – 10.00 *Meet the food and health strategy group*

An opportunity to find out who is part of the strategy group and how they function.

10.10 – 10.30 *Fruit tuck shop*

Based in Kirkhill Primary School in Broxburn. This visit was scheduled for breacktime when the fruit tuck shop is open.

11.00 – 11.30 *Polbeth food co-op*

This food co-op is situated in the local health clinic in West Calder, Polbeth.

12.00 – 1.20 *Broxburn family and community development centre*

A chance to stop for lunch at the community café in Broxburn. This project has been going for over ten years. A postgraduate student from Queen Margaret's College is currently conducting research at the centre and was there along with local residents to answer questions.

1.45 – 2.15 *Craighall day centre*

A centre for adults, with a food co-op which serves the clients of the day centre and members of the local community.

2.00 – 3.00 *Edinburgh Community Food Initiative*

A presentation by Ian Shankland, the co-ordinator of Edinburgh Community Food Initiative, on how the project supports a range of community food initiatives.

3.00 – 4.00 *Debrief*

An opportunity for participants to share their thoughts about what they had seen over the two days, before travelling home.



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