

Food Matters

Annual Newsletter | November 2024



PROJECT FOOD

Eat better, live well

Welcome to our latest newsletter



Over the last 18 years, Project Food has been proud to support many different groups of people.

These include people living alone, carers, people with mental health problems, those with heart disease, and parents of nursery, primary and secondary-aged school children.

Helping families is hugely important to us. We believe passionately that any mother or father, no matter what their income or background, wants the best for their children. And this includes wanting them to eat as well as possible.

“ As Michelle Obama said: *All children should have the basic nutrition they need to learn and grow and to pursue their dreams, because, in the end, nothing is more important than the health and well-being of our children.* ”

“ I'm so grateful for the recipe boxes and the fresh fruit and veg. It has been such a gem for myself and the kids. ”

Parent receiving fortnightly recipe boxes: meals in a box which she cooks with her children.

Let us hope that our new Government will put in place policies to support people to eat better, particularly those on a low income, so more people

can reach their full potential. Evidence shows that people with a poor diet, and with worse health as a result of this poor diet, are typically those on a lower income; a situation that's then compounded by the fact that they often struggle with ongoing physical and mental health conditions.

Since Project Food began, most of our activities have been centered around the Axe Valley and Chard. However, moving forward we will be growing so that we can also work more in Ottery St Mary and the rest of East Devon - made possible by the refurbishment of the Hospital Kitchens in Ottery. Thank you, NHS Property Services!

Tiggy Parry

CEO and Founder of Project Food

Food and farming fun for Axe Valley Academy students

A small group of students from Axe Valley Academy has been participating in weekly visits to Project Food throughout the autumn term to learn about food, farming and cooking.

Many of these students face additional hurdles relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and mental health, often grappling with low self-esteem and social isolation.

During their time at Project Food, they have not only learned to whip up healthier versions of popular dishes like pizza, burgers, and stir fries, but have also gained essential



life skills, forged new friendships and boosted their confidence. The visit to Magdalen Farm was a highlight - animals, quesadillas and tending the vegetable garden all brought many smiles! The experience has proven to be a transformative journey for these students, combining food education with personal growth and community connection.

We are looking forward to the welcoming the next group of young people joining us in 2025. Our thanks go to the Northbrook Community Trust, Devon Community Foundation, the Jack Riley Trust and Axe Valley Academy for funding this project.

The Future...

Following a recent, wide-ranging consultation, we have decided to primarily concentrate on two groups of people in the future, believing that we can do the most with these specific clients in terms of helping them improve their diets. These are:

- Children and young people (and their families) living on a low income
- People with or at risk of diet-related diseases, again prioritising those living on low incomes



At the moment, these two groups of people are being particularly failed by the system. There is no support for parents to develop skills and knowledge around food for their children. Furthermore, the food system has developed in such a way that more nutritious foods are much more expensive, while processed foods are marketed directly at children. Yet we know the harm that such foods can cause. For instance, children who are overweight or obese get bullied at school, tend to do less well and can struggle with their mental health. And this then continues into adulthood.

Within the UK, diet-related disease costs the country billions of pounds every year, adding a significant burden to the NHS. But if you are diagnosed with pre- or Type II diabetes (generally associated with diet and lifestyle), the NHS has no capacity to support you in changing your approach, and so help you prevent the complications associated with diabetes and the other health issues that can arise from a poor diet.



Cooking with Confidence cook, Lucy, explains the benefits of Project Food's new, more targeted, approach when it comes to working with both of these core groups:



"I hope that holding sessions that relate to specific diet and health related topics might motivate participants to focus on their own food choices and help them understand how they can help themselves (and, where relevant, their children) achieve a healthier lifestyle.

Hands on sessions hopefully encourage those who don't want to ask questions publicly to seek advice on any diet or food related issue... no matter how big or small. Project Food sessions provide a safe space for people to ask questions about their own dietary choices, food preparation and nutrition, without judgement.

Make and Munch now up and running in Cranbrook and Sidmouth

“ I cooked a dinner from scratch at home for the first time. I most definitely will continue as this has given me the confidence and motivation.

Thanks to funding from EDDC, more families across East Devon have learnt valuable new cooking skills by attending our Make & Munch cooking groups in Cranbrook and Sidmouth. The sessions are fun, family-focussed cooking groups for parents/carers and their young children.

Attendees are on low incomes and typically struggle with the skills, knowledge and motivation to feed their families healthy food on limited budgets.

As well as looking at family-friendly meals, the groups also learned about ways of making snacks and packed lunches both nutritious and delicious. They created their own smoothies, made savoury muffins packed with veg (and freezable too!), and some tasty tortilla chips.

This was a fantastic opportunity for Project Food to collaborate with some new organisations in East Devon, and forge lasting relationships. We had a great time partnering with the Salvation Army in Sidmouth and the EX5 Alive Community Hub in Cranbrook. We look forward, also, to working with Open Door in Exmouth.



Emily's Story



Emily is a devoted lone parent, aged 25, who lives with her two young children. In her words.

“ I just want to give my two children the best life I can.

She joined our Chard cooking group, Good Grub Club, wanting to improve her kitchen skills and learn how to cook healthy, reasonably priced meals from scratch. Her very limited budget meant she faced significant challenges in creating meals at home that were nutritious, simple and economical – and also well received by her children!

Funded by Abri Homes, our Good Grub Club was an ideal opportunity for Emily to learn new skills and knowledge about cooking healthily on a budget.

Our team of ‘calm and supportive’ staff and volunteers were able to help her feel confident in her abilities, supporting her in gaining the motivation to start cooking for herself and her children at home. The club

also fosters a supportive community, where she was able to share experiences and tips with other parents facing similar challenges.

Emily now regularly cooks her meals from scratch and is finding that she is better able to work within her limited budget, whilst providing her children with the nutritious and delicious food they need.

“ Project Food has helped me in more ways than I could imagine, and I would recommend them to anyone in the same situation.

Over the past year we have run the following activities



Axe Valley Alternative Timetable

A weekly cooking group for pupils in a local secondary school who have low school attendance records

Cooking with Confidence

Monthly cooking demos for people struggling with diet-related medical conditions, held in Chard and Axminster



Cooking made Easy

Monthly cooking demos for people struggling with diet-related medical conditions, held in Seaton

Good Grub Club

Holiday cooking group for families on low incomes in Chard



Food and Mood on the Farm

A cooking and food growing group for individuals struggling with their mental health



Food Fuel and More

Recipe boxes distributed and cooking classes held across East Devon

Kids Kitchen

A cooking group for children with SEND, held in Axminster



Make and Munch

Hands-on cooking sessions for parents and children living in food poverty, held in Cranbrook and Sidmouth

1:1 cooking

Cooking with a range of individuals with different needs living across East Devon



A year in numbers

1,168 healthy, frozen ready meals supplied to families and individuals

957 free fruit and veg bags handed out (many of them personally delivered, thus also providing important human interaction for many of our very isolated clients)

673 individuals supported, including 108 children

263 recipe boxes distributed

97 sessions - run both in groups and as 1:1

35 working with 35 volunteers

Making an impact

90%

of adults attending our hands-on cooking sessions said they felt motivated to eat a healthier diet as a result

88%

of children reported (via their parents) an increase in confidence in the kitchen following attendance at our sessions

100%

of those receiving recipe boxes reported that they cook more at home as a result of support from Project Food

90%

of people who receive our newsletter say it helps them feel better supported, more motivated and has resulted in them eating a better diet

What we will do with your donation



two recipe bags for families to take home at the end of a cooking session, so that they can practice their new skills.



one recipe box for a family of four living in food poverty so that they can cook a week's main meals together.



two cooking sessions, including dietary support and free fruit and vegetables for people struggling to manage their diet-related illness.



the food for an after-school cooking club session, allowing parents and children to cook together in a safe and friendly environment.



a tailored 6-week cooking course, providing ongoing support for a young parent needing to learn the skills to feed their children a good diet.

Some kind words

I have diabetes and live alone. Normally, I find it really difficult to motivate myself to eat what I know I should. These sessions provide me with the confidence and motivation I need to eat better for my health.

Sarah, participant of Axminster Cooking with Confidence

You are the creme de la creme of the Axminster charities. You don't just do one bit, you do it all.

Rachel, a volunteer who has been helping us every Monday morning for two years

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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