

Early Years **Self-evaluation** Collaborative



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



Introduction

This report gives an account of how the Early Years Self-evaluation Collaborative has continued to embed evaluation systems into its work with parents and children.

Five projects have concluded Stage Two and have written up individual evaluation reports that describe how they are demonstrating the impact of their work.

By providing stage-by-stage reports, the collaborative aims to show how its evaluation learning journey is relevant to community food and health projects, particularly those working with parents and children. This way of reporting on the programme is also intended to help community food and health projects learn from the collaborative and reflect on the role of evaluation.

Most importantly, it is hoped that this report will demonstrate the role of small project evaluation and its wider impact on local, regional and national targets for health improvement in Scotland.

Headline Achievements

- All six group members have completed Stage Two of the learning despite challenging circumstances.
- Comprehensive evaluation support has been provided to the collaborative.
- Over 500 copies of the Stage One Report have been distributed to help others learn from the collaborative.
- 825 downloads of the Stage One report from the CFHS website.
- Five collaborative members were successful in obtaining their REHIS Elementary Certificates in Food and Health.
- The collaborative delivered an energetic and well-received workshop at the CFHS annual networking conference in November 2008 in Glasgow, and a presentation at the Annual Public Health Conference, also in November 2008.
- [Fife Community Food Project](#) has supported parents to improve their nutrition and that of their families through attending the Fair Isle Breakfast Club.
- The [Hidden Gardens](#) has helped isolated parents from BME communities successfully integrate and develop parenting skills through their involvement in a Parent and Toddler Group.
- Edinburgh Community Food Initiative through [Little Leithers](#) Voucher Scheme distributed over 4000 vouchers and 2000 recipes.
- Mums involved in the 'Blend for Baby' project at [Burnfoot Community School](#) have increased their confidence and skills to wean their babies.
- Even though [DrumchapelLIFE](#) has not been able to sustain the Food Dragons programme for a variety of reasons, two nurseries from the initial programme have decided to run activities themselves.

Background

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

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

All the groups use a community development approach that aims to enable people in communities to work together to promote knowledge, skills and confidence, build capacity and take action to tackle issues and concerns relevant to local need and circumstances.

The six participating projects are:

Food Dragons

DrumchapelLIFE Healthy Living Centre

Parent and Toddler Group

The Hidden Gardens, Glasgow

Confidence to Cook Group

Peterhead Family Centre

Blend for Baby

Burnfoot Community School

Fair Isle Mums Breakfast Club

Fife Community Food Project

Little Leithers

Edinburgh Community Food Initiative

All the participating groups faced many challenges throughout Stages One and Two of this programme, including issues around funding insecurity and staff capacity, which affected their activities in different ways. This report will describe this in more detail on page 9.

Unfortunately, Peterhead Family Centre had to withdraw from the programme in autumn 2008 due to increasing pressures on its time. The group commented that it gained a considerable amount of knowledge from the programme, and will continue to progress its activities and the evaluation of its work. The collaborative greatly appreciates Peterhead Family Centre's contribution and shared learning.

Stage Two: Learning about self-evaluation

Stage Two: Embedding and using the information gathered

Three workshops and learning events that covered analysing and reporting outcome information took place from May to September 2008. These activities were also complemented by one-to-one site visits that facilitated more focused support for projects, concentrating on how they used and made sense of evaluation information. The value of organising peer-learning sessions, where projects shared their ongoing learning about doing evaluation and using evaluation information, as well as troubleshooting, was also recognised and included in the workshops and learning events.

Workshop One: May 2008

The intended outcomes of this workshop were to:

- provide an opportunity to reflect on Stage One learning and experiences through peer sharing. This was important in order to gather information about how the programme was progressing and what aspects, if any, could be improved or changed;
- share examples of evaluation tools and methods; and
- explore the basics of analysing information collected for evaluation.

Sharing Tools

Members of the collaborative brought along examples of evaluation tools that they have used or have adapted, to demonstrate and share with others. This sharing of different methods of evaluation gave group members an opportunity to explore tools more closely with each other and see them 'in action'. Discussion helped members review how they were being used and how others in the group could be inspired by sharing ideas, and examining the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Many of the tools described in that session are mentioned in the Stage One Interim Report which can be downloaded from www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/fileuploads/cfhsearlyyearsselfevaluationreport-5610.pdf

Analysing Information

During Stage One the collaborative identified the intended outcomes of the food and health activities it aimed to achieve in the short, medium and/or longer term.

This workshop led the collaborative through the process of analysing information gathered from the activities and programmes provided through its projects. A variety of formats for reporting evaluation information were investigated, such as visual records, graphs and pie charts, spreadsheets, individual case studies, time lines and anecdotes.

This was followed by thinking on what evaluation information can convey about activities that make a difference. This point is important, as visual information also needs a narrative to make clear to 'others' how the activities are delivering on outcomes. 'Others' could be:

- colleagues wanting to review how programmes are progressing and improve on future programme outcomes;
- local community members who are keen to receive feedback and explore how actions led by them are continuing;

- funders or local partners and planners wanting to look at sustaining funding or activity impacting on health improvement outcomes;
- policymakers tasked with measuring and reporting health improvement outcomes and targets.

Little Leithers developed spreadsheets to monitor the use of the vouchers and to see how much revenue was being generated for the shops. Its involvement in the collaborative helped to see that spreadsheets were also valuable for evaluating which vouchers were used more by families, and families' preferences for food items, which then informed what food items would be promoted from month to month, for example, widening the variety of fish sold.

The collaborative concluded this session by identifying what methods are currently used to illustrate impact, and discussed how to change current practice to help improve its evaluation analysis.

Workshop Two: July 2008

The intended outcomes of this workshop were to:

- provide a further opportunity for the collaborative to peer review analysing evaluation information since the last workshop;
- give feedback about aspects of practice that are working well or not working too well, including using visual approaches;
- introduce the output for this stage – a mini-evaluation report from each collaborative member; and
- complete the first part of the REHIS Elementary Food and Health Course.

CFHS has been involved in promoting the **REHIS** (Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland) **Elementary Food and Health Course**. This course can help groups and organisations give consistent messages about food and its link with health. This course was taught over two x three-hour sessions in July and September to collaborative members who had not previously completed the course. All the collaborative members who took part were successful in obtaining their REHIS Elementary Certificates in Food and Health.

Peer review about analysing information

The workshop was really practical in helping group members to look at how they are analysing the information they have collected. ESS has a number of support guides available to lead groups through the process of evaluation. Group members used these guides as well as their experiences of collecting and analysing information to help and advise each other in preparation for writing an evaluation report.¹

Visual approaches

As the collaborative were beginning to use more visual approaches in collecting and analysing information this was a good opportunity to look at the use of photographic technology such as video and photographs. This explored how to do it (the technology and how to get the best out of your images), the responsibility that projects have to get permission to use images, and giving feedback about how images will be used and stored.²

¹ Evaluation Support Scotland: Support Guides 8 www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk

² Evaluation Support Scotland: Support Guide 5 www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk

Collaborative members also completed the first three-hour learning session of the REHIS Elementary Food and Health course.

Workshop Three: September 2008

The intended outcomes of this workshop were to:

- conclude the learning for Stage Two and focus on reporting on outcomes; prepare for writing the evaluation reports;
- complete the learning session and the exam for the REHIS Elementary Food and Health Course; and
- discuss and explore opportunities to promote the collaborative.

Reporting on outcomes and writing reports

ESS provided some sample reports to review as part of an exercise about the content of an evaluation report and what styles of presentation make the best impact. Members of the collaborative had different experiences of writing reports. Through discussion, group members were able to tease out individual approaches to writing a report that best conveyed their own evaluation journey, and how to report on their activities that make a difference.³

Promoting the collaborative

Hard copies of the Stage One interim report have been disseminated widely and so far been downloaded 824 times from our website. CFHS, ESS and collaborative members have received a lot of positive feedback about the report, the work they are doing and how their learning is benefitting others.

“It raises the importance of making time for evaluation, think about the participants views and understanding of evaluation and appropriate methods”

Anonymous comment from feedback form

As interest in the collaborative has increased, the collaborative agreed to lead some workshops to share their learning and experiences with others at the annual CFHS networking conference in November 2008. A paper on the collaborative was also accepted for presentation at the Annual Public Health Conference which was held in Aviemore around the same time. Both required planning and commitment from the collaborative to deliver and all workshops at these events were well-attended and well-received.

Challenges that individual groups have faced along the way

The five remaining groups in the collaborative have all experienced and continue to face a range of conflicting pressures on their time and activities. Inevitably, things got in the way that prevented the collaborative members from achieving outcomes as they had originally planned. Although the five that are represented here are a small snapshot of the national picture, their experiences are relevant in that the challenges they face reflect the same or similar experiences of other food and health projects across Scotland. For example

- Funding security: two of the group members had to wind down activities for a period of time while funding was negotiated and secured. This had an obvious knock-on effect on the delivery of their work with parents and children when activities did not take place. It also impacted on their involvement in the collaborative.

³ Evaluation Support Scotland: Support Guide 11 www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk

- One collaborative member had to withdraw completely due to pressures on their capacity to continue their involvement, as previously noted.
- Changes in staff members and the subsequent settling in and development time required to continue delivering programme activities with parents and children, and the collaborative, also affected capacity
- Timing: it is important to consider the following:
 - when is the right time to collect evaluation information?
 - when are participants in programmes ready to make changes that could be reported on?
 - is more time required to evaluate impact of approaches and activities?

All of this impacted on the collaborative members' ability to complete evaluation reports for Stage Two that would be relevant, useful and descriptive to an already keen audience. This meant that some groups needed more time to implement or return to previous activities that had been on hold. The collaborative agreed that more time was needed and further support was provided to ensure that all remaining members could progress and report on their outcomes. This included further one-to-one support sessions. A checklist was also provided to give additional guidance to some group members to ensure sufficient evaluation information and evidence of impact could be reported to make the evaluation reports meaningful.

Workshop Four: February 2009

An additional workshop was facilitated to:

- tie up loose ends and finalise drafts of the Stage Two mini-evaluation reports; and
- provide space for feedback.

This workshop was very productive and enabled the collaborative members to proofread and constructively appraise their reports. By doing this the collaborative ensured that it would have clearly defined messages to communicate about its food and health and evaluation activities to others, especially policy makers and funders.

Feedback from their experiences of learning from Stage Two is summarised in the next section.

What the collaborative had to say about its experiences of Stage Two

The Process

Do the groups feel that they have been successful in embedding what they have learned in their work/organisation? Do groups feel confident about this process?

“Evaluation gives depth to work and more understanding of impact work has on people’s lives.”

Collaborative member

All the collaborative members commented that the support they received has enabled them to stand back from their work, think purposefully about what they are doing and equipped them with a range of strategies they can use and share with others receptive to developing their evaluation skills.

An unintended key benefit of evaluation

All collaborative members commented that as a result of the evaluation process they are improving their engagement with groups. A key group that the collaborative has engaged with is the parents and children who participated in food and health activities. This is because participants can be key players in collecting evaluation information, and as the reports will illustrate later, some have been willing assistants in this process. Their involvement has also had key benefits, such as engaging with the projects in more meaningful ways, For example:

- **Burnfoot Community School** is engaging with parents and children long before they are enrolled as pupils. This has helped parents feel more ownership of programme activities as they develop.
- **Hidden Gardens** has encouraged parents and children to take disposable and digital cameras home to take their own pictures when they are trying out activities learned at the Parent and Toddler Group. These have been really useful to help the Parent and Toddler Group to engage in their own evaluation.

All of this activity gives depth to collaborative work and benefits understanding of the impact of food and health activities on people’s lives.

Barriers

Have the groups experienced any barriers to embedding their evaluation process?
What are the risks to this work?

Buy-in from colleagues

Embedding learning from the collaborative has been easier for some than others. This has been occasionally difficult where managers and colleagues have come from different backgrounds, have differing views about evaluation and what information needs to be collected, and the value of that information. Some are less experienced about evaluation or are uncomfortable using creative methods to gather evaluation information.

The collaborative commented that conversations need to be developed in order to try to change thinking with and within organisations, which can take time to progress. In this way readiness to try out and engage others in different approaches to evaluation is more achievable.

Buy-in from project participants involved in food and health activities

While some of the group's participants have been key players in collecting evaluation, time and energy is required to explain the purpose of this activity and their role in it. This is a challenge, as it is a different way of working and engaging with people than they are used to. Buy-in on evaluation is required from participants so that they can fulfil their role effectively.

Buy-in from partners

Other barriers experienced by collaborative members included where partners saw food and health activity as an opportunity to achieve an output, rather than seeing the activity as having delivered an outcome. Further effort will be required by some collaborative members to raise awareness of the value of outcome-focused activity, and the associated leaning and impact.

Buy-in from others about the value of qualitative evaluation

The collaborative feels that there is a risk that some agencies and statutory bodies may not value qualitative evaluation reported on by small projects. This is a frustration for some projects, when there is a growing body of work coming from small projects evaluating their activities and impact. Dissemination of learning from programmes of work such as the Early Years Self-evaluation Collaborative is crucial to shift perceptions about how and what we measure and its value to evidencing health improvement.

Information gathering

Are groups able to gather the information they want? Is it being gathered at the right time? If not, why not?

Collaborative members all felt that most of the time they are able to collect valuable information to demonstrate more purposefully how their work is making an impact. They were keen to stress that creative methods of collection:

- enable groups to collect information that is more authentic; and
- describe how aspects of approaches work well or don't work so well, as the timing for when information is collected is significant.

The groups felt more confident about when and how to collect evaluation information at all stages throughout their programmes. This has proved valuable to building a more complete picture of the benefits of the approaches used by the groups. By using creative methods participants' progress is recorded through programme activities rather than repeated questionnaires and questions. Collecting evaluation information through food diaries, spreadsheets, images, anecdotes and case studies was found to be less threatening and superficial. The process of collecting information more creatively has been found to be dynamic, more accurate and outcome focussed. This still poses difficulty for groups that fluctuate due to their drop-in nature; however the methods listed above facilitate more immediate and practical reporting on impact. Most importantly, groups in this collaborative have embedded evaluation systems into their programmes of activity and so information-gathering has become a natural and flexible process that reflects changing circumstances.

“Collect by stealth – folk do not want to fill in forms, they are there to do the work.”

Collaborative member

Outcomes

Have outcomes changed? If yes, do groups know why? As a result of change has their focus changed? Are there any implications for your work?

Stage One of the collaborative focused group members on identifying the aims and intended outcomes of their work activities. This was crucial to assist the collaborative clarify and explain what they are trying to achieve in their work. These outcomes would also need to be measurable. The enclosed evaluation reports relate in detail the five groups' intended outcomes and how they have been working to achieve them.

Each group's approach to outcomes has been different. The two following examples highlight the importance of using outcome information to:

- influence outcomes; and
- make changes where necessary if the focus of work changes.

The **Hidden Gardens** has ten fixed over arching outcomes guiding it as a garden space. The Parent and Toddler Group has an individual set of outcomes which feeds into the overall outcomes of the Hidden Gardens. In this way the Parent and Toddler Group outcomes are influenced by the bigger picture, and more locally-identified needs within the local community.

Burnfoot Community School found that the evaluation process highlighted that changes were needed to the 'Blend for Baby' project. Focusing their activities on weaning sessions was too limiting for many of the parents involved in sessions. As a result, they are developing a 'Tots to the Table' programme that will include both babies and toddlers.

Unexpected outcomes

The evaluation reports describe how the five group members have achieved their intended outcomes. However, as you will read later on, some unexpected outcomes have also been achieved.

Having gained confidence, the **Fair Isle Mums Breakfast Club** took ownership of the club quite quickly. The range of activities they initiated within the club as a result included some members signing up for a food education course and training in weight management so that they could offer skills to others, and a buddy system to encourage other parents to join the club.

New emerging policies since the Stage One report

New emerging policies continue to broaden the landscape and have strengthened the case for the collaborative's approaches to its work, and programmes of food and health activities, For example:

National Food and Drink Policy

Following the huge and positive response to the 'Choosing the Right Ingredients' national discussion, five main themes of work were described by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment to progress the development of a national food policy for Scotland. A range of stakeholders have been meeting to discuss and explore these in relation to concerns and responses highlighted in the national discussion. Initial recommendations were presented in March 2009 and an announcement on the next stage of this policy is expected in early June 2009.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Food-Industry/national-strategy

Equally Well

This report initially launched in June 2008 was an urgent call for action to address and tackle inequalities. One of the priority groups mentioned in the report is Early Years.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/25104032/16

In October 2008 eight test sites were established across Scotland to show how services can work better to improve people's life chances, health and well-being. One of the test sites is in East Lothian called 'Support from the Start' and is 'addressing the health needs of the youngest members of our community in the areas where we know that health outcomes are poorest'.

www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/10/21103633

The implementation plan launched in December 2008 laid out an ambitious programme for change across key priority areas to support progress and change at local and national level.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/10094101/10

The Early Years Framework

Also in December 2008, 'The Early Years Framework' was launched jointly by the Scottish Government and Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA). This framework recognises that the early years of life are crucial to a child's development and that inequalities in health, education and employment opportunities can be passed from one generation to another. In recognising the importance of influences on outcomes for children, this framework highlights that parents and communities play a crucial role in a child's development.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/01/13095148/0

Good Places, Better Health

A third policy launch in December 2008 was 'Good Places, Better Health: a new approach to environment and health in Scotland Implementation Plan'. This plan sets out the government's commitment to creating safe and positive environments which nurture better and more equal health and wellbeing. This plan will look particularly at children's health issues and overall will complement focussed activity outlined in 'Healthy Eating, Active Living', the Early Years Framework and Equally Well.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/11090318/0

As the above examples show, there are many interventions in place to support the development of healthy children. As mentioned in the Stage One report, the Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) action plan outlined that considerable investment has been devoted to tackling, diet, physical activity and obesity for all of the population, but particularly early years and low-income families. Understanding the factors that influence food choices and what food parents provide for their children has been well documented.

A further study of diet and nutrition in Scotland has been provided by the [Growing Up in Scotland: Sweep 3 Food and Activity Report](#) allowing for, "the exploration of choice, behaviour and experiences in early years provision and consumption across socio-economic groups."

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/01/21085143/0

CFHS has also been contributing to NHS Health Scotland's Breastfeeding Research Action Group and the Scottish Government's Maternal and Infant Nutrition Strategy Group.

Final Thoughts

It is important that buy-in to the process of evaluation takes place throughout organisations, from management boards and managers to all other colleagues, and each explores different ways to describe how outcomes are being achieved and collated.

As all sectors of the health improvement workforce in Scotland are tasked to contribute towards achieving positive outcomes. Undertaking this task is crucial to identify where impact is being made. All stakeholders involved in demonstrating health improvement across all sectors in Scotland recognise that deeper understanding of why and how different approaches are effective or not is required. If evaluation information is only collected in one way it may only pick up limited evidence or none at all. Some funders and policy makers need to be more aware of the importance of qualitative evaluation and the individual qualities and characteristics of the diverse information that it will describe and measure. Likewise, groups and organisations need the support, confidence and commitment to better illustrate the impact they are making, in a variety of ways that are meaningful, relevant and easy to embed into their daily work.

The collaborative is keen that others benefit from their learning and use this report and the Stage One report to apply evaluation processes to their work. As a result of its involvement in the collaborative, this small group is developing its expertise and experience, and can help others who want to know about the value and impact of their own work. With the voluntary and community sector recognised as a key partner in delivering health improvement, now is a great opportunity to respond to specific policies by focusing on its contribution to addressing inequalities and achieving targets.

The collaborative hopes that the following five evaluation reports will present a picture of how it is achieving outcomes that make a difference and deliver on local, regional and national priorities.

What Next?

Stage Three of the Early Years Collaborative, 'Making the Case', is now underway. This stage focuses on demonstrating how the food and health activities provided by the five groups contribute to national and strategic outcomes.

A Learning Exchange between the collaborative, policymakers and funders to disseminate the key learning from Stage Two is being facilitated by CFHS and ESS in April.

A final report will be launched at an event in autumn 2009 to disseminate the learning from the collaborative. Check our website or our newsletter for more information and details.

If you would like any information or if there is anything you would like to discuss about this collaborative, please get in touch.

Ger O'Riordan
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Case Studies

Food Dragons

DrumchapelLIFE Healthy Living Centre



Background

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

Aims and Objectives

Food Dragons originally comprised activities delivered over a period of two days. These activities included the children making visual shopping lists, shopping at a local supermarket and preparing and cooking simple meals with help from teachers and parents. A chef was engaged by



Drumchapel L.I.F.E. to work with parents and children and Drumchapel L.I.F.E. worked with shop staff to provide support to the programme as parents and children shopped for ingredients. In the longer term, it was hoped that parents could be trained and supported to deliver Food Dragons themselves. There are four Food Dragons: Soup, Snacks, Fruit and Pizza, each a separate programme.

Outputs

Over the three years, the full programme of Food Dragons has been run by Drumchapel L.I.F.E. in each of the five local nurseries, twice. On each programme there were approximately 15 children and parents, on some programmes more, on some less. Overall, 174 children and 21 parents benefitted from the programme activities.

Outcomes

The project to date has had an overwhelmingly positive reception from all quarters and has produced significant outcomes, both expected and unexpected.

These include:

- active participation by children and parents;
- increased knowledge and skills in both parents and children of healthier food choices;
- parents and children have improved food preparation skills.

Some of the evidence to support these outcomes has been anecdotal, although alongside this, parents and nursery staff completed questionnaires and provided

valuable feedback, some of which assisted us to modify aspects of the programme where required. All nurseries involved however reported increased levels of parental involvement in other activities. Up to this point they had found it extremely difficult to engage with these parents.

Learning

As a result of initial work with the self-evaluation collaborative we recognised the need to take a more scientific approach to better define outcomes, indicators and methodology for gathering supporting evidence.

As a first step in developing this work we brought together the five nurseries to discuss how Food Dragons had been organised and taken place and to discuss both positive outcomes and areas for future development.

Feedback from activities, such as shopping trips, was really positive in that the children were the focus of the shopping trip which enabled parents and children to have a positive experience that proved less stressful than regular shopping trips. Nursery staff felt this was due to the children taking ownership of putting together shopping lists, doing the shopping with support from shop staff (food advisors) and using/cooking the ingredients they had purchased, along with their parents or teachers and under the supervision and instruction of the chef. While all nurseries ideally would have liked more Food Dragon sessions, this was not possible.

What has got in the way of us achieving our outcomes?

We had hoped to implement changes to our evaluation strategy, as brought about through our work with the collaborative, in future programmes. This, as a result of a variety of issues, has not been possible to date. One issue has been Drumchapel L.I.F.E.'s inability to sustain funding for the programme. While vital, a lack of funding has not been the main barrier to continuing the programme. The main barrier has been a low level of 'buy-in' from some local partners, particularly in relation to achieving sustainability through training and supporting local parents to carry out the activities independently.

What's been happening since?

While Drumchapel L.I.F.E. have been unable to sustain the Food Dragons programme, two out of the five nurseries which had been involved in the original programme have continued to deliver elements of the Food Dragons activity as part of their overall programme of activity for pre 5 children.

In both nurseries, staff have decided to run similar activities themselves. The programme is being offered by nursery staff but not with all the activities as originally intended. Each gets the children to make visual shopping lists, the nursery provides the ingredients and then leads parents and children in making simple meals. This means that parents and children



do not benefit from the experience of shopping together at a local supermarket, and there is no partnership with local shops or input from the chef. This means that these aspects have been mainstreamed into the work of these nurseries for all children. These activities are now being carried out as a regular once weekly activity.



Other nurseries originally involved would have liked to run the programme but have been unable to carry out the activity without support from Drumchapel L.I.F.E.

As the nurseries have rolled out their version of Food Dragons we have been keen to engage with them in discussing outcomes and evaluation, to further explore the impact of such work with under 5's. We had hoped to cascade our learning from the Self-evaluation Collaborative to them to influence and support their efforts. Unfortunately this has proved challenging, as our approach to outcomes evaluation does not appear accessible to nursery staff at this time. This means we have been unable to gather any robust and systematic information on the impact other than approximate numbers receiving the intervention. We will continue to pursue means of achieving this.

While the programme initially started in nurseries in Drumchapel, the Health Development Officer and the Health Steering Group for the local schools cluster are keen to adopt the Food Dragons programme, rolling it out over a wider geographical area.

The Health Development Officer is exploring potential funding for up to three years to deliver the programme. Other funding opportunities are also being looked at. In these programmes we would be able to build in outcomes evaluation as part of the agreement to carry forward the work. This would improve our ability to record, assess and articulate the difference Food Dragons makes.

What is the future for Food Dragons or new innovations?

Interest in Food Dragons gardens, originally intended to be an integral part of the programme, and has gained a new impetus as a result of interest by a range of new partners. A piece of land which is within 15 yards of a local nursery has been identified and a decision is awaited on a funding application to develop the site. Once funding has been secured the plan is that the nursery children will start growing plants and food from seed, using some of the produce for future cooking sessions but with the potential to sell excess produce in a 'mini-market'. This site could act as a demonstration site to show other nurseries what they could do. All the primary schools in Drumchapel are on board and are keen to get involved in growing activities too.

Also another spin-off is a planned gardening and growing activities during June and July at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow with young people resident in Drumchapel. This will also involve children participating in a positive visioning exercise for Drumchapel and what they would like their environment to look like.

While the activity itself has not continued formally over the period, a high level of interest still exists and a number of related activities have carried on or evolved. Also, core funding has been secured for the next two years, creating the potential to further develop the Food Dragons programme. Drumchapel L.I.F.E. fully intend to pursue this end.

Key learning for Drumchapel L.I.F.E. was:

- **to have the actual and potential value of the work recognised;**
- **to minimise the loss of momentum for future work;**
- **to harness the effect of a highly successful original programme; and**
- **the need to develop a new model, with maximum effectiveness, in terms of monitoring and evaluation.**

Parent and Toddler Group

The Hidden Gardens, Glasgow

the hidden gardens

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

The Pollokshields area of Glasgow is the most diverse in Scotland with 28% of the population being from a BME (Black Minority Ethnic) community in relation to 2% in the rest of Scotland. Through links with local service providers The Hidden Gardens have learned that parents from the local resident BME community are especially isolated. In response to this identified local need, we established a weekly drop in Parent and Toddler group to support local people. Parents attend with children from the age range of 0-5 as they often bring along older or younger siblings.

This group received small grant funding from CFHS and other trusts and foundations to run.



The outline of the group

Not only is the Parent and Toddler group a key opportunity to promote social inclusion, The Hidden Gardens is a sanctuary garden in the heart of an urban community. It offers a safe environment where local residents can relax, play and learn together so the gardens are a key resource for local people. The Parent and Toddler Group takes place one afternoon a week. It is facilitated by bilingual staff which is especially crucial to support vulnerable parents access the group as well as providing additional support and advice during these sessions. The Parent and Toddler Group encourages parents to positively interact with their child helping them to bond and learn together. Activities are planned on a rota system (see Appendix) and parents are supported by staff to sign up to lead an activity. As a result of needs expressed by parents such as cooking and positive parenting other professionals participate in the delivery of activities as well. We provide an activity folder, which has ideas that parents can use to develop an activity they would like to carry out. We feel this works well as the parents are supported to take ownership of the group.

Our key outcomes

We used a Weavers Triangle which was introduced during Stage One of the Early Years Self – evaluation Collaborative to help us identify and illustrate our outcomes, outputs and activities.

Our outcomes

1. Parents and children from different cultures meet and socialise more
2. Parents and children have a positive experience
3. Parents feel less isolated (social networks are strengthened)
4. Parents have increased self-confidence and self-esteem (in their abilities as parents)
5. Parents are more aware of local health services and activities
6. Parents improve their skills and knowledge (of activities to do at home)
7. Children improve their social skills and self-confidence

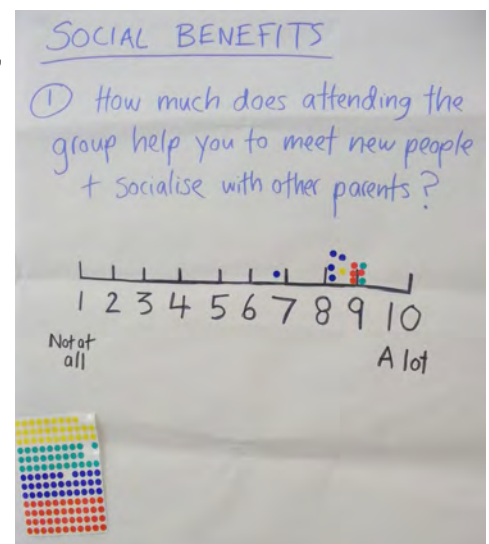
How will we know if we have achieved this?

1. Parents report meeting people from different cultures as a result of attending the group
2. Percentage of participants reporting positive experience
3. Parents report making friends as a result of attending the group
 - No. of parents that report meeting up outside of the group
 - No. of parents accessing other services/ activities as a result
4. Session leader observes changes in behaviour, eg. increased confidence leading activities/interaction
 - Parents feedback on improved self-confidence / self-esteem and positive interaction with their children
5. Parents demonstrate awareness of other local services/ activities
 - No. of parents accessing other services / activities as a result
6. Parents report trying activities at home with their children
 - Parents feedback on improvement of child's social skills (for example more prepared for nursery)

How will we make this happen? (Outputs)

The weekly sessions are planned in advance so parents can attend sessions that are relevant to them and their child/ren for example arts and crafts, gardening, and cookery. Supplementary activities and advice are facilitated by professionals such as Parent And Children Teams (PACT), to deliver positive parenting and creative play activities: health visitors and oral health promoters to provide advice on potty training, oral health: Bookstart - storytelling, Dance Your Socks Off – providing creative dance and movement classes. Parents have said they like the drop-in nature of the session, as they can come to sessions that suit them or that they are particularly interested in. Parents have also told us they attend other groups within the area, such as Bounce and Rhyme groups, which are held at local libraries, and National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCOS) events, which are held at the Hidden Gardens.

Throughout 2008 70 people have signed up to the group, 21 attend the group regularly, 12 of whom access the Gardens frequently to socialise with other parents and children from the group. Seven parents from the core group are from the local BME_community. Due to other family commitments this group of parents have said that this opportunity is especially important to them. This group have often stated it is their only chance to get out of the house and socialise with others from the local community. They have related that one of the fundamental benefits of the group is the peer support that the Parent and Toddler group provides. This is helping greatly with helping to build/increase parents confidence and skills.



On the left is an illustration of a simple evaluation we did with the P and T group.

Some challenges when we are collecting evaluation information

With all other programmes we carry out baseline evaluations with participants. This allows participants and us to compare how the groups and activities they participate in are making a difference.

Demonstrating the impact the Parent and Toddler group is a challenge, due to its drop in nature as described before. Time is limited for discussion with parents as the group is focussed on activities with parents and children. New parents to the group need support when they first attend as they won't yet understand why we evaluate our activities. Therefore conventional evaluation methods are quite difficult to use. As a result we have organised separate focus group sessions (with crèche provision) to allow more time for discussion with parents. We continually look at our evaluation systems/methods to enable us to capture and demonstrate the impact of all our work including this group.

Learning through group feedback

Over the last six months we have evaluated the Parent and Toddler group using mainly observational, verbal and visual methods like sticky dot evaluations. Through our participation in the 'self-evaluation collaborative' with CFHS (Community Food and Health (Scotland) and ESS (Evaluation Support Scotland), we have started making changes to how we gather evidence. Some key changes have been:

- Keeping evaluation simple and interactive, e.g. taking photos of activities each week and then asking parents to put a sticky dot on the ones they have tried at home.
- Getting parents to take photos during the group that demonstrate outcomes, e.g. improved confidence doing activities that they have never tried before or positive interaction between parents and children.
- Learning how to ask the right questions in determining what activities we should do to achieve outcomes, e.g. 'What would make you feel more confident as a parent?' This led to potty training, healthy eating and creative play being identified as areas in which parents would most like to improve their skills.

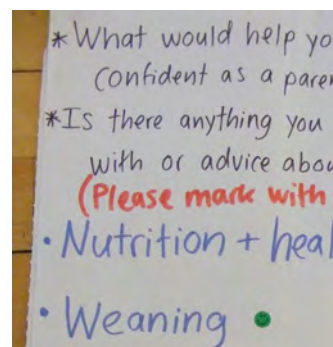
Below are some activities and information that parents have requested

- One pot recipes
- Understanding labels
- Fussy eaters
- Tasting sessions
- Allergies and intolerances
- Introducing new foods
- How to avoid pesticides
- Organic information

As a result of this information we planned three "Fun food" sessions.

The fun food sessions involve Donna (cooking teacher) working with the group to prepare and cook healthy snacks, discuss nutritional information related to what children need at different stages of development. Parents have the opportunity to ask any food, healthy eating related during this session.

We organised fun food sessions in September, October and November.



As a result of this exercise we were also able to organise other requested activities. Therefore this information helps us plan and develop activities that the group have highlighted to be important to them.

Have our outcomes made a difference?

Outcome 1 – Parents and children from different cultures meet and socialise more

Our evaluation information has shown that 95% of responding participants stated that they had the chance to socialise more as a result of attending the group. The Parent and Toddler Group is the most socially integrated of all our programmes and has also seen the highest feed through to other programmes (especially our public programme of events and food related workshops).

Outcome 2 – Parents and children have a positive experience

Parents frequently tell us that the Parent and Toddler Group is a positive experience for them to learn and play together with their child/ren. We asked them more formally ‘what do you like about the group?’ This is what they had to say....

“This group is different to other groups I’ve been to as other group’s parents sit and chat and the children run around, I think that the structure is great. It means you know what to expect when you come here and we all get more out of the structured sessions.”

“There’s a great atmosphere and everyone is so friendly, I feel comfortable here.”

“The group helped me to meet new people and socialise more.”

“The group is great, the kids love it and it feels safe.”

“It’s a nice way of meeting local children and parents and being part of the community.”

A number of parents have said that they like the drop-in nature of the group, as they can come to sessions that suit or are of particular interest to them.

Outcome 3 – Parents feel less isolated (social networks are strengthened)

Outcome 4 – Parents have increased self confidence and self esteem (in their abilities as parents)

This group offers parents the opportunity to socialise with others from their local community. Each Parent and Toddler session is full of laughter, fun activities and people socialising. The group is very welcoming to new parents, there is always a buzz in the gardens and everyone leaves smiling. We often see group members having coffee, or lunch in the cafe or enjoying playing in the gardens. Feedback suggests the group has been a lifeline for many isolated parents. The parents themselves have stated the importance of peer support, by this we mean the opportunity to talk to other parents who understand and empathise with their experiences and challenges as parents. This feedback shows that we are beginning to achieve our outcomes and break down some of the barriers that parents face.

Outcome 5 – Parents are more aware of local health services and activities

It is common to hear parents say that they attend other local groups, such as Bounce and Rhyme, which takes place in local libraries; Mini Music Makers with National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCOS), which are held at the Hidden Gardens and other one of events. Parents have accessed services relating to oral health, weaning services, physical exercise, creative play and reading. Our evaluation information shows that 85% stated that they had more access to advice and support services as a result of attending the group. Information like this shows us that parents feel more comfortable accessing other services that can provide them with additional support and advice.

Outcome 6 – Parents improve their skills and knowledge (of activities to do at home)

(pictures opposite)

We asked parents the following question to see if their confidence to try activities at home had improved. By being involved in these activities they were able to show that they had learned transferable skills and could try activities at home. This is what they had to say..

“Arts and crafts, painting, making things, I have more confidence to do these things at home now.”

“We sing the nursery rhymes at home and we have taught friends as well.”

“The cookery was great as it’s difficult to set time aside at home.”

“The cookery session was great, the snack ideas were so easy, I will definitely try these at home.”

“My daughter loves the ‘dance your socks off’ sessions, she is more confident about doing it in front of other people too. We often dance around at home.”

This feedback demonstrates that parents feel confident transferring skills from what they have learned in the group to the home.

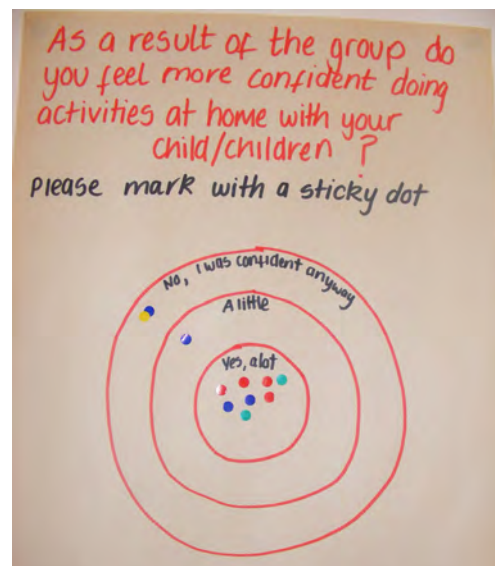
Outcome 7 – Children improve their social skills and self confidence

We asked the parents to give us feedback on the children’s social skills since they had started attending the group.

Has your child changed since coming to the group? Regarding: behaviour/social skills?

“My son is more comfortable mixing with other children.”

“The group helps the children interact, my son is better at sharing.”



The image above highlights that the group helps parents feel more confident to try activities at home.



The image above highlights activities that the parents are using at home.

Case Study

We focussed on one parent who regularly attends the p and t group. This case study demonstrates the difference attending the group has made.

On reflection how did you feel when you started the group? (In relation to yourself, i.e. confidence, socialising, being a parent etc)

I started coming to the group a number of years ago - my daughter is now 4 1/2 and was about 18 months I think when we first started...I came across a leaflet about the group whilst at the Tramway for lunch one day and decided to give it a go! The first day we came along I was a little apprehensive (being on a career break does little for your self-esteem) about entering the boiler-house (where the group is held) and having to face loads of new people - this was after a very tense bus journey from our home to Pollokshields! It was a sunny day and a few people were sitting outside waiting for the doors to open so I decided to speak to a mum - that went well - she told me that it was a very friendly group of people who attended. A staff member welcomed us into the group and we got on with some arts and crafts with her - Poppy settled in almost immediately...as did I, on reflection. As the weeks went on, it became our favourite day of the week (we ditched our local toddler group in favour of "tramway tots" which it had now become, for us at least.) I found it to be a very friendly group in terms of adults - quite often I would meet others for coffee in the tramway prior to the group commencing and sometimes afterwards too. In that respect, coming to the group was very useful in terms of my regaining confidence and socialising with others - quite often from many different cultural backgrounds which again was a bonus...

How do you feel now?

A few years on, I have become a much more confident person - as previously noted, being on a career break with a young child had dented my self esteem quite considerably (in addition to my suffering from depression for the last 30 years - what a joy) but coming to the group helped with this quite considerably. I have become good friends with many people I have come across as a result of the group - many no longer attend the group as their children are now in nursery. I decided not to send Poppy to nursery on Thursdays as I feel that we both get so much out of our 'tramway tots' - more than her 2 hours at nursery.

Have you seen a change or difference in you or your child since starting the group?

One positive and unique aspect not noted [not promoted as such] about this group is the cultural diversity - for us it was great to mix with people of different races and cultures - where we live is not a very diverse place in terms of racial mix. How great for young children to be exposed to different cultures etc at an early age where it is just the 'norm' rather than something 'different'.

"We really enjoyed the cookery; I think it was my daughter's favourite session."

This is a picture of us cooking one of the 'Fun Food' recipes at home.



Learning

In keeping with the ethos of the group staff encourage parents to be involved in the group and drive forward the aims of the group. Although parental involvement was not outlined as a specific outcome of the group in the beginning, as a result of parents increased confidence we were able to support the group to identify specific needs and activities. As parents become more confident in their decision making their ownership of the group is growing. The activities we carried out such as cookery continue to be vehicles to explore further opportunities to improve their and their children's health and improve their skills around food and nutrition.

What's next...

We feel the outcomes we have achieved and are beginning to achieve clearly show the impact the Parent and Toddler Group has on creating opportunities for integration and developing skills for health.

We have secured funding till the end of July 2009 and hopefully further.

It has been suggested we have a session for babies and one for toddlers.

We hope to encourage older members to support new parents in leading weekly activities.

We plan to continue sampling participants rather than trying to capture feedback from everyone, e.g. through case studies with parents that are happy to talk about what difference the group has made for them (and their children).

Activity Diary / Parent Rota

October-November

Date	Activity	Parents / Workshop Provider
2 Oct	Fun Food	Donna
9 Oct	Jackie	Playdough
16 Oct	Autumn Pictures	Debbie & Stevie
23 Oct	Halloween stuff (Fancy dress)	Yvonne & Audrey
30 Oct	Dance your socks off	Indepen-dance
6 Nov	Bookstart - Storytelling	Linda Muirhead
13 Nov	Fun Food	Donna
20 Nov	Walk to local park	Elaine
27 Nov	Dance Your Socks Off	Indepen-dance

Blend for Baby

Burnfoot Community School

Setting the scene

Burnfoot Community School sits on the edge of the town of Hawick in the Scottish Borders, within a community which faces many challenges. As a Community School we realise the importance of working with our community, and therefore provide a number of opportunities for families, including a number of activities to encourage healthy family eating through the Flying Start Project, e.g., Blend for Baby, Breakfast Club, Tasty Tuck and our Nursery Healthy Packed Lunch project.

Flying Start is a multi-agency, co-ordinated approach to support parents / carers and children in the 0 -12 age range through different developmental stages, with a strong emphasis on times of transition. It is a key strategy providing a means of raising expectations and attainment in order to fulfil personal, family and community potential. Within the school this work is co-ordinated by Gillian Neish, Homelink Worker, whose role is to provide a clear link and support between home and school. She is supported in this by Aileen Wilson, Depute Head Teacher with responsibility for early years. Burnfoot's partner agencies include the Healthy Living Network, Health Professionals, Health

Promoting School Co-ordinator and Community Learning and Development.



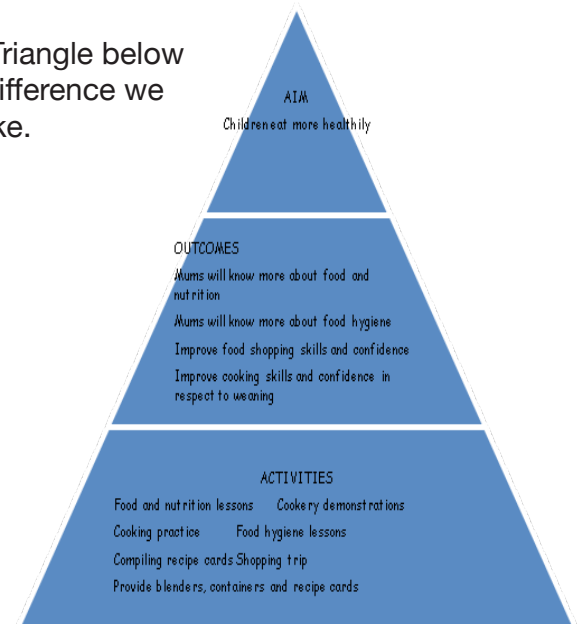
'Blend for Baby' was a seven week project, an off shoot of a pilot 'Bumps and Babies' group who identified weaning and family eating issues as an area for development.

'Flying Start' and 'Blend for Baby' are slotted into a continuum of opportunities already available within the school, including Hungry for Success linked to school dinners and the provision of snack in out of school clubs and adult cooking groups.

Aims and outcomes

The long term aim of the project was to support parents / carers to give very young children the best possible start in life in relation to diet and health, within an already established, welcoming and supportive environment.

Our Weavers Triangle below set out what difference we wanted to make.



Main activities

Our project took place over a seven week period. The sessions were run in conjunction with colleagues from the Healthy Living Network. A free crèche was provided.

Main activities included:

- sessions on food nutrition
- a shopping trip
- cookery demonstrations
- evaluation activities
- information sessions on ages and stages of weaning
- a 'Ready Steady Cook for Baby' cookery session
- provision of 'Take Home' pack with equipment to help with weaning



Headline achievements

The major highlights of the project were:

- The 'Ready Steady Cook for Baby' session at the end of the project where mums were confident enough to buy and then prepare, produce and explain to other mums why they had bought items and how they could use them for weaning.
- Mums were clearly committed to being part of the project, which was reflected in the excellent attendance figures collected in our weekly register. This is important as a number had either no or limited contact with the school and most did not engage in other community activities.

Outputs

Nine mums regularly attended the 'Blend for Baby' sessions. These included 2 first time mums, 10 with children in or close to the recommended weaning stage, with 24 children in total in the family groups.

A shopping trip was organised in the second week to gain information on the mums' shopping habits; each mum was given £5 and asked to purchase what they would typically buy. This was repeated near the end when mums were asked to buy their ingredients for the 'Ready Steady Cook' activity. This took place in Burnfoot's Community Kitchen and involved mums preparing ingredients, cooking and tasting each others meals.

Two information gathering exercises were done using activities designed by Gillian Neish (Homelink Worker). One asked mums to select photos of the sorts of things they liked to eat and drink and then stick them on a folder thus giving us a general picture of the types of food they liked: the second required mums to identify how often in a day they would drink coffee, water and other fluids.

Sessions on food nutrition were delivered, including standardised information on the food wheel and 'eatwell' plate model ¹ and looking at information provided on labels. These also provided opportunities for discussion and the Food Standards Agency information brochures were also handed out.

Mums were able to access information through cookery demonstrations showcasing differing consistencies for different stages of weaning and discussing quantities.

¹ <http://www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/eatwellplate/>

Cookery demonstrations provided opportunities for mums to observe the use of hand blenders when preparing weaning foods and examples of foods of different consistencies.



Mums also had the chance to try out some of the techniques and recipes from the demonstrations in a 'Ready Steady Cook for Baby' session. An in room crèche was provided to support this activity.

All mums got a 'Take Home pack', consisting of a blender, Baby Potz, containers, spoons, a cup, an ice cube tray and an information pack

Evaluation of the project was carried out by formal questionnaire in the last week, including the questions **"What have you gained from being part of the group?"** and **"What have you liked best?"**

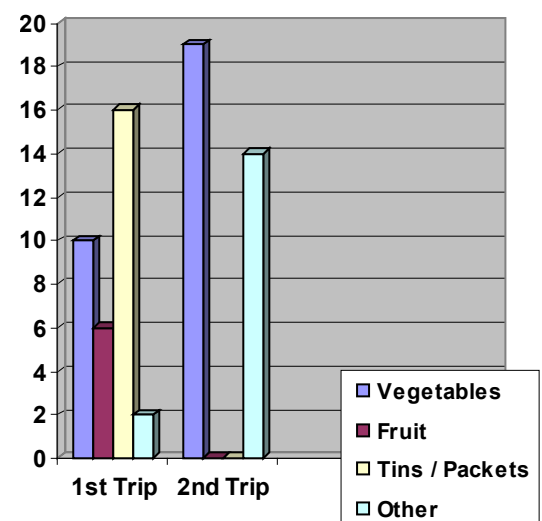
As well as this, additional information was obtained in a less formal way through asking questions of the mums each week (we referred to this as "evaluation by stealth"!) We also played a True/False Quiz toward the end of the project to check out what parents had learned from previous sessions. Staff also facilitated sessions where they listened to what mums were saying. These observations were shared when debriefing and reflecting on the activity. We had other hard evidence such as the receipts from shopping trips, the 'My Life in Food' folders, the drinking habits survey as well as those provided by the photographs of shopping bags, the food prepared by mums and of activities such as the cookery demonstration and group discussions.

Outcomes

Mum's confidence to rely less on packets and tinned food was demonstrated on the second shopping trip when receipts clearly showed an increase in the purchase of other items, in particular vegetables.

Opposite is a typical before and after bag, with the 'before bag' containing tinned produce and purpose made baby products, in the 'after bag' the mum bought broccoli, onions, potatoes and stock recognising that she could blend these for a weaning baby.

More vegetables and less fruit were bought as a result of the fact that mums had been asked to buy items to use to cook a main course with. We saw an increase in the purchase of a variety of other items such as cheese, stock and pasta, as the graph above illustrates.



Mum's commented positively on the 'Ready Steady Cook' session, with one mum stating **"it really took the pressure off"** because it was fun. The fact that they were demonstrating their improved knowledge of ingredients to other parents was not obvious to them. We could see and hear the confidence with which they had made their choices and were clear on how the ingredients could be used. The 'Ready Steady Cook' approach was much less intimidating than having to do a presentation or justify their buys in a more formal way.



During the tasting session mums were swapping ideas and cooking tips, recipes were shared and mums got a renewed enthusiasm for cooking from scratch. One mum had bought fresh herbs that provoked a lot of discussion and interest, including chats about how to include them in meal ideas and how easy it can be to grow herbs on the windowsill.

The impact of the sessions on food nutrition was reflected in feedback from the formal evaluation, for example:

"I will keep an eye on what I am buying"

"I will try to cook more fresh foods"

(Parents quotes)

This is significant as the images on their "My Life in Food" folders illustrated a high level of sugary, fast food type eating habits.

We were able to impart some information about food hygiene but as there was only one cooking activity we had limited opportunity to assess if messages were being put into practice. During the Ready Steady Cook session we did observe that parents used different boards for chopping produce and washed their hands frequently.



Unexpected outcomes

An unexpected outcome of the project was the strength of the peer support that came from within the group. Mum's shared their experiences on a variety of pertinent issues including using cups, dummies, oral hygiene, how they managed weaning in relation to the rest of their families and resources they found useful, e.g., fruit nets. This allowed us to let them take the lead and we were able to feed in any information from our areas of expertise when we felt it appropriate.

The setting for the 'Blend for Baby' project also proved valuable as mums commented frequently on the fact that they had space and time to talk and discuss things, getting help and reassurance from other mums:

"Meeting other mothers"

"Peace to think about things as older children in crèche"

"Getting ideas from other mums"

“Not so frightened of baby choking after talking to other mums”

“Space is good it doesn’t feel like being in school”

(Parents quotes)

Another unintended outcome was that mums increasingly accessed other groups and activities in the school, for example, ‘Time2Chill’ (a young mums group) and the ‘Young Mums Cooking Group’.

One mum’s story

One mum was very forthcoming in her attitude to the weaning project. She had a baby at the weaning stage but during discussions at the start of the project she was of the opinion that as she had two older children, age 3 and 4 she **“knew it all”**. Through previous discussion with Gillian it was obvious that she had established some poor habits around food and nutrition, e.g., **“I give my boys what they like best”** although she was not as forthcoming when asked to give specifics on what these were. As the project progressed she demonstrated that she was willing to learn through her participation in activities and discussions and during a subsequent project where parents made packed lunches she talked to other parents saying that **“you should not come to conclusions without listening to what is being said and before trying things out”** – in other words don’t knock it until you have tried it!

Challenges

One of the initial challenges for us was that while the need was identified by mums for a weaning project, of the mums who came, only two were first time mums and only one of these was actually weaning their baby. However, as an open group we just had to make the best of it, though at least one mum subsequently became pregnant and we will soon find out if she can apply the lessons learned on the project.

We also found it difficult to overcome established habits; this was particularly the case when there were older siblings in the home. Mums would indicate that they were aware of the importance of good nutrition and balanced meals but found it hard to find effective strategies to tackle engrained habits, like handing the children pre-packaged snacks with poor nutritional value. Mum’s themselves were not immune to this as evidenced by snack wrappers left in bins.

We were also disappointed that we could not provide more hands on cooking sessions, like the ‘Ready Steady Cook’, this was due to difficulties in accessing the community kitchen, providing crèche cover and the short term nature of the project.

Learning for the future

Through the evidence we obtained by formal and informal means we realise that any future project planning will not be limited to weaning, as was highlighted throughout, but must include family meal planning and how this must include both babies in the weaning stage and toddlers. We are developing a ‘Tots to the Table’ project to progress this work further. In addition as the facilitators of any piece of work we must not have such preconceived ideas about how the project would go, in a sense we must be adaptable enough to adapt to the needs of the group.

The provision of a relaxed environment will continue to play a crucial part in any future projects as it is very clear that parents and carers respond far better to messages regarding such things as the ‘complete picture of school health promotion’ in such a setting.

Because we have ongoing contact with the mums we will be able to do more long term tracking to check if eating and shopping habits change over time, or with future babies they may have.

How we collected our information

Our evidence was gathered in a number of ways:

Evaluation form (as seen opposite)

Informal discussion

Register

Photographs

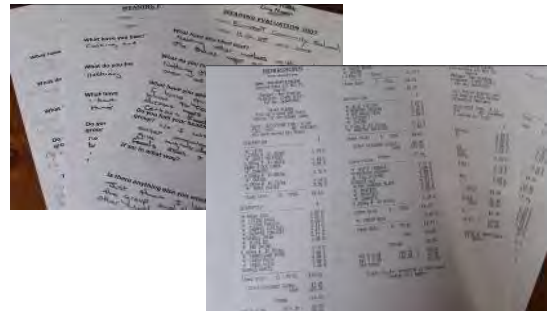
Cut and stick activity

True/False Quiz

Food wheel

Shopping receipts (as seen opposite)

Copies of shopping receipts



REPORT PREPARED BY Gillian Neish and Aileen Wilson

February 2009

Fair Isle Mums Breakfast Club

Fife Community Food Project

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

Fair Isle is a primary school in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Kirkcaldy, with a community lounge available as a resource base for parents. Tea and coffee making facilities are available, along with a fridge and microwave. From our work with mum's attending cooking classes we identified that many young mums did not eat breakfast. As we had provided breakfast at these classes they disclosed they did not usually eat it. Over the course of the classes the mums themselves felt the benefit of eating breakfast. Five of them with a connection to Fair Isle school decided they would like to open a breakfast club for mums in the school. All the young mums involved had passed elementary food hygiene certificates, so this was not a hurdle which they had to overcome when they volunteered to run the breakfast club. The aim of the group was to encourage the mums to make long-term changes in their eating habits which could also have an impact on their families' diet.

The Fair Isle Mums Breakfast Club (FIMBC) had three key outcomes:

- Change the behaviour in the household and increase the frequency with which breakfast was being eaten.



- Increase mums knowledge of a healthy diet

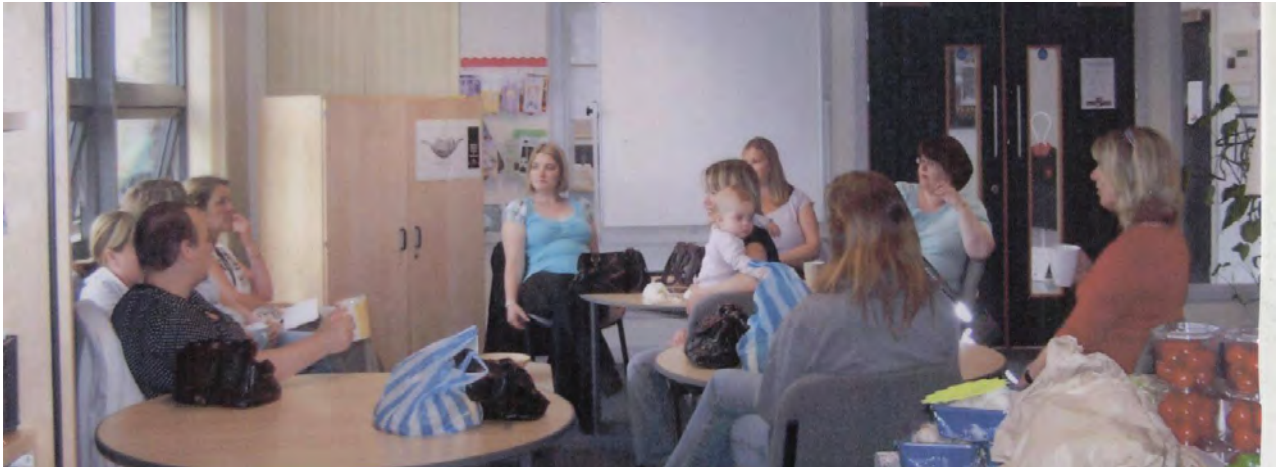


- Make mums more confident of trying different foods.

The breakfast club was set up to run one morning a week, between 9 -10.30am There was an initial four week pilot with an investment of £40 to cover the cost of food products for the first month, which were purchased by Stella Stewart (Project Worker, pictured in blue opposite) along with a toaster. Food bought included cereal, brown bread, a selection of fruit and fresh fruit juice, low fat spread and jam. Taster sessions of different foods were offered each week. As the pilot took root and it was clear mums wanted to sustain it themselves the Project worker's role changed. They took watching brief, offering information sessions on how to eat well and monitored the group. The school's Family Worker was involved in the initial pilot and continued to support the mums as they took up the organisation and running of the group themselves.

When the mum's took over they decided to raise the funds to pay for food items by charging a set fee of 50p per week. In time they revised this policy to ask people having hot filled rolls to pay £1 and for top up donations to be made. This means the club is self-sustaining.

Initially there were only five mums involved but by the end of the pilot there were 9 regular attendees, as well as 8 other mums who attended more irregularly. At first the group only consisted of mums, however now there are three pre-school age children also coming along with their mum and a dad has joined the group.



As the group has been seen to be established, other staff in the school have begun to take an interest and regularly come along to the club. This includes the Head Teacher and Teaching Auxiliary. Their attendance helps to build relationships between professional staff and families, over a scrambled egg roll and cup of tea. The lady in the picture is the Head Teacher, Mrs Walker.

Other agencies also drop in to use this opportunity to catch up with mums. For a while surplus food from the Fair Isle fruit and veg co-op was sold to mums. However, as the next day the co-op would give away the produce that was left this practice proved to be a disincentive to using the Food co-op properly and stopped.

Mums quickly realised that the Breakfast Club also provided them with an opportunity to discuss other important issues for them and their families. This led to the mums deciding to extend the opening time to 12.00pm so that they can also ask guest speakers to come along. They have developed a programme which includes topics such as, hand massage, bullying and philosophical enquiries.

What difference has the Fair Isle Breakfast Club made?

Did the behaviour in the household change and has the frequency with which breakfast was being eaten increased?

Initially we found out that of the 15 mums attending, 6 did not eat breakfast regularly, 2 ate breakfast only at the weekend **“when I have the time”**. All the rest ate breakfast everyday. When asked about their children’s eating behaviour, 3 mums said their children never eat breakfast.

After two months we found that there had been significant changes. Out of 12 attending 11 stated that they ate breakfast every day, the remaining mums only ate breakfast at the weekly club. The club has been instrumental in this change as one mum explains:

“I like a variety of cereal, I love my toast plus banana, and I started eating breakfast when I joined the breakfast club.”

Quote gathered by the project worker

Mums have increased their awareness of the importance of breakfast, as they personally experience the positive effects, as this mum tells us:

“Everyday I realise that it is important to eat breakfast for a successful day.”

Quote gathered by project worker

When the group first started they only attempted simple items to cook for breakfast such as toast. Those who had been in the cooking classes would put banana on their toast but others were less adventurous. In time this changed with more fruit being consumed and now bananas are firm favourite with most, 6 out of 12 identifying it as a firm fixture at breakfast. The school nurse donated some eggs and one young mum made scrambled eggs with them in the microwave. The others had never used a microwave to cook eggs in this way. For a while mums would ask her to make them some scrambled eggs but as she taught more people how to do this they began to take turns to prepare them for those who wanted some. Now there is a rota system for who does what each week.



As club members have gained confidence with food, they have started to celebrate different festivals and holidays, for example for Halloween they got dressed up, as you can see from the photos below, for Burns night they did Haggis rolls: haggis cooked on a table top grill, provided by the school. For many this was their first experience of a healthier way of preparing food. They can see how much saturated fat is released by normal everyday food items such as haggis, Lorne sausage and bacon, and find it hard to believe as the mum opposite is noticing. Parents have continued to try new food at breakfast with cheese and oatcakes a recent addition.



What happened that we did not expect?

The mums really took ownership of the club and within a short time were running the session independently. They have taken this forward by initiating other activities within the club, for example:

- A thrift shop – mums donate good quality second hand clothes which are sold within the Breakfast Club on a donation basis. Funds raised go towards anything the Breakfast Club needs such as special ingredients for festival events.
- Two members have signed up for ‘Cook Well, Live Well’ – this is a hands on cooking food education course, so that they can provide further initiatives such as; ‘Winning by Losing’ - a weight management programme that they want to offer to members within the club; ‘Meet and Greet’ – a buddy system to new families who move into the area to come along to the club.
- Parents are also sharing skills and expertise in other areas, for example one mum offered members hand massages.



The club is an opportunity for social interaction, a bit of a laugh and chat:

“I enjoy coming to breakfast club to get a good chit chat.”

“I come to the breakfast club for ma breakfast and a gossip.”

(Parents quotes)

Some mums are extremely isolated and the club is a crucial lifeline. The depth of this need and the mum’s openness in discussing this has surprised us, as these quotes illustrate:

“I like attending the breakfast club as it enables me to chat with different people, it helps me meet new people, it also helps me eat a healthy breakfast which I do not normally do at home.”

“I like the breakfast club because I spend most mornings alone, it is good to have adult conversation on a Friday morning.”

An additional outcome we did not expect was the extent to which parents became involved in other groups and activities within the school, for example, adult dance classes and child/parent cooking groups. The school has found the Breakfast Club an ideal route to build, develop and enrich the school community, with parents more actively involved as partners.

What was the key learning from this piece of work?

A key learning point for Fife Community Food Project has been that with a small amount of investment, willing participants and a safe environment, an initially modest project can mushroom. This project has expanded wider than just food and health and is actively contributing to building the social capital of the community. At its core are people coming together regularly over breakfast, a modest everyday thing. But this simple coming together represents community engagement at its basic and elemental level. The fact that it is organised and run by ordinary people makes it more relevant and responsive than many more elaborate community development strategies.

What are we most proud of?

The key achievement of the project has been the mums willingness and commitment in taking on true ownership of the breakfast club. They have driven the whole process, consulting with each other and taking the leadership upon themselves. This has astounded school staff and other professionals who struggle to engage similar parents.

Drafted by Stella Stewart Feb 2009

Appendix

Evaluation methods used to collect evaluation information and some examples

- Pictures of key moments and achievements
- Post it note surveys at beginning and two month point
- Food on plate activity
- Group discussions
- Family Worker's observation sheet



11/09/2009 june knight - Fair Isle Nursery Mums Breakfast Club.doc Page 1

Discussion /Observation

Fair Isle Nursery Mums Breakfast Club

Outcomes
Increased knowledge of healthier diet
Yes -
important to have a breakfast
quick!
Cooking skills improved / confidence of skills
Yes -
mums now can make scrambled eggs,
baking bread to eating reheated mums

Behaviours
Increased breakfast frequency
Yes.
Lower low 2 breakfast mums
Children frequency in eating breakfast
Breakfast mums now going to school before club

Food choices
Food more fresh
Fruit available every week - bought from
Fruit - veg shop
Cheese / vegetables

Unexpected outcomes
Children Mums
Parents enjoy making - friendships formed
Opportunity to provide school excursion

Little Leithers

Edinburgh Community Food Initiative



Background

The Little Leithers project operates in the Leith, Newhaven, and Harbour districts that have been targeted as regeneration areas. We are funded by the Fairer Scotland Fund and managed by the Edinburgh Community Food Initiative.

Our aim is to increase access to healthier foods and raise awareness of the link between food and health in families with children aged 0-5 years living in disadvantaged areas of Leith by encouraging them to use local shops, and eat and cook more using fresh ingredients.

The core aspect of this project consists of a **voucher scheme** that enrolled 20 families in October 2006, recruited from local child and family organisations, based on the criteria:

- Have children under 5
- Live in the appropriate regeneration area
- Be entitled to milk tokens or Healthy Start vouchers.

The project is also involved with running seasonal food and health promotions in 4 local nurseries along with other parent and child groups.



Each family in the Little Leithers project receives a sheet of 8 specially designed vouchers worth approximately £5 each; alongside simple, healthy recipes-on-a-budget every month for use in local shops- fishmongers, butchers, halal butchers, fruit and vegetable co-ops, and greengrocers (Appendix 1).

Outcomes

- Increase families' use of local shops
- Increase parents' knowledge of healthier food choices
- Improve cooking skills knowledge and confidence

Voucher Scheme Outputs

1. Vouchers (4000) and recipes (2000) have been prepared and distributed to all the Little Leithers families since October 2006
2. Twice a month the vouchers are collected from the local shops and recorded in a voucher tracking spreadsheet and cheques are drawn up for the shops. The information gathered for the spreadsheets indicate individual spending habits and the shops' monthly sales
3. Bi-monthly shop visits enable us to liaise with the shopkeepers and gather any feedback on what has been selling in the last month and decide together what we should include in the next months' vouchers
4. Bi-annual telephone interviews have been arranged with Little Leithers parents for evaluation and monitoring since June 2007

Little Leith Development work Outputs since March 2008

1. A four week cooking class has been offered from the end of October 2008 for up to 6 Little Leith parents
2. 2 x Weaning sessions were delivered at mother & baby groups for 14 parents
3. 2 x healthy snack sessions at local primary schools for 45 children and 11 parents
4. 3 x smoothie sessions and fruit activity sessions at a local child and family centre and the local library for 63 parents and 58 children
5. 3 x seasonal food promotions at 4 local nurseries for 316 children
6. Monthly healthy weight sessions have been organised in partnership with NHS smoking cessation classes for approx. 32 adults in Leith

Further planning for this year...

- Recruit 20 new families to take part in Little Leith voucher scheme
- Current families will transition onto coupon booklets for local shops in exchange for participation in skills building accredited REHIS Food Hygiene and Food and Health courses, cooking classes, and parent training to deliver healthy food sessions in their local communities

Learning and results

Baseline questionnaires were initially used to assess each families shopping, cooking, and eating habits. These showed that most families shopped at supermarket chain stores and bought prepared meals. A lack of confidence and knowledge on how to prepare fresh foods also put them off purchasing fresh foods from their smaller local food outlets. Recent evaluations have revealed that many of the parents have developed routines associated with their voucher foods such as; buying the foods monthly and freezing it in batches and inviting friends and family over to cook up extra foods (i.e. vegetables) at the end of the week rather than throwing it away.

Spreadsheets were then developed to monitor the use of the vouchers in each of the participating shops and to see how much revenue was being generated for the shops.

Before joining the self-evaluation collaborative we thought our only evaluation tool was a questionnaire;

- Now we realise that these spreadsheets are also a useful evaluation tool as we can look back and see what foods were more popular than others with the specific families (Appendix 2)

Visiting the shops was primarily for the purpose of checking in and picking up the used vouchers;

- Now that the shopkeepers are more familiar with the families and the project, we use these visits to discuss the families' overall likes and dislikes and decide together what foods will be included in the next month's vouchers.

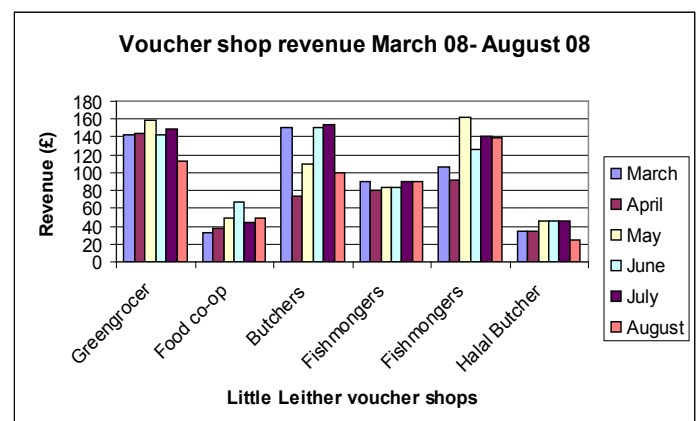
As a result of what we learned from recent visits to the fishmonger and butcher we have realised that we were not giving the families enough variety and that they were in fact ready to move on to different types of fishes and meats. We used this information to include a greater variety of fish and meats on the vouchers and provided them with new recipes and cooking tips to accompany the new foods.

The vouchers used to be valid for only specific food items (i.e. ½ kg Trout, 1 x punnet strawberries) as we were focusing on seasonal produce that may cost less in certain months. We found this to be restrictive to the families' shopping habits;

- We now provide a monetary value to most of the vouchers (i.e. £5 for any variety of fish or fruits and vegetables) at the request of many of the shopkeepers, from meeting families at the local food co-op, or through telephone interviews. We feel that this mimics normal shopping habits better and has proven to us that for many of the families who had not set foot in a fishmonger before the project were now confident in making their own choices while sticking to a reasonable budget. We also feel that many local shops don't in fact offer any considerable reductions in their prices for seasonal produce but frequently offer sales on other items. As the aim of the project was to broaden people's knowledge and tastes of a variety of healthy foods, we feel this move towards more freedom with the vouchers has helped us realise that the families are achieving this. We now get vouchers back for a range of fishes such as; sea bream, mackerel, whole fish, and scallops. As the families were initially eased in on vouchers for familiar fishes like smoked or unsmoked haddock we feel that this change has been extremely positive and a move in the right direction towards gaining a wider knowledge base of fresh foods. We will aim to make this transition in new groups that join the scheme after a few months. Our spreadsheets also show us that since we have changed the vouchers there has been significantly less of an under spend of the vouchers over the months (i.e. Sept 08 showed only £36 under spend compared to £50 under spend Sept 07)

Following our involvement with the self-evaluation collaborative we also began creating graphical representations of our data from the monthly spreadsheets.

This graph shows the shops' revenue from the vouchers over a 6 month period. It clearly displays which shops make the greatest revenues from the voucher scheme and highlights which months were more popular than others. Two fishmongers were used for the families' convenience to where they lived. These can be used alongside our vouchers to highlight likes and dislikes to certain foods, are useful for simple representations at meetings, and quickly flag up any issues than need to be checked up on (i.e. sharp drop/rise in sales)



Learning from this evaluation has reassured us that using monthly sales figures was a good way of displaying the uptake and success of the voucher scheme. These figures relate back to our original outcome of increasing families' use of their local shops with. The graph shows that the greengrocers, butchers and fishmongers have increased sales thus highlighting increased demand for fresh produce from the families involved in the voucher scheme. Informal chats with some of the shopkeepers also reveal that the parents are beginning to ask more questions about cooking tips from the shopkeepers themselves which we feel achieves our outcomes by displaying that they are confident enough to seek out new ways of expanding their knowledge of cooking fresh foods.

Some unexpected results

Support with our evaluation work has also made us realise the benefit of additional information, for example;

The positive knock-on effects of the voucher scheme to other community members using the local 'voucher shops'.

For example, we were encouraged to use some of the fishmonger's comments as a case study to show the positive knock-on effects of the scheme. This revealed;

1. An increase in sales figures for this shop recorded in our spreadsheets.
2. The shopkeeper informed us that the wider local community were picking up Little Leither fish recipes from the shop which suggests the shopkeepers were enthusiastic about our scheme and were happy to promote it to their other customers.
3. The shopkeeper informed us, which was later confirmed through telephone interviews with parents; that some of the families were buying more than what was covered by the vouchers.

Challenges and changes

Maternity Leave

Throughout the past year there have been a few staff changes within the Little Leither project. The permanent development worker has taken maternity leave from March 08-April 09. To cover her post a former volunteer for the project was recruited as the new development worker but she too will be taking maternity leave from December 2008. This has been a fairly smooth transition with little upset to the project up until now, however, there are a lot of plans to make adjustments to the project and roll it out with a new set of families in February 2009. Working with the collaborative has made us see the need to develop an easy-to-use guide for the Little Leithers project to facilitate an efficient handover for future staff and also in the event that we roll out the project in other areas of the city and potentially work in partnership with other community groups interested in our project. We now realise that having a simple hard copy (i.e. Weaver's Triangle) of our project aims, outcomes, etc. and evaluation templates can serve as a reference to the work we intend to do, the work we have done, and it can save time in future development work.

Funding Issues

Funding has also been an issue for all of ECFI since March 2008 with money being granted for periods of 3 or 6 months at a time. Planning development work has been difficult as there is a considerable degree of instability within the scheme; however, we are pleased to report future FSF has been confirmed at our current levels until 2010.

REHIS Training

An ongoing target for the Little Leither project has been to deliver accredited REHIS Food Hygiene and Food and Health courses to project participants and other community staff working with the under 5's in Leith. This was planned to increase employability, skills and confidence when food handling and to increase community capacity to tackle health inequalities. The previous development worker was a registered trainer and the new development worker also received training; however, the intensive course will not lead to her full registration until the end of November at the earliest, conflicting with her maternity leave in December. Other qualified ECFI staff will be able to deliver training in her absence; however, progress has been slow in effectively planning and arranging venues and training dates for the courses due to reduced staff capacity for organising these courses.

Finding Facilities

Finding and gaining access to suitable facilities in the community for delivering training, education, health promotion, and cookery classes has been difficult and has restricted us from achieving all of the projects outcomes. Working in partnership with a local child and family centres has proved successful in organising cooking courses for parents attending both the child and family centres and/or Little Leither participants. Unfortunately there are very few crèche facilities available nearby so class attendance has been less than anticipated due to childcare issues. For this reason, the development worker has been

looking into partnering with other local community groups that offer crèche facilities which are essential for some families to be able to attend. We are also aiming to provide our sessions during nursery school hours and asking parents to arrange childcare with friends and relatives which we hope will enable more parents to attend.

Conclusion

We have found the input and time to focus on evaluation invaluable and it has helped us efficiently redirect the evaluation process from not just using questionnaires but to thinking of more creative ways to gather information and expanding on our observational skills. For instance, we now recognise our spreadsheets as an evaluation tool and use them to develop graphical representations of our sales figures and we also acknowledge that what we learn from informal discussions with the shopkeepers and parents has helped us develop our project further. An earlier case study revealed how the knock-on effects of the scheme are another fundamental way of measuring the projects success, such as; increasing shop sales, the wider community using our recipes, and parents buying more produce from the shops than what was included in their vouchers. By taking part in the self-evaluation collaborative we have learned helpful new ways of carrying out effective evaluation on our project, which we have passed along to some of our colleagues. This has undoubtedly helped us plan and organise future development work by encouraging us to be proactive and creative in our evaluation techniques.

Appendix 1

<p>FRUIT HEAVEN</p> <p><i>This voucher is exchangeable for:</i></p> <p>FRUIT AND VEGETABLES TO THE VALUE OF £6.00 ONLY</p> <p>SIGNED BY: _____</p> <p>DATE: _____</p> <p>48 Great Junction Street Expiry Date: 1st June, 2008</p>	
<p>FRUIT HEAVEN</p> <p><i>This voucher is exchangeable for:</i></p> <p>FRUIT AND VEGETABLES TO THE VALUE OF £6.00 ONLY</p> <p>SIGNED BY: _____</p> <p>DATE: _____</p> <p>48 Great Junction Street Expiry Date: 1st June, 2008</p>	
<p>FORT FOOD COOP</p> <p><i>This voucher is redeemable for</i></p> <p>£3.50 worth of fruit and vegetables</p> <p>SIGNED BY: _____</p> <p>DATE: _____</p> <p>Fort Community Wing North Fort Street Expiry Date: 1st June, 2008</p>	
<p>GEORGE CAMPBELL & SONS FISHMONGER</p> <p><i>This voucher is exchangeable for:</i></p> <p>£7.00 Salmon or Lythe fillet</p> <p>SIGNED BY: _____</p> <p>DATE: _____</p> <p>35-37 Ferry Road Expiry Date: 1st June, 2008</p>	
<p>GEORGE BOWMANS</p> <p><i>This voucher is exchangeable for:</i></p> <p>4 Chicken legs</p> <p>SIGNED BY: _____</p> <p>DATE: _____</p> <p>44 Great Junction Street Leith Expiry Date: 1st June, 2008</p>	
<p>GEORGE BOWMANS</p> <p><i>This voucher is exchangeable for:</i></p> <p>1kg Beef mince</p> <p>SIGNED BY: _____</p> <p>DATE: _____</p> <p>44 Great Junction Street Leith Expiry Date: 1st June, 2008</p>	
<p>METHVEN FISHMONGER</p> <p><i>This voucher is exchangeable for:</i></p> <p>12 eggs & 12 fresh fishcakes & 2 Boneless Kippers <u>OR</u> 2 dozen eggs 2 Boneless Kippers</p> <p>SIGNED BY: _____</p> <p>DATE: _____</p> <p>19 Great Junction Street Leith Expiry Date: 1st June, 2008</p>	
<p>METHVEN FISHMONGER</p> <p><i>This voucher is exchangeable for:</i></p> <p>½ kg haddock <u>OR</u> smoked haddock</p> <p>SIGNED BY: _____</p> <p>DATE: _____</p> <p>19 Great Junction Street Leith Expiry Date: 1st June, 2008</p>	

Little Leither Voucher Scheme

Tracking of spend per store

Family	Voucher No.	Fruit Heaven	Co-op above	Co-op below	Bowmans	Campbells (a)	Campbells (b)	Methven (b)	Methven (a)	Rajah's
EH6 - 1 b	2049-2056	£10.19	N	£3.50	N	N	£6.00	£6.11	N	£10.00
EH6 - 2 a	2001-2008	£10.14		N	£12.96		N	N	£3.96	N
EH6 - 3 b	2105-2112	N	N	£14.00	10.31	N	£12.00	£12.07	N	N
EH6 - 4 a										
EH6 - 5 a	1993-2000	£10.32		N	£13.20	£12.00	N	N	£4.38	N
EH6 - 6 b	2097-2104						N	N	£11.09	N
EH6 - 7 a	1977-1984	£10.56		N	£13.18	£12.00	N	N	£3.96	N
EH6 - 8 a	1985-1992	£9.94		N	£13.20	£12.00	N	N	£3.96	N
EH6 - 9 b	2113-2120	£10.10	N	£3.50	N	N	£6.00	£10.13	N	£15.00
EH6 - 10 b	2017-2024	£15.63			£13.09	N	£6.00		N	N
EH6 - 11 b	2121-2128	£5.14	N	N	N	N		£15.47	N	£15.00
EH6 - 12 b	2057-2064	N	N	£7.00	£12.94	N	£6.00	£10.67	N	£5.00
EH6 - 13 b	2025-2032		N		£13.22	N		£6.88	N	N
EH6 - 14 b	2065-2072	£21.40	N	N	£12.86	N	N	£10.55	N	N
EH6 - 15a	2041-2048	N	£12.00	N			N	N	£10.19	
EH6 - 16b	2073-2080	£20.98	N	N	£13.03	N	N	£10.37	N	N
EH6 - 17b	2033-2040	£10.19	N		£13.17	N		£10.37	N	N
EH6 - 18a	2081-2088			N	N	£12.00	N	N	£6.00	N
EH6 - 19a	2089-2096	£11.31	£3.50	N	£13.18	£6.00	N	N	£3.96	N
EH6 - 20										
Total value of receipts		£145.90	£15.50	£28.00	£154.34	£54.00	£36.00	£92.62	£47.50	£45.00
Total Value of vouchers		£160.00	£28.00	£49.00	£182.00	£78.00	£42.00	£90.00	£36.00	£50.00
Over / (under) spend		(£14.10)	(£12.50)	(£21.00)	(£27.66)	(£24.00)	(£6.00)	£2.62	£11.50	(£5.00)



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www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk



the hidden gardens

Peterhead Family Centre

Burnfoot Community School