



farechoice

The newsletter for Community Food and Health (Scotland)

Now you're talking

The valuable knowledge and experience of those involved in the country's community food initiatives has long been recognised. So has the hands-on practical support they provide in many disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. However, sustaining and enhancing this contribution has been compared to painting the Forth Bridge (see Take stock, page 7), with many community initiatives describing the support they receive more in terms of a roller coaster ride.

The understanding of those who confront barriers to individual, family or community wellbeing and who see the food insecurity faced by too many in our society, is increasingly front and centre in national and local policies (see page 6). The challenge is to ensure the activity that so often encourages and enables these community voices (see page 4), namely the community cafes, food co-ops, community gardens and cooking classes, alongside the staff that support them, is not weakened or ignored when it is needed more than ever.



Enhancing the work of community food initiatives (see page 7)

Team talk

Hello and goodbye

We are delighted to have Jacqui McDowell back from her career break and we say 'sorry to see you go' to Fran Eatwell-Roberts and Susan Kennedy. Stay posted to our e-bulletin which will reveal a new addition to the team next month.

Cooking skills

We have added three more case studies to our website in the last few months. Two of them, Forth Valley Sensory Centre and Pathfinder Dogs, offer cooking skills activities led by people who are blind for other blind or partially sighted people. These case studies focus on the challenges blind or partially sighted people may face to be more independent in the kitchen.

The third case study is from Chris Mantle from Edinburgh Community Food and it focuses on

how Chris plans and evaluates his cooking skills courses. Chris was involved in a Community Food and Health (Scotland) (CFHS) cooking skills realist evaluation study group a while ago and he discusses how this helped shift his thinking when making sure cooking courses are relevant and useful for the people attending.

We presented the results of our realist evaluation of cooking skills courses at a conference in Lisbon last autumn.



The Cook and Health Conference was a great opportunity to hear about current research on cooking skills and a summary of what was learnt is available as a blog post on our website. A number of topics were discussed during the two-day event.

Eating home-cooked meals is generally associated with a better quality diet (such as a higher consumption of fruit and vegetables) compared to eating ready-made or takeaway food, so there are good reasons to encourage cooking at home. However, throughout the conference there was plenty of discussion about the barriers to cooking that need to be addressed. These include lack of time (real or perceived) to cook and undertake all the 'invisible labour' or organisation associated with cooking and eating (deciding what to cook, planning to buy the ingredients and shopping). Lack of time was seen as an influence on the growth of 'meal kits' delivered to people's homes (to those who can afford the commercial kits). Some of the cooking course programmes discussed during the conference provided these as part of the course to further promote cooking at home.

The influence of food security and insecurity was also widely discussed, particularly by researchers working in the USA. They discussed how inadequate income or lack of facilities limits the ability to shop more effectively (such as being able to bulk buy or store food). Not surprisingly, structural solutions to food insecurity were discussed, such as better welfare, job security and school meals.

Our publication 'Chopping and changing' reports on the realist evaluation and provides ideas on how to run cooking skills courses.



About us ...

Our overriding aim is to improve Scotland's food and health.

We do this by supporting work that improves access to and take-up of a healthy diet within low-income communities. Major obstacles being addressed 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 shops.

Skills

Improving confidence and skills in cooking and shopping.

Culture

Overcoming ingrained habits.

We help support low-income communities to identify barriers to a healthy, balanced diet, develop local responses to addressing them and highlight where actions at other levels, or in other sectors, are required.

We value the experience, understanding, skills and knowledge within Scotland's communities and their unique contribution to developing and delivering policy and practice at all levels.

CFHS is part of Public Health Scotland.



How food activity contributes to community justice programmes

We have been working with Apex Stranraer and Sacro in Elgin to explore how the work they do with food contributes to their work with offenders. Both organisations work with a range of partners, including community food initiatives. Their food work spans activities from gardening and cooking classes to eating together. These food activities are a way to positively engage service users, enjoying the social value of food, and improving involvement in programmes.

Both organisations have strong links with their local food banks, for example supporting their service users to deliver food parcels or to distribute FareShare produce to community organisations and food larders. This aspect of their food work contributes by being a vehicle for the other positive changes which they support people to achieve. Case studies on what we found out about this work will soon be on our website.



Borders community cafe network evolves into a food network

We have been working together with colleagues at NHS Borders who supported a network of community cafes. They were also aware of a range of other activities and initiatives focused on or linked to community food work happening across the area. These included a food growing strategy, an increase in the number of lunch clubs (a survey revealed that 14 out of 16 community halls were running lunch clubs), and an increase in the number of third sector organisations hosting community meals. Most were unaware of other community food initiatives, although in towns like Hawick and Eyemouth community organisations were beginning to link up.

We shared information on what was happening in other parts of Scotland in terms of community food networks, for example Glasgow Community Food Network, at a cafe networking event. The attendees decided that they wanted to invite others to join them

and have built on their existing good practice and experience, evolving into Borders Food Network. This has already provided benefits from being better connected and sharing knowledge and intelligence, for example, by helping volunteers to hear about and attend our annual conference.

Learning and development for community-led health

We have been working with colleagues at Community Health Exchange (CHEX) and in the NHS Health Scotland Workforce team to bring together information on learning and development opportunities for those working with communities on health issues. Targeting community initiatives, we hope the materials will be useful to NHS staff and others who want help to build their knowledge and skills in key competencies. Perhaps a useful aspect for community food initiatives is it provides a

one-stop-shop for links to a range of useful websites, such as Evaluation Support Scotland and Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC). Interested in finding out more? Watch out for the launch in our e-bulletin.

What do you reckon?

Academics, policymakers and practitioners gathered in Edinburgh recently for the latest seminar looking at the measurement of food insecurity and what that means for policy and practice. Excellent presentations from the Scottish Government (current and planned data collection), Central and West Integration Network (their community-led research) and a piece giving an impression from outside Scotland (Dr Rachel Loopstra from King's College London) were complemented by particularly knowledgeable and experienced participants. Presentations and a brief report are available from the CFHS website at www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/2019/food-insecurity-seminar-update/



Tell it like it is

Community voices are in demand locally and nationally to ensure policy is as informed as possible and practice as effective as possible.

At CFHS's annual networking conference in November, a workshop on engaging communities in the development of local food strategies came up with conclusions that could equally apply across all policies. The workshop, led by Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership and South Lanarkshire Council, recognised the importance of 'building trust' and that this 'takes time'. On a practical level it was noted that 'stories and how to communicate them' is important to complement available local data. Conference presentations and a brief report are available at www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/2019/priceless-cfhs-annual-networking-conference-4-november-2019

At the same time other conference attendees explored the challenges of partnership working in a session led by Obesity Action Scotland's government-funded whole systems approach early adopters coordinator (and former CFHS team member) Fran Eatwell-Roberts. Community engagement has been central in the early days of Fran's work and more information is available at www.obesityactionscotland.org/about-us

Linking local thinking and national action was central to last year's summit on community food initiatives and the Scottish Government engaged with a number of the country's most established community food initiatives when organising it (see page 7).

The seminar on food insecurity measurement, organised by CFHS with A Menu for Change and the Scottish Government, appreciated the need for both quantitative and qualitative evidence to inform policy as well as the need for communities, academics and policymakers to work together (see page

5). www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/2019/food-insecurity-seminar-update/

Community voices are more important than ever as Good Food Nation takes form, including young voices, rural voices and minority voices. Keep up to date with developments at www.gov.scot/publications/good-food-nation-programme-measures-2019-update/ These voices will be particularly required at a local level as the Sustainable Food Cities network develops and local food plans emerge across Scotland. More information is available at <http://sustainablefoodcities.org/getstarted/foodstrategiesandactionplans.html>

Last but not least, NHS Health Scotland has now become Public Health Scotland. The new body is part of a move to reform public health and ensure it is 'delivering for communities'. More information is available at <https://publichealthreform.scot/public-health-scotland>

Public Health 
Scotland

How can we enhance the work of community food initiatives?

This Take stock reflects on what CFHS and community food networks have been doing to support the Scottish Government to meet a commitment outlined in 'A healthier future: Scotland's diet and healthy weight delivery plan' to hold a summit. The aim of the summit was to explore how local community-led initiatives can be enhanced to ensure they continue to be able to make healthy, affordable food more accessible within communities.

Six of the larger community food networks or community organisations (Edinburgh Community Food, North Glasgow Community Food Initiative, Glasgow Community Food Network, Lanarkshire Community Food Partnership, Community Food Initiatives North East and Healthy Valleys) and CFHS helped plan the summit. Community Food Initiatives North East and Healthy Valleys provide their reflections here alongside Kimberley Smith from the Scottish Government. The summit was attended by around 60 people from a wide range of organisations. The CFHS conference in November gave delegates an opportunity to add to the main discussions.

A range of similar concerns, ideas and solutions emerged from both events, many of which will be familiar to community food initiatives and those working with them.

Inevitably, funding and resources (including 'in kind' resources such as community facilities), and particularly access to longer-term funding, were the main concerns. People were also worried about competing with other organisations for funding and risking potential partnership working as a consequence.

Partnership working, local networks and developing local food strategies were seen as possible ways to help enhance community food work and its credibility, address concerns

about silo working, make best use of resources and might even be easier for those using the services. Local plans or partnerships linked to national work were seen as a way to build awareness of community food work. However, people also acknowledged these solutions took time to develop and manage, and needed to have a clear purpose but also be flexible.

People discussed issues about the balance of power between different organisations involved and the challenge to make sure partnerships or local plans are shaped by the communities they are supposed to benefit. As one person said, 'People need to drive the system, not the other way round.' How to manage the balance of power was discussed when 'anchor organisations' were suggested as another way to bring services together and enhance community food work.

Tension between topics and competing agendas was considered a problem by a few, for example, trying to juggle resources and address food security, the environment and health issues all at the same time.

People recognised that rural and remote areas have specific challenges and that a local, flexible approach and partnerships may help address this.

Key reflections from Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE)

CFINE is a strong well-placed anchor organisation, involved in the Aberdeen Community Food Network, a key partner in Food Poverty Action Aberdeen (75 partners) and Granite City Good Food, while also operating FareShare Grampian with over 200 partners/members.

A key message of theirs was that there needs to be investment to create the infrastructure

to support, coordinate, resource, train and promote community food initiatives in local areas throughout Scotland. CFINE, perhaps like other anchor or community food networks, grew organically over time, expanding its services and offer, building its reputation and role, by responding to local needs, opportunities and assets. To develop the infrastructure that is most appropriate for an area means investing time and resources in planning and engagement activities, which can ensure the model or mechanisms designed to deliver support are fit for purpose in that area.

Another key message was that partnerships are complex with costs in terms of time and energy. They can improve delivery and achievement of objectives which are good for partners and communities, but they need to be worked at. At the most basic level, partnerships have to be about giving and taking. Where each partner is clear on this, for example on what they can give or what it is reasonable enough to expect in return, partnership working can be a more mature exercise. Being open and transparent is a great beginning. Where there is potential for power imbalances or unrealistic expectations it can be important to couch partnership work in the context of what individual partners' time and resources allow.

Key reflections from Healthy Valleys

Healthy Valleys is also a well-established and respected anchor organisation, well connected and rooted in their community. Their holistic approach means they have a range of local partners and referral agents, including general practitioners, social work and education.

A key message of theirs was that working together with others at a strategic level is a better way of working. It improves planning, avoids duplication, mitigates the potential for competition and creates opportunities for stronger, more joined-up and collaborative responses. Healthy Valleys is part of the South Lanarkshire chief officers group (a group for third sector chief officers in the area) who have worked together on a model for social prescribing. The group has carried out extensive consultation and come to clear recommendations to present to the local

integrated joint board on the most suitable pathway model and the resources needed to deliver this. While challenges remain, committing to a common set of principles and values on how they work together has made this an effective way to work where there are limited funds and resources.

Healthy Valleys also believes networking locally but also nationally is important, whether to share and learn from others, be inspired with new ideas or encouraged to take stock and reflect on what could be done better. For the summit attendee this prompted thoughts around a review or refresh of their rural cafe work and how to strengthen it, a reflection on the complexity of their referrals and the potential need to rethink issues of dependency to help service users move on. They also recognised that there are potential business partners with whom Healthy Valleys could have more or better links.

Scope for further actions

CFHS and the six organisations have continued to build on these discussions with the Scottish Government and Kimberley Smith, policy officer, Diet Policy Population Health Directorate, Health Improvement Division, provides reflections from the Scottish Government:

'By bringing people together from across Scotland, and from policy and practice from the third and public sectors, the summit created a real opportunity to explore and review the community food landscape. Conversations have sparked new opportunities already and we hope to maximise this and ensure that the day creates real change in the way that sector is supported.

'Now that the summit and the CFHS annual conference has taken place, facilitators and the six organisations involved in planning the event will discuss the key themes that arose. This discussion will consider all the views that were given and look to recommend concrete actions both at a local and national level. These recommendations and suggestions for the next steps will be shared widely and further reflections are more than welcome as we start to move forward together.'

Community cafes resource from Senscot

Following the community cafe work covered in our last edition of Fare Choice, Senscot have produced an 'Introductory Briefing on Community Café Activity', and are developing a series of peer-led publications to follow this. With input from over 50 social enterprises with experience in community cafes, these publications will focus on six common scenarios, including:

- providing a cafe for another organisation
- bringing in an external provider to operate a cafe
- having a space and considering developing cafe activity
- setting up a cafe from scratch
- making your community cafe sustainable
- developing a cafe providing employability opportunities.

The publications will cover the main challenges, key areas for consideration and top tips, plus case studies from those running cafes. For further information contact Mary at Senscot mary@senscot.net or visit the Senscot website www.senscot.net

Food issues facing older adults

Eat Well Age Well and Food Train have been working in collaboration with the University of Glasgow to explore the prevalence of malnutrition in older adults. They recently released a preliminary research report into current issues facing older adults living in their own home in Scotland, in relation to food insecurity, wellbeing and social connectedness.

The research is ongoing, but preliminary findings are based on six months of research, including surveys and selected interviews with 161 older adults living at home (average age 80 years) across Scotland (77% female, 23%

male). Of those surveyed, 52% were widowed and approximately 71% lived alone, making food access and social isolation issues of interest for these older adults.

The research paints a picture where food access and the risk of experiencing food insecurity is best understood by combining measures which capture the older person's reported sense of social connectedness with friends, family and their wider community. Lack of opportunities for 'social eating' (eating in the company of others) was attributed in the interviews as a key reason why that older person may not feel motivated to eat regular, nutritious, warm, home-cooked meals. This finding was further explained in the survey where greater socialisation with friends, family and others was statistically associated with better wellbeing, decreased loneliness, lower food insecurity and a lower risk of unintentional weight loss. Being connected to a 'social life', either through family, friends or volunteers offers a degree of protection to lower the risk of unintentional weight loss and risk of malnutrition.

The researchers found that those who do receive food delivery and meal-making services (both offered through the Food Train and the Food Train Meal Maker support service) are experiencing hardship in terms of reported lower sense of control and wellbeing in comparison to those who do not receive this service. What little control they had in their lives was attributed to these key services. This indicates that those who use the Food Train service may be already struggling to live well independently and that this regular food delivery service, and other support services they receive, are essential in supporting this vulnerable group to maximise control in their lives around food access.

Food Train is taking forward plans to raise the issues of malnutrition and loneliness, and

the links between the two, in the Scottish Parliament in spring 2020.

For more information contact Michelle Carruthers MBE, Food Train CEO on 07732 974480 or michelle@thefoodtrain.co.uk
A research report is available from www.eatwellagewell.org.uk

Healthy Valleys community cafes gain their healthyliving award plus

The healthyliving award team worked with Healthy Valleys (pictured below) to support them to achieve this prestigious award. Healthy Valleys' project worker Gail McAra says, 'Our cafes already offered healthier food choices, but the award brought staff and volunteers together with a common goal of improving our knowledge of healthier catering practices and serving good-quality, healthy food. We went for the plus award as we are passionate about helping people make positive lifestyle choices and were keen to keep developing the healthy eating ethos of the community cafes.'

'The challenge is keeping up the enthusiasm for the award across the different cafes and communities and maintaining the consistency of healthier catering across all locations. This is made easier by the fantastic staff and volunteers, who all share the same level of dedication and passion, and we now make sure all new staff and volunteers know we hold the plus award and what this means for the food and refreshments we serve in the cafes. They often mention how the variety of soups on offer, for example, has led to trying new foods they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to try and some have commented that they have tried to implement the learning gained of reducing fat, salt and sugar into their own and their family's eating plans at home.'

Find out more about the Healthy Valleys community cafes from Gail McAra at gail@healthyvalleys.org.uk

For more information about the healthyliving award www.healthylivingaward.co.uk/index



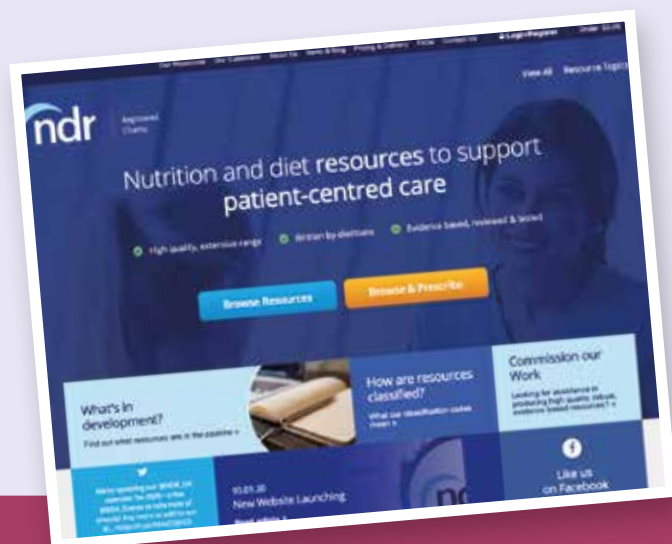


Old friends, new faces

Many Fare Choice readers will be familiar with the Healthy Living Programme which is run by the Scottish Grocers Federation and has been working with convenience stores for a number of years. You can find more information about their work on www.scottishshop.org.uk and Kathryn Neil, programme director, is always happy to be contacted by community food initiatives to discuss common interests.

Another team that many will have engaged with over the years but might be new to some is Nutrition and Diet Resources UK (NDR). NDR provide a range of publications to support nutrition and particular medical conditions. The publications can be viewed and purchased through their website www.ndr-uk.org

Both NDR and the Healthy Living Programme can trace their origins back to the Scottish Diet Action Plan and continue to be useful allies to those working in many of the country's most vulnerable communities.



Stay in touch

Just a reminder that you can still hear from us between the Fare Choice editions in spring and autumn.

Visit our website www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk to sign up for our regular e-bulletin, receive publication alerts, and access a wealth of information on community food and health activity, such as good practice guides, case studies, funding information and our regular blogs.

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If you have anything you would like to share on any of these platforms, please contact us on nhs.healthscotland-CFHS@nhs.net

Recipe

Sweet potato & chard saag

Saag is a typical Punjabi (North Indian) dish using winter greens



Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon oil or Spray Light, 4 garlic cloves (finely chopped)
- 2 teaspoons ginger (grated), 1 small onion (chopped)
- ½ teaspoon cumin, ½ teaspoon coriander, ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom, ⅓ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 whole cloves, ½ teaspoon turmeric, ¾ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups potato or sweet potato (peeled and cubed)
- 2 cups chard or other green vegetable (chopped), 1 cup water, ½ cup yogurt or coconut milk
- * ⅓ cup of lentils with another cup of water (optional)

Method:

- Heat the oil in a large saucepan, add garlic and ginger and mix together.
- Add onion and cook for two minutes or until soft. Add water if the mixture starts to stick to the pan.
- Add spices and salt and mix together.
- Add potato, chard, water and yogurt or coconut milk and mix well. Add lentils and extra water at this point if using.
- Reduce the heat, cover with a lid and cook over a gentle heat for 15 minutes.
- Remove the lid and add more coconut milk or yogurt if you prefer it creamier. Taste and season if required.
- Serve with boiled rice or naan bread.

Thanks to Burnfoot Community Hub cafe for providing this recipe. The cafe is located in the Scottish Borders on the edge of Hawick. In addition to the cafe you will find a range of activities for the local community and beyond. Find out more about the cafe and daily activities on the website www.burnfootcf.org and their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BurnfootCommunityFutures

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