

# Food Matters

Annual Newsletter | November 2023



**PROJECT FOOD**

An appetite for health

## Welcome to our latest newsletter



Since working in rural Zimbabwe in 1992, I have been passionate about helping people to overcome inequalities and gain access to better food and better health. In the long term, health inequalities will only be overcome by reform of the food system but people need help, right now, to come up with solutions to the problems they face. I'm very lucky to be part of a wonderful team of staff and volunteers who share my passion so that Project Food can make a real difference to those most in need.

80% of the adults with whom we work have long term mental and physical

health conditions which prevent them from working.

According to the International Monetary Fund, next year the British economy is likely to continue to have the highest inflation of any G7 economy. Inflation profoundly increases household food insecurity. A YouGov survey by the Food Foundation found that, in June 2023, 17.0% of households in the UK were 'food insecure' (ate less or went a day without eating because they couldn't access or afford food).

*'I am grateful beyond words..... I have cooked all my life and have been miserable only being able to eat convenience foods. I also think that it's been affecting my health. The fresh fruit and veg has made a huge difference to how I feel physically.'*  
Kayleigh, recipient of weekly food box.

The cost of living crisis is profoundly affecting people like Kayleigh. And it's affecting our ability to support them. With your help we can do more. To find out how, please read on.

**Tiggy Parry,**  
Founder of Project Food

## Project Food: making an impact

**75%**

of parents said their child will try new foods since coming to Kids' Kitchen.

**100%**

of people felt that receiving Project Food recipe boxes helped them to eat more healthily and said that they would make the recipes again in the future.

**60%**

of adults who attended Axminster Cooking Made Easy reported that they now try to eat a balanced diet all the time. This is an increase from zero at the beginning of the course.

**80%**

felt that their ability to cook a meal from scratch had improved and that they were more confident to make good food choices.

## Chard families enjoy some Good Grub

Over the last year Project Food has been running a new programme in Chard, called '**Good Grub Club**'. This is a series of cooking sessions held during the school holidays to support low-income families to cook and eat more healthily. Alongside Project Food staff and volunteers, families cook a delicious budget-friendly meal at each session and sit down together to share it afterwards. Parents are also given a recipe box to take away and practise their new skills at home. And it wasn't just the parents who

benefitted – the children found the sessions equally valuable.

As one mother told us:  
*"When Alex woke up this morning, the first thing he said was "is it cooking club today?"*

It's something he can be good at and it is making him more confident as well as teaching him new things.'

We are thrilled to have received funding from Abri Homes to run this course again in 2023/24.



## What do people think?



*For me, apart from being able to use my skills during my retirement, the major reason for volunteering is the pleasure I get from seeing individuals grow in confidence both in themselves and in their ability to cook well.*

PROJECT FOOD VOLUNTEER



*He is so much more inclined to try and do things for himself now, like cutting apples, rather than expecting me to do it for him. His self-confidence has really grown since coming to Project Food, not just around food – in general too.*

PARENT OF YOUNG PERSON

## Food and mood on the farm

Every fortnight from March to July 2023, Project Food took a group of people with serious mental illness to spend a day on a local farm.

The group got involved in a wide variety of outdoor farming activities – such as fencing, log splitting, moving and feeding animals, planting seeds, weeding and harvesting produce – before coming inside to cook a delicious lunch together. Lunch time was an opportunity for lots of conversation and, as the weeks went on, everyone became comfortable with one another

and began to share some of the difficulties that they struggled with. All of the attendees had had been unwell for many years and had largely reached the end of the support that local mental health services could provide them with. At the beginning and end of every session people rated their feelings of well-being from 1 to 10 (one being low, 10 being high), and each week everybody involved (including the staff) consistently improved their score by at least four points. This meant people arriving with serious anxiety left feeling calm and relaxed.



*It was really nice being around people who had similar issues and could relate to mine.*

*I have a diary that I complete when I have done something enjoyable. I only ever fill it in on a Tuesday when I have been here.*



*Your photos looked fab and they have really encouraged me to try making the recipe.*

*I am now really looking forward to growing my own vegetables at home.*

*I loved the food and understanding the cycle of life.*



## A year in numbers



4,514 Newsletters

were sent to adults who were isolated and living alone, supporting them to stay physically and mentally healthy

2,172 fruit & veg boxes and homemade meals

were given away to people living in food poverty or people too unwell to cook



314 recipe boxes

were given away to families in food poverty and people living with mental illness



255 adults attended

cooking sessions across East Devon and South Somerset

47 children attended

holiday, after-school or in-schooltime cooking sessions



44 parents and 71 children

attended Good Grub Club courses in 3 schools in Chard



# Recipe boxes and one to one support

Over the past year, Project Food has expanded its programme of recipe boxes and one-to-one cooking support.

Individual support is invaluable to people who find group sessions overwhelming, and has been particularly helpful for young people with mental health issues and learning difficulties. Each course is carefully planned with the needs of the individuals in mind and, in this way, we can tailor our approach so that we help the person in the way they most need it. A Devon County Council support worker who brought along a young woman said:

*“Tracey grew in confidence as the weeks went on. At first she would like Val to do tricky things like peeling and cutting vegetables, but by the end of the sessions she was doing a lot more for herself.”*

We provide recipe boxes to take home after the sessions too, to reinforce what they have learned at the one-to-one session. Each box contains a recipe, all the ingredients they need to make a simple, healthy and budget friendly meal and a leaflet with plenty of ‘top tips’ on topics such as batch cooking and substituting ingredients, as well as nutritional advice.

We also send the recipe boxes out to people who don’t yet feel confident enough to access our face-to-face services, or don’t have the time to attend.



**80% of box recipients felt that their ability to cook a meal from scratch had improved after receiving them.**

**80% said...** that after receiving recipe boxes from Project Food, they felt confident to reach out for further support.

Thank you to our wonderful team of volunteers who help with cooking support and packing boxes, without whom this work would not be possible.

## Ruth's Story



Ruth's journey with Project Food began when her children started Kids' Kitchen, an after-school club for children with special educational needs.

Ruth was keen for her children to learn to cook, but due to her own negative

feelings about food and cooking, she felt that she was not the one to teach them.

When she was growing up, Ruth often heard her mum say that she couldn't cook and was terrible at it. This meant that she never learned basic cooking skills:

*“When it came to cooking, I would give up before I had even started. Food in the fridge would often rot and be thrown away because I just didn't know what to do with it”.*

Ruth and her family now receive a regular recipe box from Project Food to give her some guidance and help grow her confidence around food and cooking.

*“The recipe boxes are absolutely fantastic. The range of recipes I can cook has gone from 3 to around 15 – and everyone enjoys the meals. I saved the recipes in a folder and cooked most of them again. I have also started to Google recipes to help me*

*find recipes to make something of food I have in the fridge which has massively reduced the amount of food wasted.”*

Ruth's next step will be to start some one-to-one cooking classes with one of our volunteers.

*“I feel a little nervous about the classes, but I know that they will ensure that I don't pass my anxieties around food and cooking on to my children. I look forward to overcoming the mental barriers which stop me from cooking confidently. I see other people meal planning, cooking, and understanding food and have always wanted to do the same”.*

*“Learning to cook with Project Food is making me feel amazing and I feel like I am really achieving something”.*

# Help comes in many forms

Supporting Project Food doesn't just have to be about donating money. Here are some other ways you can make a difference:

 **Volunteer your time**  
Helping us for just a few hours each month makes a huge difference to what we can achieve.

**Sign up to Easy Fundraising**  
Easy Fundraising partners with over 7,000 brands that will donate part of what you spend to Project Food. It won't cost you any extra. The cost is covered by the brand.

Visit <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/project-food>



**Become a Trustee**  
We are looking for people from a diverse range of backgrounds to join Project Food as trustees and help us to set the strategic direction and priorities of Project Food.



**Get active!**  
Why not do a sponsored event for us? Swim, run, cycle or take a leap out of a plane. Get in touch with us if you fancy a challenge.



**Spread the word!**  
If you like what we do, tell everyone either in person or online!



## What you can give:

  
**£10 pays for**  
a fruit and veg box and two homemade meals for someone struggling with the cost of living.

**£25 pays for**  
a recipe box for a family of four living in food poverty so that they can cook meals together during school holidays



  
**£50 pays for**  
cooking support, dietary information and free fruit and veg boxes for people with type 2 diabetes, heart disease and/or high blood pressure

**£75 pays for**  
the food for a cooking group that connects people struggling with low mood, anxiety & depression



  
**£100 pays for**  
a course of tailored one-to-one cooking classes for a young single parent with mental health problems

We are enormously grateful for anything you can give:

Your donation will really make a difference.

You can give a one-off donation or set up a direct debit through local giving: scan the QR code or go to <https://localgiving.org/charity/projectfood/> or you can send a cheque to our address below.



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**“ Thank you**  
For your donations of

- Money
- Raffle prizes
- Food
- Auction prizes
- Time



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