

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2012 /13 EVALUATION REPORT

About the programme

CFHS ran its third learning and development programme between August 2012 and March 2013. Eleven courses were included in the programme:

- Marketing for growth and sustainability (delivered by Community Enterprise Ltd)
- Customer care – two courses (delivered by Abacus Consulting)
- REHIS introduction to health and safety – two courses (delivered by City of Glasgow College and West Lothian College)
- Equality and diversity (delivered by West of Scotland Regional Equality Council)
- Understanding social enterprise (delivered by the Social Enterprise Academy)
- Scottish Grocers Federation Healthy Living programme training the trainers (delivered by the Programme)
- REHIS elementary food and health (delivered by CFHS)
- RSPH level 3 award in nutrition for healthier food and special diets (delivered by the Nutrition Training Company)
- Introduction to Policy (delivered by CFHS)

The programme was targeted at smaller community food and health organisations; those felt to be more fragile and more likely to be at risk of being affected adversely by the current economic recession.

The content of the programme reflected feedback from participants on previous learning and development programmes, needs identified by CFHS staff through their work, and suggestions received from community food practitioners.

The programme was launched in June 2012 and initially included five courses. Further courses were added throughout the year. The dates of three courses were rearranged, to avoid clashes with other events or because of initial low take-up of places.

Three of the courses were delivered in partnership with other organisations. **Understanding social enterprise** was part-funded by the Social Enterprise Academy. The venue and catering for one of the **customer care** courses was provided by the Marie Trust, which also recruited the participants. NHS Forth Valley community food workers similarly supported the **Scottish Grocers Federation (SGF) Healthy Living Programme training the trainers' session**.

The programme was widely promoted, including through the CFHS website and facebook page, Fare Choice, CHEX-point Snippets, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens ebulletin, and by targeted emailing.

In total 127 people took part (staff and volunteers) from 41 organisations. Nine participants took part in more than one course. Multiple applications were welcomed, as this provided an opportunity to reinforce learning within organisations.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the programme began early December 2012, to ensure that it could be completed before end March 2013. It includes feedback from seven of the courses. Those not included are: the RSPH Level 3 Award in nutrition and introduction to policy course (both had yet to take place); the SGF Healthy Living programme training the trainers' session (took part in early December). Feedback from these courses will be gathered later. The REHIS elementary food and health course was also not included as its impact was being measured separately through another piece of work.

Participants were emailed up to three times between early December and mid-January, asking for responses to four questions...

- What learning did they take away from the training?
- How was this learning going to make a difference to their organisation?
- Had they been in touch with anyone they'd met on the training (or were they planning to)?
- Had they identified any other training that would benefit their organisation?

Participants were not asked about the course content or delivery. While some trainers had evaluated their training course on the day, we were less interested in the content of the courses or how they delivered than if the participants' learning from the courses had made any positive difference to them or their organisations.

Each of the three emails included an offer of phoning or visiting the participants to gather feedback (one evaluation was carried out by phone). To encourage responses, a prize draw for three £20 vouchers was run.

For the seven courses included in the evaluation, the number of responses received was 37, 44% of the participants. The response rates ranged for each course ranged from 62% to 13%. One course had a very poor response rate; the other six had response rates of 47% or above.

Two organisations booked several places on one or two courses. None of the staff or volunteers from these organisations submitted responses.

Some responses were completed by organisations, rather than by the individuals that had taken part.

The length of responses, especially for the first two questions, ranged from very short to very comprehensive. Hence, it has been difficult to collate answers in a meaningful form.

Relating to the first question (about the learning taken away, most responding stated that they gained some learning. However, two noted that they had left the training more confused about the topic (social enterprise).

Some of the responses highlighted that participating in the training had resulted in change to their own practice, within their organisation, or both.

Few of the participants had contacted others that they had met on the course, and very few suggestions for other learning or development needs were highlighted.

Below are examples of the participants' responses.

I took away a lot from the training.....I have already taken new approaches with (the learning) in mind. *Participant, marketing*

I took away the importance of doing risk assessments and walk-throughs for X groups. Have already used risk assessment templates for these groups and got candidates to read over and sign – helps people feel a bit safer and that we are taking things seriously and are professional. *Participant, introduction to health and safety*

I thought marketing was about advertising and promotion, and whilst it is I learned that it is about people we potentially have access to. *Participant, marketing*

Feel a lot better working in the cafe. *Participant, customer care*

It's made me do tasks within my workplace differently to make it safe. *Participant, introduction to health and safety*

I learned that we aren't doing anything wrong, but that there are things that we could improve on. *Participant, equality and diversity*

I came back with a number of ideas on how to market X more successfully and have put some of these into practice. *Participant, marketing*

It highlighted areas I had not considered and gave me the right information to take back to my workplace. I will be working with (staff) to implement some of the policies and procedures in the workplace and oversee them. *Participant, introduction to health and safety*

I have subsequently researched health and safety requirements and will have a discussion with my organisation of any updates that need put in place. I am also more aware of potential dangers and the steps needed to be put in place to mitigate risks. *Participant, introduction to health and safety*

It was...invaluable to meet other members of this wonderful community who shared their stories and gave encouragement to others who participated in the event, I loved hearing from everyone and it really made me feel confident about what we're doing, if not necessarily how we're going about achieving our goal. *Participant, understanding social enterprise*

It was really valuable to meet individuals from different projects and discuss their ideas. It was fantastic to meet so many passionate people who constantly overcome barriers in helping others and communities. Helped me go back to work and look at whether a social enterprise is a suitable option for us. *Participant, understanding social enterprise*

I now have a better understanding of what social enterprise is.....have decided that at the moment we do not have the time to start up a social enterprise. *Participant, understanding social enterprise*

Helped me reflect on my own practice. *Participant, customer care*

I learned how important communication is in customer care and for the customer experience, namely the words I use the tone I use and my own body language. I hope I can be more aware of my thoughts, words and actions when communicating with customers. *Participants, customer care*

What worked well

Working in partnership

Delivering courses in partnership with other organisations maximised the use of everyone's resources and reduced our workload relating to recruitment of participants and / or finding venues etc. Working relationships have been built with some of the training providers over several years.

Deposit system

Applicants were asked for a £50 refundable deposit when booking places. While some participants did not provide a deposit, seeking a sign of commitment from applicants appears to have resulted in fewer non-attendees, and most non-attendees cancelled their places beforehand.

Range of topics

This programme included a wider range of topics that included in previous programmes. It attracted participants from a spread of community food organisations. Most were staff or volunteers from smaller community food initiatives or from community food activities run by organisations (e.g. community cafes).

Using own venue

Several of the courses were run in Consumer Focus Scotland's premises. This reduced the course costs and enabled more courses to be run.

Learning from the programme

Promotion

While the courses were promoted widely, it took more time to recruit participants to some than others. Applicants were recruited more easily to courses that were promoted by community food initiatives or workers operating in the (geographical) areas where the courses were being held. A similar approach should be taken in future.

Venues

Participants would appear to prefer training venues in Edinburgh or Glasgow which are reachable by public transport.

Evaluation

Participants were not asked by CFHS for feedback about the courses on the day,

although some of the trainers did so. Because we were more interested in how the learning from the courses led to changes within the participants' organisations, this evaluation was carried out some weeks or months after the courses had taken place. Encouraging people to respond some time after the course can be difficult, even with an incentive to do so.