



factsheet

www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk

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The contribution of community food initiatives to national food and health programmes

In 2012, Community Food and Health (Scotland) provided funding totalling £15,000 for six community food initiatives to build on their current work with one or more of the Scottish Government food and health programmes.

Main achievements

- Thirty staff and volunteers completed training on nutrition, food hygiene or how to run a cooking course.
- Three of the community food initiatives increased their range of stock and/or food outlets and all six attracted new customers and increased sales as a result.

The Scottish Government food and health programmes

The **healthyliving award (HLA)** is a national award working with the catering sector in Scotland, including community cafés and lunch clubs, to promote the use of healthier ingredients and cooking methods. The aim is to keep salt, fat and sugar to a minimum and to ensure that water, low-fat dairy products and fruit and vegetables are always available for consumers.

www.healthylivingaward.co.uk

The **Scottish Grocers' Federation Healthy Living Programme (SGFHLP)** is an industry-led programme to support convenience stores in low-income areas to promote healthier foods by providing staff training, marketing materials and resources, including fruit and vegetable display stands. It also works with CFHS to support community shops, co-ops or fruit and vegetable 'barras'.

The **Healthier Scotland Cooking Bus (HSCB)** visits schools and communities across Scotland for a period of several days and provides cooking workshops to pupils, teachers and community participants. It aims to address health inequalities as part of its work to develop cooking skills. Schools and communities are provided with a 'Cookit' after they have organised a visit, in order to support cooking activities afterwards.
www.focusonfood.org/scotland

Background

Each of the community food initiatives had taken part in an HSCB visit in their community, completed the SGFHLP training or held the HLA. All are working in low-income communities or with vulnerable people, making them ideally situated to ensure that national programmes reach the most vulnerable. Each community food initiative received between £2000 and £3000.

About the activities funded

The funding was used for a variety of activities, such as paying for staff and volunteer training; buying equipment; producing recipe cards, promotion and marketing materials; cooking courses; and workshops. These activities had a positive impact in several ways:

Building the capacity of staff and volunteers

Three community food initiatives delivered the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) food hygiene training or the Elementary Food and Health (basic nutrition) course to staff or volunteers. Feedback from participants from these courses was positive. One initiative, Bee Healthy, focused on developing the cooking training skills of staff within other organisations.

Bee Healthy is part of Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership and used funding to build on an HSCB visit. It ran cooking courses for young people living in two different supported accommodation projects and asked project staff to 'shadow' each session so that they could learn to run cooking courses themselves. The funding was used to purchase an additional HSCB Cookit which the projects could then borrow.

The Bee Healthy cooking tutor met with each member of staff before the courses started and informally discussed how the cooking sessions would run. The young people at each project attended four cooking sessions and a staff member at each project was supported by the Bee Healthy tutor to run the final session. The project staff had initially been nervous about the idea of running the cooking sessions, but both became more confident after shadowing and taking part in the first three sessions. The staff member from one of the organisations has now gone on to run cooking sessions within the project and borrows the Cookit from Bee Healthy. The member of staff from the other project moved on to a new job before she was able to start running cooking sessions.

Two community food initiatives increased the range of stock that they sold. Both have attracted new customers and have experienced an increase in sales.

Improving facilities and increasing stock range – improving sales and attracting new customers

Broomhouse Health Strategy Group in south-west Edinburgh was set up in 1993 by local residents and soon afterwards opened a volunteer-run fruit and vegetable shop in the local shopping market. In 2013, the group planned to refurbish and refit the shop so that it could extend its range of goods. It received funding from Dulux Lets Colour Community Initiative to transform and paint the area both inside and outside the shop. It also received funding from Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Trust to pay for a new till and scales. It used the CFHS funding to help fund the refurbishment of the interior of the shop.



The group received training from the SGFHLP on stocking and displaying produce. The planned refurbishment of the shop enabled the group to build on this knowledge and it is now able to sell a wider range of fresh fruit and vegetables, new recipe bags and dried goods. The transformed shopping market and shop has attracted new customers. The recipe bags, which contain ingredients and a recipe, and make an entire meal for around four people, have been very successful and also attract new customers.

Community Food Moray was set up as a community food shop in 2011. Since then it has expanded and now provides 18 volunteer-run fruit and vegetable outlets across deprived and rural areas. The funding was used to build on the SGFHLP and in order to work towards the HLA. The outlets already sold fresh soup and the initiative used the funding to buy equipment, such as a chiller cabinet, baked potato oven, panini maker and display baskets. Prior to buying the new equipment, it sold around 80 portions of soup per month. In the first month after expanding the range of meals and snacks it sold 160 paninis and toasties in addition to the 80 portions of soup and some baked potatoes. The paninis, toasties and baked potatoes are sold with a side salad and the type and amount of cheese in these snacks are monitored to make sure they meet the HLA guidelines. The initiative also bought chiller cabinets with the funding and has used these to widen the selection of fruit and vegetables sold. It can now stock and sell more perishable items, such as soft fruits. These have been very popular with customers.

Community Food Moray also found that displaying the fruit and vegetables in baskets made the outlets look more appealing. This attracted a new range of customers, including young people and young parents.

Some community food initiatives used the funding to promote both new and existing activities.

Promotion and marketing – improving sales

East Lothian Roots and Fruits (ELRF) was established in 1997. It runs eight food co-ops, a delivery service for people with mobility problems, a community garden, cookery courses and food information sessions. It planned to build on work with the SGFHLP. It used some of the funding to develop a website and plans to use this to develop a fruit and vegetable box scheme. It also used some of the funding to produce flyers and leaflets for its newly developed 'Grab and Go' stalls. ELRF had trialled using one of the SGFHLP display stands to sell small portions of fruit outside nurseries. The stands (which have wheels to make them easier to move) can be quickly and easily set up outside the nursery and are useful for selling small bags of fruit, such as strawberries or cherries. The six new Grab and Go stands have

been an outstanding success; each selling between £35 and £50 worth of snack fruits (each parent spends between £1 and £2) during the 15 minutes that parents are collecting their children from the nursery. The nurseries already provide fruit for the children, so parents are used to their children eating fruit.

Some food initiatives bought equipment which helped improve how their work is delivered.

Improving facilities – working more efficiently

ELRF also used the funding to build on its work with the HSCB. ELRF worked in partnership with other organisations to arrange for the bus to visit in 2010 and already had one Cookit, which it has used regularly. It used the funding to buy another, which is either loaned to groups or used by ELRF. The main benefit of this has been to enhance existing work:

The Cookit is a pleasure to use, everything that is required is there [in the kit] and the quality is good.

ELRF manager

Reaching new people and sustaining activities

New Horizons Borders (NHB) used the funding to build on its work with the HSCB. NHB supports around 220 members, all of whom experience mental health support needs and attend one of nine member-led weekly drop-in support groups across the Borders. Each drop-in group used the funding in different ways to suit the needs of its members. All ran cooking sessions, trained volunteers or bought new equipment to support cookery sessions. One of the groups used the funding to run an additional weekly session that focused on cooking skills. This attracted new people to take part in the drop-in groups as either the timing or the activity suited them. Members of another group went on to attend existing local cooking courses run by the Healthy Living Network. Members at three groups have continued with activities after the funding was spent, choosing to bring in or make healthier snacks at their meetings instead of just bringing cakes and biscuits.

Addressing challenges

Some of the community food initiatives had to address some challenges with their funded work.

One of the funded groups had planned to build on its work with the HLA. Unfortunately, it had to scale down its activities and close its café after a key member of staff became ill. It used the funding instead to build on its existing work of promoting cooking sessions with the community and has since re-opened the café.

One staff member, trained by Bee Healthy to run cooking sessions for a supported accommodation project, moved on to a new job before the cooking courses started.

These issues highlight the fragility of some community food initiatives which are reliant on a few key staff or volunteers, or are able to train just one or two members of staff within an organisation.

A more positive challenge is faced by ELRF, as it could potentially continue to expand the Grab and Go stands and its other work.

However, it is now at full capacity with current staff and its one vehicle. It would need further investment and support before considering the possibility of expansion.

Conclusion

These groups used the funding to extend, improve or enhance their existing work. They used it to improve the knowledge and skills of staff or volunteers, or to buy equipment and upgrade facilities. These fairly straightforward activities helped bring in new customers and increase sales for three of the initiatives. For ELRF, a new Cookit made the cooking tutor's work much easier and more enjoyable, enhancing the quality of the experience for staff and for those benefiting from their work.

Contact details

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