



**community
food and health**

(scotland)

MINDING THEIR OWN BUSINESS TOO

**Examples of community food initiatives that have
become more enterprising**

Welcome to Minding Their Own Business Too

In 2006 Community Food and Health (Scotland) produced 'Minding Their Own Business', an introduction to business and social enterprise for organisations supporting local communities tackling inequalities in diet and health. The purpose of the toolkit was, and remains, to encourage community food and health organisations to consider if the social enterprise business model was right for them, and provide information, advice and assistance to those groups wanting to adopt it.

Minding Their Own Business Too is a companion to this toolkit. In response to suggestions from people involved in community food and health work, it focuses on examples of community food and health organisations that have moved from thinking about being enterprising, to doing it.

Minding Their Own Business Too highlights, in their own words, the work of five very different organisations. What they all have in common is their determination to continue the work that they are doing to reduce health inequalities and improve access to food for the most disadvantaged members of their communities. All of them are striving to make their organisations as financially sustainable as they can be and are generating a proportion of their income from trading – that is, by selling goods or services.

Some of the organisations call themselves social enterprises, others don't. However, they all *'think business'* and have plans for other enterprise activities that they intend to develop.

Being more business-like and becoming enterprising is not the answer for every organisation running community food and health activities, and nor should it be. However, for those that it is, there is much that can be learned from other community food initiatives that have taken this journey.

Becoming enterprising can be challenging for every organisation. It isn't always easy. Sometimes plans don't work out. However, the benefits that organisations gain from becoming more business-like can be wide-ranging, and beyond the purely financial. For example, organisations generating their own income through trading may have more flexibility than the statutory or private sector to develop services and activities to meet identified community needs. And, their management committees, staff and volunteers have the opportunity to be actively involved in developing their organisation in a new and exciting direction, gaining new skills on the way.

There has never been a better time for community food initiatives to consider becoming enterprising. Social enterprise is high on the political agenda. The range of support currently available to community and voluntary organisations – financial and otherwise – is greater than it has ever been. And, there are a growing number of social enterprises involved in delivering community food and health activities to learn from.

Minding Their Own Business Too isn't a 'how to.....' guide. There are many other sources of advice, assistance and support available that provide this. What we hope this publication provides is useful information, stimulating ideas and lots of inspiration for community food initiatives interested in enterprise.

"The purpose of the Scottish Government is to create a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth. We see a real role for the third sector – including social enterprises – in helping us achieve this. For this reason we launched our Enterprising Third Sector Action Plan in June 2008. Enterprising third sector organisations operate in many different areas of the economy, generating income but also providing much needed services to the people of our country.

"Community food initiatives are important because they provide more than just fresh produce. As this document demonstrates, they also provide healthy food and deliver healthy eating messages thereby helping Scotland become healthier. By cutting down on food miles they help make Scotland greener. Some provide work experience for long term unemployed or for those with disabilities thereby helping to make Scotland wealthier and fairer. Others work with people to develop cooking skills thereby helping to create a smarter Scotland.

"Our Action Plan aims to create the environment in which enterprising third sector organisations can thrive in Scotland. Our direct funding for the sector through the Scottish Investment Fund, Third Sector Enterprise Fund and Social Entrepreneurs Fund will give organisations the investment they need to grow, even in the difficult economic conditions we find ourselves in now. The Scottish Government wants to ensure that a truly enterprising third sector plays its part in creating a more successful Scotland."

Jim Mather, Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism

Case studies



About the allotment

Nithsdale Council of Voluntary Service (NCVS) has been operating in the Nithsdale area of Dumfries and Galloway since 1975. As well as our core intermediary work of growing and supporting the community and voluntary sector, we are also a development trust¹ and develop and deliver initiatives that address identified community needs.

the allotment is a social enterprise that developed from a successful pilot project which had been based in a Spar retail unit in North West Dumfries. The pilot provided subsidised fruit and vegetables to people living in the area, which led to a significant increase in the amount being consumed by households. The pilot was time specific and was funded and delivered by NCVS and Nithsdale Local Health Partnership. The evaluation of the pilot was very positive and both partners wanted to continue to deliver the outcomes, but through a model that was more financially sustainable. The establishment of 'the allotment' was the result.

What the allotment does

the allotment is a greengrocers based in the centre of Dumfries. The shop is staffed by both paid and volunteer members of staff. It has been open since October 2008. In the summer of 2009 we started a one-year pilot project, operating a weekly fruit and vegetable stall in Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary which is run by a member of staff and one of our experienced volunteers.

We also accept 'Healthy Start'² vouchers. One of our members of staff visits parent and toddler groups in the area, to promote the voucher scheme.

The aim of this work is to encourage the parents to buy more fruit and vegetables from the shop.



¹ Development Trusts are community owned, led and managed organisations, established to regenerate a defined geographical area www.dtascot.org.uk

² Healthy Start is a Government scheme that provides pregnant women, or families with children under four, who are on certain benefits, with free vouchers every week that can be swapped at participating retail outlets for fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and infant formula www.healthystart.nhs.uk

How we are managed

the allotment is a trading subsidiary³, owned and managed by the directors of NCVS. It is a Community Interest Company⁴ (CIC). The day-to-day management of the shop, staff and volunteers is the responsibility of the shop manager. The strategic management of the business is the responsibility of NCVS. **the allotment** is also supported by an Advisory Group made up of relevant stakeholders and funders and receives support from Nithsdale Health Improvement team.

Our resources

The shop has one full-time member of staff, two part-time members of staff and nine volunteers. The shop is situated in the centre of Dumfries, and is leased on a commercial basis. Being a CIC it attracts business rates relief from Dumfries and Galloway Council.

Why we decided to set up **the allotment** as a CIC

We saw this as the only way that the service would become sustainable in the longer term, as there is an increasing shift away from grant funding. We saw the social enterprise business model as particularly appropriate for **the allotment**.

The support and assistance we have received

We received funding from Dumfries and Galloway Council to commission consultants to work with us to carry out an options appraisal and produce a sustainable business plan. We also received funding from them to assist with the costs of providing subsidised fruit and vegetables to targeted client groups during our start-up period. We were also successful in receiving funding from the Community Health Partnership. This one-off funding provides capital and revenue support during our first two years of trading.

We also work with Building Healthy Communities, a community health initiative that provides us with recipe cards to give to our customers.

Our future plans

We are looking to provide services to other social enterprises and develop further commercial opportunities.

The stall in the hospital is going well, and has the potential to expand. In addition to providing a service for hospital staff, patients and visitors, the stall is being used by people living close to the hospital.

We are also in discussion with the Food Train, and plan to supply the fruit and vegetables for its customers in Dumfries in the near future.

³ A trading subsidiary is a wholly-owned subsidiary company set up by a charitable company to enable it to carry out non-charitable trading activities. Any profits made by the trading subsidiary are gifted back to the charitable company.

⁴ A Community Interest Company (CIC) is a type of limited company designed for social enterprises wanting to use their profits and assets for public good. A CIC must meet a 'community benefit' test, and is subject to an 'asset lock' that ensures assets and profits made are used for the benefit of the community. www.cicregulator.gov.uk

We have recently had enquiries from statutory organisations about **the allotment** supplying fruit boxes as part of their catering requirements for business meetings. This is an area of growth we are keen to progress.

The lessons we have learned

There are four main lessons that we want to share. Firstly, the time it takes to set up a business, the level of start-up funding required, and being aware of cash flow implications are all key elements that need to be considered. Secondly, marketing your services is essential, which is something the voluntary sector is traditionally not that good at! Thirdly, you need a completely different 'head set' when moving from being a project to becoming a business. Finally, don't underestimate the amount of time and support that your volunteers will need to deliver on business goals.

Our main pieces of advice for other community food initiatives

The social enterprise model isn't necessarily the best option for everyone out there. If you decide that it is, do your market research and take time to test your business case thoroughly!

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Edinburgh Cyrenians

Good Food in Tackling Homelessness Programme

What the programme is

Edinburgh Cyrenians was formed in 1968 by local people who were concerned about the level of homelessness and social exclusion in Edinburgh and the Lothians. The charity provides a range of services for homeless and socially excluded people.

The **Good Food in Tackling Homelessness** programme was launched in 1999. The vision for programme is to use the medium of good food to improve the lives of the most socially excluded and to promote a more inclusive and socially successful Scotland.

We plan to expand our services to other geographical areas

Our resources

We are based within a depot in Leith in Edinburgh. In addition to an operating area which can accommodate our two refrigerated vans and a forklift truck, the premises include a commercial refrigeration plant, a training kitchen, training room and offices. We have four members of staff and a team of 70 trainees and volunteers.

What we do

The **Good Food in Tackling Homelessness** Programme offers four distinct food and health services each offering a refreshing approach to tackle ill-health and poor nutrition

Food redistribution - we operate a FareShare⁵ project that delivers good quality surplus food to projects working in the fields of homelessness and social exclusion. Around nine tonnes of food is delivered each week providing greater choice and nutritional value for some of the most vulnerable members of our society while at the same time reducing food costs for member organisations.

Traineeships and volunteering - we work with around 70 volunteers. In 2008, 84% of the 11,000 hours of volunteering completed was contributed by individuals who have issues around homelessness, mental health and other complex needs.

Cooking classes - we offer cooking classes aimed at people who have little or no cooking experience, and provide inspiration on how to eat well on a budget in a supportive teaching environment. At the end of each class



⁵ FareShare is a UK charity that supports communities to relieve poverty by promoting, developing and supporting the redistribution of quality food that is surplus and fit-for-purpose, and by providing training and education www.fareshare.org.uk

the participants eat together, enjoying the social benefits that good food can bring. Last year 126 small group classes were run.

Improving provision and practice - we share the learning we have undertaken since the launch of the **Good Food Programme** with organisations working with people who are experiencing homelessness and complex needs issues. We have produced a handbook that is used by organisations seeking to improve awareness of healthy eating and teach basic cooking skills. In addition, we hold an annual Food Conference, which provides a chance for organisations to find out how good food can be used creatively to support people overcoming homelessness.

Our funding

The annual operating cost of the project is around £250,000 per year. We are funded from a variety of sources including commissioned services from the City of Edinburgh Council and a Service Level Agreement⁶ with NHS Lothian. £30,000 of our costs are met through 'gifts-in-kind' The remainder of the funding is secured from trusts, corporate partners and individual supporters, and through fundraising events (including an Annual Corporate Cook Off which raises in the region of £21,000 and a sponsored walk along the Water of Leith)

Our enterprising activities

In order to become less dependent on external funding we have taken steps into the world of social enterprise in the last two years.

We have developed a membership scheme, which offers a portfolio of benefits for projects working in the field of social exclusion and homelessness. This includes the delivery of food, kitchen inspections, emergency food packs, discounts with suppliers and access to reduced cost Elementary Food Hygiene and Food and Health courses accredited by REHIS (Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland)⁷.

The project is an accredited REHIS Training Centre. Our Food and Health Education Co-ordinator regularly delivers courses in our training kitchen, and also to organisations in their own premises.

We organise study tours on a regular basis, along with a MindShift experience. This provides people with the opportunity to spend a half or whole day with the team, to find out about the work of the project and see from the inside the positive outcomes that the project is delivering. The MindShift experience includes being involved in the delivery or collection of food, working alongside people who have moved from being 'the helped' to 'the helper' and are now taking their place as contributing members of our community, and enjoying lunch with a cooking class.

We deliver cookery classes tailored to suit the needs of individual organisations. These can be arranged for the training kitchen or held within organisations' own premises.

⁶ A service level agreement is part of a service contract where the level of service is formally defined.

⁷ The Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland (REHIS) is an independent charity with the main objective of promoting the advancement of environmental health. It is the awarding body for the Elementary Food Hygiene and Elementary Food and Health courses www.rehis.co.uk

Our future plans

We plan to increase our social enterprise activities. This will include expanding the membership scheme and increasing the number of accredited REHIS Food Hygiene Courses we provide, potentially expanding into the private sector. We are also producing a feasibility study into the viability of increasing our training portfolio by introducing a Fork Lift Training Project.

Other enterprises

Edinburgh Cyrenians has a growing portfolio of social businesses that relate to their mission of tackling poverty and homelessness and promoting environmental sustainability. Each social enterprise creates high quality social and work integration opportunities that genuinely improve the lives of people otherwise facing barriers.

Cyrenians Farm is a small organic farm located just outside Edinburgh. As well as growing organic fruit and vegetables and cultivating livestock, the Farm is also home to a community of vulnerable young people, many with backgrounds of homelessness. Their unique approach to residential care helps young people to develop employment and life skills, self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation through training and ongoing support. The farm produces jams and other preserves for sale. It also runs very successful corporate teambuilding events that give participants an opportunity to contribute to the work of the Farm, working alongside some of the Farm's young residents.

CORE (Cyrenians Organic Recycling Enterprise) offers a competitive and environmentally friendly solution to food and catering waste recycling to businesses and large organisations.

All the profits from the Cyrenians social enterprises are reinvested in the enterprises to create work, volunteering and training opportunities for individuals who have had issues with homelessness and other complex needs.

The Cyrenians enterprises provide unique services and work on the principle of 'a hand up and not a hand out', offering traineeships and volunteering opportunities which allow individuals to rejoin the mainstream, invest in meaningful and valuable work, and to develop skills and confidence within a supportive environment.

At the heart of all the Cyrenians social enterprise development is the focus on putting people who have been disadvantaged at the centre of delivering services, education and inspiration for the wider community in Scotland, pointing the way to a more socially successful and sustainable future.

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About REAL Food

REAL (Real Education Active Lives) Food is a market garden and retail based social enterprise, started up three years ago in Inverness High School to provide youngsters with opportunities for personal development, work experience and community involvement by linking enterprise activities to the curriculum. It is now working, with pupil involvement, to expand its local sales base.

The idea for REAL came from an informal meeting between the school's Rector, a teacher and youth worker, and the managing director of a local fish processing and marketing business who was frustrated by the lack of link up between schools and the business community, and community engagement with the school. In particular he was frustrated by the lack of preparation for the working world that he'd found, not just in 16 year olds, but even those going into their 20s.

The vision of REAL is the involvement of the wider community in the life of the school and partnership working with the business, public and statutory sector and voluntary sector to enhance the school's contribution to that community. Bringing together private, public and social elements meant we wrote our own rule book, recognising problems existed not only for the school, but for the wider community.

Sustainability is also key for us. Everyone involved had experience of projects that rarely fulfilled their promise because of their short-term vision, and funding, which resulted in the work fizzling out. We wanted to build for the long-term by growing social enterprises that can support themselves and add value to Inverness High School and the communities it serves. However, we knew we needed funding to kick-start the project. We got initial funding from Schools of Ambition⁸ programme and two local development agencies to get us up and running. There is also significant in-kind support from the school itself in the form of working space and office resources. We are looking to break even in 2011.

Where we operate

Inverness High School is one of the five secondary schools serving the fast growing city. The school's catchment includes Merkinch and Dalneigh, communities facing challenges of multiple deprivation.

How we are organised

REAL consists of two 'arms' – the charitable arm, which enables us to apply to different funders, and REAL CIC, one of the earliest Community Interest Companies. Both arms are overseen by a board with members from the senior school staff and the local business community. REAL CIC has contracted 'The Ardmere Partnership' (TAP) to drive the executive development. TAP comprises of the teacher and the managing director who initiated the idea for REAL, and the business partner of the latter.

⁸ Schools of Ambition is a Scottish Government funded programme, managed through Learning Teaching Scotland, established to bring about fast-track change and support school transformation www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/index.asp

What we do

Food was chosen as a focal point for the development of the project, primarily because of a lack of a production kitchen in the school. Establishing a market garden was the first enterprise set up. Beginning in spring 2006 we cleared the ground and planted root crops. Nearly an acre of the school ground has been cultivated, and the area contains three polytunnels in one corner. A range of crops are grown organically, fertilised with seaweed harvested nearby and chicken manure from a local farmer.



There is a range of ways that pupils can be involved in this enterprise including the gardening club, the eco-schools group and through courses such as Rural Skills, taught in S3. The Technology, Humanities, Science and Home Economics departments also use the farm as a teaching resource. Some ex-pupils also return to the school to be volunteers.

Our first produce was sold in the summer of 2006 through the school and at a local farmers market. The retail enterprise is developing well, with pupils learning all about retailing and trading, through working in the school-based village markets and in other parts of the enterprise. In terms of development of our village market model, we are pushing at open doors as local people want a real alternative when it comes to buying their food. The scale is developing all the time. We soon realised we couldn't stock a stall with only our own produce for much of the year so we have developed relationships with local farmers and producers, selling their produce alongside our own. The pupils also visit Raigmore Hospital, Lifescan and Scottish Natural Heritage in Inverness, where they sell vegetables to staff, and the market garden supplies a number of the city's top restaurants with salad leaves.

REAL Food ties in to the schools health promotion agenda. We have a health promotion group working closely with the school meals service and some of the REAL Food produce has already been served up at school lunches, although the operation is not big enough to provide a supply all the time. Another area the business is developing is courses for adults.

Our results

We are able to offer a more flexible route to education by giving young people the opportunity to be part of genuine business and develop a range of employability skills, such as teamwork, selling, marketing, stock control, accounting and presentation. This has proved to be truly valuable to all the individuals involved. The fact that it is a real business also means work experience placements are available too.

REAL Food is creating lots of learning opportunities for pupils within the school. The enterprises bring enrichment to subjects in the curriculum, and, new courses have been introduced in the school, such as Rural Skills and Community Involvement because of the development of REAL Food.

The REAL Project got a very public boost when Prince Charles and his wife Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, visited Inverness High School in June 2008. The school also

received the Schools Social Enterprise Award from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Fiona Hyslop and in August the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Development, John Swinney visited the project. In September 2008 we received the Highlands & Islands Food Award for Innovation. The innovative nature of REAL, merging social enterprise and school activities, is creating a lot of interest beyond our campus.

Our plans

REAL Food is only the first development. The next exciting development, the REAL Place, is at the feasibility stage. This building will house, among other initiatives, a food preparation kitchen, a small conference centre, easy access health facilities and business start-up units - for pupils, teachers and the wider community; all in tune with the REAL ethos of community transformation through social enterprise. Our hope is to design an iconic facility that would resonate well with the existing Inverness High School building, the most notable art-deco establishment in the city.

The lessons we have learned

Firstly, recruit the right staff. Running a social enterprise is very, very different from operating a conventional farm or retail operation and a very specific type of person is needed to do this – someone who can operate with the tensions of the triple bottom line, respond rapidly to constant change and manage the reality of working within an insecure and variable funding environment (which we are striving to get out of!).

Secondly, the project would have worked much better if we'd employed a teacher to manage the link between the school and the business and develop resources so the farm could be used more as an alternative teaching resource.

Advice for other community food initiatives wanting to become more enterprising.

There is an open door for local food at the moment, but be prepared for hard work!
Multiple plate-spinning is a core skill!

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The Food Train

About the Food Train

The Food Train was established in 1995 following a community survey in Dumfries that highlighted there was a need for older people to get regular help with their weekly grocery shopping. It was set up by older people for older people.

The aim of the Food Train is to provide a low-cost grocery delivery service and household support service for older people who are unable to do their own weekly shopping or carry out certain household tasks because of age, ill-health, frailty or disability. We want to support older people to live independently in their own home and community for as long as possible and positively impact on their mental wellbeing through increased social contact.

For its first seven years, the Food Train was based in and operated for Dumfries only, and was run by a small group of volunteers. In 2002, the organisation received four-year funding of £187,000 from the (then) Scottish Executive to expand its services across all of the Dumfries & Galloway area. Since the successful expansion programme was completed in 2006, an additional home support service has been developed in response to the growing needs of the customers.

The Food Train now operates in all parts of Dumfries and Galloway and has plans for wider development across Scotland.

How we are organised

The Food Train is overseen by a Board of Trustees, all volunteers. It is a company limited by guarantee⁹, and is recognised as a charity by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator¹⁰.

The Food Train is an approved domiciliary care provider with Dumfries and Galloway Council

Our resources

We have five staff (two full-time, three part-time) and over 200 volunteers delivering the services.

We have six branch offices, ten delivery vehicles and 19 grocery store partners who donate their staff time (in varying quantities) to make up the weekly grocery orders.

What we do

Our main activity is providing a grocery delivery service for older people. We work closely with a number of supermarkets and shops who make up our customers orders, which are

⁹ A company limited by guarantee is a private company that limits the liability of members, who guarantee to pay a nominal sum in the event of the company being wound up. As a company limited by guarantee can have charitable status, many voluntary and community organisations, and social enterprises, adopt this structure.

¹⁰ The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) is the national body in Scotland that registers and regulates charities www.oscr.org.uk

then delivered by our volunteers. We also run a household support service, with volunteers carrying small household tasks for our customers who are unable to do these themselves.

Most of our income (about 72%) comes from a service level agreement we have with the local authority and health board. Of the remainder, about half is generated through our annual membership fee for customers (£1), the £2 delivery charge for each grocery delivery and the charge for doing the small jobs around the home (£1 or £2 each). The other half comes from donations, small grants, trust funding, and from renting out our office space and hiring out our vans when these are spare.

The Food Train is very good at being enterprising. We generate financial support in other ways which keep running costs down. Our vehicle maintenance is carried out by local garages who donate their time, charging us only for any vehicle parts that they use. In return, we advertise their businesses on the sides of our vans.



We work where we can with small local companies. Guaranteeing them business has resulted in us being offered excellent discounts and cost savings. The Food Train has negotiated generous discounts with local newspapers for advertising, with our local printers for all publicity printing and with our local stationary supplier for all our office supplies.

Why we became more enterprising

Initially, the primary reason for introducing service charges was to enable us to keep our vehicles on the road. In recent years our charges have increased slightly as our service has grown, in order to reduce the level of grant funding needed. We have always found that our customers are happy to pay our small charges and often give more than is necessary, which boosts our income further. More than ever, we need to generate some of our own income. This is important to our cost effectiveness and future sustainability.

The support and help we have had

We have received help over the years from many sources, both local and national. These have included voluntary sector and social enterprise support networks and agencies, support organisations for older people, the local authority and NHS Board, the Scottish Government and Community Food and Health (Scotland). The support we have had has been varied, depending on our needs, and has included general advice, training, access to networks, signposting to other organisations and funding streams, and mentoring. We have found that help is readily and freely available.

Our plans for the Food Train

We hope to develop our services in other areas of Scotland, which would further increase our income generation through service charges. We are also currently receiving business

support through the Scottish Government's 'Aspire to Enterprise'¹¹ programme and are planning to set up a social enterprise trading arm, delivering gardening services for our customers who are no longer able to care for their gardens.

The lessons we have learned

First and foremost, think 'business'!

Don't sell yourself short. If someone wants your expert advice – charge them for it!

Make the most of your resources. Other people may be keen to use these when you aren't. Make sure that any that you can earn money from, such as meeting rooms, vehicles, and equipment, are competitively priced and marketed well. In the past we didn't make the most of our resources. We now have regular bookings for our main meeting room and another social enterprise hires one of our vans once a month.

Never underestimate the power of branding and the need to invest in good branding materials. View them as a long term investment.

Don't assume that your customers aren't willing to pay more for your services. We didn't increase our service charges for a long time. However, customer feedback indicated they would happily have been paying more.

Our one piece of advice for other community food initiatives wanting to become more enterprising

Everything has a value within your organisation - your people, your practical resources and even your ideas. If you've got it, market it and sell it!

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¹¹ Aspire to Enterprise is a Scottish Government funded programme of business support services available to ambitious, developing social enterprises in lowland Scotland www.aspiretoenterprise.org.uk

Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership

About Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership

Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership (LCFHP) works with, supports and delivers a number of community food initiatives in North and South Lanarkshire. Originally called North Lanarkshire Federation of Food Co-ops, we have been working to promote healthy eating for over 18 years. In 2007 we changed the name of the organisation to LCFHP to reflect that we now work across North and South Lanarkshire.

LCFHP aims to improve the health of communities across Lanarkshire by providing high quality fresh produce at low cost, promoting access to a healthy diet through the establishment of community food interventions in areas of need, and providing ongoing support to volunteers and customers in community food initiatives through delivering training and health promotion education. We bring a range of benefits to the community food initiatives we support. These include reducing their costs through maximising economies of scale, the ability to support volunteers, and the ability to access different sources of funding.

The work of the organisation is guided by our values which are: the need to focus support on people, families and communities most in need; the need to organise activity to ensure food is sold at the lowest appropriate price and highest possible quality; the need to work effectively in partnership with others to maximise benefits to the people we support; and the need to share information and skills and include new groups fully in our activities.

How we are organised

LCFHP is a company limited by guarantee and recognised as a charity by OSCR. Our board of directors includes representatives from the communities and food initiatives we work with.

Our resources

We have a 1000 ft² warehouse and office space in Bargeddie, 9 members of staff (8 full-time) and a fleet of 5 delivery vehicles.

Our turnover last year was around £500,000, with about half of this from sales of fruit and vegetables.

What we do

We run three individual but linked projects:

Community programme - we work with 12 community food co-ops and 25 community food initiatives and supply another 42 projects and nine community cafés through our community programme. We focus on supplying fruit and vegetables, but also supply some of the community food co-ops and community cafés with other foodstuffs and products.

Fruits and Roots - for the past 18 months we have operated fruit stalls in partnership with NHS Lanarkshire in the three acute hospital in Lanarkshire – Wishaw, Monklands and Hairmyres – for staff, visitors and patients. This project is run as a social enterprise, with no requirement for additional non-core funding. The annual turnover of fruit and vegetables is about £45,000, which allows us to pay a part-time member of staff. Originally the fruit stalls were open one day a week in each of the hospitals. Now, the stalls are open for two days per week in Wishaw Hospital and four days in Monklands Hospital.

High Five for Fruit - we have a Service Level Agreement with North Lanarkshire Council to supply fruit to 126 nurseries in the North Lanarkshire area. We supply 25,000 pieces of fruit each year, worth £86,000 per annum. The delivery service is also provided to six nurseries in South Lanarkshire. To improve access to fresh produce within the communities that the nurseries and schools are



based in, we have opened weekly fruit and vegetable stalls in 25 locations, and have plans to open more. The turnover from the weekly stalls is currently around £22,000. High Five for Fruit has also delivered 114 health promotion sessions to around 4500 children and adults last year.

Why we became more enterprising

We want to supplement our funding by identifying initiatives that use our organisation's strengths and experience in income generation without reducing our capacity to deliver benefit to our core client base. We saw the development of **Fruits and Roots** providing the organisation with an independent income stream, which would enhance our financial sustainability.

Who we have received support from

Fruits and Roots was supported initially with a large amount of assistance from NHS Lanarkshire Health Promotion staff. This was especially important as the three hospitals have different and separate management structures (two are managed under a public - private partnership¹² contract) and we faced a number of obstacles in obtaining permission to open the stalls in all three.

¹² Public-private partnerships (PPP) are public or private business ventures that are funded, developed and operated through a partnership of public and private sector organisations.

Business Gateway¹³ has also been a useful source of advice and support in developing new business practices and planning.

We work closely with the Council's Health Promoting Nurseries and Schools¹⁴ programmes around High Five for Fruit, and our other work with children and young people.

Our future enterprise plans

LCFHP is working to roll out **Fruits and Roots** to other sectors, not just focusing on NHS acute locations. We have developed the model so that it can operate on a smaller scale in other settings where the customer base is smaller.

We are also looking at developing other activities that will generate income for the organisation including 'Working Better Together', a project which will improve the supply of fresh produce to independently-run convenience stores.

However, we will only develop new enterprises that will enhance our key objectives, and not reduce or limit our capacity to meet these.

What we have learned

The key learning point we found from our first two years of operating was that we need to fully understand what the true costs of delivering our services are. Organisations need to ensure that all the costs – including warehousing, distribution and administration costs - are reflected in the prices, and margins, charged.

We have also learned the importance of understanding our market to make sure that waste is kept to a minimum. This is especially key when dealing with perishable food like fruit and vegetables.

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¹³ Business Gateway provides practical help, advice and support for new and growing businesses in Scotland, including social enterprises www.bgateway.com

¹⁴ Health Promoting Schools is a Scottish Government initiative, managed by Learning Teaching Scotland, which encourages schools to take a 'whole school' approach to promoting the physical, social, spiritual, mental and emotional wellbeing of all of their pupils and staff
www.ltscotland.org.uk/healthpromotingschools

Summing up

The five organisations highlighted in the case studies are representative of the range of community food initiatives operating across Scotland. Each is delivering very different community food and health activities, meeting the differing needs of the community members they work with. However, they share the following in common.

The primary driver for all five is reducing health inequalities for the communities they work with through developing and delivering community food activities. This will not change. Nevertheless, all have identified new services or new markets for their current services that will increase their income and reduce their dependency on grant funding.

All aim to make the most of the strengths that they have within their organisations – (within) their staff, resources, experience and skills – to maximise the income they can generate.

They are all entrepreneurial, exploiting opportunities for new business ideas when they arise.

Finally, they all recognise that they cannot work alone. They have built strong working partnerships with local authority and NHS staff, other social enterprises, voluntary and community organisations, support agencies and, in many cases, with private sector organisations.

More information about the support available for community food initiatives wanting to become or establish a social enterprise, or become more enterprising, can be found on our website, www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk.

Top tips

In addition to the case studies, we asked four Social Enterprise experts for their 'top tips' for community food initiatives wanted to become more enterprising – here's what they say ...

CASH IS KING! In advising new starts the key area we get people to concentrate on is cash flow and getting a real understanding of the paying customer. Most people interested in social enterprise want to concentrate on social impact, it's their key driver. Of course this is important but like it or not “money does make the world go around” to a large degree. Even if you don't follow this view you MUST understand how your enterprise could work without cash. When is money coming in and out of your business? When do customers pay you and when do you pay other people? Many new start businesses will have a negative balance at some point – if you plan for it, you can plan to deal with it. If you don't plan it you may not survive it!

Naomi Johnston, Executive Director, Firstport

Failure to plan means planning to fail. It may be a cliché but it is also true. Social Enterprises need a business plan not just for an external funder but for internal use. The Business Plan should have an action plan with aims and objectives that the organization can use to plan their progress over a three-year period. Many Social Enterprises pay a lot of money to have a Business Plan written that they submit to a funder and then let sit on a shelf for the next three years. The Plan is a working document that should be at the heart of the planning for all Board or Committee meetings to drive forward the organisation. So plan, plan and plan again.

John Hughes, Enterprise Programme Manager, CEiS

Seek support. Where appropriate, always have some kind of external mentor. This could be informal (a colleague or friend) or formal (eg. through Pilotlight Scotland, Cranfield Trust, Realise or similar). Get appropriate sector support from the support agencies out there, such as Firstport, Sencot networks and Social Firms Scotland. Finally, as well as linking with your local social enterprise network, consider joining your Chamber of Commerce.

Douglas Westwater, Director, Community Enterprise

Decide upon your objectives and focus on what is really important to you because you cannot always be all things to all people. Once you have done this you will be able to decide upon your business model. Do not run before you can walk. Start small and grow your social enterprise from the grass roots. This will give you the opportunity to understand the business fully and grow it in the most appropriate way. Finally, make sure that you have the buy-in of everyone in your organisation, so that you can deliver both your social aims and your enterprise activity. Think how you are going to make sure that the right balance between the two is maintained.

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