



Evaluation of the Edinburgh Community Café Capacity Building Pilot Programme

1. Introduction and background

In March 2010, Community Food and Health (Scotland) or CFHS funded a community café capacity building pilot project for community cafés operating in Edinburgh. The pilot was delivered by Edinburgh Food and Health Training Hub (EFHTH).

The aims of the pilot were threefold:

1. to improve the sustainability of the community cafés that participated by increasing their customer base;
2. to increase the provision of healthier options for customers; and
3. to encourage community café workers and management to share and learn from good practice.

The pilot contained three elements:

- a learning and training programme, which included the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland's Elementary Food and Health and Elementary Food Hygiene courses, sessions on catering management, an introduction to marketing and the **healthyliving award**;
- development of an area for community cafés on the Edinburgh Food and Health Training Hub website; and
- funding for the participating cafés to purchase promotional materials.

The **healthyliving award** rewards catering establishments for dishing up healthier food and helps customers know where to go for healthier food. Little changes are often what is required for catering establishments to attain the **healthyliving award**, eg. reducing the amount of salt used in cooking, serving skimmed milk as opposed to whole milk or serving thick chips as opposed to fries as they absorb less fat in the cooking process.

Visit www.healthylivingaward.co.uk for more information.

The **Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland (REHIS)** is a Scottish charity that aims to raise awareness of environmental health within communities. Through its work it promotes education and training as effective ways of improving health. REHIS provides accreditation for various courses, including Food Hygiene and Food and Health. These courses are delivered at Introductory, Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced levels. Accredited tutors for these courses are registered with REHIS and REHIS also certify participants who complete these courses.

The pilot project was completed in June and the evaluation was carried out by CFHS in September, three months after the community cafés workers had completed the training programme. This allowed the workers time to reflect on the training course and begin to make changes, and demonstrated the impact of the pilot programme. The budget available for this pilot project was £5,000 in total.

1.1 Methods

The evaluation focused on the first of the three elements of the programme (the learning and training programme). At the time of writing the website area was being developed, and café workers were in discussion with EFHTH about allocation of the funding.

The evaluation was based on two main components.

- CFHS visited a sample of five of the cafés that had taken part in the learning and training programme and spoke to those involved. Interviews that explored the impact of the training were carried out with one or two individuals from each café.
- Before the pilot programme started, Edinburgh Food and Health Training Hub completed a baseline questionnaire with each participating community café. CFHS reflected upon this when visiting cafés for the evaluation, to establish any changes.

In total, 27 staff and volunteers from nine community cafés were involved in the pilot. All of the sessions were well-attended. Of the nine community cafés that took part:

- two had staff/volunteers that took part in each of the sessions;
- two had staff/volunteers that attended four of the five sessions;
- two cafés only attended the session about the **healthyliving award**¹;
- one café only attended the Elementary Food Hygiene course; and
- one café only attended the promoting your café session.

As a result, this evaluation report is based on interviews with workers from the five cafés that attended two or more of the of the learning and training programme sessions. These cafés included:

Southside Community Centre Café is open six days a week for breakfast and lunch. As well as its table menu, it has a 'specials' menu, with soup, two main courses (including a vegetarian option) and a pudding, which is changed three times a year. The café is run by three paid staff. An average of 400 customers use the café every week. The café is very busy during the Edinburgh Festival as the Centre is used as a Fringe venue.

The Square Centre Café in the city centre has been open for 20 years. It operates five days a week from 8.30 am to 3.30 pm. As well as snacks, drinks, and lighter options, it sells 'traditional' dishes at lunchtimes – soup (always vegetarian), a hot main meal and pudding, and a cold sweet. The café has 20 volunteers, three or four of whom work each lunchtime, assisting the café manager and assistant cook (both paid). The café provides catering for events run in the church. The café is also very busy during the Edinburgh Festival.

¹ EFHTH had previously identified these cafés as examples of good practice, in terms of their management and catering practices, therefore they were unlikely to benefit from attending the rest of the programme's sessions. Both cafés have subsequently registered for the award.

The Millennium Centre Café in Muirhouse is open four days a week, from 10 am to 2 pm. The menu includes snacks, homemade soup and a hot main meal. The café is run solely by local volunteers. The café has been running for over 10 years. The volunteers also run the café in North Edinburgh Arts Centre and provide outside catering for local events and meetings. One volunteer runs cookery classes for local groups in the café. The café also hosts a weekly lunch club for older people in the area.

The Bridge Café at Holy Trinity Church in Wester Hailes has been running for 16 years. It is open Wednesday to Friday, from 10 am to 1.30 pm. The café is now staffed entirely by volunteers. It provides hot and cold snacks, soups, and drinks, and serves around 100 customers each week. Any profits from the café are used to purchase provisions for the Church's food store, which provides free food for local people in need. The café premises are used as a meeting venue by several church groups.

Perc-U-Up Café at South Leith Parish Church Halls is open Monday to Friday from 10 am to 2 pm. It serves hot and cold snacks, a hot main meal, home baking, and drinks. The café employs a chef, as well as several volunteers who assist with the food preparation, service and clearing up. It has around 300 customers a week. The café also provides catering for events held in the Church halls.

Further details of the participants attending each of the sessions are included in Appendix One.

1.2 How was the training organised?

The content of the training programme was set by CFHS. The organisation and management of the programme was carried out by EFHTH, in consultation with CFHS. This included:

- identifying and recruiting trainers and arranging training venues and dates;
- marketing of the pilot and recruiting the community cafés to the programme;
- collecting baseline information from participating cafés;
- evaluating each of the training sessions; and
- co-ordinating the design of the community café section on ECF's website.

EFHTH contacted, then visited, 11 cafés to identify those most likely to benefit from taking part in the pilot. Six were invited to do so. Of the remaining cafés visited, staff from one felt they could not commit the time to attend the training, volunteers from another two were not interested and workers from a further two felt that they did not need the support being offered. These cafés were offered any spare places at the sessions, some of which were taken up. Additional cafés with staff thought to have an interest were invited to attend the session about the **healthyliving award**. Café workers who held a food hygiene qualification were not expected to take part in the Elementary Food Hygiene course. The number of participants at each session ranged from 11 to 15.

The REHIS Elementary Food and Health and Elementary Food Hygiene courses were delivered by staff from Edinburgh Community Food. The **healthyliving award** session was delivered by staff from the **healthyliving award** team. The **promoting your café** session was delivered by Out of the Blue and the **catering management** session was delivered by Fit's Cooking.

The REHIS courses (Elementary Food Hygiene and Elementary Food and Health) are accredited and therefore require participants to undertake an assessment. All 15 participants passed the Elementary Food Hygiene course. Twelve of the 14 participants that took part in the Elementary Food and Health course passed.

Community cafés were used as the venues, some of which were not participating in the pilot. This provided the participants with the opportunity to visit other cafés (which some participants had never done); and provided the host cafés with an opportunity to share their experiences and demonstrate examples of their own good practice.

2. What was achieved?

This section of the report is structured around the three main aims of the community café pilot project. The intended outcome for each aim of the project is detailed and addressed in order to demonstrate the impact of the pilot project.

2.1 Intended outcome 1: improved sustainability of community cafés

A key factor for the sustainability of cafés is their customer base – the more customers a café has the more income it can generate. The sessions on **catering management**, **promoting your café** and the **healthyliving award** were seen as directly contributing to this.

The **catering management** session intended to enhance the management skills for community cafés by sharing best practice and by looking at how cafés could become more business-like.

All of the participants enjoyed the catering management session and found it useful to some extent. The mix of participants, with very differing levels of experience, meant the training content had to be very broad and include basic information, which was less useful for the cafés that are more developed. One participant commented that they did not gain much from attending this session, but recognised that some of the others did. However, being able to share experiences and learn from other cafés was appreciated by all the participants:

“It was informal but almost too informal.”

“It was good to meet others from different cafés and it was good to meet people who were new to community cafés – they were fresh and ambitious.”

The **promoting your café** session was intended to provide participants with an opportunity to explore how they could further promote their services and attract more customers. Participants felt that whilst this session was beneficial, it could have been more focused on community cafés. Some of the cafés were already running promotional activities, eg. offering ‘meal deals’ and ‘specials’ on the menu to promote them and attract more customers. Some participants were looking for more ideas and techniques specifically for community cafés.

The session about the **healthyliving award** was included to encourage the cafés to apply for the award and highlight the benefits for community cafés of providing their customers with a wider range of healthier menu choices. For one café the **healthyliving award** was seen as a way of boosting its customer numbers, as well as working towards a healthier menu.

The remaining sessions (REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene and Elementary Food and Health courses) were seen as indirectly supporting the sustainability of community cafés by providing them with opportunities to consider why and how they could provide healthier options for their customers.

Changes that the cafés have made

Since the training the content and design of one café's menu has been redeveloped, with the introduction of a meal deal and a children's menu. The meal deal costs £1.50 for soup and a sandwich, and is particularly popular with those on low incomes. In addition, flyers have been produced, posted through doors in the area and left in GP's surgeries and other community venues.

Healthy changes to cooking and preparation methods have taken place in another café without informing customers, none of whom have commented on the changes (the café staff have since informed customers through the community centre newsletter).

Following the training, changes to the menu, introducing more healthy breakfast options, such as healthy cereals, have been introduced in another café. Some 'catchy' options are also being developed, including a two-course breakfast of cereal and kippers. All are being introduced to attract more customers.

Staff from one café commented that the catering management training had been useful as it reinforced its need to ensure that its volunteers were using portion control, which is important for ensuring its sustainability.

If it had not been for the contact with EFHTH and the training itself, staff in one café said they would not have realised the changes that could be made. The training has increased awareness.

2.2 Intended outcome 2: improved access of healthy options available within cafés for customers

The REHIS Elementary Food and Health course enabled cafés to access training on basic nutrition and the importance of healthy eating for themselves and also their café customers. Of the nine cafés that took part in the pilot, staff from five attended the REHIS Food and Health course.

Staff from six of the cafés took part in the **healthyliving award** session. Of these, four cafés have registered with the **healthyliving award**². One café has not yet done so, but there are changes to the menus and catering practices to prepare to do so in the future. Another café will be moving to new premises and staff will seek registration then. In the meantime, there will be some changes made to its menus.

While none of the cafés had significantly changed their menus, small changes to cooking practices, ingredients purchased, or range of foods offered have been undertaken.

"As a result of the training small changes have been made."

² As at 7th December 2010

One café now uses lower salt varieties of catering products, and better quality meat.

“.. giving people the choice of adding salt but not doing it for them.”

Salt has been removed from the tables in three cafés, and sugar servers have been removed from the tables in one, as a result of attending the elementary training and **healthy living award** sessions.

There are plans to incorporate more fruit and salads into the menu of one café.

However, staff in one café operating in an area with significant competition from other catering outlets were concerned that changing the menu too much or too quickly may result in losing existing customers. Workers in another were concerned that customers would react if they made thicker chips, and plan to offer a choice of both thin and thicker cut chips.

Workers from one café realised that they needed to do what they could to make the menu choices healthier, as some of the customers eat in the café every day.

One café is based in a community centre that has an allotment nearby. The allotment has been providing the café with courgettes, which are used in various ways. Its vegetarian options are very popular, and often sell out first. The café staff also reflected surprise that older people were choosing this option.

“Astoundingly older people, traditionalists, start trying it.”

2.3 Intended outcome 3: greater sharing of good practice within and between cafés

The participants brought a very wide range of skills and expertise to the pilot. Participants from all the cafés highlighted the opportunities to share and learn good practice as one of the benefits of taking part.

Some of the café staff also commented on how useful it had been to run the training sessions in the different venues, particularly in those that already held the **healthy living award**. Several of the participants reported that they benefited from the opportunity to visit different community cafés and meet other café staff. Some had never visited another community café before and a couple of participants commented that taking part had reduced their feeling of working in isolation.

In one café, both staff and committee members had taken part in the pilot. Both were keen to implement changes, but were sensitive of the need to do this in a way that brought other staff along with them.

Some of the café workers expressed a strong interest in setting up a community café network as the benefits to cafés of working collectively were highlighted. However, while interested, most café workers stated that they would find it difficult to find the time to participate. Staff from one café stated that a network could provide practical support for its staff members (eg. with recipes).

“We must come together more - the concept of community cafés is brilliant but it needs an infrastructure to support [it].”

A space was created on the EFHTH website that was specifically designed for community cafés. This space has not been used very much since it was created. However, this is something that is hoped to be used more in future as a result of establishing a café network.

2.4 Unexpected outcomes

The evaluation of the community café capacity building pilot has also identified some unexpected outcomes as a result of the work.

The most significant unexpected outcome has come from the networking element of the programme. The evaluation has found that some have further developed their relationships and an appreciation for the value of a community café 'network'. A core group of participants are exploring the possibility of working together in the future as there is a sense that within Edinburgh they could achieve more together. The Edinburgh Community Cafés group held its first meeting at the beginning of November (this is explored further on page 10).

In addition, there have been a number of other unexpected benefits. Participants from one café said they had not considered themselves to be a 'community café' until approached to take part in the pilot. Since being involved they have recognised they are a community café and also how they can benefit from sharing learning with other community cafés that they would not necessarily have associated themselves with previously.

As a result of taking part in the REHIS Food Hygiene training, two participants (from one café) have completed the REHIS Advanced Diploma, which will enable them to become tutors for the REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene course. At the time of evaluation, the intention was to register as tutors and then deliver the Food Hygiene course to groups that use the café (eg. young adults, young women, mums of pre-schoolers group).

One café has a significant number of older people using its café regularly. Through the training programme, staff realised that they needed to do what they could to make menu choices healthier. This was particularly important as many of the older people eat in the café on a daily basis and it is most likely to be their main meal of the day.

In addition to the benefits that have been identified for cafés as a result of individuals taking part in the pilot programme, there have also been additional, personal benefits for individuals. One café volunteer with no formal qualifications attained the REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene certificate, which resulted in a great sense of achievement.

"People are encouraged, they have more confidence."

Lastly, EFHTH has also benefited from being able to identify and make links with organisations running community food and health activities that it was previously unaware of. This means that EFHTH will be able to engage with more groups across Edinburgh and ensure that the support it offers reaches as wide an audience as possible.

3. What was learnt?

3.1 Learning from the pilot

Three factors strongly contributed to the success of the pilot: the co-ordination of the pilot by EFHTH; the commitment of the cafés involved; and the timing of the pilot.

EFHTH's co-ordinator undertook the promotion, organisation and management of the learning and training programme. The evaluation strongly reflected the importance of the relationships that the EFHTH co-ordinator established with the cafés involved.

"[EFHTH] sold the pilot without us knowing we were buying it! We wouldn't have got involved if they hadn't done this."

The input from the EFHTH co-ordinator was complemented by the commitment of the cafés that took part in the training. All the training courses were well-attended and two of the nine cafés involved sent all or most of their staff to all of the training sessions. Although workers from these cafés reflected that it was difficult to find this time and provide the necessary cover, both said they were glad they had done it.

Finally, for some of the cafés the training had come along at the right time. For three cafés in particular the timing was of particular significance due to refurbishments underway and changes in café management.

"It was difficult at times, the time commitment for staff was hard to juggle at times, but it was very, very worthwhile. We can't take up all opportunities that are offered as time doesn't allow but this training fitted with what we needed...the training came along at the right time."

In addition to these factors, there were additional lessons learnt about the pilot programme.

The pilot reinforced the need to have participants able to implement and influence change within an organisation taking part. Participants from one café that was not involved in purchasing or cooking food commented that it was unlikely that any changes would be made to the café's menu. For those cafés with managers or volunteers involved in cooking and purchasing taking part in the training, they have been able to influence and make changes within their cafés.

The participants involved in the training had a wide range of needs and experiences. Some participants were very new to community cafés, while others had been running cafés for a very long time. Finding the right tutor and developing training sessions for this mix of participants was therefore extremely difficult and some participants commented that a couple of sessions did not meet their needs. However, they highlighted that these sessions were useful because they provided an opportunity to meet other café workers and find out how other cafés operated.

Most of the café staff had concerns about making changes to their menus or prices. Some were concerned that they would lose customers, others had experience of making major changes in the past that had proved to be too extreme for customers. Staff from all the cafés reflected on the need to make progressively small changes, whether to the food they serve, or the prices they charge. However, none of the cafés that had implemented changes have had any reaction from customers and most felt that changes had gone

unnoticed. In addition, one café is selling more vegetarian meals and workers were surprised that older customers were keen to try new things. This would suggest that making small changes is not as big an issue for cafés as originally perceived.

3.2 General challenges for community cafés

Community cafés play an important role in providing access to affordable, healthier meals, particularly in low-income communities and for vulnerable communities. The cafés are largely run by or with volunteers and rely on community capacity and community spirit to survive. Participants from some of the cafés in the pilot stated that they are finding it difficult to recruit more volunteers.

Community cafés are more-than-profit organisations and should be aiming to generate sufficient income to cover running and development costs. However, not all the cafés that took part in the pilot were covering these costs. The organisations managing these cafés (i.e. community centres) were meeting any deficit, in recognition of their importance in increasing access to affordable, healthier food, and their role in encouraging people to take part in other services and activities that they run.

This evaluation found that some cafés are providing meals free of charge to those in most need within their communities. This ensures that individuals are provided with food, which is of prime importance, however, it does present sustainability issues for cafés themselves.

One café had previously had a café manager in post for a short period of time. It was found that this post was valuable for providing consistency for volunteers and getting to know the customers; however, it was not sustainable due to costs. The pilot did not consider the benefits of employing a manager; however, from the experience of this café it could be inferred from this that having a café manager would be an advantage in terms of sharing learning, and developing and embedding new ideas.

The evaluation found that all community cafés are struggling with their current staffing capacity. The majority rely on volunteers to work in the café on a daily basis. The challenges faced recruiting and retaining volunteers and then ensuring that they get the most out of volunteers who are involved was an issue for most cafés.

Attracting customers was found to be a challenge for cafés, even those operating in central locations within communities. For one café, there is limited footfall past the café due to its location, whilst another café found it difficult to attract customers into the community centre in which it is based.

The evaluation has highlighted some areas where cafés would benefit from future support. This includes more opportunities to undertake the REHIS Elementary Food and Health course, training around customer services for volunteers and more catering management training, in particular looking at issues around portion control and menu planning.

3.3 Challenges for the evaluation

Some of the cafés had made some changes to their catering practice before taking part in the pilot. Some had run promotional activities to attract new customers. Therefore, any positive changes to these cafés' catering practice or increase in customer numbers cannot solely be attributed to them being part of the pilot.

It was not possible to interview every participant for the evaluation. Because the meetings with the cafés were held while they were open (at the request of the café staff) it was difficult to interview the staff and volunteers who were busy working.

Meetings with the key volunteers and members of staff were delayed for some of the cafés because of holidays or illness. This lengthened the evaluation process. However, as some of the cafés were implementing changes slowly, the delay meant that some of these were in place by the time of the evaluation meetings.

4. What has happened since the pilot project finished?

The community café pilot programme has stimulated a range of different actions following the completion of the learning and development programme.

The **Edinburgh Community Food and Health Training Hub Networking and Skills event** in September provided an opportunity to hold a workshop session about community cafés, hosted by CFHS and involving some of the cafés from the pilot programme, as well as other community cafés. This session focused on the support that community cafés currently have and the support that would be useful in future.

The **2010 CFHS annual conference, Healthy Goals** provided a further opportunity to host a community café workshop. This workshop was hosted by EFHTH. This provided an opportunity to further engage with a wider audience of community cafés and identify their potential support requirements in future.

An **Edinburgh Community Cafés** group has started to come together, with support from EFHTH. The group had its first meeting on 3 November 2010, held within a community café. The group has agreed that it will focus on engaging more community cafés and taking work forward that is beneficial for all involved. This work will include areas such as marketing, site visits and exploring the potential of linking with Edinburgh Festival activities.

Since the completion of the capacity building programme, CFHS has undertaken further work to strengthen future support provision for community cafés. Firstly, CFHS has commissioned a national mapping exercise that will provide a snapshot of community cafés operating across Scotland. Secondly, CFHS has commissioned research to develop a detailed analysis of 12 community cafés operating in four local authority areas of Scotland (including urban areas, small towns and rural areas).

5. Conclusions

The community café capacity building pilot programme has effectively increased the capacity, confidence and enthusiasm of community cafés in Edinburgh. In particular, cafés have learnt from each other and the new community café group will ensure that this sharing continues.

In addition to this increased capacity, confidence and enthusiasm, the pilot programme has also developed the knowledge and awareness of community cafés, in particular around sustainability issues and becoming more business-like. However, it should be noted that cafés are experiencing a wide range of challenges that impact on their sustainability and could benefit from more catering management training opportunities.

Cafés are also providing more healthy options for customers and although small changes are being made, they are progressive. The registrations for the **healthyliving award** are a clear indication of the desire to continue providing healthy options and also to raise customer's awareness of these options.

This pilot project has had a positive impact for community cafés as well as stimulated a wide range of unexpected outcomes. Whilst there are a various ways in which the momentum created by this work will continue, the need for future support to ensure that community cafés continue to thrive within local communities has been clearly identified.

Appendix 1 – Community Café Capacity Building Programme Participants

Training Course	Participants
REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene	Southside Community Café (x 3) Bridges Café (x6) Square Café (x1) South Leith Parish Church (x1) Sikh Sanjog (x4)
REHIS Elementary Food and Health	Millennium Centre (x1) Southside Community Café (x 3) Bridges Café (x7) Square Café (x1) South Leith Parish Church (x1)
Healthy Living Award	St Brides (x 2) Millennium Centre (x1) Southside Community Café (x 2) Bridges Café (x5) Square Café (x1) Dr Bells (x1)
Catering Management	Millennium Centre (x1) Southside Community Café (x 2) Bridges Café (x7) Square Café (x1)
Promoting your Café	Millennium Centre (x1) Southside Community Café (x 2) Bridges Café (x7) Newhaven Connections (x1) South Leith Parish Church (x1)

Appendix 2 – contact details of cafés included in the pilot

Southside Community Centre Café
117 Nicolson Street
Edinburgh EH8 9ER
0131 667 0484

Perc-U-Up café
South Leith Parish Church Halls
6 Henderson Street
Edinburgh EH6 6BS
0131 554 2578

The Millennium Centre Café
7 Muirhouse Medway
Edinburgh EH4 4RW
0131 467 3578

Punjab'n de Resoi Café (Sikh Sanjog)
122 – 124 Leith Walk
Edinburgh EH6 5DT
07865 895022

Newhaven Connections Community Café
Newhaven Parish Church
7 Craighall Road
Edinburgh EH6 4ND
newhavenconnection@n-c.org.uk

Square Centre Café
Nicolson Square
Edinburgh EH8 9BX
0131 662 0417

The Bridge Café
Holy Trinity Church
Hailesland Place
Edinburgh EH14 2SL
0131 442 3304

Dr Bell's Family Centre Café
15 Junction Place
Edinburgh EH6 5JA
0131 553 0100

St Brides Centre Café
10 Orwell Terrace
Edinburgh EH11 2DZ
0131 346 1405

Appendix 3 – Trainers

REHIS Elementary Food and Health course

Katherine Purvis, Edinburgh Community Food
Sonya Kalia, Edinburgh Community Food

REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene course

Katherine Purvis, Edinburgh Community Food
Sonya Kalia, Edinburgh Community Food

Promoting your community café

Chris Askham, Out of the Blue

Catering Management

Pat Tweedie, Fit's Cooking

Healthyliving award

Joanne Burns, **healthyliving award**