

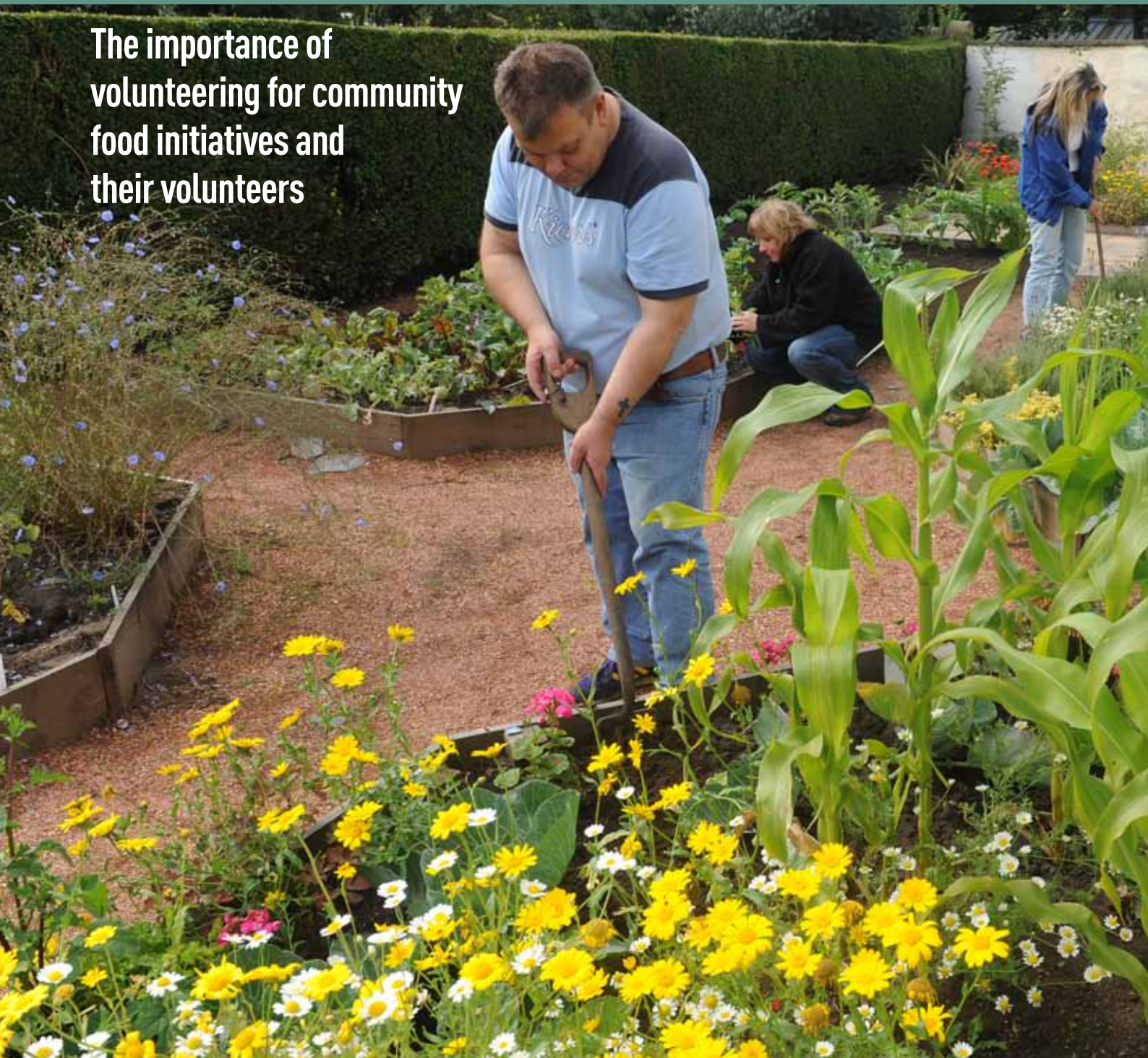


**community
food and health**

(scotland)

The Vital Ingredient

The importance of
volunteering for community
food initiatives and
their volunteers



About CFHS



community
food and health

(scotland)

Community Food and Health (Scotland) or CFHS aims to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the opportunity, ability and confidence to access a healthy and acceptable diet for themselves, their families and their communities. We do this by supporting work with and within low-income communities that addresses health inequalities and barriers to healthy and affordable food.

Barriers being addressed by community-based initiatives are:

Availability – increasing access to fruit and vegetables of an acceptable quality and cost

Affordability – tackling not only the cost of shopping but also getting to the shops

Skills – improving confidence and skills in cooking and shopping

Culture – overcoming ingrained habits

Through our work we aim to support communities to:

- identify barriers to a healthy balanced diet
- develop local responses to addressing these barriers, and
- highlight where actions at other levels, or in other sectors, are required.

We value the experience, understanding, skills and knowledge within Scotland's community food initiatives and their unique contribution to developing and delivering policy and practice at all levels.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who provided CFHS with information for this publication. Particular thanks go to Isabel Page from Meldrum Community Café, John Hancox from the Commonwealth Orchard, Kirsty Flannigan from East Dunbartonshire Community Health Partnership, Nathalie Ouriachi and Greig Sandilands from North Glasgow Community Food Initiative and Pamela McKinlay from East Lothian Roots and Fruits for their willingness to share their knowledge and experience about their work with volunteering and volunteers. Thanks, too, to Stuart McGann from Volunteer Development Scotland.

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Setting the scene

INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are at the heart of community food and health work. From the smallest to the largest community food initiative, volunteers are likely to be involved in every aspect of their work; planning, development, operation and management.

The purpose of this publication is to highlight examples of volunteering in community food and health work and demonstrate the value of volunteering for the volunteers and the community food initiatives they are involved with. More importantly, this publication celebrates the contribution of volunteering and volunteers to community food and health work.

There are very many examples of volunteering in community food initiatives that could have been included in this publication. It contains the experiences of five community food initiatives, representative of the volunteering good practice that is demonstrated throughout Scotland's community food sector.



THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Volunteering has a higher profile now than it has had for many years. At local, national, and European level the importance of volunteering is gaining recognition across the political spectrum.

2011 was the European Year of Volunteering. Launched by the European Commission, it celebrated the contribution of the 100 million Europeans who volunteer (a quarter of the adult population) and challenged those not volunteering to do so.

The year had four objectives:

- to create an enabling environment to make it easier for people to volunteer;
- to improve the quality of volunteering by empowering volunteer networks;
- to increase recognition about volunteering and the benefits for volunteers; and
- to raise awareness of the issues around volunteering.

Nationally, through the Big Society¹ agenda, the UK Government sees an increased role for the private and voluntary sectors and community groups in the delivery of services currently being provided by central and local government. Volunteers are fundamental to making this (ideological) shift in service delivery happen.

1 www.cabinet.office.gov.uk/content/big-society-overview

THE SCOTTISH CONTEXT

The Scottish Government is 'determined that volunteers should have full scope to contribute to Scottish life' and is evaluating ways in which it can promote this ethos². It defines volunteering as 'the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, environment and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of one's own free will, and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary'.

This definition encompasses two types of volunteering: formal volunteering, where the volunteer works, unpaid, for an organisation, group or club to help other people or a cause; and informal volunteering, where the volunteer gives unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives. The examples in this publication are all of formal volunteering.

The Scottish Household Survey², produced by the Scottish Government each year, includes a range of questions about volunteering. The most recently published Survey results, for 2009/2010, highlight that three in ten adults in Scotland had provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the previous 12 months.

The level of volunteering varies slightly between men and women, and between different age groups. Deprivation significantly affects levels of volunteering³. 15% of adults in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland volunteer compared with 32% throughout the rest of Scotland. Household income also correlates with volunteering levels, with adults in households with a net annual income of over £40,000 nearly twice as likely to volunteer as adults in households with a net income of up to £15,000 (41% compared with 22%).



SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Support for volunteering and volunteers is widely available across the country, including through volunteer centres, councils for voluntary service and third sector interfaces. Nationally, support is available from Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS).

VDS is the national resource centre for volunteers and for organisations that engage volunteers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Its mission is to be volunteer-centred - creating the right conditions across Scotland to improve the volunteer experience, and in so doing, to increase the total amount of time contributed by people to help others. It believes that volunteering performs a crucial role in strengthening communities and enhancing social cohesion.

VDS also provides accredited training and support for organisations that engage volunteers.

It is actively involved in many initiatives designed to enhance the experience of volunteers and works with the Scottish Government, local authorities and other partners to encourage the positive promotion of volunteering.

www.vds.org.uk

2 Scotland's People Annual report: Results from 2009/10 Scottish Household Survey, www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/08/17093111/13

3 The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland in a consistent way. www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/statistics/SIMD

About the community food initiatives

East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op was set up to increase access to affordable, quality fresh produce in four low-income areas across the local authority (Hillhead in Kirkintilloch, Twechar, Lennoxton and Auchinairn). Launched in March 2010, it runs three fruit and vegetable co-ops and provides support to two others that are run by community organisations. Established by a partnership between East Dunbartonshire Community Health Partnership (CHP) and Hillhead Housing Association, the project is currently managed by the CHP and has two members of staff; a development worker and mobile support worker.

The project relies on the volunteers to run the food co-ops. It has a core group of nine volunteers working in the three co-ops it runs, with 18 volunteers working in the two co-ops it supports. One volunteer describes their work as a TEAM – Together Each Achieves More. Volunteers have been integral to the project from the start and work well together.

The intention has always been to establish the project as a separate voluntary organisation, with the partners and other local agencies working together to have a management committee in place in 2012.

The project's work has assisted the CHP to gain an Investing in Volunteers award.

The **Commonwealth Orchard** works with schools (through its Fruitful Schools project) and communities across Scotland, planting and maintaining orchards and fruit trees.

Like many other community food initiatives, it relies heavily on volunteers to carry out its activities.

In addition to working with communities, for the last three years the Commonwealth Orchard has been providing corporate volunteering opportunities for various companies, both large and small. The company volunteers might, or might not, work alongside community volunteers.

Meldrum Community Café has been running for five years, and operates in the old town hall in Oldmeldrum in Aberdeenshire. Established by Making Meldrum Better, a local community organisation, the café was set up to provide a meeting place for local people and promote capacity building. It is a Community Interest Company⁴, managed by a board of four volunteer directors. The café is open four days per week. It has over 50 local people volunteering in the café for two hours or more each week.

The café is very successful: it makes a healthy profit (last year this was £12,000), with the surplus made reinvested in activities run by other local groups. Unlike many community cafés, it has no employees, and is governed, managed and run solely by volunteers, who are the reason for the café's success. Their commitment is noteworthy, with around half of the original volunteers maintaining their involvement with the café.

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



East Lothian Roots and Fruits is a voluntary organisation that runs a range of health improvement activities across the local authority area, including fruit and vegetable co-ops and stalls, cookery classes, healthy eating sessions and a community gardening project. The focus of its work is reducing health inequalities, particularly in low-income communities.

The community food initiative has five employees and three volunteers, two of whom have been with the organisation for over three years. It also provides placements for trainees on Government-funded employment programmes. Currently it has four trainees as part of the Community Jobs Scotland⁵ scheme and offers placements through the UK Government's Work Experience programme⁶. It also provides opportunities for parents at the ten schools involved in the community gardening project to volunteer on an ad hoc basis.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative was set up in 2001. At the time, significant numbers of asylum seekers and refugees were being dispersed to Scotland and allocated housing in North Glasgow, one of the most disadvantaged areas in Scotland. Research carried out highlighted a lack

of access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables in the area for both the new and existing community members. In response, Student Action for Refugees at Glasgow University set up North Glasgow Food Co-op, which was seen as one way of supporting integration of the new and established communities.

Initially it was run entirely by volunteers. Since then, the organisation has grown and developed, and changed its name to reflect the broad range of community food and health activities that it runs, including cookery classes, weaning sessions and a gardening project, as well as fruit and vegetable stalls. It now employs ten members of staff, including a volunteer co-ordinator. However, volunteers remain essential for the organisation, both for the delivery of its food and health activities and its management; it is governed by a board of directors, all volunteers.

The purpose of North Glasgow Community Food Initiative continues to be to involve people and provide volunteering opportunities; at the time of writing, NGCFI had 52 volunteers, a quarter of whom were asylum seekers or refugees. Three members of its board of directors are refugees.

5 Community Jobs Scotland is a Scottish Government scheme which helps 16-24 year olds get a paid job in the voluntary sector. It is a partnership between the Scottish Government, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and Scottish Enterprise. www.scvo.org.uk.

6 The Work Experience programme is for people aged 16 to 24. It aims to give people experience of the working environment before they become eligible for the Work Programme, and lasts for between two and eight weeks. It is one of the UK Government's programmes to tackle unemployment.

Common themes

Within the small sample of community food initiatives included in this publication, a number of common themes relating to volunteering emerge.

VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL

Volunteers are essential for all of the community food initiatives, and none would be able to deliver the range and quantity of services that they do without their input.

With only one paid member of staff, the internal capacity of the Commonwealth Orchard to carry out its work is limited. It delivers its aims of encouraging fruit growing across Scotland through a wide range of partnerships with business, community and school partners. While it works closely with community groups and schools, these may also lack the capacity or skills needed. The workforce provided through corporate volunteering opportunities gives the Commonwealth Orchard the scale of help needed to deliver its activities, and make an impact across Scotland.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative is able to offer its range of services because of its volunteers' inputs. The volunteering opportunities available include working with the fruit and vegetable stalls, assisting with fruit and vegetable deliveries, working in the gardening project and assisting with cookery sessions.

One of the community food initiatives is looking to build its volunteering capacity.

While East Lothian Roots and Fruits has a small number of volunteers, it is actively developing activities that are intended to provide more volunteering opportunities in the future. For example, it sees the role of the Community Jobs Scotland trainees (with the organisation for six months) as piloting development of new activities which can be run by volunteers once established. It is also currently running a stall in Edenhall Hospital. The hospital is scheduled to close shortly; however, the NHS management is keen that the stall is relocated, with the hospital's services, to a new health centre opening in Musselburgh. It is planned that the stall will be run by a volunteer when it moves to the new location.





ENSURING A QUALITY EXPERIENCE

The community food initiatives highlight that volunteers need quality volunteering experiences. Processes and procedures for recruiting, supporting, and recognising volunteers are key; some of the initiatives have invested considerable resources in these.

Recruiting

The organisations use a range of methods for recruiting volunteers, with some using more formal methods than others.

Recruiting volunteers was challenging for East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op when the project first started. However, those recruited have tended to stay. Volunteering opportunities are advertised through the local volunteer centre, local newspapers and the project's newsletter. Word-of-mouth is equally successful as a recruitment tool.

The project has designed a volunteer recruitment programme to ensure that volunteers recruited will bring benefits to, and gain benefits from, being involved. Potential volunteers are invited to visit a co-op to meet other volunteers and find out how it runs. Those wanting to become a volunteer are then asked to complete an application form. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Human Resources Service obtain Disclosures⁷ for people seeking to volunteer.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative recruits volunteers in a number of ways. Some approach the organisation directly, while others are referred by agencies. Word-of-mouth is the most successful means of recruiting volunteers to the gardening project. The recruitment processes for the gardening project and other activities differ slightly. For the former, potential volunteers complete a simple application form and are invited to visit one of the project's three gardens. Another application form is used for the other activities, and new volunteers have to attend an induction session about the activity. Prospective volunteers are expected to provide references. When this is not possible, which is

⁷ A Disclosure is a document containing impartial and confidential criminal history information held by the police and government departments which can be used by employers to make safer recruitment decisions. This includes for voluntary positions. www.disclosurescotland.co.uk.

common, eg. for asylum seekers new to the city, volunteers undergo a review after three months.

No-one wanting to work with Meldrum Community Café is ever turned away; work is always found for them to do.

East Lothian Roots and Fruits arranged two of the volunteers' placements when approached by their support agencies. The third was arranged following contact from the volunteer's parent.

Supporting

Retaining volunteers is fundamental for all of the community food initiatives. For all, this includes providing support and opportunities for personal or career development.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative is committed to providing training opportunities for all its volunteers to further their knowledge, skills and personal development. All receive information about health and safety and data protection, and they have opportunities to take part in accredited training, such as the REHIS⁸ Elementary Food Hygiene and Elementary Food and Health courses. The local Healthy Living Centre provides First Aid for Work training and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers ran a Leadership course to upskill some of the gardening volunteers. Providing the training opportunities also benefits the organisation, both directly and indirectly: it reflects well on the community food initiative when volunteers move on having had a positive experience of the organisation.

For East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op, volunteers have been integral to the project from the start, and providing volunteering opportunities and empowering volunteers is as important to the project as increasing access to fruit and vegetables. Investing in volunteers is also fundamental. A volunteer development programme has been established, developed with Wider Role⁹ funding obtained by Hillhead Housing Association. The funding has enabled the project to produce a comprehensive volunteer handbook, and run a volunteer away day. It has been important for the project to develop best practice, but to keep this simple so that everyone understands and 'buys into' the processes and practices.

One community food initiative, however, also highlights the importance of allowing volunteers to remain within their 'comfort zones'.

Meldrum Community Café puts its high volunteer retention rate down to how it operates, as well as its recruitment policy. The tasks involved in running the café have been separated. Volunteers can choose which of the tasks they would, and would not, like to do. While they are encouraged to take on other tasks and learn new skills, no-one has to be involved in any task that they feel uncomfortable with, eg. managing the till. Some of the volunteers do not want to be involved in preparing or serving food, and prefer to carry out cleaning tasks. Others bake the cakes, scones and other baked goods that are sold in the café.

“(name) arranged to meet me and she put me at ease straight away.....she discussed how the project would work and how volunteers could play a key role in making it all happen ...”

“(name) continually encouraged and supported me to develop in my role and this approach made me feel empowered and I found I wanted to do more and more!”

“I’ve learned about the till and how to pack things up!”

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

9 Wider Role Fund was a Scottish Government funded programme which supported Residential Social Landlord to undertake projects in their local communities - beyond their principal role as landlords - that made life better for the people living there.

Community food initiatives delivering corporate volunteering opportunities need to ensure a quality experience for the volunteers, while meeting the needs and requirements of the companies. These may include a higher expectation about the levels of service provided by the organisations delivering the opportunities.

Companies approaching the Commonwealth Orchard are looking for opportunities for their staff to meet and socialise with their colleagues outside of the work environment, which also benefit a community. For most companies, the volunteering is part of their corporate social responsibility agenda, and they are looking for activities for their staff to take part in that are worthwhile, provide opportunities to learn new skills, and are achievable in the time available.

Ensuring that the volunteering opportunities available meet the business needs of the companies as well as the needs of the community food initiative can be difficult, eg. tree planting can only be carried out at particular times of the year, which companies may not appreciate. Companies are usually looking for activities that can be completed within one day.

Recognition

The importance of recognising the work of their volunteers is important for all of the community food initiatives. For two, this includes formal recognition of their contributions.

East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op holds a volunteer recognition day each year, to which the project's partners and others are invited. Certificates are presented to volunteers that have committed time to the project in the previous year: bronze for 50 hours; silver for 50 to 150 hours; and gold for 150 to 300 hours. There is also an outstanding achievement certificate for committing over 300 hours.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative's volunteers receive certificates after each year of volunteering, presented at the organisation's annual general meeting.

One community food initiative is currently using other ways of recognising their volunteers' contributions.

“I have received an Outstanding Achievement Award which has made me feel valued and appreciated.”



Meldrum Community Café's volunteers are offered half-price food and free drink while working. There are also regular meetings where café management issues can be aired, and 'nights out' for the volunteers funded through the tips left by the café's customers. The directors acknowledge that the volunteers' contribution should be recognised further, with a number of ideas in the pipeline.

WIDENING VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

The community food initiatives work to ensure that their volunteering opportunities are available for everyone, including for people who need some additional support. Volunteers who need this can attend with their own support worker. For some, the level of support required reduces over time, as they became more familiar and comfortable with the staff and other volunteers, and the activities they are taking part in.

Most of the formal volunteering opportunities provided by East Lothian Roots and Fruits are for people with additional support needs. All of the volunteers working with it at present have additional support needs, with two being accompanied to work by a support worker. Two of its volunteers have been with the organisation for over three years. One of the Community Jobs Scotland trainees was previously a volunteer with the organisation. The community food initiative is seeking funding to continue the trainee's placement when the current funding ends.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative attracts a wide range of volunteers, including some who require additional support. For example, students in an Active Citizen class from a local further education college (all with learning disabilities) volunteer regularly in the gardening project. The organisation also provides placements for employment agencies such as Glasgow North Regeneration Agency, particularly for people who have more difficulty in gaining employment. For some who have a very poor employment record, the placement is extremely important as it can be used to demonstrate their willingness to work to potential employers. A small number have continued to volunteer once their placement has ended.

THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING

All of the community food initiatives highlight the benefits of volunteering for their volunteers. North Glasgow Community Food Initiative highlights the enormous therapeutic benefits of volunteering for the asylum seekers and refugees involved with them.

Many had very traumatic experiences in their own country that led to their exile, and many have poor English language skills. Due to the current legislation, asylum seekers are not allowed to work, which may result in a loss of confidence. Volunteering provides them with opportunities to contribute and do something positive in their communities, and meet people while learning new skills (including language skills).

Asylum seekers and refugees face particular challenges, but bring a range of skills, expertise, and experience to the organisation. They are a rewarding group to work with.

“ ... working at the food co-op has given me more confidence in myself, structure to my day and something to talk about of value.”

“I really like work at (name) and the people I work with are really nice to me.”

“For some, their volunteering is the only constant in their lives.”

(volunteer development worker, North Glasgow Community Food Initiative).

Some asylum seekers are under threat of being removed to their country, which is unsettling for everybody. Those that lose their 'leave to remain'¹⁰ are expected to return to their country. They also lose recourse to public funds, and face destitution. One person continues to volunteer in the gardening project and food co-ops despite being in this situation.

Around half of the organisation's volunteers work in the gardening project, a quarter of these are asylum seekers or refugees. Six of the eight volunteers working on the fruit and vegetable stalls are asylum seekers or refugees. One has been volunteering for four years and continues to do so after moving away from the area.

For many of volunteers, working in the gardens is a 'stepping stone' to other volunteering, helping them to build their self-confidence.

In order to demonstrate these benefits, most of the community food initiatives gather feedback from their volunteers about their experiences.

Previously all volunteers with North Glasgow received a twice-yearly review from the volunteer co-ordinator, but this has become unsustainable due to lack of funding. Now, gardening volunteers are mostly supported by gardening project staff, with the volunteer co-ordinator providing other support as required. This can be face-to-face or by telephone.

The impact of volunteering for East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op's volunteers was highlighted in an evaluation carried out early 2011. Eleven people working with the project at the time were interviewed to find out if they had benefitted from their involvement with it, and, if so, how. Most reported that volunteering had made a positive difference to their lives. As well as providing opportunities to develop new skills and gain qualifications, eg. in food hygiene, several reported that being part of the project had resulted in increased self-confidence and self-esteem, better mental health, and improved emotional wellbeing. Some said that they now felt they belonged more to their community, and that the social aspects of their lives had improved. Several reported feeling more valued. The evaluation also recognises their levels of commitment and the importance of their involvement in the project.

East Lothian Roots and Fruits volunteers are involved in a range of tasks, including boxing eggs, bagging up potatoes and making up fruit bags, and packing bags in a fruit and vegetable co-op. They are asked about their experience, including what they enjoy about their work, if they have learned new skills, and if they feel more confident and comfortable working with other people.

The benefits for the corporate volunteer of working with the Commonwealth Orchard are wide-ranging. These include being able to take part in an activity that is making a tangible difference to a community or school, and having an opportunity to learn a practical skill that can be used elsewhere. For many, being able to work outdoors for a day is important.

Ensuring that all volunteering experiences bring mutual benefits for the volunteers and organisations is also essential for the community food initiatives. This includes ensuring that the volunteers and others that they work with are safe.

“I began to volunteer with the project three days a week. This gave me focus to my week, something to get up for. I began to feel my confidence increasing and felt less anxious. I was also getting out and about and speaking to people, something I had never envisaged.”

10 Leave to remain is permission to stay in the UK, either temporarily (limited leave to remain) or permanently (indefinite leave to remain). www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/glossary

The experience of working with corporate volunteers has been very positive for the Commonwealth Orchard. In particular it values what the volunteers bring with them, including their enthusiasm, responsiveness and flexibility. Working with volunteers enables it to carry out its activities more quickly and effectively.

New volunteers are recruited by East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op for a three month trial period, when they are 'buddied' with experienced volunteers. During this time, they are free to leave. The trial period is also used by the project to identify any issues for, or with, the volunteer, and how these can be resolved.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative's volunteers are a very diverse group, including people who have health and addiction issues. As far as possible, no volunteer is placed in a situation where they are at risk, or are a risk to others. It has never asked a volunteer to leave.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

All of the community food initiatives raised the amount of time and resources that may be required to manage volunteering opportunities.

For the Commonwealth Orchard, working with volunteers, wherever they are from, requires careful thought and planning to be effective and fun. Arranging suitable, worthwhile volunteering opportunities takes capacity and time, and managing volunteers is similar to managing employees. However, while there is an expectation that volunteers will fulfil their commitments and take part in activities as agreed, there is no obligation for them to do so. Working successfully with volunteers requires experience, and skill is needed to ensure that the activity being run can be adapted to suit fewer or more taking part than expected.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative echoed these comments. The project has a high turnover of volunteers, particularly in the gardening project. However, some continue to volunteer from year to year. The numbers of volunteers attending the gardening sessions can vary widely, and is highest during the summer months: the staff members require the skills to adapt their programme on the spot to suit the numbers attending and their needs.

Managing the day-to-day operation of Meldrum Community Café is undertaken by one of Making Meldrum Better's directors, who, until recently, had responsibility for shopping for the café and managing the volunteer rotas, and found that these tasks were time consuming, and over time, ceased to be enjoyable. However, the director recognised that it can be difficult for someone who has been involved in setting something up to hand over control to others, which, in turn, can reduce the motivation of others to take on more of the tasks.

Two of the community food initiatives highlight the time it can take to build the confidence and skills of the volunteers so that they feel able to take on more responsibility.

Having made the decision to take a step back from the day-to-day management of the Meldrum Community Café and relinquish some of the tasks, the director has found that the volunteers are more confident and are keen to take over the management of the café. Setting up a new system, allied to increased storage space in the café, encouraged a volunteer to take over the shopping. The volunteer rotas are now self-managed. Initially there was some concern that changing the system would result in times when there would be insufficient volunteers to keep the café open. The directors allowed them to shut the café if this occurred. The new rota system is working very well; the groups of volunteers working together on different days know each other and feel comfortable about asking to swap shifts. So far, there have been enough volunteers on each shift to ensure that the café stays open.

East Lothian Roots and Fruits staff members have been running a fruit and vegetable stall for some months in the community centre attached to Whitecraigs Primary School. In partnership with the local community learning and development team they are working with a group of the school's parents to build up their skills and confidence, in the hope that they will help run the stall.

UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

One community food initiative reports unexpected benefits of working with volunteers, including the positive changes made by volunteers in communities triggering other community activity.

The activities carried out by corporate volunteers for the Commonwealth Orchard have, in some cases, been one of the factors that encouraged community members to go on and develop other activities. The volunteers 'breaking the ground' helped community members in some low-income areas to overcome their reluctance to commit to the type of work carried out by the initiative.

The activities run by the Commonwealth Orchard may also enable the company volunteers to meet and work with people living in communities that they may not usually have a chance to, and for both to find out more about each other's lives.

SUMMING UP...

Volunteering and community food and health work are inextricably linked. Information gathered for this publication emphasises, once again, that without volunteers many community food initiatives could not run as they do; their commitment is vital for the continuation of a strong and flourishing community food and health sector.

The contributions from the community food initiatives highlight that through good recruitment practices, providing appropriate support and recognising their volunteers' contributions, the community food initiatives aim to ensure the volunteers have a quality experience.

What the research for this publication also stressed was the mutual benefits for community food initiatives and their volunteers, highlighting the importance of volunteering, as neatly summed up by one volunteer ...

“Thank you for the opportunity of volunteering. It has greatly improved my life!”





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