



**community
food and health**

(scotland)

www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk

Evaluation of social enterprise activities delivered by CFHS since 2008

September 2010

Background

Between February 2008 and March 2010 Community Food and Health (Scotland) ran eight activities around the theme of social enterprise. These activities were:

‘Getting Down to Business’: two events for community food initiatives interested in finding out more about social enterprise from practitioners involved in it. Participants at both events were able to pre-book a one-to-one business health check with a social enterprise adviser. The events were held in Edinburgh and Inverness in February 2008.

Encouraging community food practitioners to attend the first Social Enterprise World Forum, held in Edinburgh in September 2008.

Two study tours to community food initiatives involved in work to alleviate homelessness while operating as social enterprises. These were held in Edinburgh and Aberdeen in September 2009.

Three Social Enterprise Academy learning and development sessions - ‘Understanding Social Enterprise’, ‘Business Planning and Strategy’ and ‘Measuring your Impact’ - held in Edinburgh in April 2009, and February and March 2010.

A business support programme, run in winter 2009/10.

While all of these activities were evaluated at the time, we wanted to ascertain if, and how, taking part in one or more of the activities had influenced the work or development of the participants’ organisations in the longer term, particularly in relation to social enterprise.

Method

The evaluation was carried out using a Survey Monkey questionnaire, which was emailed to participants who had taken part in any of the activities. Two further emailed reminders were sent out, and the initial deadline for completion of the questionnaire was extended by three weeks, to encourage more responses.

The survey listed details of the activities that had been run by CFHS since 2008. Participants were asked to contact CFHS if they could not remember which activity they had taken part in, which three did.

To encourage responses, the names of all those who responded were included in a prize draw.

Sixty-two participants from 44 organisations had taken part in one or more of the social enterprise activities. Nine participants were excluded from the survey: those who had ceased working for the organisation they were with at the time, or whose organisation had closed down. Emails to two other participants bounced back, which implies that they are also no longer working with the same organisation.

In total, 51 questionnaires were distributed to participants from 37 organisations.

Participants were asked the following:

- If they had taken their interest in social enterprise any further since attending the activity.
- How much the activity had influenced this.
- If they had developed/were developing community food and health or other social enterprises as a result of attending the activity.
- If they followed up any of the contacts they made.
- If they had contacted any social enterprise support agencies that were not at the activity they attended.
- If they had subsequently attended any other training or event about social enterprise.
- What other information, training or information CFHS could provide that they would find useful.
- If they took away other learning about community food and health work and how they'd applied this.
- If they were interested in taking part in a round table discussion about the results of the evaluation.

Results

Eighteen questionnaires were returned from 17 organisations. One questionnaire was completed anonymously. Thirteen of the questionnaires were completed fully. One of the 18 questionnaires was discounted as none of the questions were answered.

Twelve participants responded to the question asking if they had taken forward their interest in social enterprise. Nine stated that they had set up a social enterprise as part of their organisation, were in the process of becoming or establishing one, or intended to do so. Another was now generating income through trading or contracts. Two had decided that social enterprise was not right for their organisation. One organisation that did not fully complete this question commented that they were a social enterprise at the time of attending the event.

Participants were then asked how much taking part in the activities had influenced these responses. They were asked if this had been 'significant', 'to some extent' or 'not at all'. The eight activities that had been run were listed separately. Some participants incorrectly completed this section of the questionnaire. The results have been amended to include only the responses from participants that took part in each activity.

While the number of responses for each activity is small, with the exception of one of the activities, more participants stated that the activity they attended influenced their responses 'significantly' (7) or 'to some extent' (12) as opposed to 'not at all' (5).

A summary of the responses is included in the appendix.

Six participants responded that they had developed or were developing social enterprise community food and health activities as a result of attending one or more of the activities. However, when asked to give details, eight participants listed new activities, ranging from a farmers' market to a cooking and training academy. One participant is setting up a social enterprise not related to community food work, and another replied that they may do so in future. The responses are included in the appendix.

Of the 13 responses to the question about following up contacts they had made at the activities, nine had contacted community food initiatives, social enterprise support agencies or others that they had met. One stated that they intended to make contact in the future. Three stated that they did not intend to contact anyone.

Three participants stated that they had been in touch with one or more of the social enterprise support agencies that had not been present at the activity they took part in. Two participants had since taken part in social enterprise events or training run by other organisations.

Nine participants responded to the question about what other information, training or support relating to social enterprise they thought CFHS could provide. Of these, six provided at least one suggestion, all of them different. These included business planning, technical support, marketing of new projects for organisations, support to recruit staff with the appropriate skills, and mentoring and training for board members. Two participants were positive about the support that had been provided to date and had no other suggestions. One participant was not sure. All responses are included in the appendix.

Eight participants replied that they had taken away learning about community food and health work that was not related to social enterprise. For three, this had been about developing cookery classes for their clients. Six participants outlined how their learning had or would be applied within their organisation.

Five participants added comments at the end of the questionnaire. Four of the comments were very positive (see below).

Six of the 13 participants who responded to the question said that they were interested in taking part in a round table discussion about the results and how they can inform CFHS's future work.

Observations about the survey

The response rate to the survey was higher than anticipated, with 33% of individuals and 43% of organisations that took part in one or more of the activities completing or partially completing a questionnaire. It was expected that a significant number of the participants would not take part in the evaluation because of the length of time that has elapsed since some of the activities had taken place.

Despite attempting to ensure that the wording and the instructions in the questionnaire were clear, a number of people who responded completed the questionnaire incorrectly, particularly the section seeking their views about the activities that they had taken part in. However, the results could be amended and responses correctly allocated because of

details retained about who had attended the activities.

Participants were expected to respond only to questions that were directly relevant to their organisation, which was expected to vary considerably. Therefore, the number of responses to some of the questions was low, as anticipated.

The Social Enterprise Academy's learning and development session 'Measuring Your Impact' focussed on Social Accounting and Audit and Social Return on Investment only. Therefore, it was not expected that this activity would have had any influence on an organisation's decision about becoming or establishing a social enterprise.

The number of organisations that reported that they have established /are establishing social enterprises as a result of attending one of the CFHS activities was also higher than anticipated.

All the suggestions included in the answers to the question about training, support or information that they felt CFHS could provide were different. The suggestions made may be grouped under four themes: business support; management support; learning from others; and measuring impact. Some of the support sought is presently available from other agencies. This may imply that the participants are unaware of the range of support that is available from these agencies, and/or that the participants' organisations lack the resources to take advantage of the support.

The number of responses about other learning that participants had taken away from the activity they took part in was encouraging.

Next steps

The results from the survey will be shared with the CFHS staff team and steering group. A round table discussion will be arranged to discuss the results and how these can be used to inform CFHS's future work planning.

Appendix

Q. 2. How much did attending the activities run by CFHS influence your response to the previous question? (relating to if, and how, they have taken their interest in social enterprise further).

Activity	Number of responses	Number of possible responses	'significantly	'to some extent'	'not at all'
Getting Down to Business	5 (29%)	17	2	3	0
One-to-one session with business adviser at GDTB	3		1	1	1
Social Enterprise World Forum	2 (66%)	3	0	2	0
Study tours	4 (33%)	12	2	1	1
Social Enterprise Academy's 'Understanding Social Enterprise'	2 (50%)	4	0	2	0
SEA's 'Business Planning and Strategy'	5 (45%)	11	1	3	1
SEA's 'measuring your Impact'	2 (28%)	7	0	0	2
Business support programme	1 (100%)	1	1	0	0

Q7. What other information, training or support do you think CFHS could provide that would be useful for your organisation?

- One-to-one help that would help get the idea or activity off the ground, eg. follow-up support.
- More on the variety of social enterprises that can happen, that are food and health related.
- Support to ensure recruitment of staff with the appropriate skills base.
- Marketing the new project on our behalf.
- More time and training on measuring your impact
- Practical workshops with say, CFINE, leading on what they do and how we could learn from their experience.
- Training for board members from their perspective of managing a new kettle of fish, risks, etc

- Mentoring – someone exceptionally experienced to ask ‘how to’ or check out thinking. Could be over the phone.
- Technical advice.
- Business planning support.

Other comments

- Took away general learning but nothing specific that led me to use the learning to set up anything.
- It was useful to have a one-to-one session at the event. I found the event was a good introduction to social enterprise and would like to see more in the future.
- Really enjoyed the experience and knowledge gained from study tour and gained a lot of transferrable skills which has an impact on my work.
- I really enjoyed both the courses I attended and found them really informative for potential future use.
- CFHS’s support has been invaluable, staff so very helpful.....