

Exploring, identifying and tackling community food issues by participatory appraisal

The second residential training course
New Lanark Mill Hotel, November 2004



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Background

This short report lists the participants who attended the second residential participatory appraisal (PA) training course and their thoughts on how they intend to use the experience. Building on the popularity and success of the first PA residential course organised by the Scottish Community Diet Project (SCDP) in Autumn 2003, the SCDP decided to repeat the course in 2004.

Similar to the first course, Vikki Hilton, an independent practitioner and trainer in PA based in Edinburgh University, planned and delivered the 2004 training course which was designed to meet the specific needs of people working with and within community food initiatives in Scotland.

A full report of the first course is available as well as a short report on the follow-up energiser day (see further reading on back page).

Participatory appraisal is about learning to take an approach that enables local people to explore issues of importance to them within their own communities in non-threatening ways. The residential course was an opportunity for those people who support work to improve food access in Scotland to learn about how communities can begin to identify their own priorities for action. Together the participants found out about how communities can be assisted and supported to use participatory appraisal techniques to investigate food access problems in their localities.

The residential course was based at New Lanark and involved some sessions where Vikki explained what PA is, how it can be used and encouraged participants to understand the benefits of employing a participatory approach. There were also fieldwork days in the small West Lothian villages of Polbeth and Addiewell, where participants were given the opportunity to be based in a community, work as a group and try out participatory appraisal techniques in real situations.

Every person in the community who had been approached for his/her thoughts was invited to a display of the information collected from the community. The display was also publicised through the local paper, flyers given to schoolchildren to take home, and local community networks. The display gave those people who collected the information an opportunity to find out what the community thought of the information and the methods used to collect it, and the community an opportunity to see how their thoughts had been displayed.

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How the participants thought they might use PA

Fiona Bayne

Food and Health Development Officer, Strathbrock Partnership,
West Lothian

"I co-ordinate the implementation of the West Lothian Action Plan and I think PA will be useful in action planning, evaluation and needs assessment."

Moyra Burns

Health Promotion, NHS Lothian

"I co-ordinate food and health issues and work in Lothian through working in partnership with a number of agencies and initiatives. I think PA could be employed to ensure that decisions made take into account all views."

Emily Crowley

Volunteer Co-ordinator, North Glasgow Community Food Initiative

"We have a fruit and veg co-op; an allotment project; we run cookery courses; are involved in weaning workshops. We rely on volunteers – a diverse group: students, local residents, asylum seekers. PA would be useful for management committee meetings, annual planning process, assessing current services we offer, including volunteers in planning activities and development for their own areas and staff meetings."

Laura Doherty

Sustainable Communities Renfrewshire

"I am currently helping to support community gardening schemes. I thought PA might be useful to encourage communities to share their ideas, feelings and suggestions for improvements on issues we cover."

Lucy Gillie

Development Officer, Scottish Community Diet Project

"We aim to network and support community initiatives across Scotland. I think PA techniques are ideal for people who want to carry out research in their own community. The principle behind PA of including many voices and needs can be used when organising conferences and meetings."

Crispin Hayes

We Can Food for Fife Project

"At Food for Fife we focus on food availability and awareness in Fife. I also work as an independent consultant. I think I will be using PA techniques to work with grassroots groups in Fife to develop food and environment issues."

Lucy Horton

Food and Health Researcher, NHS Argyll & Clyde

"I help to relate current food policy to the food activities and programmes across Argyll & Clyde. Encouraging people to participate is an essential part of this."

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Josephine McKenzie

Community Food Worker, Stepwell Healthy Living Initiative, Greenock

“Our focus is on making people aware of diet in relation to health - practical cooking, education, budget, shopping skills. We work with community drugs teams and offenders, have referrals from heart/stroke clinics and we also work with health visitors. It’s been great to learn about how to use more participative approaches and I hope it will help me to reach those groups that currently we don’t.”

Volunteer

Near not Dear, Kirkton Community Support, Dundee

“We encourage the community to increase fruit and veg intake. I hope PA will help us do this.”

Pamela Parlak

Polbeth Food Group

“I am the co-ordinator for a local food co-op. It’s been interesting seeing PA being used in Polbeth as part of the fieldwork of the course.”

Nikki Sandilands

Project Worker, Balerno Community Food Initiative

“I work for a community food project - targeting people over 60 who have poor access to good quality and affordable fruits and vegetables. I think PA techniques would be ideal to use with groups of elderly people to find out about their opinions of local food in the area.”

Jayne Stalker

Community Economic Development Officer, East Lothian Council

“I help raise awareness of healthy living (including healthy eating) in local projects and facilities within East Lothian. Promote East Lothian Council food policy in local communities throughout East Lothian, particularly socially excluded areas.”

Elizabeth White

Community Development Officer, East Lothian Council

“I also work in East Lothian promoting healthy living.”

Alex Wilde

Development Worker, North Glasgow Community Health Project

“I am new to the post of development worker at North Glasgow Health Project – however it is clear that the PA techniques will be good for meetings and research.”

Anne Woodcock

Project Leader, NHS Tayside

“I lead a team working with wards in the primary care division. We are rolling out the implementation of nutrition standards for elderly inpatients in these wards. We will complete our project in March 2006. I think I might use these approaches with staff and/or patients at open meetings and link nurse meetings.”



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Further reading ...

Exploring, Identifying and Tackling Community Food Issues by Participatory Appraisal:

A residential training course, New Lanark Mill Hotel 29 September – 3 October 2003. Published by the SCDP and downloadable from www.dietproject.org.uk

Energiser day 5 April 2004:

Follow-up day for Participatory Appraisal workshop in September. Published by the SCDP and available free on request.

Food Access in Dystart -

Phase 1: A report of the work carried out by students undertaking a short course with the University of Edinburgh for Dystart Food and Health Initiative April 2004. To download the report visit www.fifedirect.org.uk/uploadfiles/Publications/Dysart%20Food%20Acces.pdf



Participants from left to right ..

back row - Crispin Hayes, Nikki Sandilands, Vikki Hilton, Lucy Horton, Moyra Burns, Laura Doherty, Emily Crowley, Alex Wilde and Fiona Bayne.
front row - Anne Woodcock, Pamela Parlak, Jayne Stalker, Josephine MacKenzie, Sam Murray, Lucy Gillie and Elaine McLaughlin.

Summary

The strength of the SCDP PA course is that not only do the participants get to use the techniques in community settings to uncover information about food access, but also by spending a week together, participants have the opportunity to share their experiences of working with and within communities tackling food access.

Participants from both the 2003 and 2004 courses have already employed the techniques in a variety of ways. If you would like an update of how this has been done or information about future courses in Scotland please contact the SCDP.

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