

Priceless

So what was so “priceless” about the Community Food and Health Scotland Annual Conference this year?

Put simply some listening, lots of chat and along the way knowledge sharing or learning. So just our typical “networking” conference you may say, brim full of stimulating contributors, engaged practitioners and community members. Lets’ look deeper for some priceless points...

The basics

First some statistics, this year 150 delegates from across Scotland, from Elgin to Stranraer and Hawick, joined us at the COSLA conference centre. Alongside staff and volunteers from community food initiatives there were practitioners and stakeholders from NHS, local authority, third sector, umbrella organisations, academia, social enterprises and businesses.

We ran 5 workshops and had 11 market place stalls, including representation from national bodies such as Scottish Government Best Start, Healthy Living Award and REHIS, plus local community food organisations including Pennypit Community Development Trust, Edinburgh Community Food, Midlothain Foodbank, Cyrenians and Kidzeco.

The morning menu

Our **Chair** this year was Robbie Snowden, Senior Health Promotion Specialist: Food and Health, NHS Lothian. He began by sharing a bit of his passion about connecting people and communities together who are working within the food environment: to promote knowledge, best practice, sustainability and evaluation.

Robbie introduced our **Keynote speaker** Wendy Wills, Professor of Food and Public Health and Director of the Centre for Research in Public Health and Community Care at the University of Hertfordshire. A public health nutritionist and sociologist, Wendy’s interested in inequalities, particularly the social and environmental determinants of food, eating, weight and health. After her PhD she spent three formative years undertaking research in Fife, Lothian and Tayside and this work has provided a solid basis for trying to understand how inequalities develop and persist. Involving communities in her research and its translation has long been a priority for Wendy and the Centre she directs has a worldwide reputation for doing this well. In her presentation Wendy shared some of the work she has led in this area and key insights:

Priceless point: “We need better arguments not better evidence”

A pervasive mantra is that community food needs more robust evaluation and research, Wendy argued that instead a better narrative needs to be developed to articulate the invaluable contribution that community food work and the voices of those experiencing food issues can make.



Wendy Wi

As for the **workshops** – what was the stand out point?

Food Strategies: the vital ingredient - Colleagues from Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership shared their experience of working collaboratively to develop a local food strategy. *Priceless point: National food strategy should provide guidelines on how to deliver a local food strategy whilst never forgetting that food is often a vehicle for communities addressing other issues important to them.*

How community groups experience partnership working - How community groups experience partnership working - A lively and illuminating conversation exploring what partnerships can offer, what helps them succeed and what contributes to their failure. *Priceless point: Shared understanding, realistic expectations and recognising others constraints can help, however partnerships need to be dynamic to cope with changing priorities and partners.*

Training people to run community cooking courses- what are the essential ingredients? - Cooking up a storm of activity this participatory workshop explored the practicalities with lots of sharing of learning, kicked off by the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) and Healthy Valleys. *Priceless point: being non-judgemental, understanding the people you are running the cooking activities for and being able to adapt to their needs are just a few of the essential ingredients for a successful cooking class.*

How food activities are used to enhance community / criminal justice services - Colleagues from Sacro Elgin and Apex Stranraer shared how food activities, which can range from learning cooking skills and eating together to encouraging volunteering with community food initiatives, features in their work within criminal justice. *Priceless point: Food activity is valued because it improves engagement, opening up space for richer more positive conversations with offenders.*

Scotland's eating well challenge - Colleagues from the Food Train (Eat Well Age Well) shared insights from their research on older people eating well and discussed different tools to explore issues with older people. *Priceless point: Eating well for older people is about more than nutrition, from getting help with shopping to eating together the social value of food is highly prized.*



Nutrition Checklist
Patient version 9.2015



LAURAS SLIDES
UoG.pptx

The afternoon fare

After lunch all conference delegates took part in a participative session “**Have your say**”.

The purpose of this session was to let delegates hear about what was discussed at a Community Food Summit earlier in the autumn and feed in their views. The Summit was convened in response to the proposal in the Scottish Government’s Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan, to explore how we can best enhance local community-led initiatives to make healthy, affordable food more accessible.

This 2 page summit report provides a summary of what was discussed by the 60 individuals who attended the Summit from across the community food sector.



Summit Rep

To set the scene and introduce the discussion two of those who attended the Summit shared their reflections from the event, they were Brenda Black, CEO of Edinburgh Community Food and Greig Sandilands, Project Manager of North Glasgow Community Food Initiative.

In two rounds of table discussions delegates considered if their experience, concerns and ideas for improvements resonated with those raised at the Summit.

In the first table discussion delegates looked at which aspects Summit attendees thought were key to enhance and sustain of community food organisations and those doing community food work:

- Local approaches, avoiding duplication and silo working
- Working together with others to target fundamental local issues

In the second round of discussion, conference delegates moved to different tables to represent particular stakeholder groupings including, community food organisations, third sector organisations including infrastructure or umbrella organisations, NHS, local authority, academics, businesses and community food networks or community food anchor* organisations. During this discussion delegates focused on the possible solutions that could help enhance, extend or strengthen things, which came out of the Summit. These were:

- Develop a local food strategy
- Strengthen partnership working
- Anchor organisations or networks that are recognised by decision makers and funded to serve and support others working in the field

During the discussions two further Summit attendees circulated between the tables listening to the conversations for similarities and differences to the themes raised at the Summit. These individuals, Abi Mordin representing Glasgow Community Food

Network and Gordon Thompson, Manager of Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership, gave feedback on what they had heard.

Priceless point: The key aspects that enhance and sustain community food organisations and the possible solutions resonated clearly with the conference delegates, however the issues of power (including imbalance of power, competition and decision-making), time and resources were repeatedly raised.

The points raised from the session will feed into ongoing discussions on this issue with Scottish Government, and the Take Stock article in Fare Choice 81 explores this subject further.

The day finished with a few words from our Chair and Kimi Smith Scottish Government, plus the raffle!

So not so simple then.....