



FULL REPORT

# GOOD FOOD AND BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY THROUGH COOK AND SHARE GRANTS

EVALUATION OF FOOD FOR LIFE GET TOGETHERS

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## Executive Summary

‘Food for Life Get Togethers’ are regular community activities that connect people from all ages and backgrounds through growing, cooking and eating good food. In mid-2021 Food for Life asked community groups across the UK to apply for a £150 Cook and Share grant. Groups were invited to deliver cooking and sharing activities that would bring people together from disadvantaged and diverse communities with a view to reducing experiences of loneliness and social isolation. The food-based events were also intended to promote positive attitudes towards ageing and diversity. While the focus was on Cook and Share Month (October to November 2021), organisers were encouraged to run events on longer-term basis. Our research sought to explore how these microgrants might help build community action and promote the value of good food.

- Wider evidence shows that microgrants are often used to support small community initiatives, but there is relatively little research on what happens to the money – particularly where the spending goes towards food-based social activities.
- Using a mixed methods study design, we analysed the plans of all 153 successful grant holders. A total of 88 award holders responded to our survey about their funded activity. Of these, 19 leads took part in an in-depth qualitative interview about their small grant.
- The Cook and Share grant scheme attracted a remarkable range of small-scale organisations and groups serving different communities of place and interest.
- Cook and Share events were often substantial social occasions, with the estimated number of participants at an event, or events, ranging from 10 to 400, with a mean of 39 and mode of 20 participants.
- While most groups of participants involved multiple generations, it was also notable that there was strong engagement with people living with mental health issues, long-term conditions, on low income, or with other forms of social and health disadvantage.
- Small grants benefit organisers differently depending on their experience. First timers stand to gain basic skills in setting up community cooking events. Those with more experience use the opportunity to reach for more ambitious goals. This shows how grant givers can work with community food groups to grow the capabilities of people who get involved.
- Organisers have a wide range of motivations for wanting to run a cook and share activity. Alongside a desire to support good causes, personal benefits (social connections, skills, feelings of achievement and recognition) are important drivers for organisers.
- The majority of organisers feel that their Cook and Share events help improve the quality of life of participants (92%), enhance positive attitudes towards ageing (64%) and diversity (68%), and address loneliness and isolation (83%). Almost everyone believed their event helped people connect with each other (99%).

- Almost all organisers go on to run further activities after the first event. The strong commitments set out in the applications were confirmed at survey three months after the first event. This provides evidence that the grants had benefits that extended beyond the funding of the initial cook and share event. Organiser also learnt from experience, with over 50% intending to make additional changes.
- Organisers report a range of positive developments after the grant period. Groups that were first time recipients of external funding felt an enhanced sense of the status of their group and had a new perspective on what the group could potentially accomplish in the future.
- Some Cook and Share grant recipients used the initial monetary award is used to attract further cash and in-kind funding. Others used creative means to make the grant funding stretch further.
- Cooking and sharing events appear to be powerful connectors for participants. This was partly because food-based events made social interactions feel less threatening and can encouraged those experiencing social anxiety to attend in the first place. Events provided opportunities to make conversation, swap points of view, find out about others, help out in small ways, and generate ideas for other community activities.
- The quality the food was important for many organisers and participants. For some groups, shared meals were a way to provide nutritious food to those experiencing food poverty in a way that preserved the dignity of recipients. However, grant holders showed many ways to engage with agendas on 'good food' those linked to the environment, learning, local production, culture and celebrations.
- Given sensitivities and different points of view about what makes food 'good', many organisers made it a priority to give participants the opportunity to make decisions about what they wanted to cook and how they wanted to eat together.
- The aspirations and solutions for Cook and Share event organisers help validate previous research and learning for the Food for Life Get Togethers programme. Small grants for community food activities provide opportunities for funders and organisers to think creatively and try new ideas.
- Despite the small scale of the funding, award holders demonstrated a wide range of achievements both around how to use food in social activities and how to create wider benefits for the communities they serve.

# 1. Introduction

A significant aspect of the UK Food for Life Get Togethers (FFLGT) programme has been to support community activities through the award of small grants. By the end of 2021, FFLGT had distributed small grants of £150 to 661 agencies across the UK to a variety of bodies including schools, small community groups and other third sector organisations. Of these, 153 small grants were distributed to community groups and organisations under FFLGT's Cook and Share campaign in 2021.

This report focuses on the forms of capacity building created through the FFLGT grant schemes, with a focus on the Cook and Share grants. This is linked to an examination of the role of these capacity building processes on creating agendas for good food. We draw upon applications, survey responses and interviews from a diverse range of event organisers taking part in the 2021 the Cook and Share grants.

This is one evaluation report in a series concerned with a different aspect of FFLGT programme, each covering a particular aspect of the programme's theory of change. This report is closely linked to a subsequent report on the role of networking in the FFLGT programme. It links to previous UWE evaluation concerned with the community engagement elements of Food for Life<sup>1</sup> and research by Coventry University on community participation in good food activities<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Food for Life Get Togethers

### 2.1 The programme

Food for Life Get Togethers is a UK wide programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and delivered with the support of six national partners (see <https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/get-togethers>). The programme is part the wider Food for Life initiative led by the Soil Association with an overarching goal "to make good food the easy choice for everyone. Food for Life provide the following definition of Get Togethers:

*"Regular community activities that connect people from all ages and backgrounds through growing, cooking and eating good food."*

The three key elements of Get Togethers are (1) the importance of good food in a broad sense of the term, (2) multiple generations coming together, and (3) the creation of meaningful social interactions. These elements illustrate the close relationship the programme has with a wide range of food events that take place in community settings. Often overlooked in policy debates, community food activities touch upon many areas of life and may have an important role in wellbeing, health and wider social benefits, including for disadvantaged groups. programme aims to mobilise, build capacity and build leadership.

Food for Life Get Togethers is delivered in regions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by a partnership of six organisations led by the Soil Association. Since the start of Food for Life Get Togethers, 2424 different organisations or groups have engaged with the programme<sup>3</sup>. Engagement is taking multiple forms, including registering Get Togethers activities, receiving a grant, attending virtual networks and completing online training modules. The programme has offered different levels of grant funding, with the greatest number of awards delivered as microgrants with a value of £150. The overarching programme theory of change is to mobilise activities at the community level, build the capacity of communities to act, and to develop community leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/9238856> | <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/9238864> | <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/9238872>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.fflgettogethers.org/about/our-impact-and-research/understanding-participation-in-community-food-activities/>

<sup>3</sup> Programme records up to 31 Dec 2021.

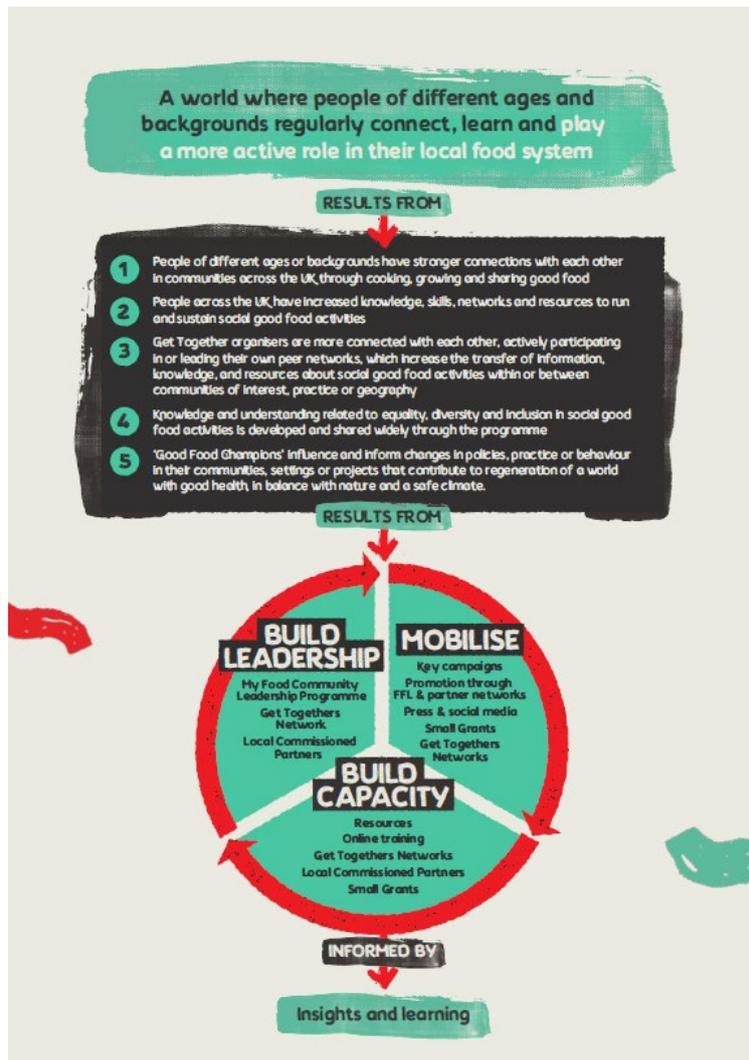


Figure 1: Food for Life Get Togethers Theory of Change (version 6)

## 2.2 Cook and Share

In the third year of the Food for Life Get Togethers, the programme team invited organisations and groups from across the UK to apply for a £150 Cook and Share grant. Cook and Share activities are defined as food-based community projects that:

- are focused on a Cook and Share activity within Cook and Share Month (16<sup>th</sup>Oct-16<sup>th</sup>Nov 2021)
- have potential to be long term
- are community led
- include people from disadvantaged and diverse communities
- bring people together
- reduce experience of loneliness or social isolation
- encourage a positive attitude to ageing and diversity

The opportunity was promoted through a range of channels including the Food for Life Facebook group and the communication channels of the Get Togethers programme partner agencies. 'Other' routes are likely to reflect the diverse networks linked to the Get Togethers programme. 239 applications were received, of which 153 were approved. Given the emphasis of the scheme on the role of food in creating social connections, the next section examines the wider literature on community capacity building, microgrants and the development of agendas around good food.

## 3. Context

### 3.1 Building community capacity

Community capacity building is a central concept for all forms of community development. Two widely used definitions of community capacity building are:

*“Developing the capacity and skills of the members of a community in such a way that they are better able to identify and help meet their needs and to participate more fully in society” (Charity Commission, 2000, p3)*

*Developing the “organizational resources or interactions that exist in a given community that can be leveraged to address a collective problem” (Chaskin, 2001, p292)*

Community capacity building can incorporate a wide variety of goals, with communities themselves having a central role in determining priorities for action. The World Health Organisation (South, 2015, p8) note that some widely reported objectives of community capacity building are to:

- combat social exclusion by giving people a voice, especially marginalised populations
- empower individuals and communities and enable them to gain more control over their lives
- mobilise community resources and energy
- aid decision-making and design more effective services through better local intelligence
- ensure community ownership and ultimately the long-term sustainability of programmes
- increase democracy, as participation is both a basic right and an essential element of citizenship

These goals illustrate how the term capacity building is used in a range of social contexts. As figure 1 shows community capacity building can be seen as one form of capacity building embedded in a wider process of change and incorporating changes for individuals. Capacity building at an individual level is often interpreted as a route towards organised action in communities. Seen from the perspective of individuals it can be useful to adapt Arnstein’s (1969) widely applied ‘ladder of citizen participation’. The adaptation in figure 2 gives a simple model of how initial individual engagement in a community activity might progress to become a leadership role within a group. In so doing the growth of the individual’s personal ‘capacity’ comes to contribute towards the collective capacity of the community to act on issues of interest. The model fits well with wider literature on civic associations and leadership development in community contexts. For example, Han’s work *How Organizations Develop Activists* (2014) is concerned with developing transformational leaders who change the affects, worldviews, and other orientations of groups. Such leaders have practical insight for action that is often born out of earlier experiences community participation.

However, it should be noted that community capacity building is often used imprecisely and can be a controversial term. As scholars such as Craig (2007, p335) observe, ideas of community capacity building readily slide into “a ‘deficit’ model of communities which fails to engage properly with their own skills, knowledge, and interests, and helps to obscure structural reasons for poverty and inequality.”

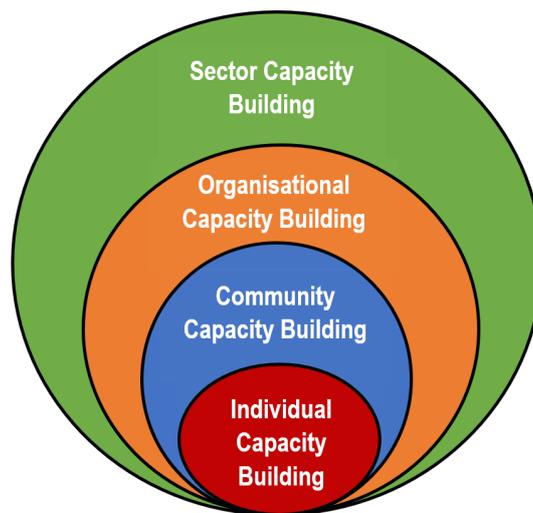
Food-based initiatives are commonly employed as routes for promoting community capacity building (e.g. Hargraves, 2018). There are many reasons why this may be the case including the potential of a shared interest in the value and meanings of food, the informality and experiential aspects of food and eating, and the shared interests of community members in food issues. A one recent UK study found (FFCC, 2021), food issues and community issues are often closely related. With respect to the influences behind the use of food in these contexts Saxena et al.’s review highlights the complexity of the issue:

*“Enablers are context-specific and they correspond to a particular combination of motivations and barriers. They include broadly five types: access to key resources (funding, infrastructure, knowledge, skills, sufficient time); effective networking and supportive local partnerships; co-designing of activities; increased community capacity (knowledge, skills, volunteers, community champions); and institutional support” (Saxena et al., 2021 p.4)*

The key resources referred to here, clearly link to the potential of small grant schemes as a enabler, which is a focus for the next section.

### 3.2 Microgrants and building community capacity

Microgrants are used in a wide range of community and voluntary sector programmes; however, research is limited on their use and impacts. In reported cases, the level of funding value of a microgrant varies considerably from a little as £50 to as high as £10,000 (Ecorys, 2020). Funding levels depend on the specific context, so it is helpful to think about small grants as a ‘funding approach’ rather than a specific value. Microgrants are often based on the rationale of reaching large numbers of beneficiaries through an application procedure that is designed to be simple for non-expert grant bidders. Microgrants are also intended to be easily accessible to small and informal groups that might not ordinarily obtain funding (Ecorys, 2020; Tamminen et al. 2014).



**Figure 2. Social capacity building: a simple model**

From the perspective of funders, microgrants are intended to enhance the reach, engagement and visibility of their programme. Accessibility and simplicity mean that they might be more attractive and inclusive for diverse and ‘hard to reach’ groups. However, award holders and funders do not always share the same view about the purpose of microgrants. Whilst award holders often seek to use the grant to continue doing existing activities, funders hope to stimulate new activities and outcomes. The situation has been compared to the difference between a traveller and an escalator (Rocket Science 2013, p27), where the former keeps things moving along and the latter goes to a new level. This contrast is particularly the case where there are pressures on funding; where there are pressures on funders to deliver innovation and pressures on award holders to survive (Mackintosh et al. 2020, Thomson & Caulier-Grace 2007).

The effects of microgrants are inherently difficult to evaluate (Hartwig et al, 2006). Given their scale, it should be anticipated that ‘small funds lead to small changes’, which are in turn not straightforward to evidence. The initiatives funded through microgrants are often very diverse. When funders seek to let ‘many flowers bloom’ it becomes hard to identify the outcomes held in common. Beyond conditions of the grant, award holders are not usually funded to participate in evaluation work. Furthermore, the diversity and large number of microgrant awards make them logistically hard to follow up. One conclusion is that a microgrant scheme should be evaluated from the standpoint of ‘what the whole scheme is intended to achieve’, rather taking a grant-by-grant assessment.



**Figure 3: Ladder of participation for community activities: a simple model**

Nevertheless, there is evaluative evidence that microgrants are well-received in community settings and deliver reputational value for funders and their goals. Micro grants often represent good value for money: notably award holders contribute substantial matched inputs and often apply for funds below the maximum value on offer. They deliver added value, such as capacity building, often exceeding the intentions of award holders (Bobbitt-Cooke 2005, Local Government Association 2016).

Microgrants carry some risks as a funding option. Funding may become misdirected or poorly focused, especially where there is a mismatch between the goals of the programmes and the needs of recipients. Given the small value of the funding, there is also a risk that microgrants exploit the time, insight and good will of fund holders and community members.

Microgrants can be optimised in several ways that include:

- very clear, simple advertisement and application steps
- setting clear and manageable expectations
- investment in support staff to do outreach, give pre-application advice, give post-award support, provide recognition publicity and celebration opportunities, advise unsuccessful applicants.
- link award holders into other opportunities available directly linked to the programme or available elsewhere (further funding, peer networking, further training etc).
- cycles of learning and adjustment, ideally built into a long-term plan.

Essentially microgrants have greater potential to build community capacity when designed as part of a wider scheme of work (Johnson et al. 2006, Caperchione et al. 2010, Thomson and Caulier-Grace 2007). Their value is limited and questionable when offered as a standalone, unsupported initiative<sup>4</sup>, and where there are unreasonable expectations of what the funding might support.

<sup>4</sup> Note that future evaluation reports will focus on how grant holders network with others as part of the FFLGT programme

### 3.3 Creating agendas for ‘good food’

In the context of UK food activism, the term ‘good food’ came into being in the early noughties; possibly originating (Carey, 2022; Parente, 2022) with initiatives such as the founding of the UK’s first Food Policy Council in Bristol and the launch of the Sustainable Food Cities network (now Sustainable Food Places Programme). Though the porosity of food activist and NGO networks make it impossible to identify the precise origins of the term Good Food, there is a clear and common intent in the use of the term to make sustainable food more accessible and inspiring for citizens, communities and businesses. The founding aim of the Bristol Food Policy Network, for example, was to ‘ensure that Bristol residents and visitors have access to ‘Good Food’, which they define as,

*vital to the quality of people’s lives... As well as being tasty, healthy and affordable the food we eat should be good for nature, good for workers, good for local businesses and good for animal welfare.* (Bristol Food Policy Council, 2011)

Good food as a replacement for the more technical and potentially alienating term ‘sustainable food’ has been increasingly adopted by food activists and policy makers (Bristol Food Policy Council (2013), the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic (2012) Sustain (2013) and Sustainable Food Places (Jones, Hills and Beardmore, 2022).

The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill sets the way for the first appearance of the term ‘good food’ to appear in UK statute. The bill was introduced in October 2021 and is scheduled to become an act in 2022. The Act of the Scottish Parliament will require the Scottish Ministers to prepare and publish a national good food nation plan and all require local authorities and health boards to produce their own good food nation plans. The wording of the bill is limited on the definition of ‘good food’ but states that:

*Good food can refer to broad range of different positive aspects of food for different people and different areas of policy; for example being healthy and nutritious, environmentally sound and sustainably produced food or locally produced food* (Policy Memorandum, Scottish Government, 2021, pp.2-3)

This reference builds upon earlier policy work in the Scottish context. In 2014 the Scottish Government published *Recipe for Success: Scotland’s National Food and Drink Policy – Becoming a Good Food Nation*. This set out a vision for Scotland in which by 2025 it would become “a Good Food Nation, where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day”. The Good Food Nation policy recognised that change at many levels was required to achieve this vision. These can be summarised as follows:

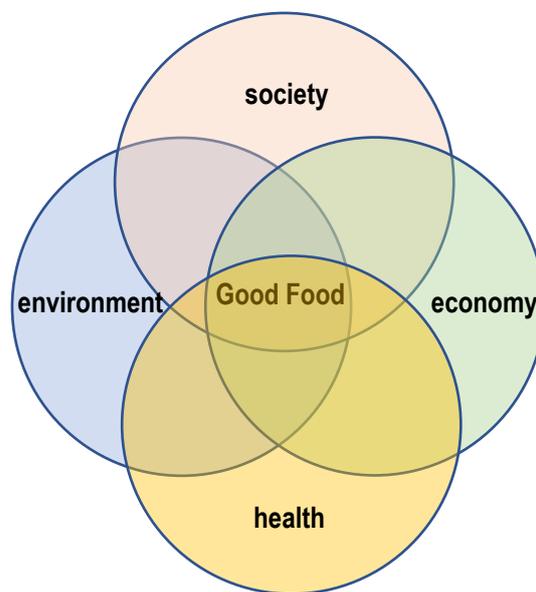
- it is the norm for the public to take a keen interest in their food, knowing what constitutes good food, valuing it and seeking it out whenever they can
- people who serve and sell food – from schools to hospitals, retailers, cafes and restaurants – are committed to serving and selling good food
- everyone has ready access to the healthy, nutritious food they need
- dietary-related diseases are in decline, as is the environmental impact of our food consumption
- producers ensure that what they produce is increasingly healthy and environmentally sound
- food companies are a thriving feature of the economy and places where people want to work

Use of the term ‘good food’ to engage citizens and businesses with the sustainable food agenda is linked to concepts of ‘food citizenship’ and ‘good food movement’. In these references changing food culture, and the language used for people and planet friendly food, is viewed as a central objective in the shift towards a sustainable food system (see for example Carey, 2011). To drive and support this cultural and behavioural shift, food activists and policy makers have taken their direction from a growing body of evidence (For example, FAO, 2013; The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2016; Murimi *et al.*, 2018). The strategic roll out of good food communications campaigns (Jones, Hills and Beardmore, 2022) alongside opportunities for the public to engage in practical activities such as growing, cooking and the sharing of food is presented as a means to inspire and empower people to make healthier and more sustainable food choices. Food for Life’s sister programme Sustainable Food Places, for example, states that:

We believe that to drive a shift towards healthier and more sustainable food requires **high public awareness of food issues and widespread participation in food-related activity**, by both individuals and institutions, as part of a growing movement of **active food citizenship**. Key to achieving this are: communications and events that can **inspire people about the role, importance and joy of good food**; **practical engagement opportunities such as growing, cooking and sharing food in every community**; **and a facilitated network** through which food actors of every kind can connect and collaborate on-line and in person as part of a local good food movement. ([Sustainable Food Places Programme](#))

It is important to note, however, that there are many interpretations of good food particularly in the context of community settings. Moreover, the narrow approaches that equate good food with ‘organic, ethical and local’ have been criticised by some for being culturally exclusive and reinforcing existing social privilege (Johnston *et al.* 2011; Johnston *et al.* 2012). Offering an alternative critique, Eriksson and Machin (2020) point to the way in which the appealing term ‘good food’ has been appropriated by mainstream food players for commercial gain with food labelled as such being neither healthy, environmentally friendly or ethical.

The food security *Five As Framework* (Chappell and LaValle, 2011) provides a helpful way to understand the multi-dimensional nature of good (sustainable) food. This addresses both supply and demand aspects and includes a food democracy/food justice dimension that is missed in some conceptualisations of sustainable food. The fourth A (Acceptability) addresses the connection between food and culture, whilst the fifth A (Agency) refers to people having the knowledge and power to effect food system change. Overall, our approach to the term good food in this study is intended to reflect the fluid, multi-dimensional and often contested character of the idea. The conceptual framework set out in the diagram below represents a simple starting point to illustrate the overlapping relationships between the social, economic, health, and environmental dimensions of good food.



**Figure 4: Key dimensions to ‘Good Food’: a conceptual framework**

### 3. Methodology

The overarching questions for this research study are:

“What forms of capacity building are created through the FFLGT grants?<sup>5</sup>”

“To what extent has participation in the FFLGT programme helped promote community-based action on agendas for ‘good food’?”

A full list of the research questions is provided in Appendices 1 and 2.

The research took place between January and March 2022 and consisted of three main elements as part of a mixed methods study design (Ivankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006).

Firstly, we analysed the application records of agencies that have obtained small grants through FFLGT. Between the start of the programme and December 2021, there have been 661 successful grant awards. Of these we focused on the 153 Cook and Share grant holders from September to November 2021. We undertook content and thematic analysis of these records to code for items that reflected our priorities for enquiry.

Secondly, with the support of the FFLGT team, all 153 Cook and Share grant holders for 2021 we invited to take part in an online survey of their work in February 2022 – at least three months after their funded event. The survey consisted of structured questions with some open text options. Recipients were invited to enter a £50 prize draw. Of 153, a total of 88 responded to the survey (response rate of 58%)<sup>6</sup>.

Thirdly, all survey respondents were invited to take part in a telephone or online interview. Of the 88 respondents, 40 agreed to be approached for interview. The interview covered the motives of organisers and their agencies to apply for the small grant, the delivery and effects of the work, and their next steps. Of the 40 agreeing to take part in an interview, we sought a range of organisations in terms of types of organisations and successfully conducted 19 interviews. Interviewees were provided with information about the research and asked whether they would give permission for us to report the name of their organisation or group. All interviews were transcribed in full, with edits to remove natural speech repetition and hesitation. We used the framework method for the analysis of transcripts (Gale et al., 2013). Evidence from the interview transcripts, grants, survey responses and programme records were used to develop a series of Cook and Share activity following an in-depth case study approach (Yin, 2009).

**Table 1: Cook and Share award holder interviewees**

Cook and Share Interviewees	Type of organisation	Local authority	First food event
Balfour Lunch Group	Community kitchen and cooking group	Glasgow City	No
Bardney Christian Community Trust	Faith/ religious group	Lincolnshire	No
CrossReach	Care setting	City of Edinburgh	Yes
Cultivate	Other business and social enterprise	Powys	No
Food in Community CIC	Community kitchen and cooking group	Devon	No
Friendly Faces of Kent	Informal community group	Kent	No
Headway Rotherham	Health focused group	Rotherham	No
Helping hooves Derbyshire	Community farm	Derbyshire	Yes
Anonymous	Community centre	Anonymous	No
Kirkby C of E Primary School	Primary School	Knowsley	Yes
Middle of the Hill	Other business and social enterprise	Gloucestershire	No
Nigerian Catholic Community	Informal community group	Enfield	No

<sup>5</sup> The original question includes Local Commissioned partnerships however we need to examine the cross over with the Networks report.

<sup>6</sup> 3 duplicates identified. Only first cases of duplicates analysed

Penrose Roots	Community farm	Bedfordshire	No
Root n' Fruit community allotment	Other business and social enterprise	Stoke-on-Trent	No
Silver Road Community Centre	Community Centre	Norfolk	No
SVP Chorley Buddies	Faith/ religious group	Lancashire	No
Tidemill Residents Group	Informal community group	Deptford	No
Unst Live Active Club	Informal community group	Shetland	Yes
Women's Cultural Arena CIC	Arts and creative group	Buckinghamshire	No

Ethical approval for this research was obtained through the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol), Health and Applied Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Reference HAS.20.11.034.



Figure 5: Summary Cook and share grant applicants, award holder and research respondents

## 4. Findings from the Cook and Share event plans

### 4.1 Overview

The event plans of award holders reflected a wide variety of types of organisations, geographical coverage and engagement from agencies in areas of high multiple deprivation, including 34.6% from the two highest ranking areas of multiple deprivation.

The routes for hearing about the grant opportunity reflected the main social media and other communications channels of the programme and showed the importance of the programme partners. The large proportion of organisations hearing about the scheme through 'Other' channels may reflect the importance of diverse community networks for organisations active in this area.

Table 2: Type of organisation of successful applicants

Type of organisation or group	Total N
Community centre	18
Other business and social enterprise	12
Community kitchen and cooking group	16
Faith/ religious group	12

Type of organisation or group	Total N
Ethnic, national and linguistic cultural group	7
Community development agency	6
Health focused group	6
Youth group	6
Environmental group	5
Arts and creative group	4
Homeless support group	4
Early-year setting	3
Primary school	3
Care setting	2
Sports group	2
Men's group	2
Secondary school	1
Community farm	1
Housing group	1
Women's group	1
LGBTQI+	1

**Table 3: Region location of successful applicants**

Region	Frequency	Percent
North East	18	11.8
South East	16	10.5
North West	15	9.8
South West	14	9.2
Yorks & The Humber	14	9.2
Eastern	13	8.5
East London	11	7.2
East Midlands	10	6.5
Glasgow & Strathclyde	8	5.2
SE Wales	8	5.2
Northern Ireland	7	4.6
West Midlands	6	3.9
Edinburgh & Lothians	3	2
Tayside, Central & Fife	3	2
West London	3	2
NE Wales	2	1.3
Highland & Islands	1	0.7
Mid Wales	1	0.7
Total	153	100.0

**Table 4: Postcode location of successful applicants: Index of multiple deprivation decile**

Decile	Frequency	Percent
1 (Highest deprivation)	27	17.6
2	26	17.0
3	15	9.8
4	27	17.6
5	10	6.5
6	14	9.2
7	9	5.9
8	11	7.2
9	9	5.9

10 (Lowest deprivation)	5	3.3
Total	153	100.0

**Table 5: How successful applicants heard about the grant opportunity**

Source	Total N
Social media	33
Food for Life	16
Programme partner agencies: Food Sense Wales; Generations Working Together Scotland; Royal Voluntary Service; Eden Project Communities	15
Press	5
Other	82
Total	153

#### 4.2 Expenditure of the Cook and Share grant

The overwhelming majority of applicants stated that they sought to purchase food ingredients to support their event. However, a range of other items were specified – many of which helped develop the capacity of groups to deliver activities beyond the initial event. These included equipment and volunteer support costs.

**Table 6: Main types of costed items**

Main types of costed items	Examples	Count of key words in applications
Food costs	Milk, flour, bread, vegetable, fruit, tea, coffee, beans, chicken	148
Venue costs	Venue hire	65
Cooking equipment costs	Cooking utensils, induction hobs, slow cooker	57
Meal serving equipment costs	Plates, cutlery, cups, serviettes, take-away containers	46
Publicity costs	Leaflets and other printing	24
Volunteer and staff costs	Volunteer training, food hygiene accreditation, expenses, tutor costs	18
Transport	Transport costs for participants	11
Overheads	Insurance, office costs	11

Many applications were detailed and showed considerable planning on how the group intended to use the grant. Figure 6 provides an example of a very specific set of items set out in one application.

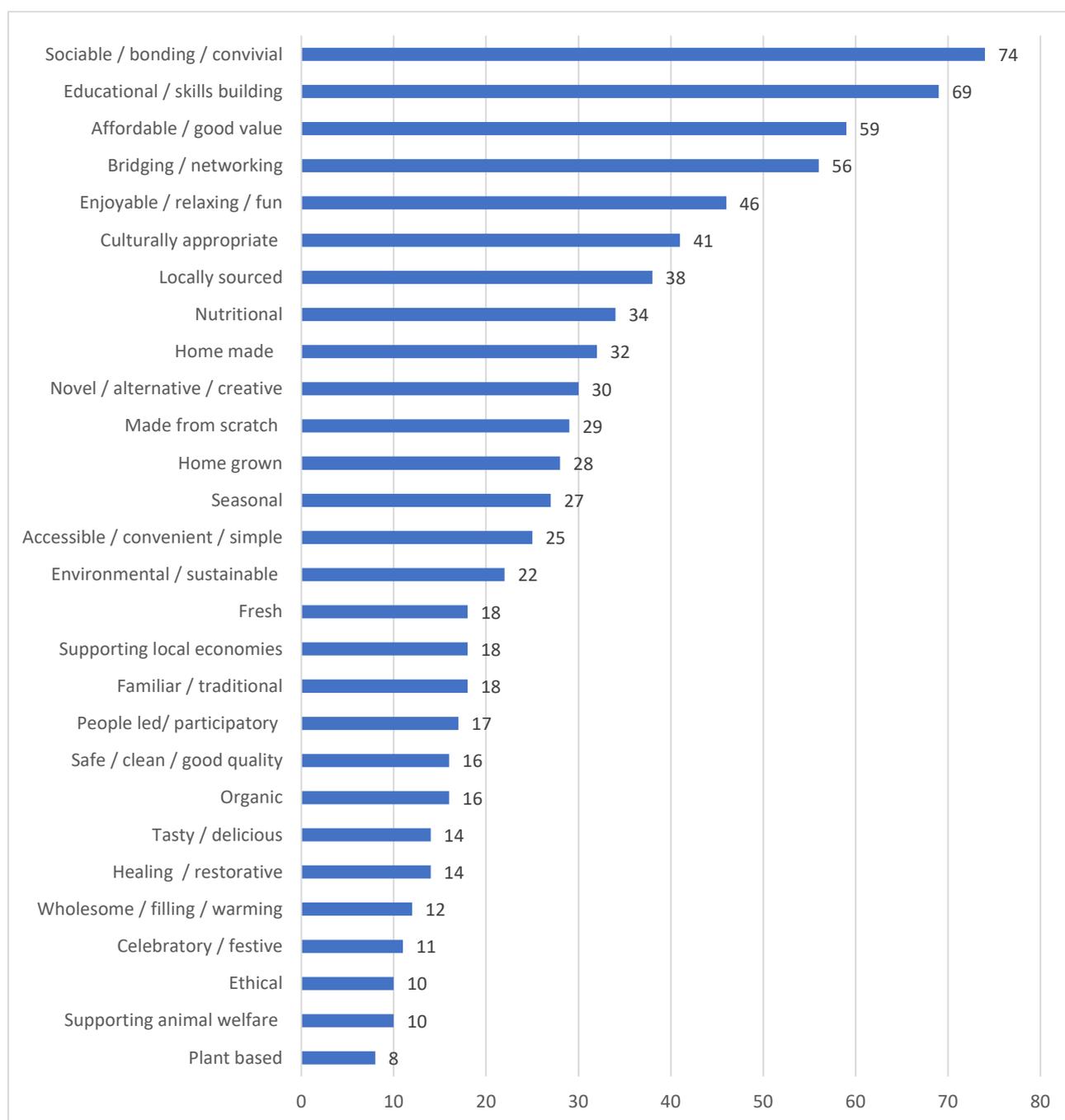
Item	Cost	Item	Cost
Pans - medium (set of 5) 1sets	34.99	Tomato Puree	0.27
Frying Pans - (2.99 each) x3	8.97	Salt	0.85
Large White Bowl (1.00 each) x6	6.00	Black Pepper	1.19
Mixing Bowls (3.00 each) x3	9.00	Garlic Puree	0.69
Chopping Boards x5	2.50	Garlic Powder	0.45
Chopping Knives (pkt 3 4:00)x2	8:00	Curry Powder	0.79
Wooden Spoons (pkt of 5 3.00 ) x2	6.00	Chilli Powder	0.55
Set of Crockery (12 piece)	16.0	Cumin	0.45
Serving Bowls (1.00 each) x3	3.00	Ginger Puree	0.65
Food for the general table: Olive Oil	1.89	Basil	0.49
Stock Cubes - vegetable	0.35	Oregano	0.49
Gravy Granules	0.79	Tinned Red Kidney Beans	0.49
Vinegar	0.29	Lemon Juice	0.35
Butter (500g)	2.50	Tea	1.09
Wholewheat Fusili Pasta	0.42	Coffee	1.79
Wholewheat Spaghetti	0.42	Milk	1.15

Brown Rice	0.89	Plain Biscuits (0.30 pkt) x2	0.60
Miniature Potatoes (500g pkt)	0.62	Box Chocolates – winners prize	3.00
Red Onions pkt	0.59	Admin and Flyer Printing invite printing	10:00
Tinned Tomatoes	0.37		
Grand Total = £128.93			

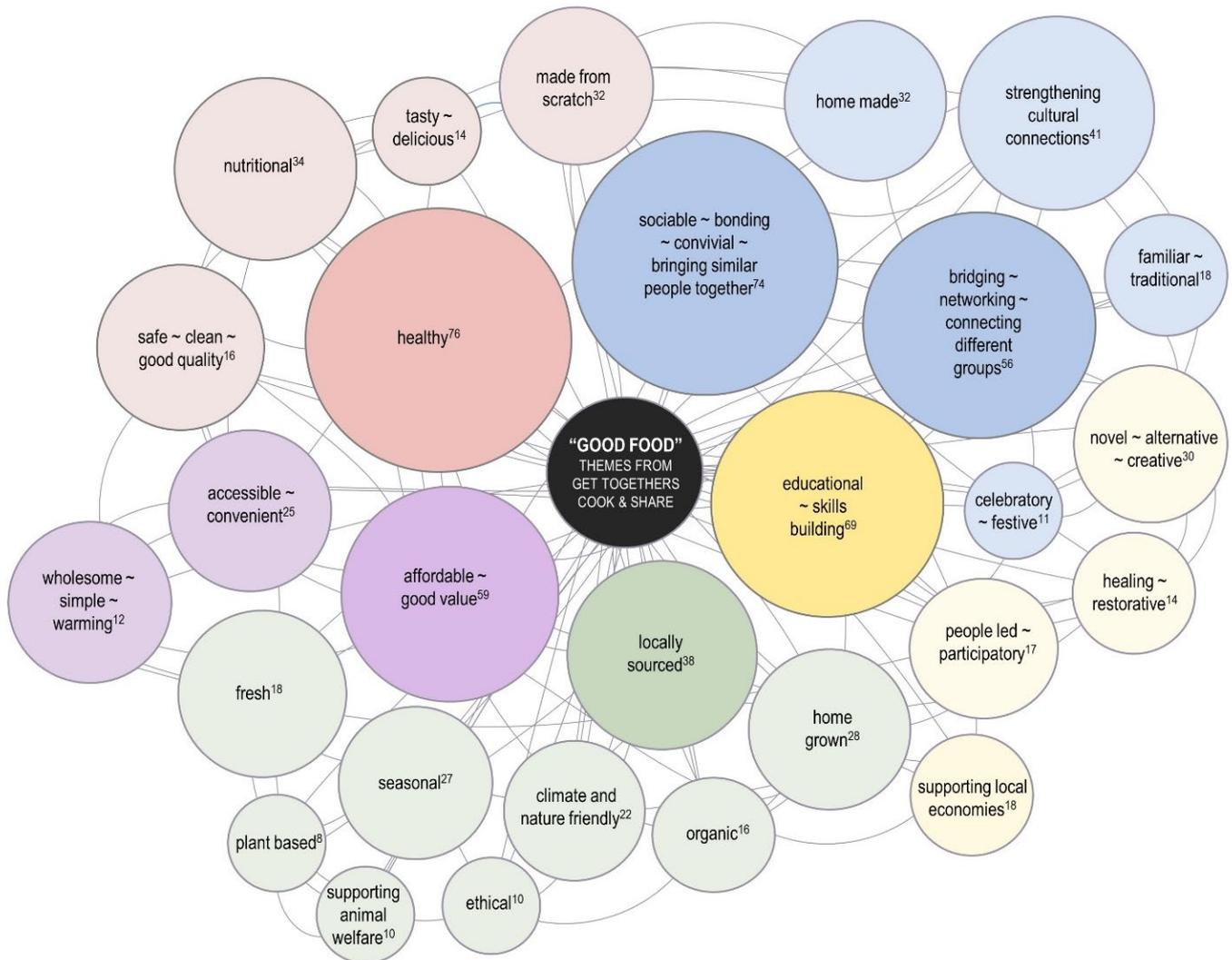
**Figure 6. Example of the detailed costs identified by a community group in Sunderland**

#### 4.3 Good food: understanding the role of food in Cook and Share activities

Groups applied for a wide and creative variety of foods. While some described how their choice of foods represented ‘good food’, others used other ways to highlight the value they set on their selection. Alongside the choice of ingredients, the preparation and cooking of these ingredients was often equally important.



**Figure 7: 'Good food themes' in Cook and Share applications (n=153)**



**Figure 8: Buddle plot to show 'good food themes' in Cook and Share written plans.** Bubble area equates to frequency (superscript number). Proximity and colour represent semantic similarity (n=153).

A focus for our analysis concerned where the emphasis on food issues was placed in the applications of different organisations. While a minority managed to touch upon many of the good food themes outlined above, most dealt with a selected combination of a limited number of issues such as 'health, education and locally sourced food'. Others were clearly concerned with one primary aspect of the role of food.

As the analysis above illustrates, interest in affordability and related issues were major themes in the applications. It was notable that some organisations were very strongly concerned with food poverty and addressing inequities in access to food. Some applicants covered these aspects and – with the exception of 'health' and 'nutrition' – did not touch upon other dimensions of food.

Our cookery tutor uses a microwave and single ring hob to demonstrate how to make 4 cheap and nutritious meals for under 35p a portion (\*Microwave porridge, Macaroni cheese, Chilli and banana & chocolate dessert). All ingredients are easy to source, quick to cook, healthy and use minimal amount of kitchen utensils. Wirral<sup>7</sup>

We are an independent food bank. Following many discussions on the benefits of social eating we have identified that there is a need for such a project in our district. This project is part of a wider strategy of tackling the causes of food poverty in our district. The grant is used to purchase food for the lunch club that will run once a week on a Wednesday lunch time. Nottingham

We will work with a parent group at a local school (known for families who struggle). We will deliver an event that includes 'cooking alongside' the parents in a relaxed environment. The emphasis will be on low budget, easy to replicate and healthy meals for families. Following the event we will provide a 'takeaway gift bag' to include the recipe and ingredients to replicate the meal at home. Bournemouth

Another category of grant holders was very strongly concerned with bringing people together who shared similar characteristics. In this example the organisation works with older people and developed a menu based around a traditional English cooked breakfast.

We are a local older people's charity with a focus on those living on low incomes. We are committed to user-led activities. Four Community Breakfast benefit are older people living alone, have some physical disability which makes getting to a social activity particularly challenging. We use local bacon, tomatoes and mushrooms, Northumbrian eggs, with home-made baked beans and a veggie sausage option. South Tyne

While the contrast was necessarily clear, other projects were primarily interested in 'bridging and networking' different social groups, rather than 'bonding together' individuals from similar backgrounds, as this example shows:

Our aim is to bring together different Africans, Eastern Europeans and Asylum-Seekers living in Bolton, and neighbouring communities. Without pragmatic steps to bring these communities together, there is a risk of increasing mistrust and prejudice. Each of these groups have skills that can be of benefit to the wider community. We bring these groups together by serving hot cooked meals from different nationalities and drinks. Periods are set aside for group members to share positive experiences and aspirations, fostering increased cultural understanding. The food items and ingredients are from world recipes to accommodate different cultures. Bolton

Although meals were frequently framed in health and nutritional terms, a proportion of organisations addressed the cultural and emotional significance of food. As this LGBTQ+ project illustrates, cooking activities represented valuable opportunities to lay down memories and meaning for some groups.

We have started a new LGBTQ+ youth club. Participating in the Cook and Share month not only increases the young people's life skills but also encourages them to give back to the community through the love of cooking and sharing. We use locally sourced, fresh, seasonal foods, that the young people plan themselves, cook and deliver, creating heart-warming meals that they will remember and continue to cook in the future. Northampton

The focus for other organisations was on the links between the environmental and health aspects of food, for example, this project developed a friendly competition based around learning how to cook meals using surplus food:

We aim to educate, provide an opportunity for groups to have fun, share food together. This event inspires behaviour change around food choices and decreasing food waste. Participants are placed into teams. The food items are pooled together for the team and each team additionally selects a maximum of 4 items from the general table with all then being used to create the best dish they can within 45mins. Each team then presents their dish for tasting and marking out of 10. All participants are taken to the garden area where they learn about the planting and growing seasons of vegetables. Sunderland

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<sup>7</sup> Data in this section has been abridged from Cook and Share applications.

A further group of organisations focused their work on bridging connections between food growing, environmental awareness and affordability.

As we are producing fresh vegetables every day, we're building our own outdoor kitchen for both social and educational purposes. Our volunteers cook and eat socially together which is a really important way for our community to support each other. It is also hugely important to those who are struggling financially as we ensure they are accessing health meals and learning how to cook cheaply with the fresh produce they can access from the farm. School groups also learn cooking skills and taste the produce. Moving forward our long-term aim is to have our own vegetable shop. Wessex Sussex

The potential value of food was well illustrated in projects where organisations managed to express multiple objectives in their events. While social connections and health usually featured centrally, these examples show the creative ambitions of some organisations.

Our purpose is to achieve multiple objectives to bring people together to socialise and avoid loneliness or isolation; raise awareness on healthy eating and healthy living; create contacts and enable service users to build strong community; provide platform for new ideas to sustain these events. We choose healthy and accessible recipes based on seasonal locally available and culturally acceptable products. These activities will continue monthly and will be evaluated at each session for the purpose of improving the future events. Barking and Dagenham

Our project aims to address health inequalities in a fun, non-judgemental environment. We do this by creating interactive cookery classes in community venues to promote the health and social benefits of creating easy, tasty and nutritious home-cooked food! We engender the principle that 'you are what you eat' by creating interactive cookery classes in community venues, designed to promote the health and social benefits of creating easy, tasty and nutritious home-cooked food. We want to instil the ethos where the social element is just as important as the development of key kitchen / cooking skills. Durham

#### 4.4 Estimated participant engagement

Applicants were asked to estimate the number of expected participants at their event or events. The mean for the estimate was 39 participants (Range 10-400), with 20 participants being the mode.

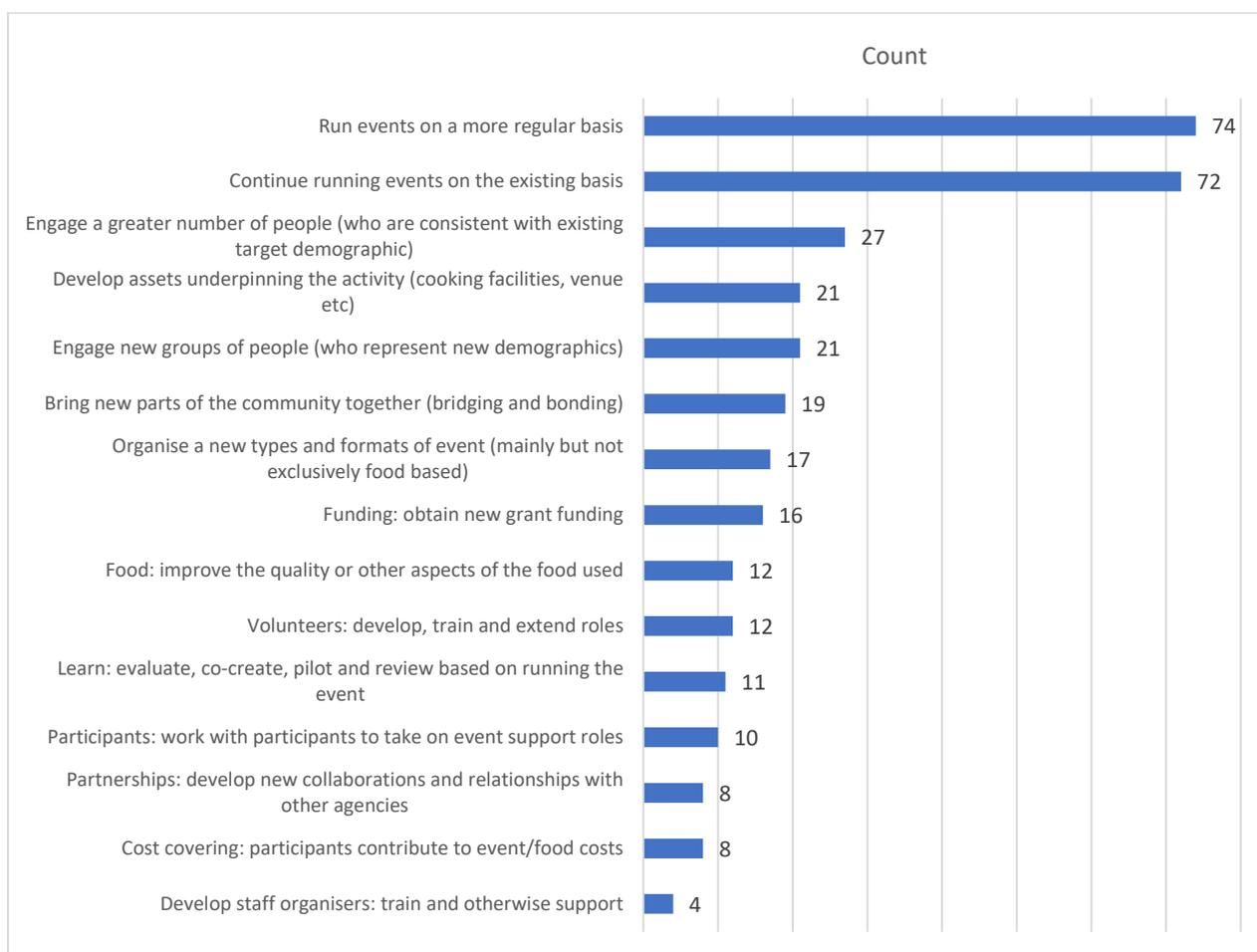
The majority (81.1%) of award holders sought to run their events on more than one occasion.

**Table 7: Planned occurrence of events**

Event occurrence	Frequency	Percentage
Annually	16	10.5
Monthly	29	19.0
Several times a year	44	28.8
Weekly	35	22.9
One off	25	16.3
Missing data	4	2.6

#### 4.5 Commitments of applicants for future development

Applicants described their commitments to future activity in the period after running the grant funded event. Based on 153 successful applications, figure 8 provides an analysis of the themes presented.



**Figure 9: The commitments of small grant holders for future activity**

Some themes appear to illustrate a continuation of activities, rather than the development of new forms of work. For example, the second leading theme concerned continuing to run events on the existing basis, which may represent maintaining the sort of delivery that agencies had also delivered prior to receiving the grant. However, most commitments reported clearly indicate developmental aspirations. These include seeking to engage greater numbers of participants or to apply for further funding opportunities.

Our aim is always to build relationships with our community and would like to invite them to try our other activities. We would love to extend the sessions with more families taking part, encouraging the children and parents to enjoy the cookery together. Healthy Living Centre Dartford.

Continue to search for grant funding and other support to allow us to develop the project further. Eat Well Project

We have applied to [the] Council for a grant to run a series of health and well-being activities for our service users and if we secure this this would include nutritional education, food cultures and annual food share events to promote the work of ELSH [define] to support the integration of ELSH students into the local community. 62 Rosie Campbell Consultancy

By using the Cook and Share activity to relaunch our Lunch Club, we intend to continue to run the club initially on a monthly basis but then hopefully increase the number of times run dependant on demand. Gorfenna Community Interest Company

Organisers described investments in equipment, facilities, venues, and other assets that would enable them to run events on a more regular basis. Others reported the use of participant payments to cover costs and greater involvement of participants to help run events.

We have recently invested in the purchase of a 10-litre soup kettle for future Get Togethers, and we are planning regular seasonal vegetable harvesting giveaways with recipes and tips to the community. Incredible Edible Handbridge

We are planning for this to become a weekly Saturday morning session, with people paying 'at cost' to cover buying food in, and ACTS providing space, heat and light and equipment, with the older people doing their own prep and cooking supported by volunteers. We have access to a large space with cooking facilities and this will be as part of our weekly Saturday morning opening (when people come in for Information and Advice and other planned sessions). Age Concern Tyneside South

There were commitments to extend the programme of events over the course of the year, with some projects showing how this would involve greater engagement of new volunteers and supporters.

We will continue get togethers and picnics on our walking sessions and bring and share during cultural events such as Eid, Diwali, Christmas, Easter, Visaki, and Windrush events. some will be outdoors others indoors depending which season the cultural events falls on. Carers Cube

We want to do this activity 4 times a year to start and then move to once a month. We are lucky in terms of guest chefs coming in from the community that are professionals to teach the cooking and making sure a health option...there is no cost for venue higher and the chefs that will help will do on a voluntary basis Food4All

Many event organisers outlined how they sought to engage new social groups and create new partnerships. Much of this represented an extension of the work of the organisation to make wider community and organisational connections.

At Willow Wood Hospice it is fundamental that we continually develop our relationships with other cultures and communities, ensuring we broaden the support, service and care that we offer across Tameside and Glossop. The plan will therefore be that events such as this continue on a quarterly or half yearly basis to further develop the relationship between the Dipak Dristi members and ourselves. This will also provide a great opportunity for both groups to learn far more about what each other can offer in the future in the way of community groups, therapy sessions and support services. Willow Wood Hospice

We want to commit to regular events especially as the council is also committed to closing streets more frequently to traffic. We hope to link up with nearby streets and businesses in the local archways to make this become a Deptford wide event. We also want to involve the foodbanks and social supermarkets to become involved so we can offer something for everyone – especially the ability to grow food and give this away to people living in food poverty. Individual

Some organisers emphasised the importance of building relationships in order to sustain activities.

We believe in longstanding relationships with the beneficiaries and that is what we have achieved with various other projects in the past. Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur

## 5. Findings from the Cook and Share Survey

### 5.1 Overview

This section presents the findings from 88 respondents to an online survey sent to 153 Cook and Share grant holders in February 2022. The response rate of 58% is good for this type of survey.

### 5.2 Characteristics of the organisers, organisations, and events

Table Q13 shows that there were survey responses from a very wide range of organisations and groups, with clear representation from diverse communities of interest.

For 47% (35/74) of respondents this was the first occasion on which they had organized a Cook and Share activity. The organisers were mainly female (83%) and in the age bracket of 40-69 years old. Seventy-eight percent identified themselves as White English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British. This is a similar percentage to the 2019 figure for the population in England and Wales (ONS, 2019)<sup>8</sup>.

We asked respondents to indicate from a list of categories that described their organisations of which they could indicate more than one category that best described their organisation. There was a higher representation of organisations that described themselves as community centres (n= 17), community kitchen and cooking group (n= 13) and other businesses and social enterprises (n= 14).

**Table 8: Characteristics of survey respondents**

Characteristics	Country where cook and share activity took place				Total N (%)
	England	N. Ireland	Scotland	Wales	
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
<b><i>Type of organisation or group</i></b>					
Early-year setting	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (33.3)	3 (3.4)
Primary school	2 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.3)
Secondary school	2 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.3)
Care setting	5 (83.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	6 (6.8)
Community centre	12 (70.6)	3 (17.6)	2 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	17 (19.3)
Community development agency	3 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.4)
Community kitchen and cooking group	12 (92.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.7)	0 (0.0)	13 (14.8)
Community farm	7 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (8.0)
Faith/ religious group	7 (87.5)	0 (0.0)	1 (12.5)	0 (0.0)	8 (9.1)
Arts and creative group	2 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (25.0)	1 (25.0)	4 (4.5)
Sports group	1 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)
Health focused group	6 (66.7)	2 (22.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	9 (10.2)
Environmental group	4 (80.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (20.0)	5 (5.7)
Housing group	1 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)

<sup>8</sup> UK figures from the 2021 Census are due to be reported in 2022.

Ethnic, national, linguistic cultural group	1 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)
Men's group	2 (66.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.4)
Women's group	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.4)
Youth group	5 (62.5)	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (9.1)
Homeless support group	3 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.4)
LGBTQI+	1 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)
Other business and social enterprise	9 (64.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (21.4)	2 (14.3)	14 (15.9)
<b>First time organising activity</b>					
No	33 (84.6)	0 (0.0)	4 (10.3)	2 (5.1)	39 (52.7)
Yes	24 (68.6)	5 (14.3)	4 (11.4)	2 (5.7)	35 (47.3)
<b>Gender of respondent</b>					
Male	11 (91.7)	1 (8.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (16.2)
Female	44 (73.3)	4 (6.7)	8 (13.3)	4 (6.7)	60 (81.1)
<b>Age (years)</b>					
18-29	1 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)
30-39	7 (77.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	9 (12.2)
40-49	14 (73.7)	3 (15.8)	2 (10.5)	0 (0.0)	19 (25.7)
50-59	17 (73.9)	2 (8.7)	2 (8.7)	2 (8.7)	23 (31.1)
60-69	15 (83.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (11.1)	1 (5.6)	18 (24.3)
70-79	2 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.7)
80+	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (100)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British	42 (73.7)	3 (5.3)	8 (14.0)	4 (7.0)	57 (78.1)
Other	14 (87.5)	2 (12.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	16 (21.9)

### 5.3 Motives of food activity organisers

While nearly everyone was motivated to bring people together through food (as one might expect), there was a wide range of other personal motivations. Notably developing personal connections, personal skills and personal satisfaction were important motivational influences. Other sources of inspiration were directly linked to the promotion of better food from a social and environmental perspective.

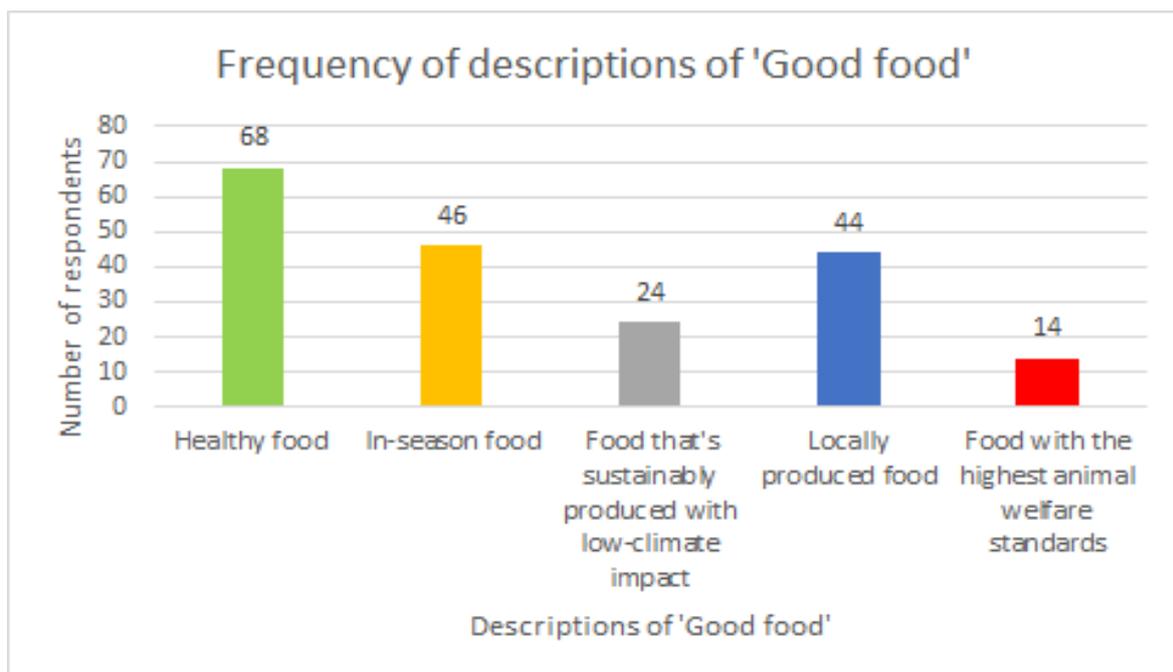
Only a minority of the organisers (n= 8) were motivated to influence policy and five of these eight groups were led by expert organisers (those who had organised community food activities more than once).



**Figure 10: A bar graph showing the ways in which organisers were inspired to organise food activities and the number of organisers responding to each motive**

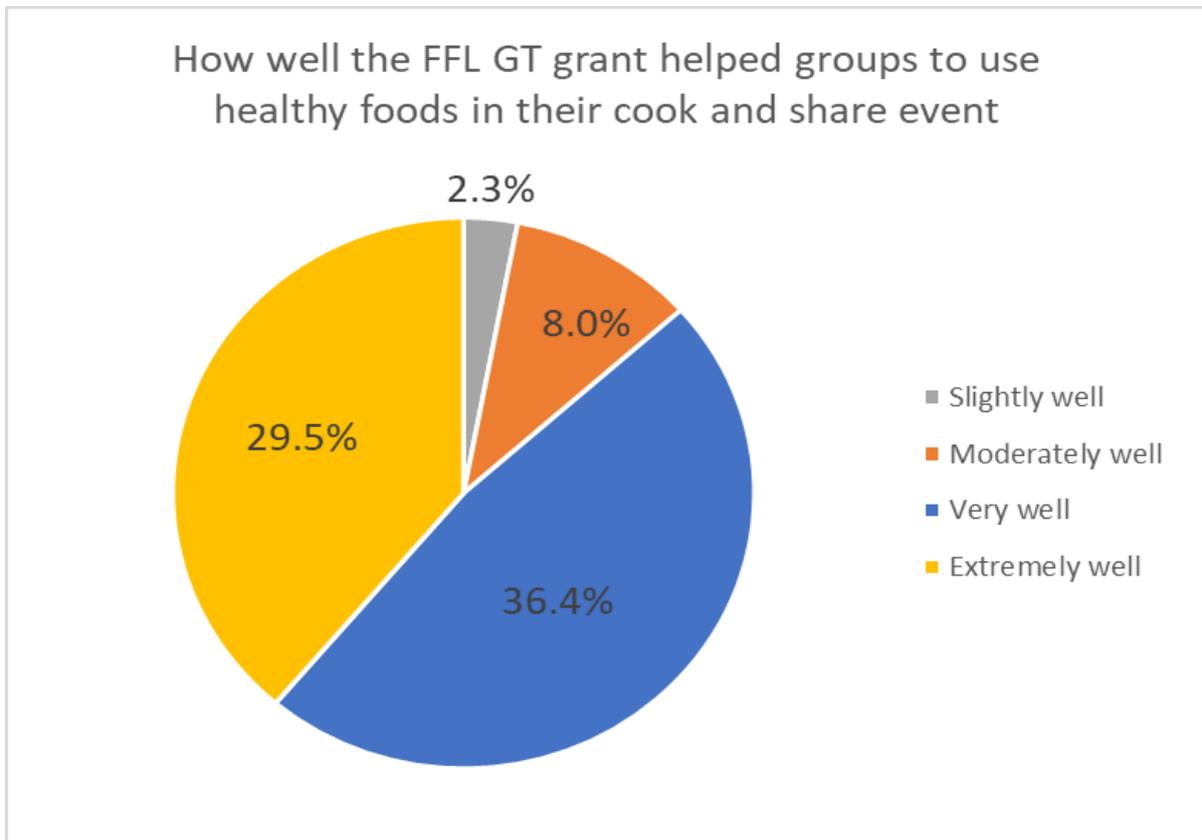
#### 5.4 Role of FFLGT small grants to promote 'good food'

It was evident that respondents were highly motivated to cook and share 'healthy foods', but other good food issues also figured with respect to seasonal food, locally produced food and food that was sustainably produced. High animal welfare standards were a driver for a minority.

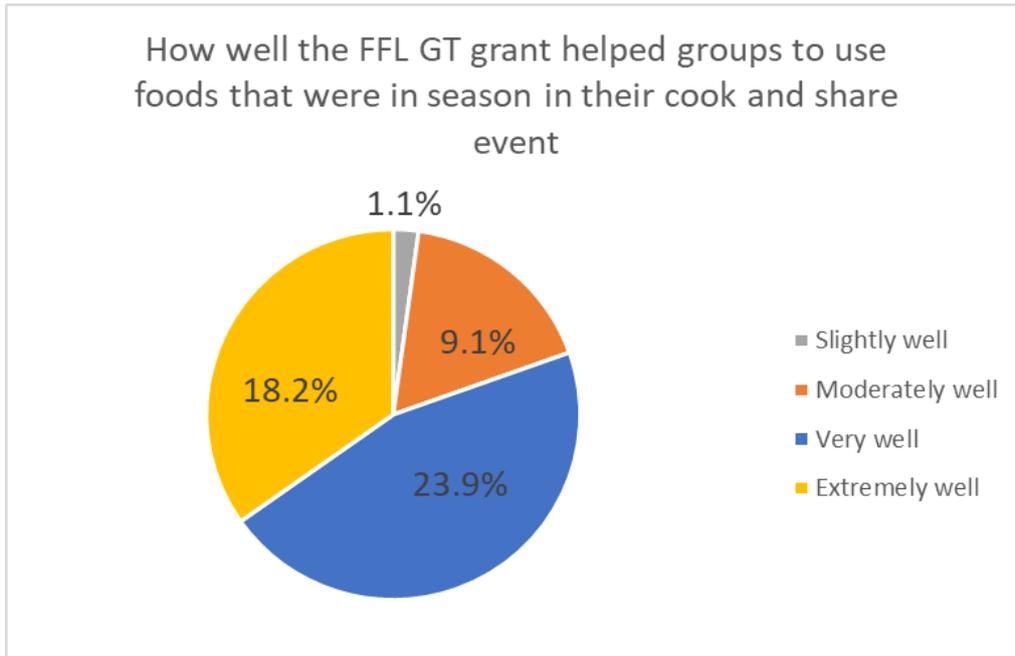


**Figure 11: A bar chart showing the frequency of descriptions of 'Good food' based on pre-defined categories**

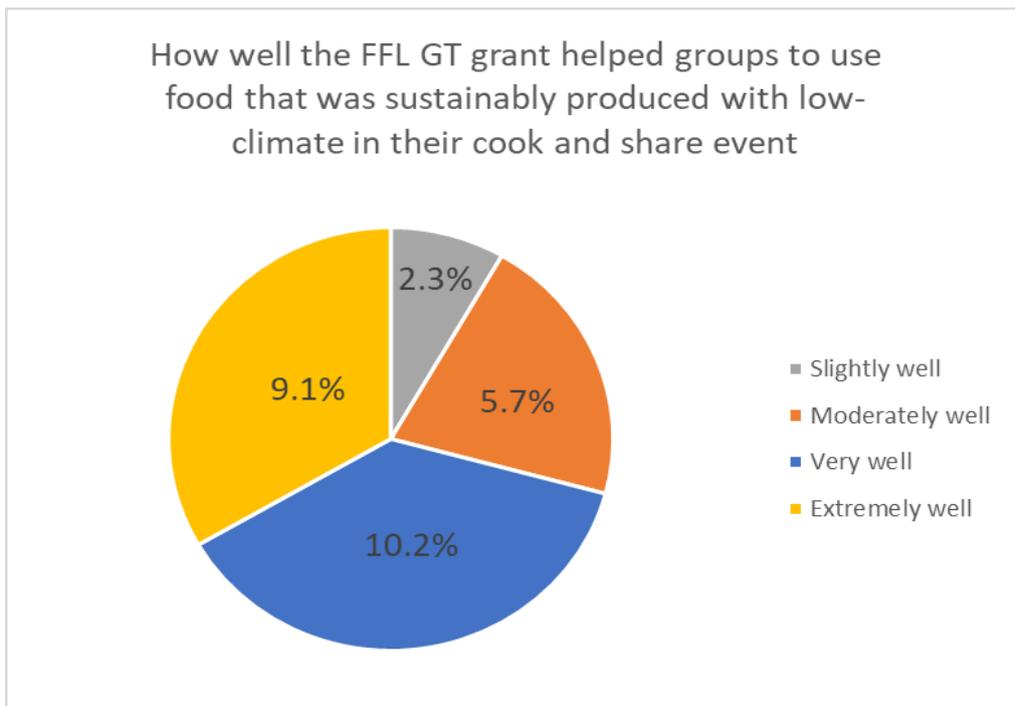
For those seeking to promote a good food issue, a clear majority felt that the FFLGT small grant helped the group meet their goals with respect to healthy food, in-season food, sustainable food, locally produced food and food with high animal welfare standards.



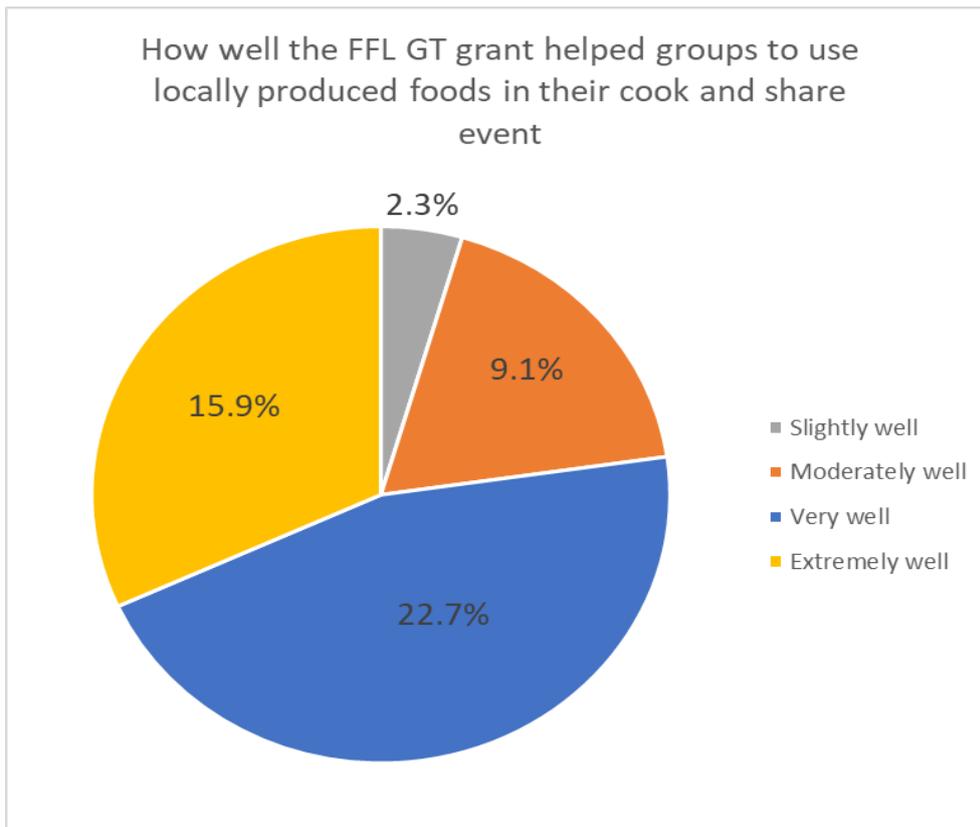
**Figure 13: A pie chart showing the extent to which the FFLGT grant supported groups to use healthy foods (lots of fruit, vegetables and wholegrains, less but better-quality meat, and little or no highly processed food) in their cook and share event**



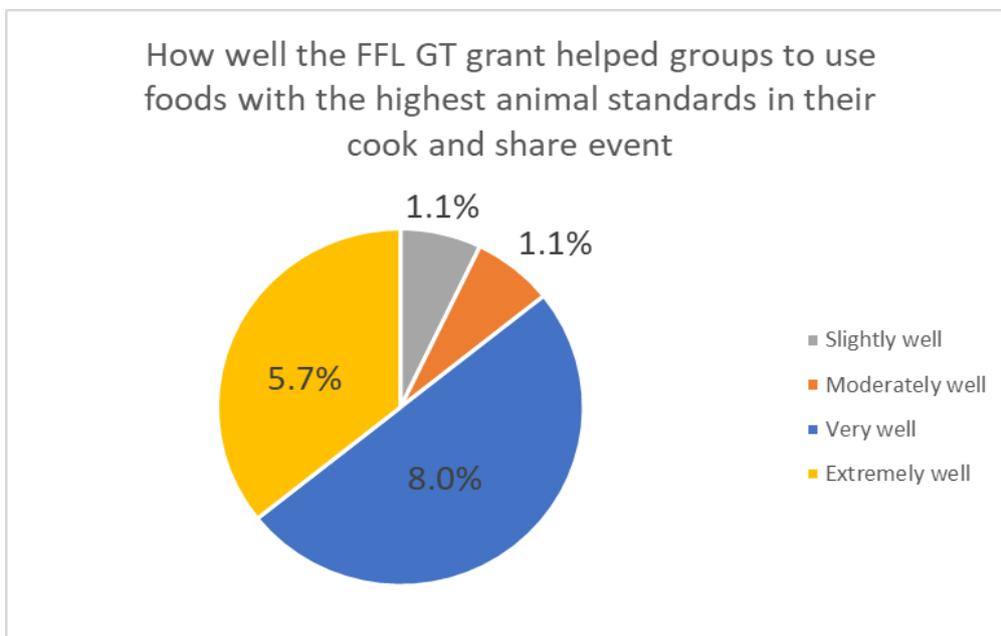
**Figure 14:** A pie chart showing the extent to which the FFLGT grant supported groups to use foods in-season in their cook and share event



**Figure 15:** A pie chart showing the extent to which the FFLGT grant supported groups to use food that was sustainably produced with low-climate impact in their cook and share event



Figures 16: A pie chart showing the extent to which the FFLGT grant supported groups to use locally produced foods in their cook and share event



Figures 17: A pie chart showing the extent to which the FFLGT grant supported groups to use foods with the highest animal standards in their cook and share event

### 5.5 People who take part in cook and share get together

Cook and share activities engaged a diverse range of social groups. The majority of respondents stated that there was participation from multiple different groups indicating that the events were inclusive in bringing these diverse parties together.

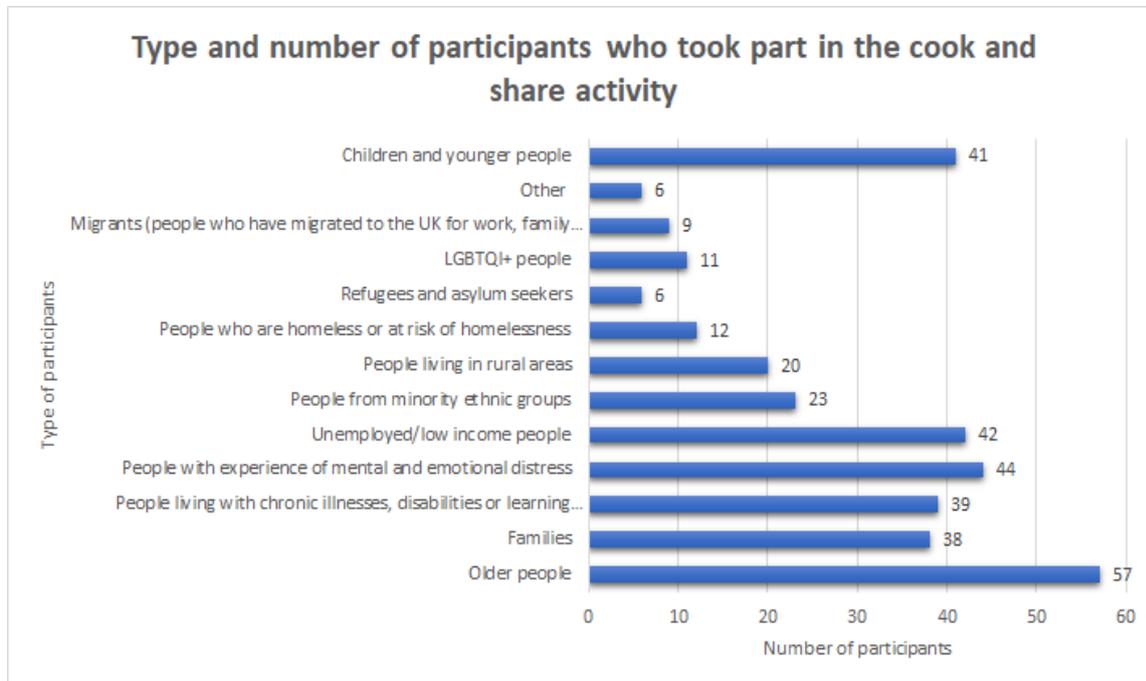


Figure 18: A bar chart showing different groups of participants who took part in the cook and share event.



**Figure 19: Tree diagram showing different groups of participants who took part in the cook and share event.**

## 5.6 Benefits of cook and share get together for organisers

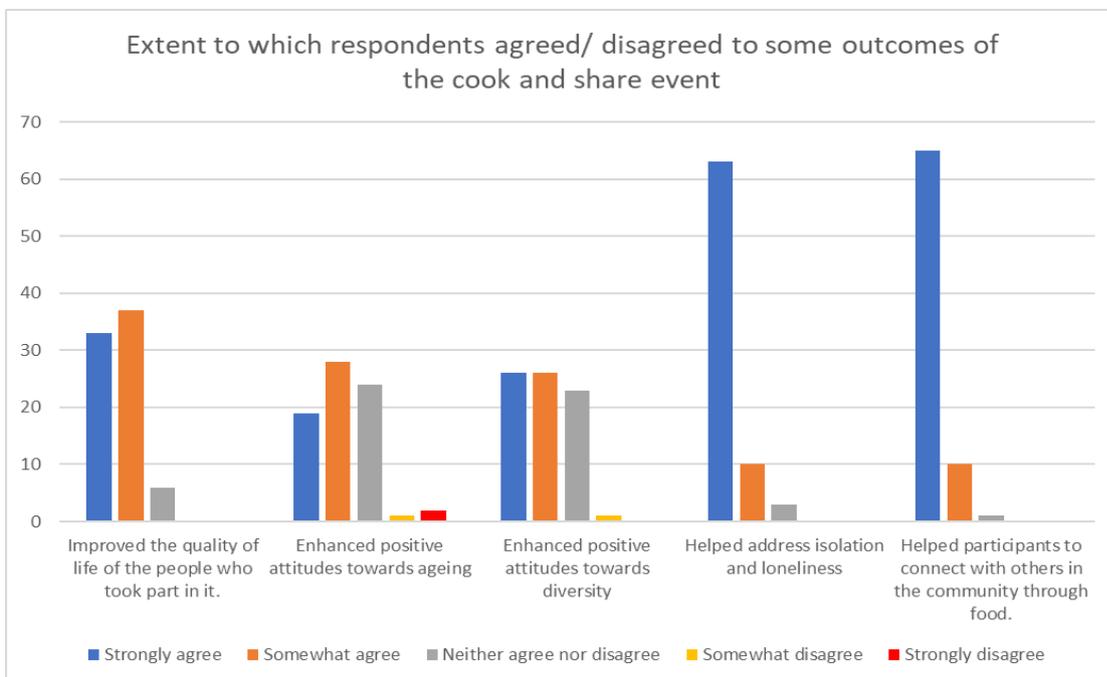
Event organisers themselves benefit from cook and share activities. While the main categories set out below are likely to also reflect the goals of their agencies, it was evident that there are personal impacts for organisers in terms of sharing knowledge, developing skills and improved health and wellbeing.



**Figure 20: A bar graph showing the number of organisers who indicated what they got out of the cook and share event**

### 5.7 Effects of cook and share get together on equality, diversity and inclusion

The majority respondents felt that their Cook and Share events helped improve the quality of life of participants (92%<sup>9</sup>), enhance positive attitudes towards ageing (64%) and diversity (68%), and addressed loneliness and isolation (83%). Almost all felt that the event helped participants connect with one another (99%), indicating a positive effect for social cohesion.



**Figure 21: A bar graph showing the number of respondents and the extent to which they agreed with various outcomes that participants derived from the cook and share event**

<sup>9</sup> "Strongly agree/somewhat agree". N=76

## 5.8 Effects of grants building the capacity of organisers and groups after the funded event

Only two respondents reported that they did not continue with a similar activity after the event. The strong commitments set out in the applications are also reported at the point of this post event survey. This provides further evidence that the grants had benefits that extended beyond the funding of the initial cook and share event. This message has further confirmation in the onward commitments of organisers, with over 50% intending to make additional changes (Figure 22).

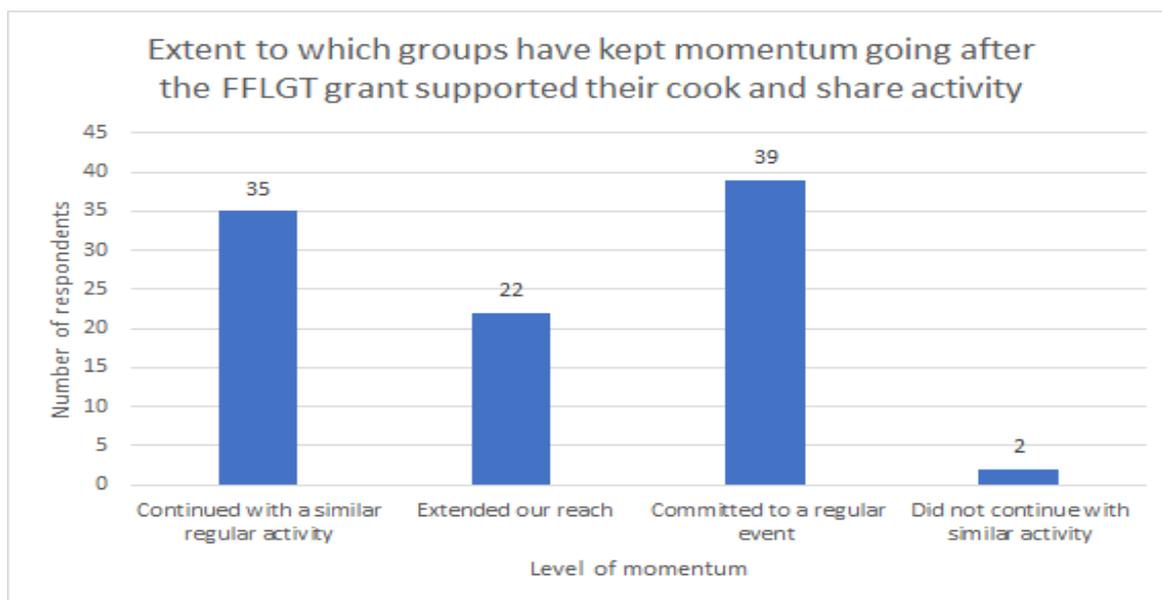
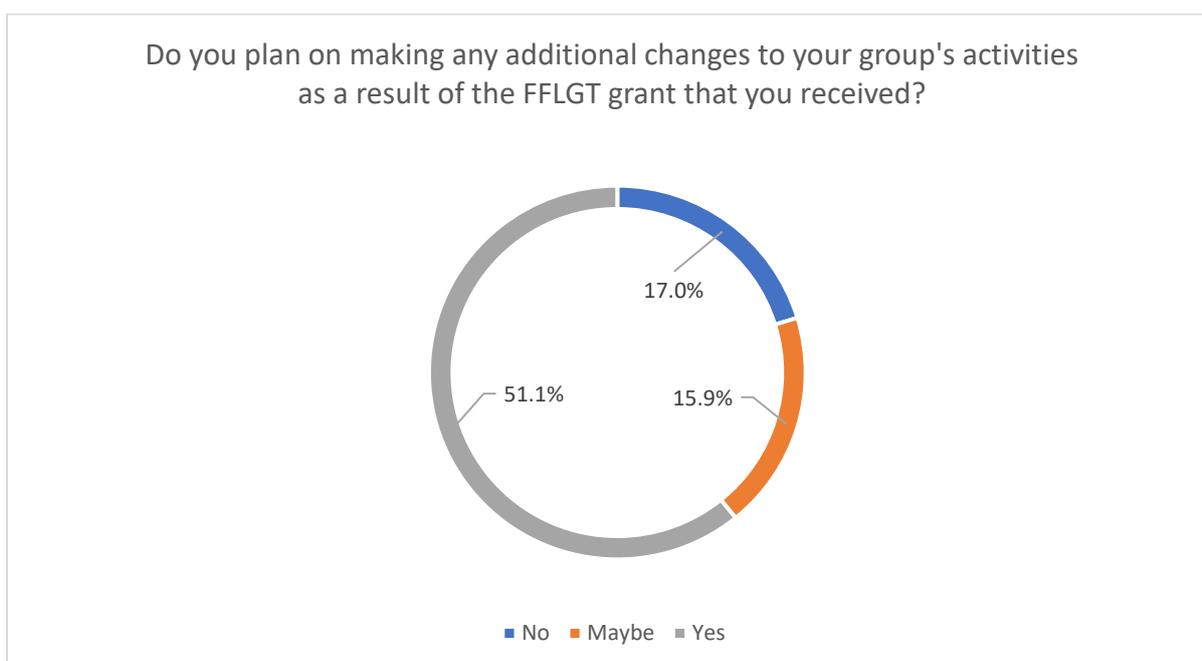
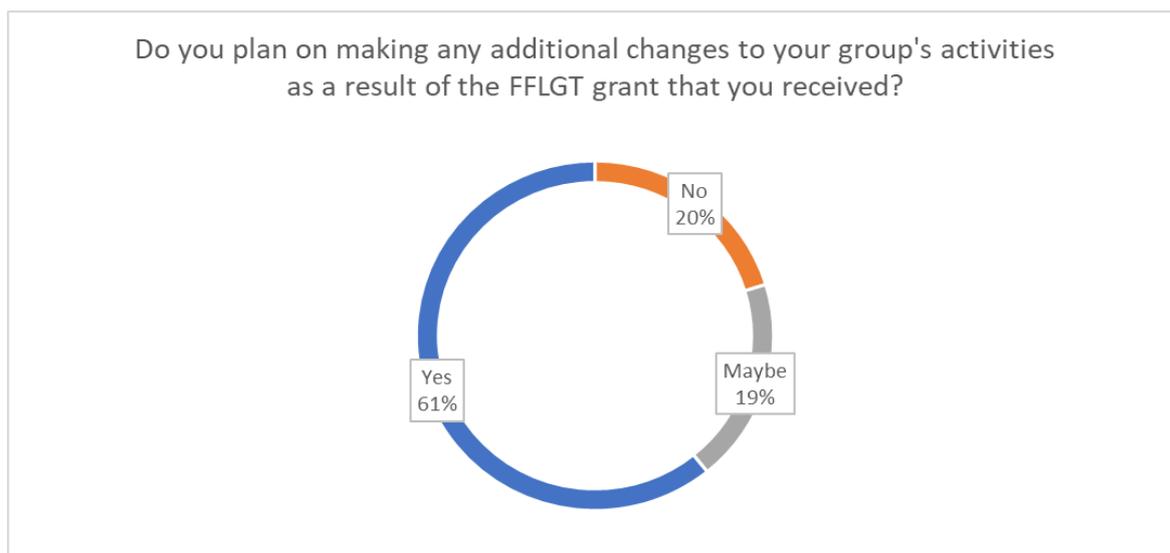


Figure 22: A bar graph showing the number of respondents who indicated various ways of carrying on with their events following the cook and share event supported by the FFLGT grant





**Figure 23: Proportion of respondents and their intention of making changes to their activities as a result of result of receiving the FFLGT grant**

Respondents outlined the types of changes that they intended to make. For those who were certain or had tentative plans of making additional changes to their events, the most frequent plans were to continue with a regular food event or increase the scope and reach of the activities such as expanding on participant numbers or increasing the size of the activity (Table 9). It is notable that these broadly reflect the themes set out earlier in the findings on the applications analysis.

A small proportion did not plan to make changes following the grant. The main reasons were that the grant had simply helped re-launch an existing set of activities; prioritizing other activities; and that the grant had helped the group achieve its current goals, without further plans at this time.

**Table 9: Intention to make additional changes to activities as a result of the FFLGT grant received**

Intention to make additional changes to activities as a result of the FFLGT grant received	Count	Example statement
Continue with a regular food activity	22	We are planning to continue with our cooking clubs every 2 weeks from Spring with our freshly grown produce from the community garden  Cooking or food activities to be a regular part of family sessions  We are hoping to continue with a Veteran's Brunch and a possibility for a Breakfast Club at a local sheltered housing
Develop partnerships	3	Get more local businesses involved to support the event  We are working with the parent's group at our primary school to do further joint events
Use 'good food' (healthy and sustainable food) in future activities	8	Having at least one of our meetings to be all about healthy and sustainable food.  Funding allowed greater diversity in the ingredients used which bought great benefits.
Develop and share knowledge, skills and ideas about food activities	4	Further developing knowledge and skills of our service users with regards to cooking, environment, and healthy eating.

		The goal is to embed some solid life skills that will benefit them as they transition to adulthood and support them to independently choose healthy options
Offer diverse food options	1	Managed to offer diverse food to our service users at the community fridge  Show other users food ideas from different cultures
Increase number of people helping to run events	1	more people to help
Explore more funding options	1	Run more regular events and look for funding to help with this
Increase scope and reach of activities	22	The group wants to continue the cooking project so we will be expanding it for outside seasonal cooking  The older group is well established so we are planning to introduce an intergenerational element once a month  We plan to publicise our monthly event even more so that more guests can participate

### 5.9 Comparisons between first time organisers and experienced organisers

It was interesting to look at any differences in motivations and outcomes between organisers with different levels of experiences of organising food events. We compared the motivations and other outcomes between first time organisers of food activities and more experienced organisers. The two groups were similar for most of the motivations we asked but we found that experienced organisers of food activities were significantly more likely to be inspired by addressing food security than first timers ( $\chi^2 (1, 30) = 5.580, p = 0.018$ ).

In terms of what organisers got out of the activity, first timers were more likely to report that the event helped them to develop their skills in organising food activities ( $\chi^2 (1, 31) = 6.764, p = 0.009$ ), while more experienced organisers significantly reported a greater tendency to contribute to addressing food and environmental issues ( $\chi^2 (1, 27) = 7.292, p = 0.007$ ). There were no significant differences between these two groups in their likelihood of keeping momentum after the food activity, making additional changes to their groups as a result of the food activity or particular use of indicators of ‘good food’ ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 10: Differences in motivations and outcomes of cook and share activities by level of experience of organising cook and share activities. Green shading indicates statistically significant difference.**

Outcomes	First time organising food activity		Chi-square	df	p-value
	No	Yes			
	n (%)	n (%)			
<b>As an organiser of food activity, what has inspired you?</b>					
To develop my skills in organising food activities	12 (54.5)	10 (42.5)	0.018	1	0.892
To improve my own health and wellbeing	6 (42.6)	7 (53.8)	0.326	1	0.568
To develop my social connections	10 (40.0))	15 (60.0)	2.679	1	0.102
To bring other people together	37 (51.4)	35 (48.6)	2.734	1	0.098
To help people to address food security	21 (70.0)	9 (30.0)	5.580	1	0.018*
To share my knowledge and skills	20 (58.8)	14 (41.2)	0.753	1	0.385

For my own satisfaction and enjoyment	9 (60.0)	6 (40.0)	0.335	1	0.563
To address food and environmental issues	21 (65.6)	11 (34.4)	3.388	1	0.066
Inspirations from friends and family	6 (42.6)	8 (57.1)	0.587	1	0.444
To meet goals of my research group or organisation	27 (52.9)	24 (47.1)	0.010	1	0.921
<b>Did the food that you used for the cook and share activity fit any of the following descriptions?</b>					
In-season food	27 (58.7)	19 (41.3)	1.374	1	0.241
Food that's sustainably produced with low climate impact	12 (50.0)	12 (50.0)	0.158	1	0.691
Locally produced food	27 (62.8)	16 (37.2)	3.622	1	0.057
Foods with the highest animal welfare	8 (57.1)	6 (42.9)	0.100	1	0.751
<b>What did you get out of organising the cook &amp; share activity?</b>					
I improved my own health and wellbeing	5 (45.5)	6 (54.5)	0.322	1	0.571
I developed my skills in organising food activities	11 (35.5)	20 (64.5)	6.764	1	0.009**
I developed connections with other organisations	19 (48.7)	20 (51.3)	0.695	1	0.404
I helped people to address food security	16 (69.6)	7 (30.4)	3.512	1	0.061
I shared my knowledge and skills of organising food activities	16 (47.1)	18 (52.9)	0.984	1	0.321
I was satisfied and enjoyed organising the food activity	28 (50.0)	28 (50.0)	0.987	1	0.321
I contribute to addressing food and environmental issues	20 (74.1)	7 (25.9)	7.292	1	0.007**
I was able to develop stronger, more resilient communities	33 (53.2)	29 (46.8)	0.106	1	0.745
I met the goals of my group	30 (60.0)	20 (40.0)	2.679	1	0.102
<b>How have you kept momentum going after the FFLGT grant supported your cook and share activity?</b>					
Continued with similar activity	22 (62.9)	13 (37.1)	2.392	1	0.122
Extended our research	11 (40.0)	11 (50.0)	0.139	1	0.709
Committed to regular activity	21 (53.8)	18 (46.2)	0.009	1	0.926
Did not continue with similar activity	2 (100)	0 (0.00)	1.798	1	0.180
<b>Do you plan on making any additional changes to your group's activities as a result of the FFLGT grant that you received?</b>					
Yes	18 (62.1)	11 (37.9)	1.234	1	0.267

\*p< 0.05; \*\*p< 0.01

**Table 11: Differences in the way the FFLGT grant supported the use of 'good food' by experiences of organising cook and share activities.**

How well did the FFLGT grant help your group in meeting the following descriptions of good food?	First time organising food activity	n	M (SD)	Mean difference	t	df	p-value
Healthy foods*	No	34	4.21 (0.73)	-0.05	-0.280	63	0.780
	Yes	31	4.26 (0.77)				
In-season food	No	27	4.00 (0.83)	-0.32	-1.369	44	0.178
	Yes	19	4.32 (0.67)				
Food that's sustainably produced with low-climate impact	No	12	3.83 (1.12)	-0.25	-0.633	22	0.533
	Yes	12	4.08 (0.79)				
Locally produced food	No	27	4.00 (0.88)	-0.06	-0.236	41	0.815
	Yes	16	4.06 (0.77)				
Foods with the highest animal welfare	No	8	4.00 (1.07)	-0.33	-0.700	12	0.497
	Yes	6	4.33 (0.52)				

\* Lots of fruits, vegetables, less but better-quality meat, and little or no highly processed food

There were no significant differences between first time organisers and more experienced ones in the extent to which the grant supported their use of 'good food' for the event ( $p > 0.05$ ). There were also no significant differences between the two types of organisers in relation to the perceived benefits that participants derived from the food activities ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 12: Participant benefits of the cook and share activities as perceived by organisers of the activity according to organisers' experiences of organising cook and share activities**

How did those who took part in your cook and share activity benefit from it?	First time organising food activity	n	M (SD)	Mean difference	t	df	p-value
The cook and share activity improved the quality of life of the people who took part in it.	No	40	1.65 (0.66)	-0.01	-0.049	73	0.961
	Yes	35	1.66 (0.59)				
The cook and share activity enhanced positive attitudes towards ageing	No	39	2.31 (0.92)	0.25	1.152	71	0.253
	Yes	34	2.06 (0.92)				
The cook and share activity enhanced positive attitudes towards diversity	No	40	2.13 (0.82)	0.27	1.389	73	0.169
	Yes	35	1.86 (0.85)				

The cook and share activity helped address isolation and loneliness	No	40	1.15 (0.43)	-1.36	-1.173	73	0.245
	Yes	35	1.29 (0.57)				
The cook and share activity helped participants to connect with others in the community through food	No	40	1.13 (0.34)	-0.75	-0.800	73	0.426
	Yes	35	1.20 (0.47)				

## 6. Findings from the Cook and Share Interviews

This section presents the cross-cutting themes from interviews that we conducted with 19 organisers representing diverse events and organisations. This should be read in conjunction with Sections 6 and 7, which provide case studies that illustrate the way in which Cook and Share has fostered capacity building and promoted community-based action on agendas for good food.

### 6.1 Overview

Overall, the interviewees were very positive about their grant, the simplicity of the application process and payment. Two interviewees wanted to apply for further small grant opportunities through the programme, at least in part to better connect their activities to the goals of the programme. Interviewees were happy to respond to questions with the average duration of 30 minutes for interview. One respondent felt that there had been a high amount of feedback and evaluation required given the financial value of the award.

### 6.2 Capacity building themes

#### 6.2.1 Motives for event organisers and their agencies

We asked interviewees about their motives for running events and submitting the application for the FFLGT small grant. For 15 out of 19, food related activities (for example, growing, cookery classes, addressing food poverty and breakfast and lunch clubs) were already part of their offer to members. For some in this category, the grant added to their overall pot of funding to enable the ongoing delivery of these activities. For others the Cook and Share grant supported the introduction of a new dimension to an existing food offer. For the four groups that had not previously offered food events the grant was a catalyst to initiating a community activity or to developing their existing offer. Many groups mentioned that the event would have been unlikely to happen without the grant or would have taken longer to initiate.

Organisers themselves described several routes into community food work:

1. Some people had a long period of interest prior to becoming organisers based upon family, friendship, or neighbourhood experiences.
2. Transitions in life were important, for example moving from paid employment to retirement, or moving to a new area.
3. They brought skills from their work experience: for example, cooking, administrative and financial management skills.
4. Personal values and ideological outlook was important: for example a desire to help others or to address social and environmental problems.
5. Personal experience of having benefited themselves from community food activities.

In the context of running a community food event, the grant represents a small amount of money. Interviewees identified the direct benefits of the grants to be the finding of food items and event support resources. However, the interviews highlighted several ways in which the grant had helped to build the capacity of participating groups.

### 6.2.2 Growing new opportunities and developing social networks

One of the strongest themes in the interviews was the way in which the grant had enabled groups to extend their activities and networks.

The grant had a more transformational effect for groups that either used the funding to introduce a new food dimension to their offer and/or were first time recipients of external funding. Many groups in this category, would not have had the event at all without the Cook and Share grant, thus representing a loss of both the real-time and ongoing benefits gained.

For example, the purchase of outdoor cooking equipment (facilitating the provision of hot meals and non-work focussed time), has enabled **Helping Hooves (1<sup>10</sup>)** to meet its participants' needs for longer sessions and a more relaxed, social dimension to group time.

The **Middle of the Hill Group (6)** illustrates how the small grant enabled the group to move from distributing ambient food to cooking and sharing food.

**Bardney Christian Community (7)** used part of the grant to hire a village hall, which has laid the foundations for scaling up community teas that had previously been hosted in private houses.

The grant enabled **Silver Road Community Centre (5)** to pilot a well-being café.

*This allows us to more or less experiment...and now we know we can go ahead, ...Yeah, so it's pretty good. I mean, it was fantastic. The way that [the grant] came along at the right time.*

Some groups such as **Friendly Faces of Kent (4)** used a portion of the grant to create 'legacy' resources such as recipe cards or plant give-aways.

*Although it was a very small grant, we managed to make it go a very long way. Because the money we received from you didn't only pay for the vegetables on the day, it actually gave us the resources and the know how to produce a recipe card and the videos.*

For **Food in Community CIC (10)**, the grant enabled the return to pre-Covid public events with plans to use money left over towards a monthly event thereafter.

Many interviewees spoke about the Cook and Share event as a means to extend their network and publicise their work to others.

**Penrose Root Community (14)** ran an end of season 'cook up' to help promote their horticultural therapy project and to attract new volunteers. For Penrose, seeing through the event publicity that they were part of the national Food for Life Get Togethers programme also gave members a new and even more positive perspective on the project.

For community organisation **Live Active Unst (2)** Cook and Share was,

*really a way of advertising what we do because there was a lot of misconception about the centre. Having people come along to a food and social event was a big crowd pleaser.*

### 6.2.3 Leveraging additional resources

Some Cook and Share recipients exemplified the multiplier effect of small grants, whereby the receipt of an initial monetary award is used to attract further cash and in-kind funding. Others used creative means to make the grant funding stretch further.

**Women Cultural Arena CIC (3)** used Cook and Share and other similar events to communicate the value of their work to funders and local decision-makers, whilst for **Penrose Root Community (14)** was a way to bring in match funding to satisfy the requirements of their core funder.

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<sup>10</sup> Case Study number

For several groups the grant was a catalyst to further successful funding bids or to attracting in-kind donations. For example, Cook and Share provided the foundations for **Friendly Faces of Kent (4)** to make a successful £1500 funding application to a national supermarket chain and they have also built a good relationship with another supermarket that is now provided staples such as tea, coffee and sugar for ongoing events.

*I would just say, apply for the grant. It might only be small, but it does springboard and open up other avenues.*

Community food initiative **Root N' Fruit** supplemented their home-grown pumpkins with a donation of 50 pumpkins from a local supermarket to be able to fully cater for the numbers at their carving and soup Cook and Share activity. Likewise, **Tidemill Residents Group (16)** who applied for the Cook and Share grant to run a street party, used this as an impetus to bring on board local businesses to meet the resourcing requirements not covered by the grant.

The **Nigerian Catholic Community (13)** were able to multiply the benefits of this and other grants by purchasing at discount through the charity Project Inkind, which enables them to make a grant of £150 worth £500 in reality.

In the case of **Live Active Unst (2)**, which had not received a grant of this kind previously, Cook and Share gave them a new sense of identify, potential and confidence as a group. Having been successful with Cook and Share they felt motivated to seek other sources of funding to further extend their community offer.

For **Women Cultural Arena CIC (3)**, it was affirming to be part of a national programme that mirrored a philosophical approach that the group had been independently nurturing and developing over a number of years.

After witnessing the benefits to pupils of the Cook and Share event, **Kirkby C of E Primary School (12)** have been inspired to apply for Arts Council Funding to run a similar event for the Queens Silver Jubilee; the challenges of making successful funding applications in the current climate notwithstanding.

*I've been putting funds bids in and I've never been rejected so much as I have in the last six months....The worst thing is when they say you did fit all the criteria and you think what else can I do then if we fit all your criteria?...Come and spend a day in the school and you tell me why these children don't deserve what we've asked you for?*

#### 6.2.4 Development of knowledge and skills

It is important to emphasise that the FFLGT Cook and Share grant scheme supported a wide range of types of events and agencies, and therefore that all learning from the organisation of events is very much dependent upon specific contexts.

Interviewees were asked to provide some overall reflections on what they had learned through Cook and Share and for their recommendations to others who might want to hold a similar event. Their responses reflect the wide-ranging knowledge, skills and competencies that group organisers develop in the life cycle of the grant from skills and confidence in making funding applications, through to the organisation of the event itself, to building on the event and planning future activities.

*On one hand the £150 wasn't much, but on the other it was. This was a way of us being able to go "oh, look, we've managed to get a little grant!" It gave us the drive to think, "We've done this, we can fundraise.*

**SVP Chorley Buddies (15)** illustrates the importance of administrative skills in maintaining relationships, managing logistics and responding to feedback. The development of leadership, management and communication skills are highlighted by **Balfron Lunch Club (8)**.

Organisers of the Cook and Share event at **CrossReach (9)**, a residential care home had to think about how to create a healthy soup that suited residents' preference for sweet tasting foods and also how to enable

residents to participate in food preparation. This shows how organising a Cook and Share event draws on (and by implication develops) qualities such as adaptability and creativity.

For the organiser of the **Headway Rotherham (11)** Cook and Share was a source of professional satisfaction and pride.

Whilst not exclusively related to Cook and Share, the **Middle of the Hill (6)** interviewee suggested that for community organisers the work involved in making grant applications, managing volunteers and partner relationships had important professional development benefits.

### 6.2.5 Future developments

Interviewees overall reported a range of positive developments after the grant period. Groups that were first time recipients of external funding felt an enhanced sense of the status of their group and had a new perspective on what the group could potentially accomplish in the future. Following the success of the Cook and Share event, many groups were inspired to make shared cooking and eating a regular activity and there were creative ideas for developing variations on a theme and giving even more control to participants to maximise the benefits gained.

**CrossReach (9)** are looking to run similar events with a cross-generational dimension in the future.

**Helping Hooves (1)** have been inspired to think about other developments that they could fund through grant applications.

**Live Active Unst (2)** are planning to run future events with a 'budget-friendly' theme, inspired by the work of food activist Jack Munroe.

Seeing the positive impact of involving participants in the planning and running of the event, the **Penrose Root Community (14)** organiser plans to hand over control to members as much as possible in the future.

### 6.2.6 Recommendations to others

Interviewees provided a wide range of recommendations to others seeking to run community food get togethers.

Setting up get together events:

1. Understand needs and whether there is a demand
2. Communicate and build relationships
3. Be organised: contact details, registers etc
4. Plan for transport and accessibility
5. Best prepared to invest a lot of time at the outset promoting events
6. Have an umbrella organisation to provide support around aspects such as insurance, training, and safeguarding

Delivering and maintaining get together events:

1. Allow plenty of time around and during the event
2. Always try to involve more people to help than you think you need
3. Try to delegate and distribute the roles
4. Give it a go
5. Get feedback

**Kirkby Primary School (12)** illustrates the importance of not having a big expectation: being quite flexible and being able to respond to circumstances as they arise. Emergent outcomes such as children finding excitement in washing up highlight the importance of not being too prescriptive and welcoming the unexpected.

**The Tidemill Residents Group (16)** street party provides a lesson about making the activity fun to encourage people to come along, with no direct focus on the food.

**Penrose Root Community (14)** and **Helping Hooves (1)** highlight the importance of optimising the participatory element to communicate events as a way to give agency to individuals whose lives in many other ways are profoundly constrained.

### 6.3 'Good food' themes

#### 6.3.1 Understanding different approaches to 'good food'

It is important to appreciate the diversity of the interviewee perspectives with regard to agendas on good food. For some activities, food was very much a vehicle to drive social engagement, with little focus on provenance or specific qualities. Other organisers were highly motivated about the characteristics of the food and the dishes prepared. Much of this diversity reflects the origin stories of groups: the lunch clubs hosted by church groups, food hubs based in housing projects, and permaculture surplus food schemes started with different intentions.

The interviews provide evidence of the way in which collectively Cook and Share fostered the social, environmental and economic dimensions of 'good food'.

#### 6.3.2 Social themes

Not surprisingly given the focus of Cook and Share, the social dimension of good food was the one most strongly emphasised by interviewees. As with the findings from the application, the interviews highlighted the multifaceted ways in which cook and share supported the social dimension of good food.

##### *Social connections (bonding and bridging)*

For many groups the grant was the catalyst for post-Covid re-connection, with the event and its constituent activities representing a welcome return to normality. This was particularly significant for vulnerable participants who had had to be extra cautious about social contact during the pandemic. For all groups that had ceased their in-person social activities, the cook and share event was a significant moment of collective letting go of some of the constraints and anxieties of lockdowns and shielding.

*I think there was just the sense of sense of celebration and just a really nice opportunity for parents to do something with their kids, enjoy themselves and forget about all the difficulties of the last couple of years.*

*During the COVID pandemic, most of the support groups had to shut down and go virtual. And we found that people begin to disassociate and become isolated and lonely yet again. We thought this would be a really good way to bring people back together again, it's a fun opportunity.*

A common theme across the groups was the power of food to make social interaction less threatening. This encouraged those experiencing social anxiety to attend in the first place and enabled participants to make the most of the opportunity for human connection during the event itself.

In some cases, for example, **Kirby Primary School (12)**, Cook and Share fostered bonding within an established setting or group – in this case parents, children and teachers.

The case of **CrossReach residential care home (9)** illustrates the way in which sharing the sensuality and physicality of food (shelling peas together and holding a warm scone) can stimulate conversation and build connection through a shared experience.

*The meal was an opportunity for conversation and talking about the food. Just the physicality of holding a scone that's warm led to talking about their baking experience and stimulated more conversation.*

In other settings the sharing of food was a way to bring together people from different groups and backgrounds. This is exemplified by the **Women's Cultural Arena CIC (3)**.

*Even though people have a language barrier or a different economic and political agenda, it doesn't matter when it comes to food...we can easily communicate through the food. And by doing this, we*

*can understand more, we can easily live in a society by understanding. That is the main ethos of our organisation.*

Likewise, **Live Active Unst (2)** highlights the power of food to bridge the divide between people of different generations.

For **Middle of the Hill (6)** 'Chop and Chat' has not only helped foster connections between members from very different backgrounds, but also helped forge a link with other agencies such as the local council and police.

### *Participation*

For some groups the participatory elements of Cook and Share were particularly important for the way in which they developed food knowledge and skills and fostered participants confidence and self-esteem.

**Kirkby Primary School (12)** is an excellent illustration. Children were involved in the preparation of food served at the event (a local dish called Scouse), made laminated recipe cards to give to other attendees and also helped out enthusiastically with the washing up at the end of the evening. Not only did they acquire useful knowledge and skills, but seeing others enjoy food that they had prepared was a boost to their confidence and self-esteem.

This dual effect is also illustrated by **Headway, Rotherham (11)** which used the grant to set up a cookery class for people with major brain injuries.

*The idea is a cookery class, learn new skills. Gain a bit of confidence.*

**Penrose Community Root (14)** involved participants in designing and organising the event. As in other cases, for individuals whose lives are profoundly constrained in other ways, involvement in decision making supported their confidence, mental well-being and self-esteem.

Following the success of the Cook and Share event, many groups were inspired to make shared cooking and eating a regular activity and there were creative ideas for developing variations on a theme and giving even more control to participants to maximise the benefits gained.

### *Health and nutrition*

Cooking from scratch and providing tasty and nutritious food featured strongly in many of the interviews. Organisers emphasised:

1. The pride and satisfaction in cooking from scratch
2. Simple, 'homely' cooking that was appropriate to participants' backgrounds
3. Working with good quality ingredients
4. Using the event as an opportunity to demonstrate a range of cooking skills including, cooking on a budget, cooking healthy food and minimising food waste.

Several of the Cook and Share events (**CrossReach, Helping Hooves, Penrose Community Root, Root n' Fruit**), involved cooking with ingredients that groups had grown themselves.

### *Accessibility*

The interviews illustrate the way in which food accessibility can manifest in different ways. For some groups, shared meals were a way to provide nutritious food to those experiencing food poverty in a way that preserved the dignity of recipients.

Taking this idea a step further, **Food in Community CIC (10)** work with the ethos that those on low incomes deserve the best quality and environmentally **sustainable** food.

The importance of addressing social isolation through attending to the cultural appropriateness of food is highlighted by the **Nigerian Catholic Community (13)**.

Many Cook and Share organisers (for example, **Live Active Unst (2)** and **Bardney Christian Community (8)**) sought to make the event relatable and accessible by offering traditional dishes and local products.

A further dimension of accessibility was demonstrated in the way that event organisers responded to some participants reluctance to eat fruit and vegetables or unfamiliar dishes. In some cases, small steps towards incorporating homegrown produce (onion from the community allotment on the Cook and Share pizza) provided a way forward. In other cases, to keep the focus on the importance of eating and being together, organisers mixed healthier options with fun foods such as S'mores (a marshmallow and biscuit sandwich baked on an open fire).

### Environmental and local economic themes

Few organisers made explicit reference to environmental sustainability as a key driver for their group or the Cook and Share event. Where this was the case, reducing the environmental impact of food was a central organising principle that pre-dated Cook and Share. To this extent, the grant, in a small way helped foster the continuation of existing work on food system sustainability.

In the case of the **Nigerian Catholic Community (13)**, for example, minimising food waste was a central organising principle (using edible food waste from the Felix Project and educating members of the group about cooking to minimise food waste.) Tackling food waste was in part a motivation for **SVP Chorley Buddies (15)** to buy edible food waste from FairShare.

For Social Enterprise **Food in Community CIC (10)**, supporting an environmentally sustainable, ethical and just food system was their founding purpose.

For the groups that used homegrown produce or bought food that was locally grown and produced the main motivations were amenity and quality. For example, horticultural activity primarily served a therapeutic or well-being function for the groups that contributed home-grown produce to the Cook and Share event. An aspect of this was connecting people with nature and given participants an appreciation of the provenance of food.

Organisers also had a variety of reasons for using local produce for the event and again, this approach pre-dated Cook and Share in all cases. For the organisers of **SVP Chorley Buddies (15)**, for example, knowing the provenance of ingredients used was highly important.

For **Balfroon Lunch Club (8)** provenance and quality were the key motivations for sourcing locally.

*I buy from our local butcher because his meat is quite obviously superb and I know where it comes from... We have fish once a month and I often buy the fish from a place on Loch Fyne because they do beautiful smoked haddock and smoked salmon. I mean I personally haven't come across a fish like it for the flavour.*

For **Bardney Christian Community (8)** the advantages of featuring local produce and products were two-fold: First, featuring traditional local elements to the meal such as Lincolnshire sausages, plum bread and cheese supported the community-building aim of the event. Second, there was also an economic advantage because the local butcher provided meat to the group at a discount.

## 6.4 Case studies that illustrate capacity building<sup>11</sup>

### 1. There wasn't one person round that fire who didn't talk to everybody

**Helping Hooves Derbyshire CIC** provides mental well-being sessions for ex-offenders, school-age children and members of the public. The sessions are based around working with animals and therapeutic gardening. The Cook and Share grant was used to buy a firepit/bbq, tripod cooking stand, cooking pots and a marshmallow toasting kit. This enabled Helping Hooves to fulfill their ambition to offer outdoor cooking for their groups, which they would have struggled to fund through other means.

*If it hadn't been for that £150 grant, we wouldn't have cooked in October, because there were so many other things that happened to our income last year, that meant our reserves were zero. So without having the ability to say, Yeah, okay, we can bring folks that and we can get something to actually cook on. it would never have happened.*

Traditionally Helping Hooves has offered hour-long activities. The cooking equipment has enabled the organisation to respond to participants' requests for longer sessions by complementing animal and horticultural activities with those that, through food, have an important social dimension. The power of the Cook and Share event was that it fostered relaxed social interaction among participants.

*A lot of what we do day to day is very hands on and busy. I think what having the meal was good for was just people relaxing, and actually coming together and talking about what they've been doing.... There wasn't one person around that fire who didn't talk to everybody.*

#### **Catalyst and inspiration for more**

Building upon the success of the first event, the Cook and Share grant has been the catalyst and inspiration for further cooking-based activities. Some of the participants are now talking about getting a pizza oven and even a whole outdoor kitchen!

*You know, it is now pretty much every week, but they just cook their own stuff.*

Receipt of the grant has also inspired Helping Hooves and its groups to think about other developments that they could potentially realise through fund raising activities. Seeing the results of the Cook and Share grant for Helping Hooves has also inspired other community projects in the area to explore whether they could apply for a Food for Life grant.

#### **Facilitating easy access**

Lead Facilitator Bridget says that following the Covid-19 pandemic it is important to do everything possible to make these types of events as physically and psychologically accessible as possible. This is particularly the case for first-time participants. For Helping Hooves, inviting people as groups rather than individuals and facilitating people's travel were crucial in getting good attendance.

*If you invite a group, they've already got their support structure there. So they can say "yeah the group are going to go to Helping Hooves, and we're going to do a cooking activity" and all the rest of it.*

#### **Use every opportunity to empower**

As with others, the Helping Hooves case illustrates the potential to use Cook and Share as an opportunity to give participants agency by involving them in decisions about food and format and also making space for events to take on their own character on the day. For participants whose lives for many reasons may be otherwise profoundly constrained this can be one of the key benefits of a cooking and eating activity.

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<sup>11</sup> Most of the case studies include aspects of capacity building and fostering community agendas on good food. Case studies in this section have been selected because they usefully illustrate and further develop some of the themes discussed in Section 5.

## 2. Keeping it 'easy-osey' on the northernmost island in the UK

**Live Active Unst** is a community organisation situated on Unst, the most northerly inhabited island of the British Isles. Operating from the leisure centre, Live Active Unst runs a range of social activities for the island population of just over 600 people. A close-knit community in a remarkable part of the world, there are limited opportunities for the community to come together especially for older people.

Live Active used the Cook and Share grant to organise a potluck lunch encouraging people to bring a dish to share with the group, alongside sandwiches and soup for all. Apart from funds for equipment such as dining tables, part of the grant was used to create soup kits – with carrots, potatoes, onion, a stock cube and instructions – to be given out to participants.

It is often difficult to access fresh produce on the island so an aim was to bring community members together to share recipes and cooking tips for healthy budget meals that would work well for both older single people and family groups.

### Celebration for all ages

The event brought together a very wide cross section of the community. The oldest person was almost 93, while the youngest was 4 years old. In between there were teenagers of 15 and 16, and 'mums and dads in their 20s and 30s'. One disabled person in his forties found that the group was more attractive than an alternative day centre group that was mainly directed towards older people.

The food and social activities involved all these groups, for instance a pass the parcel game included both young and old in a robust contest.

*We have some really interesting people and I think it's nice for them to be able to 'be them' and not just be some 'Old dear' or 'Granny'. We like to celebrate the people's lives whether they're 4 or 93 years old.*

### A chance to try a new menu

While the soup recipe kit was simple for some, it appeared to be particularly attractive for some of the younger less experienced cooks. The choice of food – including the bring and share contributions – felt relaxed and informal. While the event might have been themed around local dishes such as reestit mutton and tattie soup (stew of salted dried mutton and potato), the organisers felt that this was the sort of food that local people ate all the time. Instead they are planning to run further events around budget friendly meals such as those promoted by food activist Jack Munroe (<https://cookingonabootstrap.com/>).

A further benefit of the event was to publicise the wider activities of Live Active Unst and the leisure centre:

*The food event was really a way of advertising what we do because there was a lot of misconception about the centre. Having people come along to a food and social event was a big crowd pleaser.*

### We can fundraise!

The event attracted interest from elsewhere in the Shetlands as an easy, simple format for an intergenerational community activity. One of the benefits for the group was to demonstrate the ability to fund raise. Success with the Cook and Share grant has led to a further funding application.

*On one hand the £150 wasn't much, but on the other it was. This was a way of us being able to go "oh, look, we've managed to get a little grant!" It gave us the drive to think "We've done this, we can fundraise!"*

### Be flexible and keep things simple

Karen felt that it was important to have the encouragement from an umbrella organisation, in this case Ability Shetland which had supported connections between the Cook and Share events and other community initiatives. As far as setting up the event, a top piece of advice was to take a very open-minded approach and put the social aspects first:

*I would definitely recommend just making it a very sociable experience. Don't start with 'a project' in your mind, start with getting people to have the confidence to come through the door - at least twice*

The next recommendation was to start by bringing people together with a simple set up – even if this meant having minimal aspirations around the food on offer.

*Keep it simple. Really the costs of doing [a social event] is next to nothing. We've had some board games, we hired the hall, we bought some tea, coffee, milk and sugar. You know, that's negligible. A lot of intergenerational things are based around a project and ours was very much just come along, drop in. Don't scare people away with a structured project. Keep it easy-osey: come in, drop in, drop out, no fear.*



### 3. Influencing decision-makers through food

Based in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, the aim of the **Women's Cultural Arena CIC** (WCA) is to bring together women from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds through activities based around several themes including art and literature, cooking and gardening. The WCA also set up a community fridge as part of the Hubbub network.

Sharing food in different ways is core to the work of the WCA. The Cook and Share grant was used to run a continental style healthy breakfast event that was advertised via the local press, radio and other media to all women in the High Wycombe area.

#### **Fostering community building and mutual respect**

The aims of Cook and Share (and Get Togethers more broadly) aligned with the core values of the WCA and their aim to foster community building and mutual respect between people of different backgrounds.

*Even though people have a language barrier, people have a different perspective and economic and political agenda, it doesn't matter when it comes to food...we can easily communicate through the food. And by doing this, we can understand more, we can easily live in a society by understanding. That is the main ethos of our organisation.*

#### **Goodwill Ambassadors**

Operational Director Shanthi emphasises the importance of taking a respectful and flexible approach with event contributors and participants. Those who help cook and organise are called "Goodwill

Ambassadors” rather than volunteers and identifying those with the skills to cook for large numbers is done with tact and diplomacy.

The wide-ranging background of participants has been achieved by building the WCA’s network of different faith and cultural organisations. The WCA invites funders and local policy makers to their events to help decision-makers understand the value of the work that they are undertaking.



#### 4. Just being able to draw everybody back close again

[Friendly Faces of Kent](#) was established in 2017 with the aim of supporting people who are isolated and lonely with their mental and physical wellbeing. The Cook and Share grant was used to deliver a virtual cook along where participants learned to cook a seasonal vegetable casserole.

Students and older people took part in the event. Volunteers delivered ingredients to participants and recipe cards were provided to those who were not on social media so that they could follow along too. The vegetables were sourced from a local farm and shop.

One of the main aims of the event was to help people who had lost contact with the group during Covid to reconnect in a safe way.

*During the COVID pandemic, most of the support groups had to shut down and go virtual. And we found that people begin to disassociate and become isolated and lonely yet again. We thought this would be a really good way to bring people back together again, it's a fun opportunity.*

##### **Healthy cooking skills and new food knowledge**

The Cook and Share activity introduced participants, particularly students, to new cooking skills and healthy eating options.

*Yes, a couple of our members are students away from home, finding it difficult to fend for themselves for the first time probably. And in that instance, it was a really good idea to be able to give them new skills and some tips for cooking and healthy eating whilst they're away from home.*

For the older people, they gained new knowledge and ideas of cooking.

*For our older generation it was just some new ideas really that perhaps that they could cook and bake and freeze because a lot of our members are single ladies and gentlemen.*

In addition to sharing new ideas of cooking, the cook and share event also introduced economical ways of cooking among the older generation.

*... but also because specially older generation are on a very tight budget, it sort of made, you know, we gave them some ideas for perhaps being able to reduce the cost of buying ingredients. And yeah, just helped them all out really.*

### **Reconnecting and making new friendships**

The activity was used as a vehicle for reintegrating participants into support groups. It brought people together developing a sense of community among participants and strengthening social connections.

*Physically, it was just a really nice way to actually reintroduce people that have still [been] feeling a bit nervous about going back into groups...And they got a lot from it really, it was about reconnecting with people making new friendships in some way. Also, now our members have connected virtually they are going to come along to our group, some of these people [have] never been to our groups before.*

### **An ongoing resource**

The benefits of Cook and Share extended beyond the event itself. A recipe card and video of the activity was produced which was then shared with wider audience. This has become a permanent resource that will be used to facilitate future similar activities.

*Although it was a very small grant we managed to make it go a very long way. Because the money we received from you didn't only pay for the vegetables on the day, it actually gave us the resources and the know how to produce a recipe card and the videos...We've actually covered I think, 450 members for the recipe card. And I haven't actually checked our YouTube to see how many people viewed it there, but on our social media page, more than 340 people have accessed the video.*

### **Springboard to further funding**

The grant has also served as a springboard to acquire grants for other activities.

*So, it's sort of gone a very long way actually, and springboarded us into receiving a grant from Tesco, £1500 to be able to do things like that. Next month, we are starting a new healthy eating for the older generations booklet. So that money from them, will help us sort of forward and build on this project that we started with this very small fund.*

The grant also helped the group to develop partnerships with other local agencies and businesses that have led to in-kind resourcing for other activities.

*We've made really good connections with the Co-op locally who actually helped fund some of that produce for the cook and share that we done with yourself. And they are actually helping us with resources like tea and coffee and sugar and things for our groups now, which is fantastic...So yeah, it's made some really good connections locally with local, other businesses.*

### **Have a go and make it fun!**

*I would just say, apply for the grant. It might only be small, but it does springboard and open up other avenues and gives everybody a chance to sort of get together in a fun environment and share sort of new ideas and things about food portions and nutrition and healthy eating options.*

One of the recommendations made by Lesley who helped organize the event is to make this kind of activity fun. This means that for cook and share activities to be successful, consideration needs to be made beyond the food itself.

*I think it's all about just making it fun, making it a really fun environment.*

## 5. Food provides the milieu for a therapeutic session

**Silver Rd Community Centre** rents a space from the council for £1 a year. The centre has a food bank, community café and library. Julie who is also a local councillor applied for a grant to support an indoor wellbeing café to provide a meal that people could share together.

*People all enjoyed the food. It's lovely and warm where we are now. And we and they [had] a good time.*

### Well-being cafe

Food was used as a catalyst for a group therapeutic session. Participants could express and share their life concerns with others in the group mediated by the safe activity of learning how to prepare healthy food. The benefits that the group derived did not primarily pertain to the food itself, but instead helped to create the milieu for the wellbeing café to take place.

*All of our volunteers have worked really hard through COVID. It was really lovely to see everyone just sitting down...And one lad who lost his wife six months ago started coming down there. And he even said to us, "You know, you're my lifeline. I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't joined your group"...And there was one lady comes down there she's 30 or 35. And she just lost her mom last week. And so they sat there for about an hour this week....And I think that's common and sort of like connecting with people about things that you've got on your mind that you want to get off your mind.*

The grant enabled the community centre to pilot the well-being café, which the group now plans to carry forward based on their learning from the Cook and Share activity.

*This allows us to more or less experiment...and now we know we can go ahead, ...Yeah, so it's pretty good. I mean, it looks fantastic. The way that [the grant] came along at the right time.*

## 6. It works well because it's run by neighbours for neighbours,

**Middle of the Hill Community group**, based in Nouncells Cross, Stroud operates a food hub out of a small community room in a block of flats. As well as other food donations, the group distributes surplus food from supermarkets through involvement with Fare Share. Around the start of the pandemic the group wanted to expand their provision to cook with the surplus food and share meals with neighbours.

The Cook and Share small grant was used to invest in items such as food containers, saucepans, utensils, table cloths, a first aid kit, a microwave a slow cooker and top up food ingredients. The grant also helped pay for two people to obtain food hygiene certification and contributed towards public liability insurance.

### Chop and Chat

Many of the participants in the Cook and Share events are experiencing extreme food insecurity, finding fresh ingredients unaffordable, lacking kitchen facilities and having to make hard choices about the energy costs for cooking. A key benefit of the grant was that the group was able to access a greater range of surplus foods, including meats and fish, and in so doing prepare cooked meals for residents. This went beyond the Cook and Share event itself and has developed as a regular feature of the group. The 'chop and chat' preparation sessions have become social events for people who do not get out the house very much. The regular 20 recipients get a good quality cooked meal based on dishes that are known to be popular through feedback. Nathan Roe, the Chair of the Middle of the Hill Community group felt that understanding what residents want to eat is an important aspect to the work of the group:

*We've got a partnership with a local organisation [that also offers meals] and the feedback from our visitors was that the food was a bit fancy for them...They wanted sausage and mash, cottage pie and you know, that's what they can have with us. [It's important to know] our different values that we might bring about food.*

The food sharing work has engaged and brought people together from different backgrounds and perspectives.

*While some people are experiencing food inequality, [other] people want to play their part in reducing food waste. So, it's a really diverse group of people.*

The grant enabled the food hub to create opportunities for residents. In particular, the food hygiene training provided accredited certificates for individuals with few formal qualifications. The group provided a volunteering opportunity that was very local and relevant to the immediate interests of people in Nouncells Cross.

*It is an accessible volunteering opportunity, where [other volunteer projects] might seem more formal or are simply further away from home.*

The community organisers also benefit personally from the project. For example, Denise is not in paid employment and has had to shield during the pandemic. Her work to induct and train volunteers, and manage funding applications and partner relationship has given her a focus during a challenging two years.

Representatives from the council and the police have engaged with the group because it has trusted links with people in the local community. A positive relationship has developed with the community workers in the District Council leading to opportunities for further grants.

## 7. Come on in, it's a community tea

Bardney village in Lincolnshire has a mix of established residents and people who have recently moved from surrounding urban areas into newbuild developments. Open to people of all faiths and none, the **Bardney Christian Community Trust** (BCCT) was set up in 2015 to encourage social interaction and build a sense of community; addressing the isolation and loneliness experienced by both newer and older residents.

### Relaunch of community teas

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the BCCT ran regular community teas in people's homes. The Cook and Share grant enabled BCCT to have a relaunch community tea event in the village hall, which attracted 40 people of all ages. As well as the hire of the village hall (which allowed the event to be socially distanced), the grant enabled organisers to theme the event with locally produced food such as Lincolnshire sausages, plum bread and cheese. Participants were also invited to bring along a dish to share if they wanted to.

The community teas will now take place monthly and are likely to continue as an expanded event in the village hall.

*We're going to find it's getting so big that it can't go back to where it used to be. Because people have seen that there's something going on and being a small community some people come to the door and say, "Oh, what's this? What's going on? There's nothing normally here at this time." And we'll say, "Well, come on in. It's a community tea, why don't you join us." I know of at least one family who did that the first time and then they came back next time. So I think it's going to grow.*

### Being sensitive to social dynamics

BCCT member Kim says that not pressurising people and being attentive and responsive to the dynamics in the room are key to making the community teas welcoming and conducive to social interaction.

*We recognise that the people who are lonely, it's hard for them to turn up to something. Because when you're somewhere you don't know you kind of I suppose get defensive and the more alone you get, the harder it is to go out and meet people. So it's just encourage people to come but not make them feel under any pressure to come. And the first time they come tell them it's optional to bring something.*

The BCCT organisers look out for people who may be struggling to engage and help facilitate conversation with other participants. Initially the tables and chairs had been set up cabaret style, but as people arrived they all congregated around one table. One of the BCCT members spotted this and quickly moved tables and chairs to expand the capacity of the popular table.

*That was a surprise. We thought people would want to be spaced out, but they didn't, they just wanted to all come together.*

## 6.5 Case studies that illustrate the promotion of community agendas for good food

### 8. Don't try to do everything yourself

**Balfron Lunch Club** is a Church of Scotland group located in the village of Balfron about 20 miles north of Glasgow. The group started about 15 years ago and in normal times runs on a weekly basis, one week offering a soup and main course and the next a main course and dessert. The Cook and Share grant marked the first occasion since March 2020 when the club met in person. During pandemic restrictions the volunteers had been taking meals to people at home. The club offered a menu of broccoli and stilton soup with crusty bread, then chicken casserole with potatoes and peas. This was followed by tea or coffee, and shortbread made by a young person doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award. There is normally a charge of £4 for the meal, which was waived on this occasion. About 25 people took part in the meal with another five receiving a home delivery.

The club involves a large team of volunteers, with six people to cook, set up and serve, and two drivers for the deliveries to homes. The volunteers have a rota with up fluid number of about 30 people involved overall.

#### Conversation and quality food

The lunch club is open to anybody with a focus on older people who may be experiencing frailty and live alone. The meal provides an opportunity to come together, meet friends and get to know others:

*It's just lovely to hear in the background the babble of conversation and the laughs.*

The quality of the food is a stand-out feature of the club:

*I buy from our local butcher because his meat is quite obviously superb and I know where it comes from... We have fish once a month and I often buy the fish from a place on Loch Fyne because they do beautiful smoked haddock and smoked salmon. I haven't come across fish like it for the flavour.*

#### Volunteers are participants themselves

Aside from supporting a Duke of Edinburgh volunteer, the main group of volunteers get a lot personally from running the club. The majority live by themselves, so the lunch club is a social event for the volunteers as well as the main diners. Rae feels that the group like putting something back into the village.



*There's a lot of a lot of people living by themselves. In fact, I would say probably the majority are by themselves. And many of the volunteers live by themselves. Like myself, my husband died six years ago. We get more out of it than we put in really. We thoroughly enjoy it.*

While the pandemic brought forward new temporary volunteers, there are concerns about the ageing profile of the volunteers and the need to younger recruits to help the club flourish. One issue is that many people in their 60s are continuing in work alongside helping out as grandparents.

#### **Organisation and delegation**

With over 15 years of experience, Rae has a wealth of insight into how to run a lunch club. One of the greatest challenges is to build a team of volunteers who are clear about their roles:

*First of all, you need enthusiasm, and you need a heart for what you're doing. Then the thing is to get a team... I would say to anybody taking it on "don't do it alone". Make sure you have other people who are doing it with you. But in lots of ways you do need somebody at the top with the expertise to delegate to the right people and encourage them. If you have three or four people all helping to run [things at the same time], the communication can fail.*



## 9. The physicality of holding a warm scone

**Crossreach** is a residential not-for-profit care home in Edinburgh, currently with 39 older people living with dementia. During the Covid lockdowns the residents had been in room isolation with staff support for extended periods.

Kathryn, Crossreach's Activity and Wellbeing Co-ordinator had worked with residents to grow a variety of vegetables and fruit in the home's courtyard garden. The Cook and Share grant was used to supplement this produce with the purchase of additional ingredients, containers, induction hob and suitable pans. Due to ongoing Covid restrictions the first event was limited to residents and staff, although a second event had volunteers from the local senior school to assist. At this event the group prepared pea and courgette soup with a hint of garlic alongside cheese scones.

### Getting back to normality

The residents were actively involved in the choice of the food and took part in the preparation – with the shelling of peas a particularly enjoyable aspect. They also took part in washing and clearing up afterwards and didn't leave this all to the staff. According to Kathryn, the 'normality' of the occasion was felt to be a key benefit of the shared meal.

*The meal was an opportunity for conversation and talking about the food. Just the physicality of holding a scone that's warm led to talking about their baking experience and stimulated more conversation. The majority of the residents here are mums, and they've learned to love to share food. I think people forget that when you go into residential care, your life shouldn't just stop. It should carry on as it did before, and you should be enabled to do as many normal things as possible.*

Due to Covid restrictions, during the activities the residents did not have the opportunity to engage as fully as planned with their families and wider community members. This is an important aspiration that Crossreach are hoping to develop further in future, particularly with intergenerational food-based activities.

### Build your community of volunteers

Kathryn, who led on organising the event recommends that these types of activities in care homes need 'a really good team of volunteers' to support service users, to create a good atmosphere and to help maintain the dignity of residents. The work beforehand involves putting time into building up a local community network of potential volunteers for such events.

### Involving residents in menu choice and cooking

The facilities in most care home place constraints on what can be achieved, especially regarding the cooking and dining environment. The ability to bake food together provides the benefits of sensory smells, which is lost when dishes are baked in the home's kitchen that is not open for use by residents.

There are several considerations about the choice of food when organising events with people with dementia. For example, changes in sense of taste can mean that residents have a strong preference for sweet foods. Kathryn found that some dishes such as parsnip soup provided a healthy option that avoided added sugar. Nevertheless, the starting place for planning meals should always be to let residents choose, for instance through holding informal focus group meetings.

## 10. People having a hard time deserve good quality food

Based in Totnes, Devon, [Food in Community](#) collects sustainably produced vegetables and fruit from farms and wholesalers and delivers it for free to households in need as fresh food boxes and to other charities and not-for-profits so they can help their beneficiaries. Now in its tenth year, the award-winning community interest company has expanded to run pop-up cafes and community cooking groups from several venues.

Food in Community has three paid staff, four trustees and about 80 volunteers. It operates on permaculture principles so that, for example, it seeks to recycle food waste for use as compost by food growers. Chantelle Norton, explained that these principles also apply to high food standards.

*One way I think our project is fairly unique is that we only use organic (or unsprayed if it's from very small supplier) regeneratively produced food. We don't take any food from supermarkets, we take it all from box scheme farms, community supported agriculture, and local farms and orchards. It's all really good quality food that supports biodiversity and the environment. It's at a quality we would eat ourselves. I think if you're providing food for people that are on low incomes or have health conditions, it's even more important to have a strong quality standard...People having a hard time deserve good quality food.*

### A chance to celebrate the easing of Covid restrictions

The Cook and Share grant was used for a celebratory lunch to mark an occasion for families to come together after the relaxation of the covid restrictions. Two thirds of invitees were from low incomes or with other vulnerabilities. The funds went towards the hire of the venue and costs of extra food apart from the surplus food already gathered.

The meal centred around a pumpkin soup, made from the leftovers of a family pumpkin carving workshop, along with a selection of nibbles. The event filled the venue to capacity (over 50 people) and the surplus hot soup was served to passers-by on the high street outside the hall. For participants, Chantelle felt:

*There was just the sense of celebration and of a nice opportunity for parents to do something with their kids, enjoy themselves and forget about all the difficulties of the last couple of years.*



## 11. Miss, I really loved that

**Kirkby Church of England Primary School** is a mixed school in the north east of Liverpool. Levels of deprivation in Kirkby are over double that of England and two fifths of children are income deprived. Covid has exacerbated poverty and had a significant impact on children's mental well-being.

The Cook and Share grant was used to purchase the ingredients and bowls for a community outdoor meal in the newly refurbished school woodland area. The event was open to children and families from Kirkby C of E and other local schools. The children helped plan and deliver the meal, which included a traditional local stew called Scouse and cooking S'mores on an open fire. The children also produced laminated recipe cards that were given to families at the end of the meal.

*It's just so difficult when you're constantly battling for every single penny....but for that afternoon, we achieved a lovely time, children enjoyed it their families enjoyed it, people got to taste food they'd never tasted before.*

### Sense of pride

Being involved with the planning and delivery of the event and meal had multiple benefits for the children. As well as learning food preparation, cooking and teamwork skills, the sense of achievement and pride in serving food that they had made supported their self-esteem and mental well-being.

*The good thing that comes from it is seeing the smile on a child's face when they've made something and they give it to somebody who then says, "yeah, that's really nice, thank you", that is just, it's unbankable....children coming up to me saying, "Miss, I really loved that!"*

### The return of fun!

The event also restored a much-needed social dimension and sense of fun to the school community. During the pandemic annual events such as Christmas, summer and Easter fairs had to be cancelled and extra-curricular activities were significantly reduced and constrained by Covid restrictions.

*I think what was probably the nicest thing was being able to have that social element as well... It was nice to have something where parents and families could be involved, but without it being about school matters. It wasn't about, "oh, Johnny's not handing his homework in",...it was literally just a nice, pleasurable occasion.*

In addition to enjoying a good meal on the evening, families were able to take home any leftover stew.

*Families got extra Scouse, so we know that they at least got a good tea that day, and maybe a good tea the next day from what we gave them.*

### Building on Cook and Share

The school would like to run a similar event for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, but will only be able to do so if they are successful in bidding for external money. This is far from certain in an environment where external sources of funding are limited and demand has been exacerbated by Covid. The school has had an 80-85% funding application failure rate in the past six months even though funder feedback states that they meet all the eligibility criteria.

*I would love to be able to do something like this in May because I've seen the benefits of it for the children and for the families. It would be an absolutely perfect opportunity because it's going to be on the field, we're going to be able to invite everyone to it. But again...it's getting funding together to do something like this.*

### Prepare for all eventualities....

In terms of organisation, the School's Extended Services manager Elaine, says that taking up all offers of support, careful planning, building in contingencies and being flexible on the day are key to the success of an event like this.

*Have a plan B, a Plan C, a plan D because...things can rapidly change. And if anyone wants to help with your prep, say, yes, please and grab them with both hands so you're not up peeling potatoes to silly o'clock. However long you think you're going to take to get everything ready, I'd give yourself a couple more hours, or as much extra time as you can.*

### **But go with the flow**

It's also important to recognise the value for children in being fully involved with the planning and set up of the event.

*The children were involved with planning. Initially we were going to do a proper menu and have it set out and the children were going to wait on people, but everything we were going to do just had to get rapidly changed. The children were fine with all that, very adaptable. You sort of plant a seed - 'what do you think we could do? how about if we try this what do you think?' I like the sense of pride that the children get when they're involved in something. I think it's good for them. It's good for their mental health.*

As well as the planned elements, it is also good to be able to alert to unexpected ways to add value.

*So getting children involved maybe in things you wouldn't have thought they'd want to do. I didn't think the kids would want to wash dishes, but....they absolutely loved it. In fact, we had a tussle over who was going to wash and we had to have a rota!*

## **12. Everything we do is about peer support**

**Headway, Rotherham** is a support group for people with major brain injury and their carers. The group carries out social, life skills and sporting activities to bring members together. The idea was to use the grant to set up a cookery class. Participants were aged between 40-70 years. The idea of organising these sessions was to establish peer support.

*The idea is a cookery class, learn new skills, gain a bit of confidence. The idea is you get eight to ten people together....everything that we do is about peer support.*

### **Building confidence and self-esteem**

The cookery class that was supported by the grant created an opportunity for peer support that then enabled participants to develop key skills. Kristopher who organized the Cook and Share activity reported that the participants learnt new cooking skills and the event built their confidence in cooking. The event also enhanced their self-esteem and there was food for participants to take away as well.

*We achieve quite a lot. I mean, like I said, you've got eight brain injured people taking part, producing a meal to the whole family unit. Each one supporting each other within the activity.*

### **Take home cooking skills**

The Cook and Share event enabled participants to learn new cooking skills and built their overall cooking confidence.

*You've got the fact that they can repeat the recipe and do what they've done at home. So again, you've got increasing self-confidence, self-pride in themselves as well as they've got a life skill, something that they can do again...So it is repeatable for them. Something that they can do on their own at home, and they've learned how to do it. So, it is something that will probably continue.*

### **Knowing that I make a difference**

Kristopher found it satisfying and fulfilling to organize the event and to see the benefits that the participants derived from it.

*It's more fulfilling for everybody, even for them. For me, so yeah, I do get a lot of satisfaction knowing that the work I do is beneficial to everybody.*

## 13. Learning about healthy and sustainable food

**The Nigerian Catholic Community (NCC)** on the outskirts of north east London is a social and Christian community. In July 2020 the NCC set up a food hub following the first Covid lockdown and they also provide regular Sunday meals and cooking demonstrations that are open to all members of the community. NCC receives food from a London-based food waste redistribution project called the Felix Project.

*Our focus is on healthy eating, sustainability and waste reduction....Sometimes we get a massive supply of fruits and vegetables. I remember last summer it was pumpkins. People didn't know what to do with them and actually, it's quite nutritious, it can be cooked in so many different ways.*

### Culturally familiar

The NCC applied for the Cook and Share grant to provide the ingredients for one of their regular communal meals aimed at older, homeless and vulnerable people. Because the food supplied by the Felix Project varies from week to week, the money from Cook and Share enabled the NCC to supplement their Felix delivery with ingredients such as eggs, milk, fruit and vegetables and also to buy food that would be culturally familiar; particularly for the older people attending.

### Sense of belonging

For participants the meals and cooking classes give them access to healthy food and the skills to cook with healthy ingredients. There is also an important social and community-building dimension with people coming from many different backgrounds and cultures.

*You bring people together as well...We work across communities...We do have a lot of people come in, like the homeless, they come from everywhere. And it gives people a sense of belonging, because isolation is terrible for many people, especially for the older people. When they finally move out of [central] London, they're kind of alone. So centres like the church the mosque.... become central because they are open 24/7.*

### Creative ways to be healthy and sustainable

Delia places emphasis on thinking about cooking and meals in a holistic way that delivers multiple benefits. Her approach provides healthy food for people experiencing food poverty, teaches people how to be flexible in their approach to cooking and eating, gives people a sense of community and tackles food waste.

NCC also demonstrates the importance of being resourceful. They have found creative ways to deal with the inevitable variability in edible food waste supplies and to multiply the value of any funding received. Via Project Inkind, for example, NCC can make a grant of £150 worth £500 through buying goods at a discount of 80%. They also formed a

*grassroots group [working with faith groups from different areas of London], because by forming a group sometimes we can do things together and that way the money goes a longer way. And then you bring people together as well.*

## 14. Take every opportunity to empower

**Penrose Root Community** (PRC) has various nature and environmental projects across Bedfordshire for people with mental wellbeing and addiction issues, ex-offenders as well as those who are homeless, socially isolated or with learning disabilities and other members of the community.

The horticultural and environmental projects provide a way for people to develop friendships and mix with people from different backgrounds.

The aim of the Cook and Share event was to bring more people into the community garden to find out about the work of PRC and gain more volunteers. They ran an end of growing season 'cook up' using as much of their own grown produce as possible. They also encouraged members and volunteers to bring baked goods to coincide with National Bake Week.

PRC ran two events with the money. For the Social Group event members were reimbursed for the food that they brought along. For the garden event, participants cooked pizza using some ingredients that had been grown in the community garden. The Cook and Share grant was also used to buy compostable tableware that was composted on site. Each attendee was given some easy and cheap recipes and an edible plant to take home with them.

### The ease of Cook and Share

Samantha, the Service Manager at PRC appreciated the simplicity of the grant application process and the flexible way that the grant could be used to meet PRC's aims.

*It was really easy, because some of them are really complicated, even if it's £50 pounds. And I liked that it was very much about what you wanted to do, that it was about us rather than the funder.*

### Letting members take charge

Giving members the opportunity to make decisions about what they wanted to cook and the format of the event was empowering.

*It gives us the platform to be able to tell the members to go out and choose rather than us be in control of it. The one down the garden was very much a voting system....So it was a nice time to kind of get them thinking. And we had different people. So we've got a couple that are vegan, so they brought along the vegan stuff. So then we've got meat eaters trying the vegan stuff. I think we had a vegan quiz....there's all different things that we tried around food and the sharing of it.*

### Grow and cook

Cooking some of the produce that they had grown also helped to change participants' relationship with food.

*When I first started the project, people would have been there for nine months watching all these vegetables grow and then when it would come time to dish out they would say I don't eat vegetables. If you are providing them with the skills and the tools to then make it into a meal, I think it has a totally different effect.*

### Pride in being part of a national programme

Seeing (through the advertising posters) that the Cook and Share events were part of a bigger national programme gave members of PRC a sense of pride and added an extra dimension to the meals. PRC also felt that taking part in something connected to FFL helped to promote their work.

*I think it makes a difference...because to them, we are just a little project that they go to on a Friday afternoon or Monday...so when it's linked to something that they could essentially go on the internet and search – Soil Association and all of that they are like, "Oh, that's good, we did that"...it gives that little bit more pride.*

### Adding value to core funding

The grant also had several benefits for PRC. Taking part in something connected to FFL helped to promote their work and to demonstrate to their core funder that they were being successful in sourcing match funding. Although the Cook and Share grant is relatively small, PRC recognised the cumulative impact of such small inputs over time.

*So when there is the opportunity to do these extra things with these little pots of money it does make a huge difference, because it's ticking another funders box as well....Over the years it would have made a huge huge difference to us and the members to have that little bit of extra.*



## 15. Communication is key – and be careful not to take on too much

**SVP (St Vincent de Paul) Chorley Buddies Conference** is a not-for-profit community-based group. Although the SVP Society is a Catholic based organisation it is open to all denominations or none. The Buddies organise a range of activities such as fitness classes, craft classes and social walks in the Lancashire town of Chorley and surrounding villages. They had been running outdoor lunch events where possible during the pandemic. In the autumn of 2021, the Buddies wanted to run monthly indoor lunch and social events serving hot meals. These monthly meetings ran throughout the winter months when people can feel particularly low and isolated.

The Cook and Share grant was used to pay for the food ingredients for a November lunch for 30 people. Participants were invited to make a donation, with the surplus carrying forward to the next get together event. The meal was a hotpot and a Lancashire Butter Pie – a dish of potatoes, onions and butter in layers with a crust on top. The grant helped cover the cost of a last-minute change of venue due to a boiler breakdown at the church hall.

### It's all about homemade

Judith, secretary for Chorley Buddies, said that they had positive feedback from everyone who had lunch. The group are mainly, but not exclusively older people, some of whom have little social contact. The choice of a local dish was popular, and it was important that the food had been made with care and attention:

*[The food] is fresh, it wasn't commercially made, it was homemade, but by someone with qualifications to do it in the kitchen properly. It's comfort food and it's all homemade. We know every ingredient that's gone in with local vegetables and meat purchased from a local butchers with good provenance for all their meat.*

### Reconnecting after Covid

The grant helped mark a moment, providing the first opportunity for the lunch club to have a hot meal in the company of others after the Covid lockdowns. The Buddies are expanding their food-based work with a food club. This is a scheme with a £10 annual membership and £3 weekly fee that allows members to choose a range of foods, often equating to a retail value of £25. The food is collected through the FairShare food surplus charity. Judith explained the attraction of the initiative:

*It's double pronged. Yes, it's helping food poverty, and that's a big part of it. But it's also helping the environment because the food would be going to landfill and it's a total disgrace because it is good food. There is nothing wrong with it. It's shocking, the fruit and veg is second to none.*

### Going from strength to strength

There are plans to expand the range of dishes and to offer more than tea and a biscuit for visitors. The food club has been so successful that the Buddies are looking at whether they need to cap the membership. The local authority has invited the Buddies to run a similar initiative outside Chorley.

For Judith, her work as the secretary for Chorley Buddies is a major commitment involving about 15 hours a week. Since early retirement from her work as a librarian, she has been a volunteer for many years where she has been able to make the most of her strong skills in organisation, administration and keeping up relationships with other volunteers.

### Creating an event that people want

Judith felt that it was important to first make sure that there is a call for a lunch group, and then to put effort into finding out what people prefer to eat and have as accompanying social activities. Running a regular event is rooted in good organisation, from building a team of volunteers with clear roles, careful budgeting and venue preparation. Communication is central to everything. It is important to phone people, especially those more isolated, before an event to confirm that they plan to attend and to organise any transport. This phone call is a small way to 'show you care'.

### Get the backing of a larger organisation

While it is possible to organise a lunch group from scratch, the team found that it was enormously helpful to have the backing of a larger organisation – in this case to become a conference under the St Paul du Vincent Society – to help arrange public liability insurance, safeguarding and DBS checks. Investing time to support volunteers has reaped dividends. As Chorley Buddies have expanded into food clubs many new people have come forward to volunteer. As the group grows, the core team are taking careful steps not to take on too much. For instance, even though the lunch club could run more regularly, they want to keep it to a manageable cycle of once a month.



## 16. Getting the neighbours together

**The Tidemill Residence Group** is an informal residents association in Deptford, south east London. Neighbours were keeping in touch through their local WhatsApp group during the lockdowns and the group wanted to have a street party to bring neighbours together after the lockdowns were removed. The Cook and Share grant was used to support a local street party.

*We achieved what we wanted to achieve, we got the neighbours all together, ... We have a very active WhatsApp group, but some of the neighbours you may chat to on that WhatsApp group I've actually never met.*

### Providing the spark to make things happen

Although the grant itself could not cover the full expense of the street party, it served as an impetus for the event and attracted contributions from neighbours and local businesses.

*Lots of people came... Obviously we funded a small amount of it, but then people brought a lot more stuff so there was a lot more to it. And we got some of the local businesses involved. They contributed principally actually.*

Cook and Share became the driving force for bringing neighbours together. The event created the opportunity for the first time in a while for children to come out and play together and this was seen as a memorable event.

*We live in very, very central London, kids would never play on the streets. Because we were able to shut the streets, the kids from the block played out in the streets and that's never happened before..... I'll never forget that.*

#### **What matters is bringing people together**

As other Cook and Share organisers have noted, keeping it simple and flexible is the key to success.

*So it's quite simply normal sausages, veggie sausages, skewers. If you wanted something else, you bring it yourself. Don't give too much choice. Just do what you can. The only option was to do a barbecue. ... So I personally don't think it [choice of food] matters because it's only 38 households. Were very much like, well, if the thing I want is not available, I'm not going to complain about it, I'll go and make it myself. I guess it's about attitude.*

The respondent found the grant application process to be easy and liked the idea of having the flexibility on what it could be used for in relation to the food.

*I thought it was a good grant. It was easy to apply for. We were given a fair amount of autonomy, what to spend it on.*

## 7. Discussion and Conclusion

### 7.1 Overview

In this study we explored FFLGT's Cook and Share small grants programme that ran between September and November 2021. We used a mixed methods study design. We analysed the contents of all 153 successful applications and, of these we obtained survey responses from 88 award holders at three months post-delivery. Approximately one month later a total of 19 award holder leads took part in an in-depth qualitative interview about their small grant. The research focused on the capacity building functions and food agenda setting role of the small grants. We situated our research in the context of recent literature on the role of microgrants and the rise of a social movement for 'good food' in the UK.

Through the survey, organisers of the Cook and Share activities shared their opinions on what they and their agencies obtained from the microgrants they were awarded to support with their activities. The survey findings provide evidence of many motivations and desired positive outcomes from the microgrant funded Cook and Share activities. These results support previous reports on the effectiveness of microgrants in supporting community-based activities and offer important implications for policy and practice in microgrant funded activities at the community grassroot level. The interviews and case studies provide a rich picture of the experiences of a diverse range of groups to provide evidence on the delivery and learning from organising Cook and Share activities.

### 7.2 Cook and Share and capacity building for event organisers and their organisations

For a microgrants programme, Cook and Share held large ambitions. The scheme was intended not only to bring diverse and disadvantaged groups together and address leading social issues around loneliness and discrimination, but it was also hoped that organisers might go on to run further events. It was not surprising that most case study interviewees felt that the £150 grant was helpful - but not transformative - with respect to these aspirations. Nevertheless, the survey and interview evidence showed a number of mechanisms for change that reflected upon the community capacity building aims of the programme.

Cook and Share grants appear to be important markers of affirmation for many applicants: they validated the work and goals of the community group and were used to communicate success to event participants and wider stakeholders. For first time event organisers in particular, the small grants provided a platform for further activities and new grant applications. The focus of the grant guidance on delivering further activities after the event helped make the longer-term purpose of the award clear from the outset. Evidence from the survey and interviews strongly showed that this message was clearly received and stimulated ideas about how organisers might take their work forward.

Our research sits alongside studies that have shown that microgrants can be effective in developing new skills, improving knowledge, addressing organisational goals, and increasing participation in community activities (Thomson & Cauller-Grice, 2007; Center for Community Health and Development, 2022; Ecorys, 2020). As other research shows, for many recipients the small grants had a multiplier effect helping to leverage in additional funding and in-kind support. It should also be noted that, as with evidence from other microgrant schemes, some activities – or elements of activities – would have taken place regardless of the award. This is understandable given the tight constraints under which many small-scale voluntary organisations operate. Often groups can only take on activities that fit well with their existing work or have a good fit with current circumstances. For the Cook and Share initiative, part of the success of the scheme was clearly due to its coincidence with a relaxation of lockdown restrictions and a point in the pandemic where many community groups were keen to re-convene their in-person activities.

A clear finding from across the research was that a very strong majority felt that the event helped participants connect with one another, indicating positive effects for a local sense of social cohesion. The survey findings show that microgrants suit a wide range of purposes. Most importantly, first timer and more experienced organisers differ in what they get out of the Cook and Share activities. Novice organisers of food activities indicate that microgrants help them try something new and develop their skills and confidence. Thus, on the

one hand, the micro-funded activity had improved the personal skills of first-time organisers more in comparison to experts. On the other hand, experienced organisers find that the micro grant funded Cook and Share events helped them develop more ambitious aspirations on addressing food security and food environmental issues. Having their personal skills already developed through engagement in previous events, it makes sense that expert organisers have greater skills and experience to take on more substantial issues – a finding clearly in keeping with models of organiser and community capacity building (Chaskin, 2001: South, 2015). These findings may help us understand which type of organisers to target when issuing microgrants with specific objectives in mind.

Motivations varied among organisers of the cook and share activities and included personal aspirations and other wider socioecological impacts. These motives may indicate the grant recipients' readiness for change through the microgrant-funded event (Deacon *et al.*, 2009). This might explain the mechanisms behind the positive benefits perceived by the organisers of the cook and share activity in the survey.

In the survey, respondents indicated that the Cook and Share activities improved quality of life, enhanced positive attitude towards ageing and diversity, addressed loneliness and isolation among participants of the activities. These outcomes are common benefits predicted to be associated with micro grant funded community projects (Ecorys, 2020). By building local assets through micro grants, organisers can develop their skills, knowledge and confidence, enabling them to bring people together and help prevent participants from feeling socially isolated and lonely, leading to improved wellbeing and quality of life (Bennett and Eadson, 2017).

The case studies illustrate some of the variety and complexity this social inclusion agenda in practice. The majority of the case studies show that work to connect diverse groups was the consequence of building relationships of trust over the long term and possessing deep insight into the local nuances for planning the event (specific choice of setting, timing, publicity routes, menus etc). The Cook and Share initiative therefore provides a good illustration of how microgrants for small community groups can be very effective in delivering activities that have a good fit with local settings in which they take place.

The survey findings showed several perceived positive benefits for organisers, participants and their agencies. As mentioned in the literature review, recipients of microgrants require support during the implementation of their funded projects to ensure that these projects are sustainable beyond the period of the grant. Moreover, post-grant support is emphasised to foster building capacity in the longer term (Thomson & Cauller-Grice, 2007). In the survey findings, organisers indicated a commitment to making their events more regular in the future, continue with similar activity and extend their reach following the microgrant-funded cook and share activities. Post-grant support is therefore crucial to enable these agencies sustain their activities beyond the grant.

### 7.3 How Cook and Share develops agendas for 'Good Food'

Microgrants are better placed to thrive when the purpose of the scheme is clear to all parties. The titles 'Get Togethers' and 'Cook and Share' appear to have been well received and self-evident in terms of their mission. In line with this language, it was hardly surprising that leading themes around the use of food by grant holders concerned social participation and involvement. The lens of social capital works well in characterising these interactions in terms of three dimensions of (1) bonding together groups with shared characteristics, (2) bridging diverse social groups and (3) linking communities of different scales and geography. As the recent *Food Builds Community* report from the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (2021) found, agendas of food and community building are often a very good fit.

A further strong message that came through the Cook and Share awards was an educational, skills development or more general 'learning' dimension. This was sometimes framed as a consequence of bringing different groups together, although in many instances there was a specific concern such as to develop cooking skills, knowledge around cuisine and recipe learning. While some organisations framed their activities in terms of upskilling through the support of experts, a strong theme from grant holders was to express the process in more participatory language, with use of terms such as 'co-creation' and 'empowerment'.

Overall, participants in the research felt that the grant helped them promote 'healthy foods' and associated ideas of nutritional, good quality, fresh, seasonal foods prepared from scratch. As other research shows (Tsofliou et al., 2020; Thomas and Edmund, 2017), social eating groups can clearly provide nutritional health benefits particularly for older people and those living alone, not least because they can offer home-made style meals without the food preparation at home. For cross generational social food activities, there are also likely to be a range of direct and indirect nutritional health benefits for both older and younger participants (Jones and Ismail, 2022).

Ideas around what constitutes 'good food' are clearly complex and sometimes contested. The aspiration of Cook and Share to further agendas around this topic were therefore clearly ambitious. Some of the challenges reflect the context in which many grant-holding lead agencies were working. The pressures of working in areas of high multiple deprivation meant that events in these circumstances often (but not always) prioritised affordable meals and the distribution of food to help address food insecurity. For some agencies, these concerns eclipsed other ideas, such as the environmental dimensions of food.

Event organisers that sought to bring people together who were experiencing social isolation or other forms of exclusion often opted for 'familiar', 'safe', 'comforting' menu options - although it should be noted that the definition of these characteristics varied according to the specific local circumstances and cultural context. Food items, menus and meal serving can all raise feelings around recognition and security. As other studies have found particularly for older people attending lunch clubs (Thomas and Emond, 2017; Saeed et al., 2020), organisers needed to choose food carefully to avoid upset or embarrassment for diners. Done well and with the involvement of participants, Cook and Share organisers found that food was a powerful medium to bring people together and make social interaction less threatening. The effectiveness of the grant scheme overall was likely to have been enhanced through its emphasis on taking the views of local participants into account.

The survey and interview stages of the research showed that some organisers had interests around food that were not clearly visible in the applications. For example, a greater proportion of survey respondents showed an interest in animal welfare issues than was visible in the applications. Conversely, some interviews indicated less of a priority for some environmental issues than had been stated in the applications. This might reflect differences in the perspectives of individuals engaged in an activity, or a desire to reflect FFLGT's funding criteria.

An interesting feature of many projects was their approach towards blending different aspirations around food. For example, combining agendas on affordable food with environmental concerns, or through producing 'traditional dishes' using novel ingredients or surplus foods. As O'Brien's study (2015) of lunch clubs in Brighton found, many established groups are weaving together older traditions around social meals in the community with concerns around planet and nature-friendly foods or other contemporary concerns. Some ideas for cook and share activities were clearly accelerated by pandemic events, such as the provision of take-home menus or the use of online cookalongs to reach people at home.

#### 7.4 Strengths and limitations of the study

A strength of this study was the ability to draw upon multiple sources of data – grant records, survey and interviewee data – with a large number of grant award holders. This evidence provided an account of activities from across the UK and a wide range of organisations and local settings both prior to the grant and at about four months after the initial grant funded events. The study does not directly capture the perspectives of event participants although, with a focus on capacity building, key targets for the grant scheme were the event organisers themselves – who were the primary focus of this study. The study was not able to follow up on the effects of the grants beyond a four-month period. However, given the scale of the grant allocations we anticipated that the main effects would be created in a relatively short period during and in the months following the initial grant aided events.

There are several strengths of the survey that support the credibility of the findings. The survey had an appreciable sample size, providing confidence in the statistical findings. The types of agencies in the survey were representative of the agencies that applied for the small grant. There were no significant differences in number of first-time organisers and more experienced ones. However, there are slight differences in the way

in which agencies were categorised in their applications for the small grant and the survey. This is because, the former was done by the researchers whereas the latter was indicated by the agencies. It should be noted that the evidence from the survey is cross-sectional in nature and do not infer causal relationships. Perceived participant benefits from the activities were captured from the lead organisers and these may not necessarily be the true views of participants of the activities.

We do not have a picture about how the grants led to further engagement with the FFLGT programme and its networking activities. Building upon insights from other research this is an important dimension to the scheme and one that will be explored in the next stages of our research.

## 7.5 Recommendations for community groups, funders and researchers

The following recommendations pull together advice from event organisers and learning from the evaluation more generally.

### Recommendations for community groups and organisations

- Microgrants provide an opportunity to think creatively and try new ideas. In this scheme the small grants were a good opportunity to bring new people together, try different food or run an event in a different way.
- A small amount of funding can go a long way to involve people. For example, with the £150 cook and share grant it was common for organisations to provide a meal for 20 people and to include some additional or follow-on social activities.
- Where possible, close consultation is important with the people involved around the choice of food. While it is important to know the reliable favourite options, keep an open mind, for example novel dishes may draw new people and act as a good talking point.
- Be realistic when communicating with the grant giving agencies about what the agency can achieve through a small amount of funding.

### Recommendations for funders, programme and policy developers

- A clear and topical promotional message is important to attract the interest of community groups to apply for microgrants.
- Microgrants need to be very simple to apply for, have a clear brief and be accompanied by illustrations to show groups what is needed in the application.
- Asking groups for their onward plans at the point of application is a useful way to signal the role of the grant in generating new and sustainable activities.
- Microgrant schemes are an excellent platform for networking and the sharing of ideas between community groups. It is a good investment to allocate resources to support these ends and to gather learning about how the grants were used.
- Similarly, onward support in the form of advice for grants and further opportunities and policy advocacy is a beneficial role that programme leads can undertake when planning a microgrant programme.
- Funders, programme developers and wider audiences should keep reasonable expectations about what can be achieved by an agency receiving a small amount of funding.

### Recommendations for researchers

- This study shows the importance of understanding the context and subsequent work of small grant holders. Further evidence is needed on the long-term effects of small grants, how they relate to other opportunities to grow community initiatives, and how they provide a platform for networking.
- While this study engaged with a wide variety of agencies, there is further research needed to understand the variety of ways in which different organisations make use of cook and share events to promote social and environmental benefits.
- Further research is needed to understand the barriers and opportunities to engage small informal community groups through small grants.

## 7.6 Conclusion

The focus of this report has been on the Food for Life Get Togethers Cook and Share small grants scheme. It has provided a window into a rich field of community and voluntary action across the UK. As a microgrant scheme Cook and Share has been popular with a wide variety of community groups seeking to run many types of activities. Despite the small scale of the funding, award holders demonstrated a wide range of achievements both around how to use food in social activities and how to create wider benefits for the communities they serve.

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## Appendix 1: List of research questions on good food

### Lead research question

To what extent has participation in the FFLGT programme helped promote community-based action on agendas for 'good food'?

### Sub questions

a. How has FFLGT supported agendas on 'good food' with community-based agencies (groups and organisations)?

- b. What are the characteristics of agencies and participants that have engaged with FFLGT programme activities? (This includes how many were engaging in community food activity for the first time).
- c. How have motivations of agency leads that have engaged in FFLGT changed over time? How have changed motivations around 'good food' led to changed practices or behaviours?
- d. What is the evidence that diverse groups of participants have engaged with agendas for 'good food'?
- e. What benefits and challenges have followed from agency and participant engagement with agendas for 'good food'? (This includes a focus on benefits / challenging from participation, without the good food message focus? Would be particularly interested in impacts relating to social capital and agency as a result of engagement, particularly in the longer term, e.g. did the bonding, bridging / linking social capital lead to other activity after the FFLGT? Did the agency motivated by FFLGT continue / spill over elsewhere?)
- f. What are the implications for key audiences?

## Appendix 2: Research questions for this report on capacity building

### Lead research question

What forms of capacity building are created through the FFLGT small grants?

### Sub questions

- a. What forms of capacity building has the FFLGT programme sought to create? How does the FFLGT approach to grants compare with other third sector approaches?
- b. How successful was FFLGT grants and partnership approach at building capacity of FFLGT organisers (as per its outcomes), specifically:
  - What capacity building activities have grant recipients sought to engage with?
  - Developing knowledge and understanding related to equality, diversity and inclusion in social good food activities?
  - Developing skills, knowledge or confidence to influence and inform changes in practice or behaviour in their communities, settings or projects that contribute to regeneration - a world with good health, in balance with nature and a safe climate
  - Increase knowledge, skills, networks and resources to run and sustain social good food activities developing relationships, partnerships or collaborations at a community, place or national level?
- c. To what extent has FFLGT's approach to grants and partnerships changed the motivations and capacities of GT organisers to start and sustain good food activism and lead others into more active food citizenship?
- d. To what extent has FFLGT's small grant activity led to more people getting involved in community-based good food activities? (This might include people who were not active becoming active, and people who were already active doing more or different activities)
- e. To what extent has FFLGT grant activity resulted in sustained community good food activities or practices after the life of the original grant?
- g. What is the evidence of the effects of capacity building for diverse agencies and stakeholders?
- h. What are the implications for key audiences?

## Authors

Mat Jones, *Professor of Public Health and Community Development*<sup>1</sup>

Sarah Hills, *Senior Lecturer in Sustainability*<sup>2</sup>

Sanda Ismail, *Senior Lecturer in Public Health*<sup>1</sup>

Amy Beardmore, *Senior Lecturer in Public Health*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Public Health and Wellbeing, UWE Bristol

<sup>2</sup> Department of Geography and Environmental Management

## Contacts

UWE Mat Jones: [matthew.jones@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.jones@uwe.ac.uk)

Food for Life Get Togethers:

Dale Cranshaw, Head of Programme  
[dcranshaw@soilassociation.org](mailto:dcranshaw@soilassociation.org)

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