



**community
food and health**

(scotland)

Cooking up connections:

working together to improve food and health
for adults with learning disabilities



Community Food and Health (Scotland) 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 addresses 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.

From 1 April 2013 CFHS will become part of NHS Health Scotland, a Special Health Board with a national remit to reduce health inequalities.

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What this is about

This publication gives a flavour of what community food initiatives and learning disability support providers are doing to offer adults with learning disabilities access to food and health activities in order to improve their health and wellbeing. It includes views on how an accredited nutrition course developed for those caring for adults with learning disabilities is viewed and the difference it is making to nutritional practices within the support sector. It has six case studies from community food initiatives or learning disability services. Finally, it includes information about resources available online and elsewhere to support you with improving the nutritional wellbeing of people with learning disabilities.

Who this is for

This publication provides a snapshot of food and health work with the learning disability sector and is suitable for:

- Learning disability services
- Community food initiatives
- Support staff and carers that have completed the basic nutrition course: Elementary Food and Health Course for Carers of Adults with a Learning Disability

Where the information came from

- Evaluation reports from 11 trainers who delivered the REHIS Elementary Food and Health course for carers of adults with a learning disability
- Five organisations provided case studies about their work, two of these provided additional case studies about individuals or groups they had supported
- Four additional organisations supporting food co-ops or fruit and veg barras gave information on the frequency of people with learning disabilities being supported to volunteer within their activities.
- CFHS materials, including evaluation forms from groups or agencies that have received funding, and CFHS reports.

Why adults with learning disabilities should have access to food and health activities

In 2000, the Scottish Executive produced 'The same as you? A review of services for people with learning disabilities'. This document made recommendations that would help people with learning disabilities live full lives and exercise more choice on all issues that affected them, including health.

In 2012 the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD) worked with partners to find out the progress of 'The same as you?'. This included surveying people with learning disabilities and family carers to find out their views, and an evidence scoping exercise.

Adults with learning disabilities are more likely to be obese or underweight compared to the general population. They are also more likely to have osteoporosis, which is linked to a lack of exercise, poor nutrition and smoking. The evidence scoping exercise also cited research that reported that less than 10% of people with learning disabilities in supported accommodation consume a healthy balanced diet.

In its review SCLD asked adults with learning disabilities and their carers about how they were being supported to build healthy lifestyles, including eating more healthily. They found some examples of good practice: some support workers were assisting those using their service to eat healthier by helping them with shopping, menu planning and understanding healthy eating information. Other people with learning disabilities had less positive experiences, often because staff lacked time or resources and as a consequence they were more reliant on re-heated ready-meals. The report concluded that many people with learning disabilities lack opportunities to make choices or take decisions about their lives, particularly around diet and exercise.

Since the publication of 'The same as you?' the Scottish Government has produced a range of National Care standards, some of which are aimed at services for people with learning disabilities. These include a standard on eating well and providing appropriate food choices.

In terms of other issues that affect the lives of people with learning disabilities, the SCLD's scoping exercise found evidence that showed that people in supported employment are better off and happier than those in traditional day services. In 2012, the Scottish Government announced that it planned to ensure that help is available for people with learning disabilities seeking employment. Some community food initiatives are in a position to offer volunteering placements for people with learning disabilities; this can provide a step towards employment by building a range of skills.

The **Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability** is a charity that is made up of partner organisations that have joined together with funding from the Scottish Government to help people make the changes set out in the Scottish policy on learning disability: 'The same as you?'



What is a community food initiative?

Community food initiatives come in many shapes and forms. What many have in common is that they are community groups or voluntary organisations that:

- Are shaped by the community ('community' can mean geographic or shared interest)
- Work with or within low-income communities to address health inequalities
- Aim to improve access to, and take up of an affordable, varied and balanced diet
- Address food issues in a variety of ways - such as developing food co-ops or volunteer-run fruit stalls or 'barras' and community cafés, or providing support to learn practical skills, such as gardening or cookery.

Community food initiatives may be embedded within an organisation's other activities, such as a youth club or community centre, or might stand alone as a community food initiative.

How community food initiatives are including people with learning disabilities

Throughout Scotland, community food initiatives are including people with learning disabilities within community cafés, community gardens, community-run shops and 'fruit barras' or by offering training, supported volunteering and taking part in activities. Working with people with learning disabilities or learning difficulties fits perfectly into their aims of tackling inclusion and health inequalities.

Some of the community food initiatives that we gathered information from here enable people with learning disabilities to volunteer. Some learning disability support organisations can provide staff to support a volunteer (who might need extra assistance) to work alongside community food initiative staff and volunteers if required. Supporting people with learning disabilities to volunteer helps the initiative provide a positive experience and secure environment for the volunteer as well supporting the person's volunteering opportunity to be meaningful. Some initiatives may not always have enough staff or volunteers available to meet the demand for numbers of people wanting to get involved who require support.

Many community food initiatives and other agencies such as local authorities and the NHS, also support community cooking courses. Some of these will be tailored for groups of people with learning disabilities; others will provide a place for people with learning disabilities on existing courses and might also accept support workers to attend with them.



CASE STUDY ONE – a community food initiative with a history of including people with learning disabilities

East Lothian Roots and Fruits (ELRF) was set up in 1997 and works throughout the area to develop and run healthy eating, cookery or gardening workshops for schools and community groups. It also runs eight fruit and vegetable stalls or food co-ops and a mobile shop, manages a community garden and supplies fruit to a range of community groups.

People with learning disabilities volunteering with ELRF

ELRF has been supporting and developing food co-ops for 15 years. A large number of people with learning disabilities have volunteered for ELRF and the co-ops since then.

Currently ELRF supports six people with learning disabilities to volunteer in the food co-ops or its warehouse, some have been involved for several years. Others volunteer within the gardening project. Most are recruited via referral from organisations such as East Lothian Vocational Opportunities Service (ELVOS) and ELCAP – a support service for people with learning disabilities in the area. However, some people have been referred by family members. Those wishing to volunteer are interviewed by ELRF to find out their support needs and what they would like to do that will enable them to develop a variety of skills. Some volunteers with learning disabilities are assisted on an ongoing basis by their support worker whilst they carry out tasks; others require less support, but will work beside ELRF staff.

Over the years, ELRF has addressed a range of minor challenges to providing volunteer placements for people with learning disabilities. Each volunteer has to be matched to a suitable co-op and member of staff who will work beside them and support them if necessary. Some of the food co-ops serve small communities and only require one or two staff members or volunteers at a time; these are unable to provide the space to include an

additional support worker alongside them. Volunteers requiring more informal support have been offered a role within the ELRF warehouse, which is housed with the main office. This provides a wide range of activities and has access to the assistance of ELRF staff based in the office.

Cookery workshops for people with learning disabilities

ELRF has run cookery courses for many years, but it had never run a cookery course solely for people with learning disabilities. Port Setan Resource Centre (which supports adults with learning disabilities) was advised to ask ELRF to run sessions for those using the Resource Centre.

Together, the Resource Centre and ELRF planned a course of four workshops for 12 participants, based on ELRF's cookery course model. While the Resource Centre had run some cookery workshops in the past, these had been infrequent and were restricted by limited cooking facilities at the Centre. The ELRF cookery workshops aimed to teach participants to prepare a range of main courses, soups and desserts so that the cooking group could make its own shared lunch, learn a range of skills and try new foods. The cookery course participants pooled their lunch money each week to pay for the ingredients for the course. Four staff from the Resource Centre assisted with running the workshops and gave one-to-one support for those that required it. Although the kitchen had just one stove, there was plenty of space for all the participants to take part in hands-on food preparation and take turns to use the stove. The group made soups and desserts in the first week, and the participants were encouraged to choose recipes for the following workshops.

ELRF had to address only a few minor challenges with the course, which it did with the help of the Centre staff. These included encouraging participants to try new tasks each week and supporting one participant who was initially too frightened to use the stove. Participants were encouraged to give feedback at the end of each session and both the staff and participants felt that the group had gained confidence and skills around cookery and had enjoyed the experience. Some took recipes home with them. As the result of positive feedback, ELRF plans to run another course of workshops for the Resource Centre in 2013.

Future plans

ELRF continues to offer volunteer activities for people with learning disabilities as this is in keeping with its ethos to promote social inclusion as well as promoting access to, and take-up of, healthy foods throughout East Lothian.

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CASE STUDY TWO – a community food initiative set up by and for people with learning disabilities

Windmills Café – a training café for young people with learning disabilities and additional support needs

A committee of young people from Firpark Special School in North Lanarkshire, with support from teachers, parents and an advocacy worker, set up the Windmills Café in 2006 because they felt there was a lack of suitable work or training opportunities available to them after they left school. The committee received Big Lottery Funding for three years to help them get started and the café opened in April 2010. They recently received further funding from the Big Lottery Fund. Currently, the café project is in the process of securing and developing new premises within Motherwell shopping precinct after closing its original café. The lease for the original café was about to expire and the project used this opportunity to seek larger, more suitable premises after being unable to meet demand for training places.

What it does

The aim of the café is to provide a training and supported employment programme for young people (18 to 25 years) with learning disabilities and additional support needs. Fundamental to the ethos of the work is that the young people are involved with all aspects of decision making, including recruitment, menu planning and business development. Currently a team of young people and three staff members are helping to plan and set up the new café to open in spring 2013.

Once it is re-established the café project will continue to offer a three year programme that is tailored to each individual.

- **Year one** provides a background in food hygiene and health and safety, catering and customer care.
- **Year two** focuses on securing work placements in other establishments, so that the young people can gain experience of

other workplaces.

- **Year three** involves training the young people to become mentors, so that they can support other young people in the café and with their employment training.

Throughout the programme, the young people will receive support and training to develop their employability skills. After three years, it is hoped that young people will achieve employment or further supported or voluntary work placements elsewhere. The café will also offer short-term work experience placements for young people attending school or college.

The original café offered a table service and provided a range of snacks and drinks, cooked meals and baked goods. This gave the young people the opportunity to be more involved with customer care beyond operating the till and serving behind the counter. It was popular with local people in the area, particularly older retired people, some of whom used the café every day. Last year a customer survey showed that most used the café because they liked the food and the service, but many were also motivated to use the café because they wanted to support its social aims.

The impact it had on the young people

Although the café had only been in operation for around two years, an evaluation involving the young people, their parents and staff found that the project had a positive impact on the young people involved. Outcomes included:

- **Increased confidence** – the young people who took part in the café reported higher levels of confidence compared with when they first started at the café. Parents and staff agreed that many of the young people had grown in confidence and felt that the ethos of involving the young people with decision making and peer mentoring had contributed to this outcome.
- **Improved independent living skills** – young people developed a wide range of

skills at the café that have helped them in their daily lives as well as increased their employment prospects, such as using public transport, preparing foods safely and hygienically, answering the phone and dealing with social situations.

- **More social contact with others** – the café provides an opportunity for the young people to maintain friendships made at school, and to engage with people using the café.
- **More opportunities to take part in volunteering or other employment placements** – several of the young people currently involved in the café project reported that they volunteer for local community cafés and shops after building their work skills in Windmills Café.

Some young people developed their skills beyond catering and customer care. One young person enjoyed developing the café's facebook page and others have been involved in developing their administration and marketing skills.

The impact it had in terms of food and health

All the young people involved have developed their cooking and food preparation skills. Some reported that they continue to use these skills at home. Staff reported that the young people regularly tried new foods and were involved in trying out healthier options and new foods in the café. However, the café had to balance the aim of promoting healthy options with the need to retain a sustainable business. The group continues to prepare a healthy lunch for themselves when they meet weekly to plan the new café.

Addressing challenges and social enterprise activities

The café project has faced a range of challenges since it opened. Those involved soon realised that the size of the café kitchen would not allow them to develop their business. They hope that the new café will help them expand their social enterprise activities and make the café sustainable in the future. They are planning to develop a catering service and a retail outlet to complement the café, which will increase the range of opportunities for young people to develop their skills. They are also finalising a joint REHIS and Windmills accredited Food Hygiene course specifically designed for people with learning disabilities. The café will sell annual licenses to suitable trainers to deliver the course, and are trying to secure a wider range of work placements for the young people. The café team hope that their new café will raise their profile, increase their customer base and provide more opportunities for other partners to get involved. Through their WorkClub, they work with the young people in writing their CV, in pursuing job searches and in developing interview techniques.

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Windmills Café is on facebook.



The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS)

REHIS is the awarding body for a wide range of courses delivered across Scotland including those on food hygiene or basic nutrition. The basic nutrition courses include the six-hour Elementary Food and Health course, which has been available since 2006 and has been completed by over 10,000 people. In 2011, it launched the Elementary Food and Health course for Carers of Adults with Learning Disabilities. This nine-hour course provides information on supporting people with learning disabilities with their food and health needs, as well as a basic background in nutrition. It has also developed joint awards in partnership with other organisations. For example, the REHIS/ Cyrenians Good Food Good Health Joint Award trains people to run their own cooking classes with a focus on improving health. It is currently working with Windmills Café on a joint food hygiene course designed for people with learning disabilities.

CASE STUDY THREE – a community food initiative that has developed cooking and nutrition training suitable for learning disability support staff

The Cyrenians Good Food Programme is a social enterprise with a mission to bring good food and healthy lifestyles to people who are experiencing disadvantage, isolation, poverty, homelessness and social exclusion. Working with vulnerable people of all ages, circumstances and backgrounds, the Programme offers opportunities and support designed to meet individual needs and help participants towards making long-term improvements in their lives.

Cyrenians FareShare, one of the Programme's projects, delivers around nine tonnes of surplus food each week, collected from local businesses. This is quality checked and distributed by volunteers and trainees. It supplies 43 charity kitchens around Lothian to supplement their food budget and add fresh food to their menu. As a result, large quantities of food are diverted from land-fill. The Programme includes cookery classes, provided for a range of individuals (more than 200 a year and their carers) who have little or no experience or confidence in cooking. Many cookery class clients typically include vulnerable adults with a range of complex needs including people with poor literacy and numeracy skills, who may have difficulty in following a traditional printed written recipe.

Recognising the positive health and social benefits cooking classes can have led to Cyrenians Good Food Programme becoming a registered centre for REHIS courses. It regularly delivers Food Hygiene, Elementary Food and Health and Food and Health for Carers of Adults with a Learning Disability courses and more recently, the REHIS / Cyrenians Good Food Good Health joint award (GFGH). This trains people to run their own cooking classes, including those who might support people with learning disabilities.

Recipes for the cookery classes and GFGH course included those adapted by a speech and language therapist to pictorial recipes, using Boardmaker software,¹ to support those with learning difficulties and the carers working with them. These were found to be useful and easy to follow, although they did require a large number of symbols to show the 'steps' required for every recipe. Staff felt from their experience that it might be helpful if Boardmaker were to give consideration to looking at some of their cooking and food symbols which the staff felt could be improved to provide better clarity and avoid potential ambiguity. As an alternative, Good Food has been working with nutrition students from Queen Margaret University to develop its core basic recipes into photo recipes.

One of the first organisations that took part in the GFGH course was Places for People, which supports adults who need help to gain, or regain, their independence, including some people with a learning disability or learning difficulty.

Training staff to deliver cookery sessions for people with learning disabilities or learning difficulties

The Horizons Service, which is part of the Places for People group, provides supported accommodation in self-contained flats across Edinburgh for single 16-25 year olds who are care leavers or have mental health issues. The project also provides a floating support service for up to 10 young people. Some of the people it supports have additional learning difficulties. Its main focus is on short-term follow-up support, providing advice on move-on options and help with resettlement.

¹ Boardmaker is a software package that can be used to produce a range of resources such as recipe step-by-step guides.

The Horizons Service signed two members of staff up for GFGH in May 2010. Over the two day training M and J engaged in the practical discussion based activities. They then brought the same four participants, some of whom had either learning disabilities or learning difficulties, each week to the eight GFGH training sessions that followed as part of the GFGH course. Over the eight weeks M and J showed competence and professionalism in delivering a cooking class, moving comfortably from trainee to the position of 'tutor'.

Since their completion of the GFGH course M and J have been extremely enthusiastic and proactive in getting the cooking classes up and running within their own organisation. Their first set of classes took place in the autumn of 2010 with two participants taking part once a week over an eight-week period. The classes proved very successful. They planned a second set of classes in January 2011, which they changed to a six-week course to tailor to their own service users and organisational requirements. All the cookery course participants were encouraged to take part in shopping, cooking and clearing up. The staff use peer mentoring to support other participants. In the early days of the classes, one of the participants who came to the GFGH classes was asked to act as an 'assistant' to the class, demonstrating the skills that he had learnt.

Before a cooking class the staff ask participants what they like to eat. If, for example, they chose pizza, then the discussion focuses on how to make it from scratch and with more healthy ingredients than a ready prepared one, by perhaps adding extra vegetables. Part of the cooking class includes menu planning and participants are supported in choosing ingredients, taking into account what is already in the store cupboard. Whilst shopping, the conversation focuses on healthy eating awareness, such as what to look for on a food label, recognising when something has a lot of fat or sugar in it, as well as how to locate food in supermarket aisles. This is also a good time to talk about food costs and provide tips on budgeting. Including a shopping activity has been very successful and has led to a greater

level of confidence in the participants and enhanced 'soft skills', for example, one of the service users is immensely proud to be able to use the 'self-service' checkout.

Recently Horizons' staff have helped one young woman with a learning disability towards independent living by spending time with her on developing pictorial resources specifically related to her. M said this young person has mobility issues and a brain injury that means her memory is not good. She often forgets what she has in her cupboards so staff have worked with her to develop a comprehensive set of pictures gathered from the internet and put these together so that she can see what she needs to buy when she goes shopping. She has also been helped to put together step-by-step pictorial recipes for herself, by taking photos of ingredients and different stages of meal preparation and putting the pictures onto laminated picture boards. This is still a work in progress, but has been extremely successful in building skills, helping her feel more in charge of her food choices and to have greater independence. Staff had tried Talking Mats² with her as a communication tool, but in this instance she found it confusing and the photo and picture boards have been much more successful.

M sees the cooking and food activities as not only a great benefit to service users towards better health and nutrition, but they also complement the range of activities that the service provides that aim to raise self-esteem, build confidence and team working skills within a safe environment.

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2 Talking Mats is a communication tool, which uses a mat with symbols as the basis for communication. It is designed to help people with communication difficulties to think about issues discussed with them, and provide them with a way to effectively express themselves in a visual way that can be easily recorded.

How learning disability services are improving food and health

The research undertaken by SCLD shows that support for people with learning disabilities to eat healthily is varied across the sector. However, some organisations have been working on improving this aspect of their work for some time; one of these is Enable Scotland which has been providing nutrition training for staff since 2007. Upward Mobility, a charity in Edinburgh, has focused on providing hands-on practical activities as part of its Health and Wellbeing programme for students using its service. Both organisations stress the importance of empowering individuals to make choices about their lives.

CASE STUDY FOUR – a learning disability service that provides cookery and gardening activities for people with learning disabilities

Upward Mobility, Edinburgh

Upward Mobility started as a summer project in 2006, undertaken in response to an identified gap in day services and activities available for adults with learning difficulties living in Edinburgh. The project was composed of a small workshop programme of Creative Movement, Drama, School of Rock and Art. These workshops contributed to a documentary film project: *The Dream of Wong Tong!* which screened at the Cameo Cinema in December, 2006. This helped secure the continuation of the Upward Mobility Project in 2006.

Today, the project runs over 50 workshops per week for over 100 students in both Creative Arts and Health and Wellbeing subject areas. The workshops encourage and enable the development of physical and practical learning. The rapidly expanding Health and Wellbeing programme currently consists of Yoga, Tai Chi, Relaxation, Bike Club, Cooking, Community Gardening, Landscaping, Literacy & Numeracy, Life Skills and Work Experience. All workshops are structured using Curriculum for Excellence with set aims and objectives that ensure that personal development, greater levels of confidence and independence can be achieved.

Cookery

In-house cookery workshops have been a major boost to students planning towards living independently. Safety, awareness of healthy options, making personal choices and experimenting with different foods and textures all form part of the sessions.

The cookery workshops run six times per week, with one group of more experienced students piloting the cooking task for the rest of the sessions in order to identify and iron out any issues. The workshops ensure that basic food skills are explored, and allow students to work with a wide variety of ingredients and methods. The project intends to publish a cookery book later in the year, using the recipes from the workshops.

Garden project

The Greenseeds project was launched as a community enterprise to encourage links between the local community in Musselburgh and students from Upward Mobility. The project now has two gardens - in Musselburgh and North Berwick. These include polytunnels, a permanent cabin, and a variety of bespoke garden installations.

Upward Mobility has had to address some major obstacles to continue the cookery courses and the garden project. These have included securing sufficient funding to comply with health and safety regulations for the cookery workshops. Funding was secured from a variety of sources, including Sainsbury's, Starbucks and Gregg's to complete work on the existing kitchen. Due to the nature of the funding process, it took over a year to ensure that the kitchen was fully accessible to all students. The Greenseeds project also required considerable funding to ensure access for wheelchair users, raised beds, health and safety training, and for continued management of the garden.

Feedback from families, carers and social work departments has identified that students continue to develop awareness of responsibility and healthy choices through both the Greenseeds project and the cookery sessions.

Future plans

Upward Mobility aims to create a self-sufficient café, run entirely by students for students and supported by staff. This will operate as a 'tuck shop', eventually developing into a hot food provider for daily lunches, working towards catering for larger events. This will link to the Greenseeds group by using the fresh produce grown by the students and aims to generate a small amount of revenue to help to pay for ingredients in the future. Interim funding is required to ensure the continuation and realisation of this project.

The Greenseeds group will be working on a yearly growing schedule, creating opportunities for individuals to sow, tend and harvest even more independently. The addition of a new landscaping workshop has allowed the project to take place in an urban setting, encouraging

students to think about inner city growing and responsibility for the immediate environment. A wider selection of vegetables and fruit will be introduced, and the team are looking forward to the next harvest.

Megan and Sarah, students at Upward Mobility

Megan recently moved into independent supported accommodation. She took a year to transition with support from Upward Mobility and her family. Megan attends Upward Mobility throughout the week and is supported to attend dance classes and the gym and undertake social activities held elsewhere.

She has a passion for creating food, enjoys interacting with a variety of people and requires consistency in the structure of activities. She had been part of the previously outsourced cooking workshop for almost two years.

"I like it because it helps me with cooking in my own flat. I can make cakes, but I think about healthy food and don't have treats all the time. It's fab and awesome!"

Megan has changed her approach to food – now linking sweets and chocolate with a 'treat' and not for everyday consumption. She has started to regularly attend the gym and swims twice a week. This is a huge change and reflects her involvement with the healthy eating programme, which runs through each of the cookery workshops. Her confidence and ownership of her diet has led to a huge improvement in her personal knowledge and ability to make independent choices.

Speech and language issues previously led to confusion, lack of confidence and anxiety. Working in small groups was a new challenge as Megan had been used to working with one-to-one support only. This steady integration was critical and has led to the majority of her time now being spent in larger groups, allowing successful development of social skills and confidence in more previously challenging contexts.

Sarah lives at home with her parents. Sarah got involved in the cookery class this year once the in-house kitchen was up and running. She is part of the group that pilots the cooking task for the rest of the sessions. Sarah has been attending Upward Mobility for over two years, and enjoys taking part in a wide variety of activities. She says of cooking:

“It is the best cooking class – I’m happy that I’m better at cutting onions with a sharp knife.”

Sarah’s confidence in herself has grown considerably, due in no small part to the application she put forward to Starbucks to request funds for kitchen equipment and utensils. Sarah worked hard with facilitators to create a presentation, which she then pitched to the Starbucks committee. This bid was successful, allowing Sarah a personal stake in the new kitchen. Feedback from home confirms that Sarah is more outgoing, vocal and confident with new challenges.

Sarah faced the continual challenge of public speaking when she first undertook the sessions. Combining her cookery workshop with performance-based sessions has allowed many aspects of her development to progress quickly. Her personal shyness is now far more balanced with her ability to communicate confidently. Vocalising her thought processes and building lasting friendships have been two major developments as a result of the cookery sessions.

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CASE STUDY FIVE – a learning disability service aiming to improve food and health across its services

Enable Scotland employs around 1,900 staff to support adults and children with learning disabilities living in their own homes or in shared accommodation across Scotland. It has its own training service which is accessible to other organisations and individuals (through Individual Learning Accounts) as well as its own staff.

Development of its food and health work

In 2007, Enable received a small grant from CFHS to develop a half-day Nutrition and Health course to add to its training programme. Enable team leaders and other staff deliver the half-day course after they have completed the nationally accredited 'REHIS Elementary Food and Health course' and Enable's 'Becoming an effective trainer' course. Enable staff were concerned that people using their services were not always receiving consistent messages about healthy eating and others reported difficulties trying to balance the rights of people receiving support with making sure this choice was not detrimental to their health. A half-day course was considered to be accessible for staff, who often have to prioritise mandatory training.

Since then, nearly all the team leaders across Scotland have completed the half-day Nutrition and Health course; some have also completed the REHIS Elementary Food and Health course or the newer REHIS Elementary Food and Health course for Carers of Adults with a Learning Disability. Enable now has a core group of five team leaders who regularly deliver the half-day Nutrition and Health course across their regional areas and have done so for up to 100 staff in the last 18 months. This core group of staff has been essential for championing this

course since it was developed and has helped improve practice around continuity of care and recruitment practices since then. The group meets two or three times a year at Enable's central office to keep up to date and share good practice. Staff from other organisations have occasionally attended these meetings in order to learn from the group's achievements and share practice between organisations.

The group's work is complemented by other Enable staff, who have the role of assessing the progress of staff completing SVQ Health and Social Care Level 2 qualifications.³ This award must be completed by all staff within three years of the SSSC⁴ register opening for their service if they do not already have appropriate qualifications. Many of those undertaking the course opt for one of two units on food and drink. Both units require the individual to demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes a healthy balanced diet, how to minimise sugar, salt and fat in the diet and how to read food labels. The availability of the Nutrition and Health course has helped those opting for these units to build and demonstrate their knowledge. Staff assessing them have access to suitable resources and support to help candidates complete this unit.

The Enable trainer and the five staff involved with delivering the Nutrition and Health course feel that much has been achieved in the last five years. People using the service are now more likely to receive consistent healthy eating messages and staff are adhering to support strategies. Staff involved with catering have improved menus and job applicants are more likely to be asked about their cooking skills. Team leaders also report that some people using the services are a healthier weight.

3 Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) are accredited and awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. They are awarded for a wide range of topics and are based on national standards of performance, developed by representatives from industry, commerce and education

4 The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is responsible for registering people who work in social services and regulating their education and training.

Addressing challenges

Enable still has challenges to overcome. In some regional areas, there are some excellent results and improved practice, but other areas have been slower to come onboard. As the service has had to evolve recently due to budget cuts and the implementation of self-directed care, team leaders are under even more pressure to prioritise mandatory training over training such as Nutrition and Health whilst the service is being re-shaped. Some staff also continue to report that they find it difficult to balance the rights of the individual with the need to help ensure the individual is making an informed choice and not damaging their health. Some practical aspects of supporting people can make it difficult to promote a healthy diet:

“It can be difficult for staff in some regional areas; some of the people we support may only need a few hours of support a week. Our staff often meet with them in cafés in areas where the food available offers only a limited range of healthy or affordable options. Staff need to think out of the box to help support people in different ways, by thinking of other activities they can do outside the home or by supporting people to chose healthier food options from what limited range of foods are available.”

Enable Internal Verifier

Future plans

Enable plans to continue to offer the three nutrition courses to its staff and will continue to provide support for staff who deliver the half-day Nutrition and Health course. It is currently developing its e-learning training resource, which will make all Enable’s training and food and health materials more accessible. A new ‘Soup & Smoothie’ initiative has been launched to share easy to follow, affordable, healthy recipes with staff and people receiving support.

Contact details

Enable Scotland

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www.enable.org.uk

Food and health training for the learning disability sector and carers

Enable Scotland has worked hard in the last five years to provide nutrition training to its staff across Scotland to ensure that they are providing a service that meets the food and health needs of those it supports. Organisations working nationally on food and health more recently recognised the need for this type of training and in 2011 produced an accredited nutrition training course for the learning disability sector. Since then, Community Food and Health (Scotland) has promoted this course and provided funding to organisations to deliver it when it was first available.

CASE STUDY SIX – views and impact of national nutrition training for the learning disability sector

The Elementary Food and Health course for Carers of Adults with a Learning Disability

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) has acted as the awarding body for this nine-hour basic nutrition course since 2011. CFHS had worked in partnership with members of the Scottish Learning Disability Clinical Dietetic Network and others to trial the existing six-hour REHIS Elementary Food and Health course within the learning disability sector. Although the group concluded that an accredited basic nutrition course appealed to the sector, they felt that a more tailored course could potentially help carers meet the particular health needs of adults with learning disabilities. The group worked together with REHIS and with funding from the Scottish Government to develop this nine-hour course.

The Elementary Food and Health course for carers of adults with a learning disability includes outcomes on:

- Introduction to food and health
- Eating for health and wellbeing
- Understanding energy balance
- Health issues in people with learning disabilities
- Menu planning
- Awareness of food policy and documents relating to people with a learning disability

Trainers are encouraged to include a practical cookery or food preparation task as part of the course or to provide a practical food preparation task as 'homework' between course sessions. Like the REHIS Elementary Food and Health course, participants must pass a multiple choice exam in order to receive a certificate.

Twenty-one centres have registered with REHIS to deliver the course and 411 participants have completed the course since it was launched in 2011. CFHS provided funding to support the roll-out of this new course. Eleven organisations provided us with evaluation reports letting us know who took part in the course, their feedback and what the participants intended to do with the information that they learned on the course.

- 111 participants completed the course
- Participants included managers, support workers, nurses and a couple of family carers
- Participants worked for the NHS, local authorities, housing associations, charities and voluntary sector organisations
- Participants worked across seven NHS Boards areas
- The support they provided to adults with learning disabilities varied from 24-hour care for people with complex health needs, to those requiring just a few hours of support a week

What was useful or interesting about the course?

Participants from all courses found information that would support them with their work. They highlighted:

- General ideas to help people with learning disabilities eat well
- An increased awareness of the need for adequate fluid intake for people with learning disabilities
- Learning how to plan healthier menus
- Using the FSA eatwell plate with people being supported
- An awareness of calorie intake of people with learning disabilities
- Discussions around food choices
- An awareness of local dietetic services and when to use them

Participants from eight of the courses highlighted more general nutrition information that was interesting or useful, all of which is taught on the six-hour Elementary Food and Health course. This included understanding of:

- the FSA eatwell plate
- food labelling
- vitamins
- salt
- sugar
- fat
- portion sizes
- alcohol

Some participants reported that this information would make a difference to their own, or their family's diet as well as those they worked with. All trainers that carried out practical hands-on cooking reported that participants found this useful and indicated that this helped make the link between theory and practice.

What difference did participants say it would make to their work?

Six of the 11 trainers gathered information about what changes participants planned to make in their workplace after completing the course. Two of these included changes that participants had already made between the courses' two sessions. The changes included:

- passing information about nutrition onto colleagues
- improving menus or provided meals
- increasing fluid intake of some people using the service
- promoting healthy eating with people with learning disabilities using pictorial information



One trainer gathered information from participants after they had returned to their workplaces after completing the course. All five participants gave examples of how they had improved menus since they had completed the course, these included using more fresh ingredients, being more aware of food portion sizes, and providing more soups. One participant also said that they were planning to develop a vegetable garden for the organisation.

“There was a real buzz after the course from several of the group, who worked in the same venue and they collectively pooled ideas for implementing changes at work.”

Trainer

Did participants or trainers report any challenges with the course?

Participants reported few challenges or concerns with the course. Most participants indicated that they had learnt new and useful information. Some felt that there was a lot of information to take in over a short space of time. Others felt that there was not enough accessible information available to promote healthy eating with people with learning disabilities.

Some of the trainers reported that they felt the amount of information they had to teach was too much for a nine-hour course. However, most of these were teaching the course for the first or second time and had ideas for improving how they taught the course:

“[In future I would spend] more time looking at recipe alteration or healthy cooking techniques as this makes it more realistic for staff who are cooking every day for, or with clients but who do not necessarily have the knowledge or time to discuss healthier practices.”

Trainer

Future plans to deliver the course

Nine of the trainers hoped to deliver the course again. However, some were concerned that the course would be less popular if the learning disability services had to pay for staff to attend it. For example, one trainer had planned to deliver the course for a third time, but was unable to offer it free of charge. It has had to postpone it, because there was not enough take up from services to deliver it, including from those keen to send their staff to the courses when it had been funded by CFHS. Other trainers suggested that although services find the course useful, they are unable to put staff in the course because they have to prioritise mandatory training. Some services also find it difficult to make staff available for a nine-hour, or effectively two-day, course. Some trainers are able to offer the course free of charge or for a nominal fee and plan to continue to deliver it in their areas.



CASE STUDY SEVEN – the impact of the Elementary Food and Health course for carers of adults with a learning disability on one service

NG is a Senior Community Support worker with the Health and Social Care Department of Edinburgh Council. He is part of the Drylaw Project, a community based project managed by the Craighall Centre which offers daytime care and support to adults with a learning disability. Those using the service have varying degrees of disability, from minor learning disability to more complex needs. They may have Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, and some have a range of disorders on the autistic spectrum. It means that some people are relatively independent, whilst others may require assistance from staff with all daily activities. NG enrolled on the REHIS Food and Health for Carers of Adults with a Learning Disability course delivered as part of Cyrenian's Good Food Programme.

NG found the course to be particularly useful in giving him more detailed knowledge about vitamins and minerals and their functions, and the types of foods in which they were found, as well as sources of and the importance of fibre in a balanced diet. NG was very enthusiastic after taking part on the course and sung its praises to other support workers at the Centre. NG strongly believes delivering person centred care and support is a priority and essential to helping people with complex needs.

Staff at the Centre are strongly aware of a duty of care and are keen to encourage their service users to make healthier food choices. NG said that the course gave him the knowledge and confidence to lead by example and encourage a consistent approach by staff. A lot of emphasis is put on supporting service users in preparing their own food. Depending on the individual the food activities can be on a one-to-one basis or in a group. As a result NG is now seeing many service users develop and maintain skills to make healthier food choices, which can lead to greater independence. Also a number of individuals on soft food diets now take part in preparing their own food; some have also increased the variety of foods in their diet by having the opportunity to taste alternative foods.

However, NG says that one of the main challenges is addressing a culture of a poor diet that has been established over many years. Pictorial methods, mostly photos from NHS sources, have helped to encourage replacing crisps and fizzy drinks with a piece of fruit and diluted fruit juice. Challenges can be around individual circumstances, which sometimes require safety consideration. For example, for a person with epilepsy at risk of drop seizures handling knives and hobs, one-to-one support



is essential using, for example, hand over hand. Introducing individuals to ways they can make small changes, such as adding a few vegetables, making a soup from scratch and involving service users in the preparation and cooking in the kitchen all helps them towards a better more balanced diet.

One service user in particular ate a large amount of pasta at most meals and, classed as obese, was keen to lose weight. The individual was encouraged to volunteer in the Centre's café project. Observing other service users getting involved in the kitchen, being offered 'taster' opportunities and seeing ingredients he had not previously tried, for example couscous, radish, and baked potato, have all helped in him taking a much greater responsibility in making small changes to his own diet.

NG says

"The social aspect is also enormously important in having helped this service user enjoy preparing food and giving him autonomy and pride in producing meals himself. Support in shopping for ingredients and helping in the preparation of meals in the kitchen has given him confidence in exploring new ingredients and sharing food with others. Recently he came back from the shops and made a meal for the whole staff team."

An additional benefit of the course, NG says, is giving him useful information and increased confidence from a personal angle around healthier food choices. He is now more aware of what he is eating and adopting healthier cooking practices, like grilling and poaching rather than frying and using alternative flavourings to salt. He also now understands how making gradual small changes can lead to a better balanced diet and the reasons behind why this is important.



Conclusion

Research shows that adults with learning disabilities are more likely to experience nutrition related health problems compared to the rest of the population. This publication has shown that there are some good examples of work being carried out by learning disability support services and community food initiatives that are working towards addressing this problem. Some of these have found that access to suitable nutrition or cookery training courses can help ensure that those supporting adults with learning disabilities provide consistent and accurate nutrition messages. However, take up of these courses varies, as services are not always able to prioritise this training for their staff.

Some community food initiatives are able to provide opportunities for people with learning disabilities to get more involved with their community and develop employability skills. This might include getting involved with a community café or by volunteering with a food co-op or community garden. This can have a benefit beyond improving basic nutrition.



Where to get further information

General healthy eating information and resources

The eatwell website is managed by the Food Standards Agency Scotland and has information on the 'eatwell plate' and a wealth of information on nutrition

www.eatwellscotland.org

The Scottish Government's Take Life on campaign website has information about healthy eating, including tips and ideas

www.takelifeon.co.uk

Information about nutrition and health and learning disability

The Caroline Walker Trust has produced the following publications:

Crawley, Helen Dr, (2007) Eating Well: children and adults with learning disabilities. Nutritional and practical guidelines. The Caroline Walker Trust: Herts.

Dr Helen Crawley (2009) Eating well: supporting adults with learning disabilities - Training Materials. The Caroline Walker Trust: Herts.

These are available by donation and can be downloaded or ordered via its website

www.cwt.org.uk

The Knowledge Network has a wide range of information aimed at health professionals for the delivery of health and social care. It has links and information about learning disability in the Portal and Topics section of its website and this provides a section about nutrition.

www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk

FAIR (Family Advice and Information Resource for people with Learning Disabilities and their Carers): provides advice on a range of subjects including benefits and health promotion through its courses (currently FAIRweighs Healthy Living) and accessible booklets. Contact: Kimberley Swan on 0131 662 1962/kimberley@fairadvice.org.uk.

www.fairadvice.org.uk

Training on nutrition

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS)

REHIS accredits a wide range of courses, two of which focus on nutrition:

The Elementary Food and Health course; and

the Elementary Food and Health course for Carers of Adults with a Learning Disability

Details of trainers and courses are available on its website.

www.rehis.org.uk

Training resources on nutrition for people with learning disabilities

Healthy Eating Active Living training pack. This pack provides training materials on healthy eating designed for people with a wide range of learning disabilities. It is structured for delivery of a course over 22 sessions, but can be delivered more flexibly. The Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability website has information on accessing this resource.

www.sclld.org.uk

Information about community food initiatives in Scotland

Community Food and Health (Scotland) has a wide range of publications and information on its website about the work of community food initiatives in Scotland

www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk

Community cafés and learning disabilities

CFHS, 2011. Report on research into community cafés in Scotland for Community Food and Health (Scotland). This report mentions that there are examples of cafés that run supported training or volunteering opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk

Community gardening and learning disabilities

Trellis is a Scottish charity that supports, promotes, and develops the use of horticulture to improve health, well-being and life opportunities for all. Its website has a directory that includes information about community gardens that support people with learning disabilities.

www.trellisscotland.org.uk

Accessible healthy eating information and recipes

NHS Grampian has produced some downloadable pictorial recipes and a recipe book which are available in the Equality and Diversity section of its website.

www.nhsgrampian.org

NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Munch Crunch 2 recipe book

The recipe book was not designed specifically for people with learning disabilities, but uses pictures and simple recipe information that aims to be accessible.

www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk

Nutrition and diet resources UK

NDR-UK is the UK's practitioner-led nutrition and diet resource provider. It has a small selection of information booklets designed for people with learning disabilities.

www.ndr-uk.org

Tools to produce accessible information or to help with communication

Talking mats are a communication tool produced by speech and language therapists which uses symbols for communication. This social enterprise sells a range of packages including a package around weight management.

www.talkingmats.com

Boardmaker is a software package that can be used to produce resources such as recipe step-by-step guides.

www.mayer-johnson.co.uk

Information about supporting people with learning disabilities

The Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability
www.sclld.org.uk

Enable Scotland
www.enable.org.uk

Scottish government policies, standards and initiatives

Scottish Executive (2000) The same as you? – A review of services for people with learning disabilities.
www.scotland.gov.uk

'The same as you?' – evaluation reports

Trew, Chloe. (2010) 'The same as you?' Evidence Scoping Exercise, Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability

Allan, L et al, (2012) 'The same as you?' Evidence Scoping Exercise, Health Report. Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability

Curtice, Lisa and Trew Chloe (2012) 'The same as you?' Evaluation of progress from the perspectives of people with learning disabilities and family carers

www.sclld.org.uk

Information about Scotland's National care standards, including for adults with learning disabilities in various care settings

www.nationalcarestandards.org

The Care Inspectorate is responsible for ensuring that Care Standards are met

www.scswis.com

The Scottish Government produced the supported employment framework for Scotland

www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/303629/0095168.pdf

Information about self-directed support

www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk

Scottish Government news release (2012) Funding for Learning Disability Projects

www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2012/08/learningdisability26082012

Acknowledgements

CFHS would like to thank everyone who helped with this publication. These include:

Aberdeenshire Council, Community Food Moray, Pamela McKinlay: East Lothian Roots and Fruits, Chris Mantle: Edinburgh Community Food, Noel Guy: Health and Social Care Department - Edinburgh Council, Chris Stevens: Edinburgh Cyrenians Good Food, Susan Strain: Enable Scotland, Ian Shankland: Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership, NHS Borders, NHS Fife, Wendy Handley, Susan Kennedy and Debbie Ross: NHS Forth Valley, NHS Grampian, NHS Lothian, Greig Sandilands: North Glasgow Community Food Initiative, Momentum Scotland, Dorothy Morrison, Jade Holmes: (East Craigs Service) and Morag Selby: (Horizons Service) - Places for People, Port Setan Resource Centre, Graham Walker and Jane Bunting: REHIS, Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability, Joshua Barton and students: Upward Mobility, West Dunbartonshire Community Health and Care Partnership and Margery McBain, staff and young people: Windmills Café.



**community
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From 1 April 2013 CFHS will become part of NHS Health Scotland,
a Special Health Board with a national remit to reduce health inequalities.

