

# Fact Sheet

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JUNE 2013

## Impact of 'winter promotion' funding, 2013

### Background

The Scottish Grocers Federation Healthy Living Programme (HLP) is a Scottish Government funded programme that works with convenience stores to encourage them to promote and sell fresh fruit and vegetables and other healthier food products. The Programme has been very successful, with over 1,100 shops involved. The programme includes training and point-of-sale materials, including display stands.

Community Food and Health (Scotland) or CFHS has been working with the HLP since 2006, providing the Programme's training and resources for community food retailers (fruit and vegetable co-ops, stands, barras and community-owned shops).

Since 2010 the HLP has run promotional events involving many of its convenience store members. The aim of the promotional events has been to increase sales of fruit, vegetables and other healthier produce at times of year when sales of these tend to drop: post-Christmas and during the summer.

Community food retailers also report fewer customers and sales, especially in January. To support them to increase sales and customer numbers, for the last three years CFHS has awarded community retailers small amounts of funding to run their own promotional activities, to complement HLP's events.

### About the funding

All community food retailers that had taken part in one of the HLP training sessions delivered since 2010 were invited to apply for funding to

run promotional activities in January and February 2013. Thirteen community food retailers were funded, and were awarded between £200 and £700, depending on the number of community food outlets they were running or supporting. Those running one community food outlet were able to apply for up to £250. The total number of community food outlets supported with this funding was 47, and total funding awarded was £4045.

### About the activities

The range of activities run by the community food retailers was very varied. While some guidance was provided about the types of activities that they could undertake, the community retailers were encouraged to run those that best suited their organisation. The funding was used for: health promotion activities; cookery sessions; purchase of equipment; design of produce price lists, leaflets, posters or newsletters; and purchase of fruit and vegetables. All but one of the community food retailers used part of their funding to purchase fruit and vegetables: most of these used it to provide special offers: 'BOGOF's (buy-one-get-one-free) or half price fruit, vegetable or recipe bags.

Broomhouse Heath Strategy Group used some of the funding to produce and distribute a newsletter in the Broomhouse area of Edinburgh, to advertise the refurbishment and re-opening of its shop. The promotion was delayed to coincide with the re-opening of the shop. Most of the remaining funding was used to subsidise the cost of half-price soup, vegetable and recipe bags sold during the last two weeks of March. While the shop has sold

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soup and fruit bags for some time, the range of five recipe bags (containing the recipe and ingredients required to make a main meal for four people) were a new addition.

Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership promoted heart health during the week of Valentine's Day, offering half-price locally-sourced, seasonal vegetables.

Sunflower Nursery in Lochgelly was funded to buy resources need to run cookery sessions as part of the nursery's 'Happy and Healthy' course. The sessions were supported by Fife Community Food Project. Parents were encouraged to buy soup bags, sold while the sessions were running.

To encourage islands to purchase more fruit and vegetables, the community shop on Eriskay, Co-chomunn Eirisgeadh, organised a community lunch involving the schoolchildren on the island. The lunch included recipes using fruit and vegetables provided by islanders, with a competition held for the 'best recipe'.

Tullibody Fruit Barra used the funding to buy resources and produce to run a soup making day for the Barra's volunteers, to try out new soup bags before selling them on the barra.

Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre ran a 'Winter Warmers Week', offering a soup-making workshop and half-price soup bags. Some of the funding as used to produce fliers advertising the Week. The fliers included vouchers for the half-price bags.

## Feedback about activities

The community food retailers were contacted in March and April for feedback about their activities. Eleven responded. One had been unable to run its activities but intended to do so in May. Another (funded to buy external signage and display baskets) is intending to relaunch its fruit barra, and will use the funding to purchase the items for this.

The retailers were asked about how their activities had gone, if they had or intended to ask their customers about the activities, if they intended to do anything else as a result of

running the activities, and for any comments. We were particularly interested in finding out if the activities had resulted in any increase in sales, increase in the number of customers using the outlets, or both.

For those that used the funding to subsidise the cost of selling fruit and vegetables, all reported some increase in sales, and some reported attracting new customers.

During the nine days of its Shop Promotion, Broomhouse Health Strategy Group's number of customer visits increased from an average of 38 each day to 51, an increase of 30%. Takings were also up by 20%.

Coalburn Miners Welfare Charitable Society used part of its funding to produce and distribute fliers and posters about the fruit and vegetable co-ops throughout the village, with the remainder used to run a 'Winter Specials' week, selling half-price soup and stew packs, and a BOGOF week. These resulted in a slight increase in customer numbers, but less than hoped.

Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership also reported that customers numbers did not increase significantly, although sales of produce to the co-ops and stalls supplied (around 30) increased by 37%.

**'(the winter promotion funding) is one of the most successful promotional activities we run and the timing helps boost co-op impact in a difficult time of year.'**

Sunflower Nursery sold out of its vegetables bags every week of its cookery sessions.

The soup packs sold by Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre were very popular; in response to customer demand, the soup pack promotion was run for an additional two weeks.

Some of the community food retailers highlighted other ways that the funding had benefitted their organisations.

East Lothian Roots and Fruits used the funding to run health promotion activities at its stalls, which includes six 'grab and go' outlets. The activities run included fruit and vegetable

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tastings, smoothie workshops, and healthy eating quizzes. The 'grab and go' outlets are open for a very short time; running the activities gave the staff time to talk to customers about the work of the organisation and its purpose.

Preparing and tasting the soup recipes to be sold from the barra has increased the skills and confidence of Tullibody Fruit Barra's volunteers. In future they would like to run their own cooking workshops.

Community Food Moray used the funding to run 'Season's Eating', two cookery and health promotion sessions for young parents, which also promoted the fruit and vegetable outlets run by the organisation. The sessions also raised awareness about the affordability of locally-sourced produce and the importance of supporting local growers.

## Feedback from customers

As well as East Lothian Roots and Fruits, another four of the community food retailers said that they had collected feedback from the people that took part in their activities, informally or formally.

Community Food Moray carried out an evaluation of 'Season's Eating'. It compared feedback at the end of the sessions from the people taking part with their views gathered at the start. This included their views on buying and using locally-sourced produce.

Informal feedback from Coalburn Miners Welfare Charitable society's customers was very positive about the special offers available.

A participant with learning difficulties that took part in Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre's soup-making workshop said that she had made one of the soups included at home for the first time.

Broomhouse Health Strategy Group asked its customers for feedback about the Shop Promotion at an Open Day held a month later.

**'We took the opportunity (at event) to get feedback from customers ... we had lots of positive comments...'**

## Changes to services

Four of the community food retailers stated that they had made changes to their services as result of running the promotional activities, or intended to.

Broomhouse Health Strategy Group is continuing to sell the recipe bags, and is planning to introduce a Recipe of the Month on a regular basis. It now has six recipe bags available for customers.

Sunflower Nursery is now selling fruit bags as well as vegetable bags, and can just keep up with the demand for these.

East Lothian Roots and Fruits is considering running similar activities twice a year, to maintain interest in its work and to gather feedback from customers.

**'We have seen an increase in requests for various parts of our project in the last two months. I think this is because we are working at the heart of the community and we are reaching more people. The funding did a lot more for our project than only being able to run the promotional activities we had available. It has helped raise the profile of our project.'**

Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre started healthy eating cookery classes for older children using its out of school care service. The Centre's catering staff also delivered a healthy cooking and nutrition class to people involved in a 'Routes to Work' programme.

## Conclusion

The feedback obtained from the community food retailers that contributed to this evaluation of CFHS's Winter Promotion funding scheme suggests that small amounts of funding for promotional activities can make a positive difference to organisations.