

FABULOUS FOOD!

A summary of visits to Food Projects in England, Ireland and Scotland 2008/09

BDA Community Nutrition Group Innovation Award Project 2008/09

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NOTE FROM AUTHOR

This report describes briefly the food projects I visited during autumn 2008 and spring 2009. It is unashamedly personal and at the end of each project description, I have summarised my 'learning points' - the things that really struck me about each visit and which continue to shape the work in which I am currently involved. I met Community Dietitians and Food Workers whose achievements in working with food projects were inspiring. They gave me a vision of what could be. I also met wonderful 'ordinary' people who, through the daily provision of healthy food, showed a care and concern for the welfare of others that was humbling. This, perhaps, was my greatest 'learning point'.

Above all, the experience has strengthened my conviction that there is a need for skilled and creative nutrition professionals – especially dietitians - to become involved; to be the valuable nutrition resource needed by those who seek to improve food access and choice where they live and work. I cannot thank the CNG Committee enough therefore, for making this possible. I feel I have been on an exciting journey that has challenged my ideas and widened my horizons. I trust that in future it will bear fruit - where I live and work.

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***The views and opinions expressed in this report
are solely those of the author.***

The Community Nutrition Group is a specialist interest group of the British Dietetic Association for members with an interest in public health and community nutrition

For more information about CNG see www.cnguk.org and for more information about the BDA see www.bda.uk.com

For information about the range and scope of work undertaken by dietitians working in public health in both the UK generally and Northern Ireland specifically see the publications page <http://www.bda.uk.com/resources/>

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INTRODUCTION

Healthy eating has become a topic of almost daily debate. Rising obesity, coronary heart disease, links between diet and cancer, healthier school meals and food labelling are just a few of the nutrition related topics that have featured in the media with varying degrees of sensational cover. It seems that everyone knows about the importance of eating a healthy diet. Evidently, however, knowledge is not enough, for despite the amount of information available to the public, obesity continues to rise and our taste for fatty, sweet and salty foods seems undiminished. Moreover, there are links between deprivation and ill-health that are influenced by poor food choice but are only partly explained by lack of money. The barriers to eating a healthy diet are complex.

Strategies to improve the nation's health – nutrition included - exist throughout the UK and Ireland. Northern Ireland's public health strategy 'Investing for Health' was published in 2002 with an overarching aim of improving health and well-being and reducing health inequalities through "partnership working amongst Departments, public bodies, local communities, voluntary bodies, District Councils and the social partners."¹ But strategies, while necessary, cannot lead to change without local intervention and for those who are concerned with promoting good nutrition, local food programmes make an important contribution to changing food habits.

The virtue of such programmes is that they are generally small in scale and have specific aims, whether in terms of what is being delivered or the target audience. Food projects may be limited to a few specific objectives – making fruit and vegetables more accessible or teaching cooking skills for example - but they are generally practical in nature and focus on changing habits and behaviour. They involve local people who in turn are the main beneficiaries and for whom the benefits, in terms of social networking and self confidence, may be wider than just a healthier diet. So, although the outcomes of such projects may be modest in terms of the wider population, they may be profound for those who are involved. " 'Food projects' are about more than just food."²

BACKGROUND

'Cook it!' is a healthy eating, cooking skills programme produced by the Health Promotion Agency (now part of the Public Health Agency) for use in Northern Ireland and aimed primarily at low-income groups. It covers healthy eating (using the Balance of Good Health/Eatwell Plate model), food hygiene in the home and practical hands-on cooking. Delivery of 'Cook it!' programmes is by specially trained tutors, who are usually recruited from community and voluntary sector organisations.

¹ Investing for Health; DHSSPSNI 2002

² 'Food projects and how they work' by Pauline McGlone, Barbara Dobson, Elizabeth Dowler and Michael Nelson. Joseph Rountree Foundation, March 1999

In 2004 Big Lottery funding was secured in Northern Ireland to establish four “Cook it!” teams – one in Causeway Trust and one each in the Eastern, Southern and Western Board areas. The Western ‘Cook it!’ team was based at the Health Action Zone office in Strabane, Co Tyrone, with the task of providing training and support for ‘Cook it!’ tutors and their groups throughout the Western area.

The Western ‘Cook it!’ team had three posts:

- ◆ Community Dietitian - full time (project lead)
- ◆ Development Officer – part time
- ◆ Administrative Assistant – part time

The project was a great success and both the local and regional evaluation showed the ‘Cook it!’ programme to be an effective way of helping participants shop, cook and eat more healthily. The funding however, was short term and the Western ‘Cook it!’ team, enthusiastically backed by their Working Group, determined to seek mainstream funding to continue and develop the project.

In July/August 2006 two scoping exercises were carried out in the Western area. The first of these exercises aimed to assess the level of support that the statutory services could make available for community food and nutrition projects³. The second assessed the number and variety of food and nutrition projects underway in community organisations at that time⁴. The surveys showed that the ‘Cook it!’ team was the only agency that had the time and resources to co-ordinate and provide the training and support necessary for ‘Cook it!’ to continue. They also showed a wide variety of food and nutrition initiatives - some funded through the Health Service - being delivered through the community and voluntary sector but the lack of professional support available to them was evident. The one exception was ‘Cook it!’ for which the training and support provided by the ‘Cook it!’ team was deemed good.

The results of this survey, along with the evaluations of ‘Cook it!’ carried out in the Western area and regionally throughout Northern Ireland, were used to develop the proposal that a Community Food and Nutrition Team be funded and established to build on the work already achieved. This team would provide training and support for community based food and nutrition activities including ‘Cook it!’ which could thus continue to flourish in the west. Establishment of such a team would be innovative and show genuine commitment to promoting good nutrition using a community development approach, by making nutrition expertise and professional support available to community food and nutrition projects. Mainstream funding for this was identified and the new Community Food and Nutrition Team launched in April 2008.

³ Scoping Exercise and Needs Assessment Paper 1: Statutory Sector Input to Community Based Food and Nutrition Projects August 2006

⁴ Scoping Exercise and Needs Assessment Paper 2: Food and Nutrition Projects in the Community, Voluntary and Statutory Sectors August 2006

The broadening of the team's remit gave rise to new challenges and it was soon evident that more must be learned about community food initiatives. The Community Food and Nutrition Team is unique in Northern Ireland and, not surprisingly, there has been keen interest in its progress. However the team's experience was centred around 'Cook it!' training and support and involvement with other food programmes was limited. The CNG Innovation Award 2008 was seen as a means of making visits to food projects in other parts of the UK and Ireland a possibility. These visits would be a 'fact finding' mission, to learn from others about the practicalities of delivering community based food projects and gain fresh ideas that could be used in the western part of Northern Ireland. It was with this aim that the ultimately successful submission was composed and forwarded.

VISITS IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND

Barnsley Food Network

Hilder House, 49/51 Gawber Road, Barnsley, S75 2PY

Tel: 01226 773134

Website: www.barnsleyfoodnetwork.org.uk

Barnsley is a town in South Yorkshire, England. Previously sustained economically by the coal industry, it has suffered from the closure of mines and subsequent loss of employment. Health of the Barnsley population, while it has improved in recent years, is generally worse than the English average with life expectancy, adult obesity and early death from CHD, stroke and cancer, all being worse than England averages. Men from the most deprived areas have a life expectancy that is more than five years shorter than those in the least deprived areas. Levels of childhood obesity are similar to the English average while levels of breast feeding initiation are lower.⁵

Barnsley is a Spearhead Area – one of 70 Local Authorities and 88 PCTs in England that were identified in 2004 as having a scale of health inequalities that is greater than other areas and which therefore require additional support.

Barnsley Food Network was established in 2005 with the following aims:

- Provide an opportunity for people working on food issues to share information and resources promoting and building on examples of good practice.
- Encourage and support new food initiatives involving local communities.
- Help support people in their work and enable them to link to a broader network working on similar issues.
- Develop opportunities for the development of partnerships in a service delivery linked to food.
- Encourage a shared vision for local food and the promotion of a healthy diet.

The Network is run by the Food Network Co-ordinator whose role covers the set up and administration of the food network, managing the website, co-ordinating meetings and enabling stakeholders to engage with each other. The role also involves providing support to the local commissioning team which funds food initiatives such as cooking at school, promotion of healthy food for under 5s, 'Cook and Eat' schemes, work with local food retailers looking at food provision in deprived communities and food provision in the

⁵ Association of Public Health observatories: Report: Health Profile 2008 - Barnsley

workplace etc. At the time of the visit, the Food Co-ordinator was involved in promoting healthy food provision and use of locally sourced food by local public sector organisations - such as the Local Authority and hospitals in the area - who provide food for staff and clients or patients.

In April 2008 the local Food Strategy for Barnsley was produced with the aim of improving the health and well being of Barnsley communities by encouraging a healthier diet. £¼ million was identified towards meeting this aim.

Evaluation of the Food Network was carried out by questionnaire in 2008. The feedback was very positive but it was carried out among those who are interested and positive about the Food Network. More robust evaluation of the outcomes of the Network was under consideration at the time of the visit.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- Food is about more than healthy eating and encompasses many different aspects.
- In setting up a Food Network, a co-ordinator is essential to ensure that the whole project gets going. Because of the possible tensions which may arise between those with conflicting interests, eg promoting organic food and combating food poverty, the co-ordinator should be chosen with care. Dietitians have a role here because of their focus on nutrition and understanding of the complexity of influences on food choice for individuals. This gives a degree of impartiality to their work.
- Plan evaluation from the start – and look at the qualitative (outcomes) as well as the quantitative (numbers and amounts) to really prove the value of a project.
- There is so much more money available in England to address food and nutrition issues. Why is this area so ignored in Northern Ireland?

Cook and Eat

Nutrition and Dietetic Department, Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust,
Gawber Road, Barnsley, S71 2EP

Tel: 01226 730000 ext 3098/2606

Website: www.bhnft.nhs.uk/dietetics/

Cook and Eat is a programme enabling the participants to enhance their cooking skills and become informed about healthy eating. Trained 'Cook and Eat' Tutors who have undertaken an NOCN accredited course, deliver the programme. Using recipes that are colour coded according to food group, participants cook together and then sample the dishes cooked. Resources used during the course to reinforce healthy eating information include sugar and fat games. Evaluation is built into the course so that the tutors can see the benefits for themselves.

At the time of the visit, a support pack was under development.

Visit to Cook and Eat session

A visit was paid to a Cook and Eat session being held at Dearne Enterprise Centre, Goldthorpe. The session Tutor was one of the Dietetic Assistants employed by the Nutrition and Dietetic Department.

Three participants were taking part in the session and while they each had different reasons for attending, all were enjoying the course. Reasons for attending were various and included wanting to eat more healthily, concerns about children's diets, to assist with weight management, boredom with eating the same meals, and wanting to develop cooking abilities. All liked Cook and Eat because it is sociable and the recipes were tasty, inexpensive and healthy.

The tutor often improvises during session delivery to make the sessions less formal. The participants choose the dishes they will cook – usually three courses – and then cook and eat together. The recipes are available to take away and enough food is cooked to allow them to take home a portion of the dishes.

Cook and Eat is delivered in the Barnsley area by two dietetic assistants who job-share. They sometimes experience difficulty in getting a group started, but once established, the biggest complaint from participants is that the course is too short. The number of courses run is limited however, because there are only two staff trained to do the delivery. There were plans to extend the training to representatives from the community sector who would then deliver the programme in their own areas. The training is lengthy and expensive, however and it was felt that this could be a barrier to recruiting interested people from the community unless additional funding was sourced.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- With only two dietetic assistants delivering the sessions, access to Cook and Eat is limited. Recruiting trainee tutors from the community and voluntary sector would lead to an increase in delivery.
- Training is very comprehensive and of high standard which means that the tutors are well prepared with nutrition information. However the length of time required and expense of undertaking accredited training may make the course inaccessible to community and voluntary sector organisations.
- Funding for training and support is essential.
- In England, there seems to be a greater focus on public health nutrition among Primary Care Trusts than among the Health Trusts in Northern Ireland.

Liverpool Primary Care Trust

Nutrition and Dietetic Department, Abercromby Health Centre, Grove Street, Liverpool, L7 7HG.

Tel: 0151 708 9370

Website: www.liverpoolpct.nhs.uk/improving/eating/Food.asp

Community Food Workers

Community food work in Liverpool PCT started when two community food workers were recruited to deliver food programmes in the Everton area - one of the most deprived districts of the city. Initially, community food workers were recruited from the area in which they would work since this ensured that they had good local knowledge - deemed to be important in a role that was designed to bring about change in food habits of local residents.

Although no longer exclusively recruited from the communities where they will be based, many of the community food workers do live where they work. All however, are expected to have a strong interest in food and a desire to be involved in the local community. Community food workers are now employed in North, Central and South Liverpool, promoting practical skills like cooking and making healthy eating advice accessible. They deliver Taste and Eat food sessions and provide training in basic food hygiene, healthy eating, practical cooking skills and shopping on a budget. The food workers are part of the Obesity Team, which is one of three teams making up the Nutrition and Dietetic Department. They work closely therefore with the community dietitians as well as other health professionals and local community organisations.

Training for community food workers is comprehensive and includes:

- Nutrition
- Group facilitation
- Cooking skills
- Budgeting
- Presentation delivery
- Resource development
- Professionalism

The work undertaken by the community food workers has been acknowledged as a model of good practice and won the Caroline Walker Special Overall Award in 2005/06. Work is ongoing to see how community food workers can engage with chronic disease such as obesity – especially in an NHS preoccupied with waiting lists.

Other Food Initiatives

A number of food related initiatives/projects were underway in Liverpool at the time of the visit. Not all of these came under the management of the Nutrition and Dietetic Department but many would require input from the community dietitians and food workers:

Taste for Health – initiative to promote a healthier lifestyle particularly through good nutrition. Includes projects promoting 5-a-day, growing schemes, cooking schemes, Liverpool Healthy Schools, after school nutrition clubs, food labelling made easy etc. Community Food Workers contribute much to this initiative. Website www.tasteforhealth.com

Liverpool Challenge – target set of 1 million pounds weight to be lost by the population of Liverpool in one year. Community Dietitians and Food Workers involved in implementation.

CHAT – Community Health Action Team (not part of Dietetic Department) employs health trainers who signpost people to PCT services – including community food workers and the Nutrition and Dietetic Service.

Visits to Community Food Workers

(1) Local Health Fair

Community food workers are both involved in the Taste for Health initiative and deliver Cook and Taste programmes and cooking classes for after school clubs. At the Health Fair, two of the food workers manned a stand with information on healthy eating and dishes made using recipes from the 'Bag a Good Meal' recipe book for display and sampling. 'Bag a Good Meal' was produced by the community food workers and contains simple, inexpensive recipes including local favourites such as 'Scouse' – a version of Irish Stew.

The Health Fair gave local people an opportunity to access healthy eating information and find out about the classes and food initiatives available but also provided the community food workers with a valuable opportunity to network with other organisations or teams from the Liverpool Primary Care Trust. These include health trainers, who are employed by the Trust to assist members of the public to 'signpost' them to appropriate services. The health trainers can be approached by individuals and are trained to assess need and provide support so that the individual can obtain appropriate assistance.

(2) Garston Children's Centre, Garston Village Hall, Garston

Two community food workers based at Bridge Chapel Christian Centre, Garston and work in the Garston area. At Garston Children's Centre, they were taking a 'Fruity Faces' workshop as part of 'Snack Right' – a campaign to enable families of pre-school children from less well off communities, to choose healthier snacks. The event had been organised by the Family Link Worker at the Children's Centre.

The Food Workers provided washed and sliced fruit that the children could use to make faces on paper plates. They also encouraged the children to taste and eat the fruit.

G.O.A.L.S

Present at the Children's Centre, was a nutritionist who works with Sportslinx and who was working with 'GOALS' (Get our Active Lifestyle Started) – a programme for families of overweight and obese children organised as part of the Taste for Health initiative and funded under the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. 'GOALS' is an 18 week course comprising:

Nutrition - one day per week during term time
 - covers cooking, takeaways, breakfasts, snacks

Behaviour change – goal setting, body image, self esteem

Physical activity – different activities, signpost to appropriate physical activity groups or organisations

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- The same food challenges exist in Liverpool as in NI though on a much greater scale.
- The development of the network of community food workers is impressive and makes good use of dietitians' time. It also provides communities with an identifiable person with whom to work in food initiatives.
- Community food workers need a good programme of training and opportunities to build on their knowledge and skills.
- Cooking programmes are always popular.
- This visit gave me a vision of what could be in the future. However, I would not want to abandon the partnership-working that we have established with the community and voluntary sectors.
- Training for community and voluntary sector workers is of interest in Liverpool too.
- There is so much money available in England for food related work. There is also competition for this funding from private nutrition businesses.

VISITS IN THE DUBLIN AREA

Healthy Food for All

Clonliffe College, Clonliffe Road, Drumcondra, Dublin Tel: 00353 1830011

Website: www.healthyfoodforall.com

Healthy Food for All is an initiative seeking to address diet-related ill-health and to ensure that everyone on the island of Ireland has access to healthy, affordable food.”⁶ The initiative was established following the publication of the Food Poverty and Policy Report⁷ published in 2004 and commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency in collaboration with Crosscare and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. One of the recommendations of this report was the establishment of a food poverty network that would keep a database of activities and resources and facilitate information sharing, collaborative working and sharing of good practice.

The Project Worker from Healthy Food for All planned and accompanied me on a series of visits to food related projects in the Dublin area and these are summarised below.

Dublin Food Bank

35 Portland Row, Dublin 1

Telephone: 00353 (0)1 836 5040

Opening hours: Monday – Friday 9am – 4pm

In 1989, the Dublin Food Bank was set up in 1989 through Crosscare⁸ as part of a programme to address food poverty which also includes a food centre, ‘Meals on Wheels’ provision and homeless shelters. Initially opened as a six month pilot project, the Food Bank still continues its redistribution of surplus goods donated by up to fifty manufacturers, wholesale and retail outlets – items that would otherwise end up in landfill. The majority of these goods are edible food items – usually rejected because of damaged or changed packaging – though some toiletries and domestic cleaning products are also received. All goods are checked for quality before being accepted by the Food Bank and if not fit for purpose will be rejected.

Food suppliers can withdraw their donations as rapidly as they can offer them. Shortly before my visit, the new manager of one supermarket store in Dublin had decided to halt donations of unsold fresh fruit and vegetables to the Food Bank.

⁶ Healthy Food for All website www.healthyfoodforall.com

⁷ Food Poverty and Policy, Sharon Friel and Catherine Conlon, April 2004

⁸ Catholic social service agency for the Dublin archdiocese

Two Food Bank staff collect goods from donors in a refrigerated van and take them to the warehouse in north Dublin which, though small, is well equipped with chilled and deep freeze storage as well as shelving for dry goods. Fresh, dried, canned, chilled and frozen foods and drinks can therefore be accepted for redistribution by the Food Bank.

The Food Bank covers the whole Dublin area. Voluntary and charitable organisations providing meals and/or support for families, homeless and older people etc, who wish to become clients must first register with the Food Bank by writing to the manager on headed paper which includes the registered charity number. Staff can then visit the warehouse on a booked appointment basis to look at the items available, assess what and how much can be used and collect them. Organisations are charged 35 cents per kg of items from the Food Bank.

Food items stocked include:

- Dry products – rice, pasta, cereals etc
- Canned products – tomatoes, beans, vegetables etc
- Bottles and jars – sauces, ketchup etc
- Fresh vegetables – potatoes, carrots, turnips etc
- Chilled products
- Frozen products
- Drinks

Organisations are constantly contacted in order to get the food moved on. On the week prior to the visit, the Food Bank had put through 14-15 tonnes of food.

Staff:

Two full time staff man the van, collecting and unloading food items while another works in the warehouse. The manager is based in the Food Bank and is responsible for all aspects of running the operation. At the visit, the manager was expecting forty pallets of soup (with a long shelf life) the next day. This soup had been offered to the Food Bank because of a change in packaging – it would otherwise have ended up in one of Dublin City Council's deep burial sites. A large part of the manager's day can therefore be spent in phoning organisations to let them know about expected deliveries of goods so that they can be shifted as soon as possible. Food items with a short shelf life are not accepted in large quantities because it is not always possible to pass the goods on quickly enough.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- This is a great and environmentally friendly food project that benefits people and solves problems with refuse disposal for suppliers.
- The manager shows great organisational skills in dealing with the amount of food that goes through the Food Bank and the unpredictable nature of the sourcing.
- This project made me think about the huge amounts of perfectly good food that is wasted each day.

St Agatha's Food Centre

Next door to the Dublin Food Bank - and with a convenient connecting door – is St Agatha's Food Centre, one of four Crosscare food centres in Dublin.

St Agatha's Food Centre provides 'Meals on Wheels' for about thirty people each day and has a restaurant which is mostly used by older people, though the client base is constantly changing. Its close proximity makes it one of the Dublin Food Bank's most loyal customers. Sister Magdalene manages the Food Centre and has worked there for thirty years. "It is the happiest place I have ever worked in!" she said.

Volunteers collect the 'Meals on Wheels' each day and distribute them to people living on their own. The restaurant generally welcomes twenty – forty people who each pay €3 for a meal comprising soup, main course, dessert and coffee or tea. Sister Magdalene likes to give each customer a piece of fruit to take home with them. She was regretful of the decision by the Dublin supermarket store manager to no longer send fruit and vegetables to the Food Bank because this meant additional expense in order to continue giving fruit to each customer.

Most of the customers are elderly and many live alone. The Food Centre offers company, a home cooked meal and a welcome to all who cross its doorstep.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- I walked into a cosy café environment with tables beautifully laid with attractive tablecloths, nice china and flowers. The smell of home cooked food was mouth watering. It had such a warm, welcoming atmosphere.
- Sister Magdalene was an inspiration
- The food at St Agatha's was such good value – and could be so because of the link with the Food Bank.

Global Action Plan, Ballymun

27 Shangan Road, Ballymun, Dublin 9

Tel: 00353 (0)1 862 5846

Website: www.globalactionplan.ie

The Ballymun area of Dublin was for many years associated with drug dealing, violence and hopelessness. A programme of regeneration started in 1997, however, has seen the replacement of the grim flats erected in the '60s with a variety of pleasant housing styles, while gardens, parks and green spaces have been created and opportunities for training, recreation, arts and environmental action have flourished.

Global Action Plan is one of the many organisations involved in this regeneration of a community and while it is an organisation concerned with

the environment rather than food, there are lessons to be learned from their involvement and approach.

Global Action Plan believes that since the actions of the individual are important, enabling each person to adopt a more environmentally friendly lifestyle will have a collective and positive effect on the environment. In Ballymun, the organisation runs a series of programmes to this effect:

Eco Action Team
Garden Action Team
Bounty Hunters

There has been much input through the 'Garden Action' courses in showing people who had previously lived in flats how to manage a garden. This may start with planting shrubs and flowers but leads on to composting waste organic material and ultimately growing organic vegetables. Community gardens, such as the one in Sallowood, have been created and these are open to residents who can use them to hold barbecues, social gatherings, or simply as a place to sit.

The Shengan Recycling Centre opens each Wednesday and accepts all kinds of recyclable items including batteries and mobile phones. Much work has been done in teaching children and adults to recycle rubbish and the Bounty Hunters is an arts and crafts programme for children enabling them to create art works from left over and waste packaging and paper.

Global Action Plan has been fully involved in Ballymun becoming Dublin's first Fair Trade town, through promotion of Fair Trade products which are now widely available in shops and restaurants in the area. A regular Farmers' Market has also been established.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- Importance of using resources and training together to effect change.
- Green spaces are important for the environment but can also be used to grow food and cultivate an interest in eating more healthily.
- Focussing on issues like gardens and reducing waste can be used as other ways of promoting healthy food changes.

Focus Ireland Coffee Shop and Housing Advice Centre

15 Eustace Street, Dublin

Tel: 00353 (0)1 472 7500

Website: www.focusireland.ie

Focus Ireland was founded In 1985 by Sister Stanislaus Kennedy of the Religious Sisters of Charity, who had for many years campaigned on behalf of those who are deprived and marginalised before moving to Dublin in the early 1980s. Today - sitting comfortably among the trendy cafés and bars of the Templebar quarter of Dublin city - the Focus Ireland Coffee Shop and Housing Advice Centre offers good food along with housing advice and assistance to the homeless.

The Coffee Shop has been open since 1985 and offers a main meal for €1.60. This is not a soup kitchen – it is a coffee shop with customers who have the same consumer rights as anyone else eating out in Templebar. In one corner of the coffee shop is the help desk where customers can request advice on housing issues.

The Coffee Shop is staffed by three qualified chefs, a project worker (who is also a chef) and the manager. It opens seven days a week and offers meals all day:

10am –12noon	Light breakfast – tea, coffee, scones, cereal, toast, yoghurt, fruit
12noon - 3pm	Hot dinners – meat or fish or vegetarian options available, salads and dessert, fruit and yoghurt
4 - 5pm	Tea, coffee, soup and sandwiches

A three week menu plan operates and changes according to availability of food items. Meals are inexpensive and healthy.

Nutrition is a prime concern for Focus Ireland. In September 2006, the organisation launched their 'Eat Well, Be Well' campaign to improve the diet of homeless people. This campaign arose from research carried out by the organisation showing that low incomes and lack of access to cooking facilities resulted in poor nutritional intake among many homeless people.⁹

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- Selling meals creates customers with rights, protection and dignity.
- Combining coffee shop with housing centre is a great working example of how food can be used to meet another need and can do away with the stigma of being seen to enter a homeless advice centre.
- Serving a needy client base does not conflict with providing healthy food.

⁹ Hungry for Change: Social exclusion, food poverty and homelessness in Dublin. (2003) Claire Hickey and Daithí Downey

Clondalkin Community Healthy Initiative

Clondalkin Healthy Living Centre, 4 Neilstown Crescent, Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Tel: 0035 (0)1 457 0665

The Community Healthy Living Centre was originally an ordinary house and from the outside there is nothing to distinguish it from the others in the terrace. However, since September 2008, Clondalkin Community Partnership have rented it from the local authority.

Staff at the Healthy Living Centre included a community health co-ordinator, a dietetic assistant and an administrator. As a team, they have been particularly adept at building links with local health services and opening the centre for use by health professionals - thus making access to medical services easier for local people.

Ante-natal Activities

Women come to the Healthy Living Centre for ante-natal checks which are carried out by a midwife in the consulting room (also doubles as a counselling room). This provides an opportunity for pregnant women to meet the health co-ordinator, find out about the other programmes – such as Infant Massage or Healthy Food Made Easy - held at the centre and to meet their public health nurse (equivalent to health visitor).

Healthy Food Made Easy

This is a community based nutrition programme lasting 6 weeks which is co-ordinated by the dietetic assistant who works at the centre Monday – Thursday. Each session consists of a cookery demonstration by the trainer with the fifth session including a question and answer session which is attended by a dietitian.

Session		
1	Food and health – a fresh look at food	Introduction to Food Pyramid
2	Focus on fat	Cookery demonstration
3	Fibre providers	Cookery demonstration
4	Family Food	Cookery demonstration
5	Sensible shopping	Cookery demonstration Q&A session with Dietitian
6	Cook for health	Cookery demonstration Food hygiene information

The dietetic assistant, in conjunction with one of the local community dietitians, trains local trainers to deliver the programme. At the time of the visit, twelve local people had been trained to deliver Healthy Food Made Easy. Training for trainers is composed of fourteen x 3 hour sessions held once every two years. About twelve -fourteen people are usually trained and the dietetic assistant provides support for them in their delivery of the programme.

Trainers are paid by the Health Promotion Department at a rate of €40 per hour, making €100 for a 2½ hour session. If there is more than one trainer, this sum is shared between them. The Health Promotion Department are aiming for 15 - 16 courses to be held each year. There were hopes that seasonal courses lasting about 2 weeks and covering food for Christmas, Easter, summer time etc might also be introduced.

Weaning

Plans to deliver workshops on weaning for parents. Packs will be available with hand blenders, recipe ideas, ice-cube containers.

Directory of Health Services

Produced by Clondalkin Community Health Initiative to provide a list of services available in the locality, the directory is available in booklet or electronic form. The latter can be accessed at special touch screen kiosks located in libraries, community centres etc. These kiosks are funded by Wyeth and maintained by Clondalkin Health Initiative.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- The use of the Healthy Living Centre as a venue for ante-natal appointments makes health services easier to access by vulnerable and low income women in the area. It also raises awareness of the variety of services available.
- Making contact with women early in pregnancy develops relationships and provides a client group for the activities in the Centre.
- Making the Healthy Living Centre a welcoming place encourages women who would perhaps not otherwise do so, to seek help and support.

An Cosán

Kiltalown Village Centre, Fortunestown Road, Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24
Tel: 00353 (0)1 462 8488
Website: www.ancosan.com

An Cosán is a Centre of Learning, Leadership and Enterprise. It has developed from a project originally set up to promote community education of women and now houses three sections

- The Shanty Education and Training Centre (community education)
- Rainbow House (Early Childhood Education Centre)
- Enterprise Training and Network Centre (Early Childhood Education and Care)

A wide range of courses and projects are delivered here from higher education courses to the Fantasy Football League, though there is an emphasis on educating women of all ages.

While food programmes as such are not delivered through An Cosán, hospitality plays an important part in the life of the centre. Just inside the entrance is a café that is open to the public and offers breakfasts, snacks and

lunch menus. The café also provides tea, coffee and freshly baked scones for courses held on the premises.

Rainbow House, the childcare facility housed within An Cosán, has its own kitchen and provides healthy food for children attending the crèche. One of the publications An Cosán has produced is entitled 'Being a Young Mother' and offers advice to young women who are pregnant, including a short section on the importance of healthy eating during pregnancy.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- It takes a lot of hard work to set up a project but once it is established the best advertisement is word of mouth from those who have discovered the benefits of the project.
- Another example of how food can be used to underpin a project.

Dublin Food Co-op

12 Newmarket, Dublin 8

Tel: 00353 (0)1 454 4258

Website: www.dublinfood.coop

The Dublin Food Co-op was started in 1983 by a group of friends who found that buying in bulk was an economical way of purchasing food. The money each of the founders budgeted for food was pooled to make the working capital. Each founder compiled a list of the food items they required and these were then combined to make one large order which was purchased from a wholesaler before being weighed and portioned out by the group. As time progressed, cheaper suppliers were sought and the Co-op grew. Now however, the original system of advance ordering, bulk buying and self packaging has been abandoned because of difficulties in maintaining health and safety standards.

Despite this, the Food Co-op has grown over the years and adopted new approaches. It now runs food markets on Thursdays and Saturdays in its premises in Newmarket. High quality fresh, local produce – much of it organic – is on sale, as well as the Co-op's own range of organic dry food and prepared foods. Many of the stall-holders are also producers.

Most of the founding members were vegan or vegetarian and the Co-op still does not sell meat or meat products. Promotion and provision of 'ecologically acceptable' products is the basis of the organisation and so organic clothes, books, and plants etc are available as well as food items. At the sides of the food market are stalls that can facilitate cookery demonstrations or freshly prepared dishes and Amnesty's 'Freedom' café offers refreshments in keeping with the Food Co-op's ethos. Other services and events available to members include bulk buying and pre-ordering services, lectures and performances.

Membership of the Co-op is essential in order to shop at the market. A 10% discount on purchases is available for members who join the 'Help Rota' which is made up of volunteers who, every seven weeks, contribute about two hours of their time to running the Co-op.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- The market is impressive and shows what a few people who have limited budgets and a lot of determination can achieve!
- Although the Food Co-op was originally set up as a means of enabling the founders to make their food budgets go further, it now serves the needs of those who have particular views on food production and the environment.

Fatima Groups United

Community Porta-Cabins, Reuben Street, Rialto, Dublin 8

Tel: 00353 (0)1 453 4722

Website: www.fatimagroupsunited.com

Fatima Mansions was built in 1949 to accommodate families living in inner city Dublin tenements that were due for demolition. Over the years, owing to closure of local industry and rising unemployment, the estate fell into disrepair and had some of the worst social and living conditions in Ireland.

In 1995 a number of residents came together with the help of the Rialto Community Drug Team, and formed Fatima Groups United with the aim of tackling the increasing and chronic social problems – unemployment, poor housing, poverty, drugs – and the isolation and demonisation that accompanied residing in the area. Over the years, the group has been an active leader in the regeneration of the Fatima area in all aspects – education housing, improved access to services, employment, environment etc.

The Fatima Community Centre hosts a number of activities including a children's homework club, youth club, holistic therapies, women's and men's groups and parenting groups.

The place of food at Fatima

Food is used as an enticement to get people to use the community centre – from dropping in for coffee with a friend to enrolling on a course. At each activity organised at the community centre, food is available.

The Homework Club meets each day at 3pm. Children arrive and have a short time to 'let off steam' before homework starts. The children eat together once homework is completed and a cook is employed to prepare healthy food each day.

The need for a community cooking course has been identified but it was commented that there seemed to be nothing between a 'chefs' course and

'Healthy Food Made Easy' though they were looking at 'Cook Well' which can be downloaded from the internet.

The Health Workers have forged links with one of the community dietitians at the Health Promotion Department in Tallaght to investigate introducing a weight management programme at the Community Centre.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- The needs in the Rialto area were initially so profound that food and healthy eating were not high up the list of priorities and yet the use of food as an enticement to get people to take up courses and use the facilities available has been rewarded.
- Sometimes the 'scenic route' is the best when promoting healthy food choices.

Fettercairn Health Space

Fettercairn Community Health Project, Fettercairn Community Centre,
Tallaght
Tel (mobile): 00353 (0)86 7907778

The need for improved access to services including health services, was identified in a summary report produced by Fettercairn Community Health Project in December 2007.¹⁰ The survey collected the views of local residents and identified a number of priorities. Of particular concern was the lack of a GP, dentist or pharmacy in the Fettercairn area. Additional health and wellbeing concerns highlighted included the need for health promotion and information, diet and nutrition issues, weight problems and a lack of affordable fresh food.

In response to this survey, the Community Health Project received funding for a Health Space and a project worker was appointed to co-ordinate use of the Health Space.

The Health Space comprises three rooms in Fettercairn Community Centre. One room is designated as a treatment room for minor injuries while the other is used for group sessions. At the time of the visit, this room was being used for speech and language therapy, baby clinics and as a meeting place for a women's group. The third room acts as an office.

At the time of the visit, the community health worker was in the process of negotiating the use of the Health Space for breast screening, social activities and for 'Healthy Food Made Easy'. One of the difficulties encountered however, has been the lack of interest in the Health Space. This perhaps was

¹⁰ Taking the First Steps to a Healthier Fettercairn (2007)

because the most pressing health service deficit identified by local people – namely that of lack of a GP – had not been addressed.

IMPRESSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

- There is a lot of benefit in addressing the anxieties and needs identified by a community rather than putting in place what statutory services perceive to be a solution.
- Communities work more enthusiastically at solutions that come from within than those imposed from outside.

VISITS IN SCOTLAND

Get Cooking

Strathbrock Partnership Centre, 189a West Main Street, Broxburn, West Lothian EH52 5LH
Tel: 01506 771793

Get Cooking is a healthy eating, cooking skills programme delivered by trained Tutors. The programme runs over 6 sessions, and includes information about food hygiene, budgeting and healthy eating. It is aimed particularly at low income and vulnerable groups. Recipes are taken from the Cookwell course¹¹.

The development officer for Get Cooking who is employed by the Midlothian Council is also a dietitian. The role includes the organisation and delivery of training for Get Cooking tutors, who are recruited from statutory sector or community organisations. The training programme is made up of six ½ day sessions, covering nutrition, group work and adult education issues regarding literacy and numeracy.

The project commenced in 2004 with Lottery funding for three years and as a partnership between West Lothian Food and Health Steering Group, NHS Lothian and Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh. Training for Tutors originally took twenty weeks but has been revised to six ½ day sessions followed by supervised delivery of one Cook and Eat session – supervision and observation being carried out by a member of the team or the line manager.

Get Cooking is delivered to many different client groups who set individual targets for their own food intake and exercise and then assess each week how they are doing in meeting the targets.

Cooking by Numbers is a practical cooking course providing an opportunity for participants to gain an SQA¹² numeracy qualification. About three or four of these courses are held each year, facilitated by a 'Get Cooking' Tutor and an Adult Education tutor from Community Education.

LEARNING POINTS

- Get Cooking is a similar type of programme to Cook it!
- There was recognition that recruiting Tutors from the community maximises delivery of the programme. There was much interest shown in how we recruit from the community and how effectiveness of the Cook it! programme was evaluated.
- Cooking by Numbers – a great idea. Could it be used in prison or in conjunction with organisations offering adult education?

¹¹ Food Standards Agency 2003

¹² Scottish Qualifications Authority

Willow grove Therapeutic Day Programme

Willow Grove House Day Unit, 1-6 Willow Grove, Craigshill, Livingston
West Lothian, EH54 5LU
Tel: 01506 434274

Willow Grove House Day Unit is a day centre for young people aged 11-18 with behavioural or psychiatric problems. It is part of the Department of Family Psychiatry of West Lothian Healthcare Trust and operates as a day patient unit. One member of staff has a particular interest in eating disorders and there is a link with the Young Person's Unit at the Royal Edinburgh Psychiatric Hospital.

Up to eight young people attend each day. A number of different approaches from therapeutic to practical are used to address their problems. These include:

- Talking therapy
- Bullying issue groups
- Get Cooking
- School room
- Voluntary work

Programmes are tailored to individual need. The young people referred to the Unit sign a contract to attend the courses assigned to them. Attendance starts at 9.30am each morning and prior to this, a risk assessment is carried out on each child due to attend that day.

A link with school is maintained and the unit includes a school-room with a qualified teacher. Willow Grove is also registered as an examination centre and the teacher works closely with each child's own school so that pupils can sit their examinations at the unit.

Food and meals play an important part in the life of Willow Grove. Staff arrive early and have breakfast together to facilitate the risk assessment. It is policy for the staff and young people to eat together during lunch time each day.

'Get Cooking' is run by two trained members of staff and is very popular with the young people. It started as a summer programme but is now run on a weekly basis every Tuesday for two hours. Food hygiene principles are strictly enforced and the programme adapted to suit the needs of the young clients – for example, with clients who have anorexia and are happy to prepare food but less happy with eating.

Recipes from the 'Get Cooking' pack are used along with the tutors' own recipes, but the young people taking part are also encouraged to develop their own cooking skills eg making omelettes, pancakes etc and pass these on to others. Fruit is provided and portioned up at each cooking session. As the course progresses, the tutors collect verbal feedback on how each participant in the group is meeting their own targets.

LEARNING POINTS

- Practical cooking programmes have other benefits such as encouraging group participation, enabling participants to achieve.
- Cooking makes learning about healthy eating and food hygiene fun.
- Food can be used as therapy for other problems as well as building lifeskills in this setting.

West Lothian Food & Health Development (WELFEHD)

Unit 5, Heron Square, Deans Industrial Estate, Livingston, EH54 8QY

Tel/Fax: 01506 429000

Website: www.welfehd.co.uk

The West Lothian Food & Health Development is a social enterprise that exists to supply high quality fruit and vegetables to schools, nurseries, retailers and food co-ops throughout West Lothian. Where possible, food is locally produced and seasonal. Among the services provided are:

- Support for food co-ops
- Fruit and vegetable supply to retailers
- Pre-packed fruit and vegetable portions for school healthy tuck shops and packed lunches
- Home and workplace delivery schemes

Started in 2006 to act as a wholesaler for local community food outlets, WELFEHD has since rapidly expanded, moving premises three times in the process. The enterprise now has fourteen paid staff, provides opportunities for volunteering and is planning to move into new purpose-built accommodation. WELFEHD aims ultimately to be an independent enterprise.

Fruit and vegetables are sourced from local markets and growers. WELFEHD has formed partnerships with several local farmers who have been pleased to have a guaranteed local market for their produce.

Fruit and vegetables are sold at a profit to food co-ops, private companies, schools and individuals. Community food outlets such as the food co-ops and schools are charged less than private companies but prices are competitive. Local food co-ops run fruit and vegetable shops and stands at hospitals, health centres, government offices etc. They are always encouraged to site their shops and stands in public places frequented by many people, to ensure that the outlets sell a lot of fruit and vegetables and are profitable,.

WELFEHD sells directly to hospitals and schools and provides portioned fruit and vegetables for healthy tuck shops and lunch boxes at a cost considerably less than that of supermarkets. Demand for them is high. A member or staff is employed from Sunday to Thursday to cut and package the fruit and vegetable portions. At the time of the visit, there were plans to install in their new premises an automated system of portioning and packing the fruit.

WELFEHD also supply schools with competitively priced fruit juice in 200ml cartons.

One unusual aspect of WELFEHD is that they operate a 'returns' policy meaning that food co-ops can return unsold produce. This has not created problems because WELFEHD contacts are so diverse and numerous that the returned produce can be sold elsewhere. This policy has enabled food co-ops to offer a more extensive range of fruit and vegetables to their customers. They do not have to stick to 'the usual' choices of produce for fear of not being able to sell unusual items, but can take a chance on more exotic varieties and see if they sell. This has increased the choice available at outlets and has led to bigger orders.

In the future WELFEHD aims to become completely self sufficient so that grants will no longer be necessary. They would like to employ a nutritionist to put healthy eating information into their publications, analyse recipes, provide fruit and vegetable information and train the co-op volunteers. There are plans to teach marketing to community groups and ultimately to be able to pass on some of the profits to their members.

LEARNING POINTS

- This was a sustainable, profitable, social enterprise business with a conscience – and it was making a difference to what people eat.
- An important factor in the success of the project was knowledge of the fruit and vegetable business - the Managing Director had worked in the business for years.
- Marketing is essential for food co-ops.

Fife Community Food Project

Levenmouth Regeneration Initiative, 36 College Street, Buckhaven,
Fife KY8 1JY
Tel: 01592 411266

The aim of the Fife Community Food Project is to enable Fife inhabitants to eat more healthily. The key outcomes of the project are:

1. To increase understanding and information on healthy eating
2. To encourage local people to become more involved
3. To provide opportunities within local areas for people to make affordable healthy food choices
4. To develop local projects highlighting all aspects of food including growing, sustainability, cooking skills and access to healthy food choices.

Three community food workers are employed to develop the project and roll it out in the Fife area by providing support and help with programmes. A dietitian

from the local Trust provides input one day per week to the Fife Community Food Project.

Food projects supported by the Community Food Workers include:

Clued up Youth Project

Tuesday Cooking club which includes putting young people through elementary food hygiene in order to make them employable in the catering industry.

Clentry Nursery Fruit and Vegetable stall

The Nursery runs a fruit and vegetable stall each week and a recent development has been the provision of soup packs containing all the vegetables necessary to make a pot of soup plus a copy of the recipe. These packs have been very popular. Cooking classes are also held at the Nursery and orders for fruit and vegetables can be made through the stall and the cost is less than in the local supermarket.

Healthy eating on a budget (Homestart)

Women from varying backgrounds attended a cooking class. Classes on weaning were also offered. Mothers participating in this scheme can gain a food hygiene certificate, which may be helpful to them in finding employment.

Greenfingered Club

Establishment of a vegetable garden at Abbey View Childcare Centre, Fife where children can grow vegetables and take them home with them.

Woodlands Family Unit

The soup pack scheme has been very popular here. The packs contained all the ingredients and recipe to make lentil soup – a tasty, healthy soup that only takes about half an hour to make.

Men's Cooking Club

A cooking class with an emphasis on healthy eating on a budget, was offered to men - many of whom were carers for the family. The class was held on Friday evenings and a full meal – soup, main course and fruit dessert – prepared by the participants who could then take the meal home for the family. The programme was held in a nursery school and linked to a gardening scheme.

Additional programmes were also held. The 'Four Week Count Down to Christmas!' programme showed participants how to cook a Christmas dinner while the 'International Cooking' programme featured recipes from around the world.

Hoe, Soe and Grow

This project tackles the regeneration of unused ground and seeks to put it back into productive use for growing vegetables.

LEARNING POINTS

- Community food workers can concentrate on working closely with a specific community or organisation. It means that the organisation does not have to bear the expense of employing someone to deliver food programmes.
- The amount of work that can be carried out is limited by the capacity of the community food workers.

WECAN! Food for Fife Project

Rural Business Centre, Elmwood College, Carslogie Road, Cupar,
Fife, KY15 4JB

Tel: 01334 658704

Website: http://www.wecan.org.uk/fff_index.php

The WECAN Food for Fife project aims to “fight food poverty and increase access to a healthy diet through encouraging community groups to start local food projects”¹³ that come under three main categories:

- Growing/producing
- Supplying/distributing
- Composting

The project is focused on the most needy communities in Fife where low income and poor access to services are important issues and where uptake of fresh, local and seasonable food is limited. Enabling local people to establish projects not only makes good food attainable but builds a base of skilled help and support that can be shared through the WECAN network and encompass the whole ‘virtuous circle’ of food: growing, supplying and composting.

WECAN offers support to a variety of food initiatives including:

Farm shops and tea rooms

Organic producers of beef, lamb, pork

Local fishmongers

Soft fruit and mushroom growers

Producers of free range poultry and eggs

Local ice cream, chocolate, jam, pickle and honey producers

Organic nurseries

Community orchards, gardens and allotment schemes

Community cafes

Community supported agriculture

Composting schemes

¹³ FANmail, Food Access Network UK, Issue 38: May 2007

Groups linked to WECAN:

Cupar Allotments Group

The Fife Diet project – asks people to sign up to eating food grown in Fife for one year, monitor their progress and share the experience.

Newburgh Orchard Group – formed by local people to develop and market fruit produced in the ancient orchards - the remnant of an ancient monastic settlement - in Newburgh on the Firth of Tay. The Group organises 'Fruit Days' and acts to preserve the area as a historic fruit growing area.

Further information about the above can be found on the WECAN Food for Fife website http://www.wecan.org.uk/fff_index.php

LEARNING POINTS

- Promoting local food can be used to promote care for the environment as well as being a different way of promoting healthy eating.
- Local schemes have appeal because of the benefits for those involved and contribute to a sense of community.

The Engine Shed

19 St. Leonard's Lane, Edinburgh EH8 9SH

Tel: 0131 662 0040

Email: admin@theengineshed.org

Website: www.engineshed.org.uk

A stone's throw from St Leonard's Police Station - workbase of Edinburgh's fictional detective Inspector Rebus - lies The Engine Shed. Established in 1989, The Engine Shed is a social enterprise providing training and skills for adults with learning difficulties. A three year training programme is offered, which includes work experience with other employers and appropriate vocational qualifications designed to enable the adults taking the programme to eventually enter the employment market.

There are four different work areas in the Engine Shed:

- ◆ Vegetarian Café – open to the public
- ◆ Bakery – producing bread, tray bakes, savoury pies and cakes
- ◆ Food processing – manufacture of organic tofu
- ◆ Conference facility – available for meetings and study days

'Engine Shed' foods can be purchased in The Engine Shed café as well as a number of retailers throughout Scotland.

LEARNING POINTS

- Another great example of a social enterprise based around food – but here it is food preparation skills that are the object
- Food businesses can give adults with learning difficulties the dignity of employment.

Edinburgh Community Food Initiative

22 Tennant Street, Edinburgh, EH6 5ND

Tel: 0131 467 7326

Email: admin@ecfi.org.uk

Website: www.ecfi.org.uk

The Edinburgh Community Food Initiative (ECFI) was founded in 1996, aiming to support and promote food co-ops and healthy eating by making healthy food accessible.

Food items are supplied at cost to the CFI's customers, all of which have charitable/non-profit making status. There are approximately forty customer organisations in total, made up of child and family centres, community groups (including community food co-ops), voluntary organisations and charities. The food co-ops are all situated in deprived areas and sell the produce on to local people. Foods supplied are mostly fresh fruit and vegetables with some dry goods such as pulses.

The project is largely funded through core grants from Edinburgh City Council and NHS Midlothian, but at the time of the visit, warehouse is now making a loss and ECFI seeks to change and become a social enterprise.

A team of Food and Health Workers – one of whom is a nutritionist - are based at the warehouse on Tennant Street and they have a proactive role in promoting healthy eating through cookery demonstrations, recipe books and information that are available at the food co-ops. The food and health workers also deliver healthy eating programmes:

❖ Happy Jack Project

Provides free fruit for Family Centres in the most deprived areas of Edinburgh. The children (all under fives) get a fruit snack at the Family centre and five pieces of fruit each week to take home. Basic cookery classes for parents ensure that knowledge of healthy eating is expanded along with the ability to cook healthy meals.

A Happy Jack pack containing healthy fruit and vegetable based activities and seasonal recipes is available for staff in the Family Centres to use with their families.

❖ **Little Leithers**

This project is based at one of the Family Centres in the Leith regeneration area and is aimed at families of children under five. There are four aspects to the project:

- Training in healthy eating for staff and interested parents in the area
- A lending library with books on food, recipes, weaning etc. Cooking equipment is also available for loan.
- A voucher scheme whereby participating families can exchange vouchers for healthy food in local shops – including the Halal butcher. It runs with twenty families in the Newhaven and Harbour regeneration area – most of whom are also receiving Healthy Start vouchers. Through cooking and shopping courses run by the food and health workers, the families are enabled to develop healthier patterns of eating. Families stay on the voucher scheme for one year and are then followed up to see how they manage after leaving the scheme.
- Fruit and vegetables are promoted through activities with children in some of the local nurseries.

ECFI supports many of the community Food Co-ops throughout Edinburgh and is committed to supporting a sustainable local food economy through local procurement and growing projects.

LEARNING POINTS

- Passion and commitment are essential for any food project to flourish - ECFI was started by volunteers from local food co-ops.
- Local needs can be met by local solutions.

Edinburgh Cyrenians

84-86 Jane Street, Edinburgh EH6 5HG

Tel: 0131 554 3900

Website: www.cyrenians.org.uk/

Commenced 40 years ago, Edinburgh Cyrenians work with homeless people of all ages and backgrounds, aiming to investigate the causes of homelessness and find practical ways of breaking the cycle.

The organisation runs two hostels, an organic farm run as a social enterprise, and rent and guarantee schemes. The 'Good Food in Tackling Homelessness' programme began about nine years ago and covers four distinct aspects:

- ❖ Fare Share programme – 15,000 fresh nutritious meals provided each week to homeless people. Surplus meat, dairy foods and fresh fruit and vegetables are collected from suppliers that include wholesalers and retailers and redistributed from the Fare Share warehouse in Jane Street.

All the food is in date but would otherwise be heading for land fill. Fresh fruit and vegetables make up about 40% of the food redistributed.

- ❖ Cooking at home classes – enabling participants to cook healthy meals for themselves and their families. Participants are recruited from mental health referrals, other homeless organisations etc.
- ❖ Volunteering scheme – the Good Food Depot is manned largely by volunteers, of which about half have themselves experienced homelessness. Volunteers are supported in their input to the programme through training in food hygiene and health and safety.
- ❖ Shared learning – the experience of working with homelessness is shared with other organisations through study visits, an annual Food Conference and the Edinburgh Cyrenians Good Food Handbook. This includes ideas for ways of improving access to food, how to run a Cooking at Home classes, information on healthy eating, food hygiene, food storage and kitchen safety and recipes. The handbook can be downloaded from the Cyrenians' website.

LEARNING POINTS

- Homelessness can strike anyone.
- Food plays an important part in the total picture of tackling homelessness because it promotes good health that can otherwise suffer and because of the contribution good food makes to maintaining wellbeing, through social contact in cooking classes and through mood improvement because nourishing meals are available.

Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership (LHCFHP)

Unit 7 Strathclyde Business Park, 391 Langmuir Park, Bargeddie,
Glasgow G69 7TH
Tel: 0141 771 9043

Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership (previously known as the North Lanarkshire Federation of Food Co-ops) promotes healthy eating through partnerships with local communities that make fresh fruit and vegetables more easily available to local people.

Eight employees and five delivery vehicles are based at the company's warehouse in Bargeddie. From here, fresh fruit and vegetables are sourced and supplied to local food co-ops – often situated in areas where reliance on small local shops and stores is high.

LCFHP has two main themes: Community Programmes and Children's Initiatives.

Community Programmes

Food Co-ops – sourcing and supply of fruit and vegetables for nine food co-ops all in areas of deprivation in North Lanarkshire.

Food Initiatives – supplying fruit and vegetables to educational establishments (nurseries and schools) in both North and South Lanarkshire

Fruits and Roots¹⁴ – a social enterprise scheme operating fruit and vegetable stalls in the three general hospitals in the area (Wishaw, Monklands and Hairmyres). Fruit stalls have also been sited in a further nine NHS locations in Bellshill, Coatbridge, Airdrie and East Kilbride areas. Evaluation of the Fruits and Roots programme was carried out by Glasgow University in June 2008. Customers in each area with the exception of Hairmyres, reported an increase in the fruit and vegetables they consumed and 51% of participants felt that their fruit and vegetable consumption had increased as a direct result of the Fruits and Roots initiative.

Young People's Initiatives

High Five for Fruit project supplies fruit each day to all the nursery schools in North Lanarkshire (127 in total) and six nurseries in South Lanarkshire. Workers from the LCFHP also deliver promotional activities including fruit tasting activities, cooking sessions, recipes, apple tree planting and seasonal fruit promotions. Four newsletters are produced each year and food co-ops within nurseries and schools are supported. Evaluation of the project by Glasgow University showed an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption by the children participating in the programme.

LEARNING POINTS

- Another example of a social enterprise that sees the need and then finds a practical way of meeting it.
- Fruit and vegetables can be sold cheaply through food co-ops and stalls if the leadership and support are right.
- Very interesting to compare the effect on fruit consumption among the children taking part in the High Five for Fruit programme with results from the Fresh Fruit in Schools pilot programme in NI. Here, fruit was supplied to schools but there was no reinforcement of information among the children or their parents. Little wonder that the children's fruit consumption did not increase!
- LCFHP has only two staff who carry out the activities in the nurseries and yet they achieved a significant change.

¹⁴ **hphs** Fruits and Roots Case Study: can be downloaded from http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/9478-HPHS_18_Fruits&Roots.pdf

Making a Difference - Community Food and Health (Scotland) annual networking event: 11 November 2008

The CFHS¹⁵ annual networking conference was held in the Thistle Hotel, Glasgow on the 11th November. Visits in Scotland were planned to allow attendance at the conference which provided an excellent opportunity to find out about work in community food initiatives. The workshops attended were:

Morning: Workshop four: Early years
(Kenny MacDonald, DrumchapelLIFE. Glasgow).

The 'Food Dragons' programme delivered through a partnership between DrumchapelLIFE and local nursery schools was summarised. This initiative started following the recognition that despite ongoing work on healthy eating with young children in nurseries, the information was not getting back to parents. Four 'dragon' characters - fruit, soup, snacks and pizza – are used to focus on healthy eating and engage the children, parents and families in healthy eating fun activities that take place over two days.

Evaluation has been carried out using a simple tool and results are very positive but no in depth evaluation to look at longer outcomes has yet been tackled.

Afternoon: Workshop eight: Older People
(Margaret McLaren, Catering Officer, Bield Housing Association Association Ltd)

The Bield Housing Association is the largest association in Scotland, providing a wide variety of housing for older people. A wide variety of food needs are catered for including all meals in care homes, healthy meals and snacks for those in sheltered accommodation and food at luncheon clubs.

Nutrition is important and a client focussed Nutrition Policy is being developed. This has been a real challenge since it was developed from scratch and covers a wide variety of needs. Client interviews have been key to ensuring that the client focus is maintained.

NOTE:

A copy of the conference programme is shown in appendix 2. The full report on the conference giving summaries of the speakers presentations, table discussion, summaries of the workshops and summing up can be found on the Community Food and Health (Scotland) website:

www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk

¹⁵ Community Food and Health (Scotland)

Healthy Valleys Project

31 Stuart Terrace, Rigside, Lanark, ML11 9NN

Tel: 01555 880666

Email: info@healthyvalleys.org.uk

Website: <http://healthyvalleys.org.uk/>

The Healthy Valleys project was established in 2003 to promote health and well being among the population of rural south Lanarkshire. In partnership with the Integrated Children's Services and the NHS it is part of a three pronged approach to providing early intervention with vulnerable families aimed at the Data Zones with the lowest 15% scores on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The area is largely rural, encompassing agricultural land and small market towns.

Through 'Healthy Valleys' local people can access a number of initiatives that promote healthier lifestyle choices and cover:

- Stress Management
- Diet and Nutrition
- Exercise and Activity
- Health Information
- Volunteering Opportunities
- Training

Diet and nutrition courses include:

- Feeding the Family
- Healthy Weaning Initiative
- Ready Steady Get Cooking

These courses are delivered by Healthy Valleys staff or trained volunteers.

Feeding the Family: - a six session cooking course aimed at enabling parents to cook healthy meals for their families. I visited one of the courses held for parents at Forth Sports Centre, Forth, Lanark by two of the project workers.

Parents come to the course and get the opportunity to cook together. The tutor delivering the course first explains the recipe and then the parents cook in pairs. Once the food has been prepared the group meet together to decide what to cook the following week. Recipes are sourced by the tutors from the internet or friends and family. Ideally the tutor tries the recipe out before the group makes it.

Healthy Weaning Initiative – a four session course that enables mothers to prepare home made nutritious weaning foods. The tutors use 'First Food Fast' by Lara Boyd - a recipe book providing recipes and tips for healthy weaning - as a resource during the course. The sessions are structured with a script for the Tutor to follow and include cooking demonstrations showing how to cook for this age group. Recruitment to the course is through advertising, referral or

signposting of mothers to course by health visitors or through the local Breast Feeding Group.

Ready Steady Get Cooking - a programme enabling Primary seven children to find out about food and make healthy choices while giving them a chance to cook healthy recipes. The cooking days are facilitated by trained volunteers.

LEARNING POINTS

- Individually, dietitians have limited capacity to influence what people eat. We need to work with those who do have the power, influence and ability to bring about change. This includes those at the top ie government agencies, and those at the bottom ie. deliverers of local food programmes.
- A well written cooking programme makes delivery so much easier for tutors.

VISITS IN IRELAND

Food and Health Project for Longford, Westmeath, Laois, Offaly and Kildare

Mountmellick Development Association, Mountmellick, County Laois, Ireland
Tel: 00353 (0)57 8644989 or 00353 (0)57 8624525

The Food and Health project is a joint initiative between the Mountmellick Development Association, Westmeath Community Development Ltd and the Health Service Executive (HSE) Dublin Mid-Leinster. The project runs in a number of venues through out the Irish Midlands. A Food and Health Co-ordinator is based in Mountmellick Development Association and liaises with the local community dietitians who also support the project.

There are four components to the project:

Healthy Food Made Easy - a six session healthy eating and cooking skills course delivered to groups by a trained tutor.

Cooking For Health – a cooking course for adults with learning difficulties or poor literacy.

Healthy Heart – a three session programme covering cholesterol, stress and exercise to promote heart health. It is delivered as a programme to progress on to after Healthy Food Made Easy or Cooking for Health.

Cool Dude – a five session, healthy lifestyle programme aimed at young people and covering healthy eating, activity, alcohol and smoking.

The Food and Health project developed from a previous project covering women's health topics with travellers. The Food and Health Co-ordinator recruits tutors and organises the delivery of the programmes in the Laois area. Community Dietitians first train locally recruited tutors to deliver Healthy Food Made Easy and then, with additional training, to deliver the other programmes.

The HSE funds the project including employment of the Food and Health Co-ordinator and tutors, training, food and travel for delivery of the programmes. Local community groups are charged €200 that goes towards the cost of the programme. In addition to the training offered by the community dietitians, a chef has been brought in to take a session on cooking skills and using fish for the Healthy Heart project.

Visits to courses

Two visits were made with the Senior Community Dietitian. The first was to a group of young women taking the Catering and Hospitality Development Course at the National Learning Network, Longford. Healthy Food Made Easy is delivered as part of the 'Personal Development' element of the course. In session five the Dietitian attends to answer questions on nutrition that have arisen during the earlier part of the course.

The second visit was to the Cooking for Health course underway at St. Christopher's Training Centre, Longford. This programme also forms part of the personal development module and is offered to clients attending the Training Centre as well as interested participants from other programmes who have previously attended the Centre.

LEARNING POINTS

- Dietitian attends Healthy Food Made Easy during session five to answer questions. If the programme is being delivered correctly there should be questions and tutors are instructed to record these.
- Cooking made Easy is an easily accessible course for adults with learning difficulties and one that is very popular.

DISCUSSION

The food projects visited during 2008-09 were of varying nature. Some were projects set up to promote a particular aspect of healthy eating, like the many schemes based around the theme of '5-a-day'. Some promoted a particular ethical or environmental stance on food or addressed issues of waste. Many projects promoted practical skills such as cooking or growing food while others used food as a means of reaching marginalised target groups or to make access to other services possible. All of them had one thing in common – passion and commitment on the part of those involved.

It became evident during the visits that just 'promoting healthy eating' was not always the best way to bring it about. Sometimes it is necessary to 'take the scenic route'; to find out what really captures people's attention – be it cooking or growing or just having somewhere local to go for coffee – and use this to bring about change. There is an opportunity here for really creative thinking as the projects visited frequently displayed.

It was also evident that food and nutrition are really important to people – concern about diet is not limited to health professionals. Local people wanted to make better access to healthy food a reality. They knew about healthy eating but could see the barriers that existed. They saw the food needs of children, older people, the homeless, the unemployed and wanted to meet them. This desire to change things became the driver for many local food projects.

Above all, the visits underlined the important part that food plays in everyday life. Food is about more than nutrition. It is a means of showing hospitality, of expressing affection and care for those we love. Sharing food can build relationships and being able to cook and serve a tasty meal brings a sense of achievement. Food based social enterprises can create employment while also supporting local projects like food co-ops and ultimately offering their customers good value – nutritional as well as monetary.

In supporting community food projects, community dietitians have an important contribution to make. We can deliver nutrition training, plan programmes and evaluate their effectiveness. We can make sense of complex nutrition information, putting it into plain language. We can tailor nutrition information to the needs of a particular client group and counter the hype, myth and sensation that often accompany media reports of food and nutrition research.

In Northern Ireland we have unacceptable levels of diet related ill health. While this is recognised widely, there seems to be a lack of leadership when it comes to changing what we eat. Cook it! – the healthy eating, cooking skills programme originally produced by the Health Promotion Agency, designed to be delivered through trained community tutors and funded in most of the Province for three years through the Big Lottery - has not received province-wide mainstream funding, despite being recognised as a well constructed and

effective programme. Indeed, the only original Cook it! team remaining, is that in the west – now the Community Food and Nutrition Team. There simply does not seem to have been the same level of commitment to community-based food programmes that other parts of the UK and Ireland have shown.

Perhaps this will change. Fit Futures – the policy to tackle childhood obesity – has been published. New standards for school meals have been introduced, along with nutrition training for catering staff, two nutrition associates to ‘police’ the standards and a community dietitian to develop the work underway on changing what children eat at school. Innovative programmes for tackling obesity can be found in each Trust area. Some however, remain unused because of lack of capacity and funding.

But all this focuses solely on weight gain and while obesity is an undeniable problem in Northern Ireland, not everyone is obese and not everyone who is thin is healthy. What we as a nation eat, is actually everyone’s concern.

Talk of promoting good nutrition is not enough. There needs to be action both at government and local level. A Province-wide Food and Nutrition forum, genuinely focusing on access to healthy food and bringing together all agencies - government departments and communities, nutrition professionals and voluntary organisations, consumers and food providers, (one might say, the poor and humble as well as the rich and mighty) – would be positive step forward. The setting up in 1996 of the Scottish Diet Action Plan - now Community Food and Health (Scotland) - provides a working example of how the profile of food and nutrition can be raised. Changing eating habits is slow work but it needs commitment from everyone. Commitment however, is not shown through words or speeches or strategies or reports. It is shown through action.

Down at the level of the community food project is where the results of action are most visible. They may be modest; they may pass unnoticed by those who are not involved but the results are there in community gardens, cooking clubs, fruit and veg co-ops, food re-distribution schemes etc. There is a need for a consistent approach to promoting healthy eating – one which starts at the top, at government level and makes its way right down to grass roots, to where people live and work. An approach where funding for local food projects is not cut off before the benefits are fully realised, where nutrition messages are consistent and targeted, where local people feel they are involved in decisions about what they eat and really believe they will benefit in health terms by making changes. Surely the population of Northern Ireland can only gain from such an approach!

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Summary of visits

DATES	VISITS
18/09/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Barnsley Food Network ➤ Barnsley Nutrition and Dietetic Department, Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust ➤ 'Cook and Eat' programmes
19/09/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Liverpool Primary Care Trust ➤ Visits to Community Food Workers
20/10/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Healthy Food for All project ➤ Dublin Food Bank ➤ St Agatha's Food Centre ➤ Global Action Project, Ballymun ➤ Focus Ireland Coffee Shop
21/10/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clondalkin Community Healthy Living Centre ➤ An Cosán, Tallaght ➤ Dublin Food Co-op ➤ Fatima Groups United, Rialto ➤ Fettercairn Health Space
5/11/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Get Cooking, Broxburn ➤ West Lothian Food & Health Development
6/11/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fife Community Food Project - Community Food Workers ➤ WECAN Project
7/11/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engine Shed ➤ Edinburgh Community Food Project ➤ Good Food Project, Edinburgh Cyreniens
10/11/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership
11/11/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CFH (Scotland) Networking Conference
12/11/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feeding the Family programme, Healthy Valleys Project
12/02/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Food and Health Project, Mountmellick and Longford.

Appendix 2:

**Community Food and Health (Scotland)
Making a Difference – Annual Networking Conference,
Thistle Hotel, Glasgow 11th November 2008**

Programme

09.30 – 10.00	Registration Tea and coffee
10.00 – 10.05	Introduction and housekeeping CFHS
10.05 – 10.20	Conference overview Moyra Burns, Health Promotion Manager, NHS Lothian
10.20 - 11.00	Morning plenary Policy making a difference Kay Barton, Deputy Director, Scottish Government Chief Medical Officer and Health Improvement Directorate Measurement making a difference Michael Craig, Public Health Advisor, Evidence for Action Team, NHS Health Scotland Activity making a difference Ian Shankland, Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership
11.00	Armistice Day (two-minute silence)
11.02	Table exercise leading to morning break 11.30 – 12.00
12.00 – 1.00	Morning workshops
1.00 – 2.00	Lunch and marketplace
2.00 – 3.15	Afternoon workshops
3.15 – 3.45	Final plenary Dave Simmers – Strategic Director, Community Food Initiatives North East, and Food Champion for Food Access and Affordability: Food and Drink Leadership Forum Kate Barlow – Co-ordinator, Food and Health Alliance, NHS Health Scotland Summing up ‘What have you heard?’

Appendix 3:

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the many people who, through their help and assistance, have made it possible for me to visit so many food projects and compile this report. My thanks go to everyone who has made it possible:

- ❖ The Community Nutrition Group members and committee for providing and organising the Innovations Award and the judging panel for giving the 2008/09 Award to me.
- ❖ Siobhan Sweeney, Manager, Western Health Action Zone who was at the time my line manager and who gave me study leave to make the visits.
- ❖ Bill Gray, Community Food and Health, Scotland who put me in contact with other organisations and suggested projects to consider visiting when in Scotland.
- ❖ All those who very kindly organised visits for me:
 - Anne Pridgeon, Barnsley Food Network
 - Clarinda Redmond, Barnsley Hospital Trust
 - Dr Brian Johnston, Liverpool PCT
 - Sarah Fleming, Healthy Food for All
 - Shiona Jenkins, Strathbrock Community Partnership
 - Celeste Thomas, Fife Community Food Project
 - Ian Shankland, Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership
 - Cara Gray and Barbara Lalor, Food and Health Project for Longford, Westmeath, Laois, Offaly and Kildare
- ❖ All those who transported me to and from food projects, bus and train stations, thus making my journeys easier.
- ❖ Everyone who gave me permission to visit their projects, shared their experiences with me and made the visits so memorable. You have been an inspiration and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to meet you.
- ❖ Jackie Loach and Grainne McMacken for asking when this report would be finished – it has been quite a challenge to write it up and I needed a gentle reminder every now and again!
- ❖ My husband, Willie, who carefully proof read the report.

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