

## **What did we discuss at our most recent community food online peer session? - Building a more resilient community food sector: How does your community food work support prevention?**

This took place on 13 May online and was attended by a range of people from NHS and community and voluntary sector organisations.

### **What was this peer session about?**

Public Health Scotland partnered with Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) to run an *Evaluating Prevention* workshop earlier this year to outline how prevention works in a community food context. We used this peer session to share learning from the workshop.

### **What did participants discuss?**

In breakout groups we discussed a common issue that community organisations may try to address: “People are struggling to eat well in your community”. During feedback after discussion, we considered how some of these activities might contribute to preventing wider and longer-term problems and used a logic model to help us.

### **How can community food initiatives (CFIs) help address this problem?**

- A wide range of community food activities were delivered or supported by participants, including:
  - Food larder network, REHIS training, community diners/cafés (e.g. for recovery groups and faith-based groups), and cooking programmes like *Confidence to Cook*
- There was a strong emphasis on dignity, acceptable food, embedding nutrition messages, effective signposting and the importance of community-led approaches and building trust.
- Training and capacity building (delivered by NHS partners) was considered essential to enable delivery via partners (Third Sector Interfaces, growers, community chefs, coaches)
- Evaluation challenges for cooking groups were addressed through accessible methods, such as QR codes and easy-read forms to measure success.
- There was recognition of wider impacts of community activities such as:
  - Skills development, training, and pathways to employment.
  - Supporting participant’s confidence by pairing less confident participants with volunteers for cooking or other activities.
  - Food growing and group activities support mental health, social connection, and wellbeing.
  - Pathways into training, employment, and decision-making.

### **Are there still barriers that CFIs struggle to address for participants?**

- Local projects cannot reach everyone in need in their communities
- Rural areas may have limited access to affordable food; this is beyond the scope of a community organisations and linked to wider issues
- Infrastructure barriers often beyond local control
- There has been a greater emphasis on food banks and cooking group provision has declined - loss of key delivery partners might be contributing to this shift
- Ongoing challenge of ensuring nutritious food, including where services rely on surplus food

### Useful links

- [More information about prevention in public health is available on the PHS website.](#)
- Prevention is mentioned in Scottish Government policies such as the [Population Health Framework](#), [Cash-First: Towards Ending the Need for Food Banks in Scotland](#), a focus on prevention is also important to meet [National Good Food Nation](#) outcomes.
- Edinburgh Community Health Forum, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE), Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) and Community Health Exchange (CHEX), and Voluntary Health Scotland came together to issue a joint statement on prevention within the third sector. [You can read the joint statement and case studies on the SCDC website.](#)
- We used information from the ESS website to understand the community food sector's contribution to preventing problems:
  - ESS information on Prevention: [Evaluating Prevention - Evaluation Support Scotland](#)
  - ESS information on evaluation: [Evaluation Pathway - Evaluation Support Scotland](#)
  - Logic models: [Support Guide 1c - Developing a Logic Model - Evaluation Support Scotland](#)
- Other organisations or programmes mentioned by delegates included:
  - The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland: [www.rehis.com](http://www.rehis.com)
  - Confidence to Cook Grampian programme: [www.healthyweightgrampian.scot.nhs.uk/confidence-2-cook](http://www.healthyweightgrampian.scot.nhs.uk/confidence-2-cook)

### About the peer sessions and how you can get involved

These sessions aim to provide an informal non-judgemental networking and discussion space for people working within the community food sector and those supporting them. We aim to run several of these each year and limit the number of participants attending to ensure everyone can contribute to breakout group discussions. If you have a suggestion for a community food topic that you'd like to speak about or discuss with your peers, please let us know by email: [phs.cfhs@phs.scot](mailto:phs.cfhs@phs.scot)