



APRIL 2012

Feedback - the value of CFHS 'January Promotion' funding for community food retailers

Introduction

This report summarises the feedback obtained from 12 of the 15 community food retailers funded by Community Food and Health (Scotland) or CFHS to run promotional activities in January and February 2012. The aim of the funding was to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables sold by the community retailers.

Background

Community Food and Health (Scotland) has been working for several years with the Scottish Grocers Federation's Healthy Living Programme (SGF HLP)¹. To date, over forty community food retailers that sell fruit and vegetables have benefited from the Programme's training and resources.

In January 2011, the SGF HLP ran a 'January Promotion' event with some of convenience stores included in the programme. The aim of the event was to increase sales of fruit and vegetables and other healthier produce in the stores. The

¹ The Scottish Grocers Federation's Health Living Programme is a Scottish Government-funded programme that aims to increase availability of good quality, affordable fresh fruit and vegetables, and other healthier food products, in convenience stores. The programme provides training and resources for stores that are taking part in the programme.

event was such a success with the participating convenience stores that a second event was run in the summer of 2011. To coincide with both events, CFHS invited the community retailers involved with the Programme to apply for small amounts of funding to run promotional activities at these times. A factsheet² outlining the impact of the funding awarded in January 2011 is available, as is a report³ of the evaluation of the promotional activities funded in summer 2011.

The funding

As previously, all community retailers that had taken part in one of the SGF HLP's training sessions were invited to apply, for between £150 and £750. The amount available depended on the number of community food outlets they support or manage that had taken part in a SGF HLP training sessions. Fifteen community retailers applied, with a total of £4650 awarded. All of the awardees intended to run their promotional activities in January or February 2012.

² Factsheet: The impact of investing small amounts of funding in community food and health organisations.
www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/fileuploads/act-sheet-jan-promo-6777.pdf

³ Report available from CFHS

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Evaluation forms were emailed to all fifteen in March, with a reminder sent in early April to those that had not responded. The form was available by email and post, and the community retailers were also offered the opportunity to complete the form by telephone. Information was gathered from twelve (80%).

What the funding was used for

Nine of the community food retailers used some or all of their funding to subsidise the cost of running half-price, 'BOGOF' (buy one, get one free), or 'special' offers on their vegetables and fruit. Because of the time of year, most focused on the sale of winter vegetables or soup packs.

Broomhouse Health Strategy Group ran a 'Winter Specials' week at the end of January. As well as selling half-price soup and stew bags, customers were given bags of porridge oats, to encourage sales. Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre also ran a 'Winter Warmer's Week', selling half-price soup bags.

Abbeyhill Food Co-op is supported by Edinburgh Community Food. It ran a successful 'half-price' day. Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership also ran a half-price promotion at the food co-ops it runs or supports, focusing on winter vegetables. Tuillibody Fruit Barra ran a BOGOF promotion for its soup and fruit bags for three weeks in January.

Four community retailers ran taster sessions, alongside other promotional activities. Two ran soup tasters, tying these in with the promotion of the vegetables used to make the soups.

Healthy 'n' Happy promoted homemade soup, providing tasters of vegetable soup and supplying reduced-price vegetables packs with recipe cards. The session was run twice in the Fruit Barra it supports, and once in a local nursery that was

running a Health Day.

East Lothian Roots and Fruits used part of its funding to put on activities at Environmental Days run in a community centre and a primary school. The activities included a 'food miles' quiz and locally-sourced vegetables were used for the taster sessions run.

"(some of the customers) never usually bought vegetables and it was good to see how cheap and easy it was to make soup and also that it was just so tasty with just vegetables...people were not used to working that way."

Two of the community food initiatives used most or some of their funding to produce newsletters about their outlets.

Coalburn Miners Welfare Charitable Society produced a newsletter about its co-op, which was distributed to every house in the village.

More information about how the twelve groups used their funding is available from CFHS.

What didn't go as expected?

Most of the community food initiatives used their funding for the activities outlined in their application forms.

Two intended to use some of all of their funding to purchase promotional resources. Both had yet to purchase all of the items.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative purchased a banner and tablecloths. It will also purchase a second banner and a 'pop-up' display, and 'bags for life' if it has any funding remaining. One of the community food initiative's volunteers is helping to design the banner.

Edinburgh Community Food received funding for activities in four of the co-ops

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it supports. The activities run in three of the co-ops differed from those intended.

One co-op, in Balerno, is closed temporarily due to building renovation works. Rather than use the funding for a soup pack promotion, the co-op wants to purchase a banner to promote the co-op when it re-opens.

The second, Pleasance Co-op, decided it did not want to run a half-price day, as planned. Instead, it wanted to use the funding to purchase its own set of scales.

The third, Richmond Co-op in Craigmillar, decided to use the funding to run activities with the local primary school, culminating in 'Masterchef Healthy Curry'. The meals produced were sold at a community lunch, with the proceeds going to the co-op (which provided the fresh produce).

East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op intended to use the funding to cover advertising costs in two local newsletters. One of the newsletters was distributed throughout the local authority area. Some of its funding was used for an advert in this newsletter, with the remainders used to design and print recipe cards which were used at two food demonstrations.

What difference did the activities make?

Six of the community retailers stated that they had maintained an increase in customers following their promotional activities.

Broomhouse Health Strategy Group reported a sustained increase in the number of customers using their co-op since their promotional activities. Following a significant increase during the week of the activities (with 290 customers, up from 220 for the same week the previous year), around 240 customers now use the co-op each week.

Abbeyhill Food Co-op runs in housing association premises. Most of its customers were housing association residents. Their 'half-price' day attracted

a '*significant increase*' in other customers, some of which continue to shop at the co-op. It had found it difficult to engage with members of the public, and encourage those that did try the co-op once to use it again.

Tullibody Fruit Barra said there had been an increase in the sale of soup and fruit bags in the week following its promotion, and there were '*few new faces*'.

Coalburn Miners Welfare newsletter resulted in more customers using the food co-op. The new customers were not aware that the co-op existed.

Two of the community retailer's promotional activities encouraged local people to try something new.

Healthy 'n' Happy's soup pack promotion and taster sessions encouraged some customers to try vegetable soup for the first time. Some of their customers did not normally buy vegetables.

One of Broomhouse Health Strategy Group's customers made soup for the first time because of the promotion.

"I made leek and potato soup and the kids loved it. They've asked me when I'm making it again!" Mum who had never made soup before.

Another reported that their new promotional materials were eliciting positive comments from its customers.

The tablecloths and banner purchased by North Glasgow Community Food Initiative are making its fruit and vegetable barras '*look more attractive and appealing*', with one customer asking about the location of the other barras it runs.

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Any unexpected outcomes?

Three of the community retailers highlighted other outcomes that resulted from running their promotional activities.

As well as generating new customers for its food store, the activities run by Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre also provided opportunities for the cafe and store staff to work together, and for the volunteers to develop other skills.

The activities run in Richmond Co-op provided the school pupils with learning opportunities, including handling money and weighing. The Co-op and Edinburgh Community Food are going to build on the relationship they have developed with the staff at the school.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative's new promotional materials have helped its customers identify which organisation is running the fruit barras; previously this had not been clear for some of its customers.

For one community retailer, the success of the promotional activities resulted in additional expenditure.

"(we) had to repeat the promotion (at our cost) the following week as some of the co-ops due to complaints that stock had sold out before some of our regular customers came."

What changes are the community food retailers going to make?

Five of the community food initiatives indicated that they are planning to make changes to their services as a result of the promotional activities

Broomhouse Health Strategy Group's volunteers will be making up soup bags each day to have on display, to encourage spontaneous purchases. It is

also improving the layout of stock to make the porridge oats more prominent.

Abbeyhill Food Co-op has introduced a loyalty card scheme for its customers.

Tullibody Fruit Barra may run a BOGOF promotion for its £1 soup and fruit bags again as it was so popular with the customers.

Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre is planning to offer soup and healthy meal recipe cards on a regular basis. The latter will tie in with the recipes on sale in the centre's cafe.

East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op is planning to run additional food demonstrations as these encourage its customers to purchase more produce.

"...(taster sessions) can be time consuming, but think they are worthwhile – it helps build up better relationships with customers and participants."

Conclusion

Feedback from the community food retailers funded to run promotional activities in January and February 2012 highlights that, for some, small amounts of funding can impact positively on their level of sales of fruit and vegetables.

