



**community
food and health**

(scotland)

Study tours September 2008 Aberdeen and Edinburgh

Background

Community Food and Health (Scotland) is committed to providing opportunities for staff and volunteers involved in community food and health activities to develop their skills, share knowledge, and contribute to policy and practice development. One of the means by which we do this is by arranging study tours to organisations that are recognised examples of good practice.

In September 2008, we ran two tours to organisations in Aberdeen and Edinburgh delivering services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and operate as social enterprises.

The organisations included in the visit were Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE) and Aberdeen Foyer in Aberdeen, and Edinburgh Cyrenians 'Good Food in Tackling Homelessness' programme and the Cyrenians Farm in Edinburgh.

The purpose of the study tours was to provide people taking part with an opportunity to:

- visit and learn from organisations involved in working with homeless people or people at risk of homelessness through food and health activities, and
- learn about the experiences of establishing and operating successful social enterprises.

The study tours were aimed at community food initiatives wanting to find out more about social enterprise and homelessness work, and organisations delivering services for homeless people or people at risk of homelessness interested in developing food and health activities and learning about social enterprise.

Who attended?

Sixteen people took part, seven on the Aberdeen tour and nine on the Edinburgh tour. The participants worked for 12 different organisations. There was a high demand for places; however everyone who applied for a place was offered one. All participants work in some capacity with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Why did they want to take part?

Everyone was asked why they wanted to take part in the study tours. The reasons given included:

- to increase their knowledge
- to hear about and find new ideas
- to find out how to develop their services
- to find out about supporting volunteers
- to learn about social enterprise
- to find out about partnership working and
- to network and share experiences

Several participants were particularly interested in finding out about setting up cookery classes for clients.

'This will bring my organisation a better understanding of the issues around homelessness and what services people value when they are homeless.'

'... would benefit from sharing and learning from others in this field - to ensure that we are approaching the problems from the right perspective.'

'... learn how to make better use of our resources ...'

'... to look at ways in which my organisation could possibly look at the benefits of having a social enterprise.'



Seery and Anne Gibson.

Aberdeen tour

Programme

16th September – meet up at ‘Foyer at HMT’ for dinner

17th September

Morning - CFINE (Community Food Initiatives North East)

Dave Simmers, Strategic Director

Afternoon (lunch)- Aberdeen Foyer

Lisa Fallowfield, Health Team Manager

Leona McDermid, Commercial Director, Foyer Enterprise

Participants

Gordon Anderson, Alison Bennewith, Vikki Binnie, Norrie Hunter, Colin McQueen, Eric Nicol, Janet

The study tour began on the evening of the 16th, when we met Lisa and Dave at ‘Foyer @ HMT’ for dinner. The restaurant was chosen as it is one of the newer social enterprises run by Foyer Enterprise, part of Aberdeen Foyer. The meal was excellent and everyone had a chance to get to know each other.

The following morning, we met up at CFINE’s warehouse, and were treated to a second breakfast of fruit and rowies¹. Dave then spoke about **CFINE** – its history, the work that it is doing and its future plans.

CFINE's origins were as a youth project in Aberdeen that ran a fruit and vegetable co-op in the 1990s. The organisation has developed significantly since then, and now has two arms:

CFINE Ltd, the charitable arm, which supports 50+ community food outlets throughout Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray for disadvantaged communities and groups, and runs a FareShare franchise. It has been awarded funding to open new outlets in Aberdeenshire.

CFINE Enterprises, the trading arm, which runs the Fast Fruit scheme delivering fruit to 120 schools and nurseries, and sells fruit to 30 companies in Aberdeen. Other enterprise activities being developed include an online shopping hub providing food from local suppliers, establishing a social enterprise support resource in Moray (in partnership with other social enterprises) and delivering fruit and vegetables to prisons. CFINE currently has 25 different funding streams, as well as generating £400,000 from fruit and vegetable sales last year. It aims to be financially self-sufficient within 3-4 years.

¹ traditional Aberdeen breakfast rolls

Dave talked about the importance of social enterprise in community food and health work stating, *'If we're serious about anti-poverty work, then there is a moral imperative to trade to support this work, where we can'*, but added that organisations need the experience, skills and commitment to set up as social enterprises. He spoke about the danger of social enterprise becoming an 'industry' and the need for the differing viewpoints and 'languages' brought to social enterprises by those involved being understood and shared.

We then walked to Aberdeen Foyer's main building, where we had lunch. This was followed by presentations from Lisa and Leona.

Lisa spoke about different aspects of the work of the **Foyer**:

Aberdeen Foyer aims to prevent and alleviate youth homelessness and unemployment in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Its work covers four themes – housing support, learning, health and enterprise.

Food and health work is incorporated into much of the work that they do – for

example, group cooking sessions are included in most of the learning programmes offered.

Food and health activities offered by the Foyer recognise that their clients are aware of what they should be eating but have difficulties accessing a healthy diet. The importance of the social aspect of food and eating have also influenced the design and delivery of the activities, which include cookery sessions, providing a fruit and vegetable stall, support with shopping, group work around healthy eating, and one-to-one support.

Lisa gave us an exercise based around real examples of clients' difficulties in accessing a healthy diet. This was followed by a tour of the Foyer building.

She ended by sharing her dream of having a dedicated nutrition worker and being able to develop its food and health work with clients, volunteers and staff.



Leona talked about the work of **Foyer Enterprise**:

Foyer Enterprise is the enterprise arm of the Foyer, and operates a number of businesses which generate income for Aberdeen Foyer, while assisting it to meet its social aims.

The Foyer Restaurant and Gallery was the first business established 10 years ago. A second restaurant and café, and entertainment area – Foyer@HMT – now operates in His Majesty's Theatre. Foyer Graphics was set up as an in-house graphics company by the manager of another organisation, and provides a service for the Foyer and for external customers. Aberdeen Foyer also runs Foyer Drive and owns half of a driving school. It is intending to buy the remaining half-share within 3 years. Foyer Drive provides drivers education and driving lessons for Aberdeen Foyer clients, schoolchildren and to individuals.

Leona talked about the need for discipline when running social enterprises, which includes closing loss-makers to protect the core of the organisation.

She asked everyone to talk about the business ideas they had. The participants ideas included providing employment for people excluded from the mainstream, accessible produce in disadvantaged areas, alongside cooking skills, and going to Liberia to teach food hygiene.

Leona then discussed five different models of setting up a social enterprise which included **intrapreneurs** (people who develop a social enterprise from within a company), **start-up**, **franchising and licensing**, **business acquisition**, and **replication** (of a successful social enterprise in another location). She followed this by talking about the key points that need to be considered when setting up a social enterprise.

Before finishing, Leona encouraged everyone wanting to set up a social enterprise to seek advice from existing businesses and social enterprise support agencies and organisations.



Edinburgh tour

Programme

Morning – Good Food in Tackling Homelessness Programme

Carol Anne Alcorn, Programme Manager
Jeanie Collier, Cooking at Home Co-ordinator

Lunch

Afternoon – Cyrenians Farm

Rob Davidson, Farm Manager and Tom.

Participants

Laura Balfour, Gail Copeland, Gillian Dick, Hazel King, Karen McGilvery, Dorothy Morrison, Mandy Ramage, Pippa Robbie, Stella Stewart and Anne Gibson

The tour started with everyone watching a delivery of surplus food from Marks and Spencer being unloaded into the 'Good Food in Tackling Homelessness' programme's depot. Carol-Anne began by showing a DVD about the programme, then talked about its history, current activities and future plans

'Good Food in Tackling Homelessness' programme

The programme is one of a number of different activities managed by Edinburgh Cyrenians, with the aim of alleviating homelessness and social exclusion. The Cyrenians Good Food Programme started with the Food Redistribution Project (FareShare franchise) which was set up in 1999 to distribute surplus food to homelessness organisations in Edinburgh and the Lothians. As well as continuing to manage the FareShare franchise, the programme runs three other food-related services – Supported Volunteering, Cooking at Home and Improving Provision and Practice. There are 60 volunteers at the depot, 80% of whom are, or have been clients of the Cyrenians and require support.

Edinburgh Cyrenians has set up a social enterprise steering group working to develop new enterprises that relate to the charity's mission of tackling poverty and homelessness and promoting environmental sustainability. Each will create high quality opportunities that genuinely improve the lives of people otherwise facing barriers. The first initiative developed by the 'Good Food in Tackling Homelessness' programme has been the establishment of a Membership Scheme for organisations working in the field of social inclusion. The membership package includes the delivery of surplus food, information and training in respect of food safety and hygiene, advisory visits and information updates. In addition the project has been recognised as a Training Centre by REHIS (Royal Environmental Institute of Scotland).

Other enterprise ideas being explored include a forklift truck training project, and providing warehousing and catering services .

Carol-Anne then took us on a tour of the depot. Following this, one of the depot's volunteers, James, joined us to tell us about his experiences of the project, and how it has helped him make changes to his life.

Jeanie talked about the food education work carried out and the Cooking at Home classes. This includes cookery classes run in the depot and within homelessness projects and hostels, and the delivery of Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland's (REHIS) food and health and food hygiene courses. She spoke about the background and history of this work, and how the cookery classes have evolved to meet the needs of the students better. She discussed the issues that she has encountered in setting up cookery classes and training, and how she has overcome them.

Jeanie highlighted the importance of the social aspect of the cookery classes to the students, and recognising the achievements of the students (for example, with certificates) and the need for evaluation of the work.

After lunch at the depot we travelled to the **Cyrenians Farm**, where we were met by Rob and Tom. We began by watching a short DVD about the Farm's activities, which Rob then expanded on:

The Farm has been running for over 30 years, providing supported accommodation for up to eight young people. It is a working organic farm.

It operates as a social enterprise, with income being generated from a range of activities including the sale of eggs, fruit, vegetables, and jams and preserves that are made on site, and running corporate teambuilding events. The participants on these events carry out some of the Farm's tasks, assisted by the young residents.

Over 50% of the Farm's income is generated from sales. To increase income, they plan to plant more apple trees and berries as they are more profitable and versatile.



Rob and Tom then took us on a tour of the Farm. Rob spoke about some of the issues that the Farm faces, including identifying funding to refurbish the barn, and their reliance on volunteers.

We then spent some time picking hawthorn berries to be used in jam-making. This gave everyone an opportunity to find out more about each other, and share experiences and ideas, while enjoying the sunshine. The study tour ended with us sharing a cup of tea with some of the volunteers who live at the Farm.

What did participants take away from the study tours?

Following both tours, participants were asked to complete and return a short questionnaire, which asked:

- Which part of the study tour they had most enjoyed.
- Which part had been most useful for their organisation.
- What they had taken away from the tour that will make a difference to their organisation.
- How the tours could have been improved.
- If they had been in contact with, or were planning to contact, anyone that they had met on the tour.

Forms were received back from 12 of the participants (from 10 organisations). Here are some of the comments included:

'I enjoyed all the study tour. As all the information I was getting was new to me it was all fascinating. I enjoyed the Cyrenians and the farm.'

(What I most enjoyed was) '.. meeting and chatting with other organisations.'

'It's hard to chose (which was the most enjoyable) as both experiences were extremely informative and enlightening.'

(What was most useful was) '.. being able to share experiences and discovered that there was a lot of common ground. I have sometimes felt that I have been hitting my head on the ground with the client group but came away with renewed enthusiasm.'

'The Foyer was wonderful. I picked up a few ideas to introduce with my client group.'

'The CFINE visit (was most useful) as we are hoping to establish a FareShare type scheme and the visit was quite inspirational.'

'The social enterprise ethos that includes service users.'
(was most useful)

'The other areas I found most useful was being able to speak with the other people on the tour about their work with homeless people.'

'I came away more confident that our approach to homelessness and food in North Ayrshire was in fact on the right lines.'

'.. the knowledge that cookery classes can be achieved, sustained and rewarding.'

'I want to try and source funding to provide fruit on a daily basis for clients as I feel this would be very beneficial to their diet.'

'We are in the process of setting up a supported accommodation project for young people. The Foyer presentation was particularly informative in this regard.'

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