



# factsheet

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## Learning and development programme 2014: feedback from participants

### Background

Community Food and Health (Scotland), or CFHS, is committed to providing community food practitioners with opportunities to develop skills and expertise that will help build the capacity of their organisations. Since 2010 CFHS has run an annual learning and development programme for community food practitioners. In 2013/14 the programme contained a range of courses that focused on delivering practical skills and knowledge.

The courses included were:

- **Customer care**, Edinburgh, 18 October 2013, delivered by Abacus Coaching
- **Introduction to social enterprise**, Edinburgh, 7 November 2013, delivered by Social Enterprise Academy
- **Scottish Grocers' Federation Healthy Living Programme (SGFHLP) training** (2 courses), Aberdeen, 24 October 2013 and Edinburgh, 27 February 2014. First course delivered by the SGFHLP, second course delivered by CFHS
- **Marketing**, Stirling, 21 November 2013, delivered by the Social Enterprise Academy

- **Introduction to health and safety** (2 courses), Glasgow, 26 November 2013 and 5 February 2014, delivered by the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives (SCHWL)
- **Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) Level 3 Award in Nutrition for Healthier Food and Special Diets**, Glasgow, 20–22 January 2014, delivered by the Nutrition Training Company.

In total, 60 participants from 34 community food initiatives attended one or more of the courses; eight participants attended two.

Originally one 'introduction to health and safety' course was planned; however, a second course was arranged because of high demand for places. Both courses were fully booked, and there was 100% attendance at both.

## Evaluation

Five of the eight courses (Customer care, Introduction to social enterprise, Marketing and the two Introduction to health and safety courses) were evaluated. The other three courses are being evaluated separately. These five courses were attended by 43 participants. The evaluation was carried out between early February and the end of March 2014.

Participants were invited, by email, to answer two questions:

- What learning have you taken away from the course?
- How is this learning going to make a difference to your organisation?

Participants could include other comments about the course if they wished.

A second email was sent to those not responding to the original one, and a third to those not responding to the second.

The response rate for the courses ranged from 33% to 75%. In total, 27 responses were received. Most were from individuals, but some collective responses were submitted. The lowest response rate was for the second 'Introduction to health and safety' course, which had only recently taken place; more responses may have been received if the evaluation had taken place later.

## Feedback from participants

With two exceptions, all the respondents stated that they had learned something on the course(s) they attended.

## Health and safety courses

Although organisations are expected to comply with health and safety legislation, there is no requirement for management, staff or volunteers to take part in a health and safety course.

This was the second year running that the 'Introduction to health and safety' course had been included in the learning and development programme. The course was included again

because of the high uptake of places the previous year. The course participants included staff and volunteers from community food initiatives running retailing, catering or gardening activities.

Several participants on the courses stated that these had emphasised, or re-emphasised, the importance of health and safety, and/or highlighted the need to regularly review and update policies and procedures, within their organisations. Two stated that they now recognised the importance of health and safety in all aspects of their lives.

**'It reminded me that risk assessments are a live document ... in our work things are changing all the time and we have to reassess on a regular basis.'**

Most participants replied that they had implemented changes within their workplaces, or were intending to. For example, one had carried out a risk assessment in his/her organisation's warehouse; another recognised a need to implement manual handling training for volunteers. Three stated that they were seeking further support from the SCHWL; one was doing so along with other organisations operating from the same premises.

## Customer care course

The participants on the customer care course all had, or will have, customer-facing roles in their organisations.

Several respondents reported that they had attended the course with some understanding of customer care; however, with one exception, all stated that they had gained some learning and were implementing this within their organisations. Most stated that they would use their learning to improve customers' experiences of their services. Two of the organisations responding collectively are, or will be, training organisations running catering services. Both stated that they had disseminated, or were intending to disseminate, their learning to their trainees.

**'The aim is to use the knowledge gained to help motivate the team, so that we can build our customer base and ensure customers are happy.'**

One respondent commented that she felt that her colleague who also attended the course was subsequently more confident with customers.

Being better able to deal with difficult customers was highlighted as a benefit by two respondents. Two also highlighted the importance of good customer service in attracting and retaining customers.

**'Going to change how my job can be done ... hopefully attract new customers.'**

One respondent stated that meeting staff from other organisations and hearing about their experiences had been very useful.

## Introduction to social enterprise course

As with the customer care course, some respondents stated a prior knowledge of the topic. Again, all but one participant reported gaining some knowledge, including the legal structures for social enterprises, how boards function and an increased understanding of the process of establishing a social enterprise.

One participant commented that the content of the session had not been helpful. However, he was positive about the venue used (a canal barge), a feeling echoed by two other participants.

Learning from others on the course was highlighted by three of the respondents. One reported that she had found a volunteering opportunity as a result of attending.

**'Folks on the training all seemed very interesting and contributed to the discussions, which made for even better learning.'**

Two of the respondents were unsure of the difference the course would make to their organisation; both were considering establishing their own social enterprises at a

later date. One stated that his organisation may change its legal structure. Another recognised the need to involve the new board of directors.

**'[We] need to involve them in designing plans and get "buy-in" and ownership of tasks within the team.'**

## Marketing course

This one-day course had the smallest number of participants (six), with three contributing to the evaluation. All three stated that they had learned something from the course which they were intending to use in their work. This included recognising who the stakeholders were, how to promote an organisation's work and the need to produce targeted information for different audiences.

**'I think it will make things much simpler and cleaner, less scattergun and haphazard and more efficient.'**

## Reflections about the learning and development programme

### Working in partnership

The SCHWL is based within NHS Health Scotland. Working in partnership enabled SCHWL to reach one of their target groups of employers (third sector), with CFHS able to provide more courses because of the lower costs of working with another NHS Health Scotland team, rather than an external training provider.

Recruitment for two of the courses was carried out by CFHS and the training organisation in order to maximise uptake of places. Although this increased the number of participants taking part in the courses, it also increased the administrative workload for both CFHS and the trainer.

## Continuing relationship with trainers

Community Food and Health (Scotland) had worked with the two other training organisations in the past. Both had a good understanding of the learning needs of the community food sector and were able to tailor the training delivered to meet these needs.

## Course dates, times and venues

To maximise attendance, course venues that were easily accessible by public transport were used and course dates that avoided holiday periods and school holidays (as far as possible) were chosen. When possible, courses were delivered over half-days to minimise participants' time away from work.

## Penalty payment for non-attendance

Course applicants were advised that non-attendance may incur a financial penalty. With the exception of one course, this appears to have encouraged applicants to attend or advise in advance that they were not able to do so.

## Types of courses included

The uptake of places was greater for the courses that were providing information about practical skills (health and safety and customer care). Although CFHS is not running another learning and development programme in 2014/15, a further 'Introduction to health and safety' course is being delivered by SCHWL because of the demand shown for this course.

## Summary

**Feedback from participants in CFHS's learning and development programme, delivered in 2013/14, indicates that the courses included have resulted in positive impacts for some of the community food practitioners that took part.**