

# Developing Local Networks To Tackle Food Poverty

A summary report of five seminars organised by The Food Poverty Network in partnership with local food and health workers between January and May 1999.



Supported by the Department  
of Health through the Health  
Education Authority

**Our Work:**

Sustain represents over 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level.

**Our Aim:**

To advocate food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, promote equity and enrich society and culture.

**The Food Poverty Network:**

One of Sustain's major projects is on food poverty. Food poverty means having too little money or other facilities to be able to obtain a healthy diet. Poor people suffer worse health outcomes throughout their lives such as increased risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity and some cancers. Many of these illnesses are caused by poor diets.

Since January 1996, with funding from the National Lottery Charities Board, Sustain has been developing its food poverty network. The network aims to:

- keep community food projects in touch with each other and with developments that affect them;
- challenge the myths about food poverty and propose positive solutions;
- continue to improve our understanding and raise awareness of food poverty;
- be a policy forum for people working on food poverty issues.

The network consists of a regular newsletter, *Let Us Eat Cake!*, the food and low income database (developed with the Health Education Authority), regular conferences and a range of publications. In January this year the network published *Making Links - a toolkit for local food projects*. A key theme throughout the toolkit is the importance of networking - making links - with like-minded people who can offer advice and assistance, and share experiences. This was also the theme of these seminars.

**The Health Education Authority:**

The Health Education Authority promotes sustainable improvements in health, particularly among disadvantaged groups. It researches the need for, and effectiveness of, health promotion measures; tests out new approaches to health promotion; advises the government on health promotion solutions to public health problems; and works with partners across a range of sectors to bring about social and behavioural changes that contribute to better health for all.

The HEA also houses the Health Promotion Information Centre (HPiC) which is the national centre for health promotion information and advice.

**Thanks and acknowledgements to everyone who helped in each local area:**

Anita Attila, Brenda Milson, (North Tyneside), Anne Holt, Councillor Len Picken, Karen Stinson, Sandy Tuohy and Steve Turnbull, (Barnsley), Steffie El Hassan, Julie Holt and Jane Sephton (Chorley), Kate Benson, Penny Burns, Marilyn Denbigh, Joy Dillon, Ruth Finlay, Nicky Foreman, Vicky Johnson, Nicci Kapelus and Liz Robson (Brighton), Sam Church, Lucy Gillie and Victoria Williams (London).

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**Written by Jacqui Webster  
Sustain Food Poverty Officer  
July, 1999**

## Foreword

**by Trudy Turner**

There is no better time to deal with these issues. Both the wide range of government initiatives and the new focus on constructive partnerships are effective mechanisms for addressing food poverty. It is important that local programmes are related to the wider public health agenda and that there is "joined up" thinking at national and local government levels. This will represent a fundamental cultural change in the way that people work. But change can be good for everyone.

If you are a policy maker, with an interest in inequalities in health, community development and working in partnership, you will find this report very stimulating. If you are working to relieve food poverty, and you want to find out what else is going on, this report will help you. It will also be extremely useful to anyone who is planning to run a similar seminar in their local area.

If you are interested in the different ways people are addressing food poverty, and how government initiatives such as Health Action Zones (HAZ) and Healthy Living Centres (HLC) can support this work, this report will answer some of your questions.

As an example of local skills, energy and enthusiasm, the seminars in this report provide an inspiration to us all. They are also an example of effective working between a number of national and local partners. Their success is a result of a lot of hard work, and this was an exciting project to be part of.

**Trudy Turner is the  
Food and Low  
Income Officer for  
the Health Education  
Authority**

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# 1) Introduction

This report summarises the proceedings and outcomes of five seminars which were organised by the Food Poverty Network, in partnership with local food and health workers in North Tyneside, Barnsley, Bolton, Brighton and London. The seminars were funded by the Department of Health through the Health Education Authority (HEA) as part of the continuing collaboration between The Food Poverty Network and the HEA.

The aims of the seminars were:

- To promote local networking between people working on community food issues. Bringing people together to exchange information on best practice in planning, developing and carrying out community food initiatives is a good way of tackling food poverty;
- To facilitate and support active community food projects to arrange and run the seminars, so that local priorities were reflected and local network could be used;
- To highlight and promote *Making Links: a toolkit for local food projects*, published by Sustain's Food Poverty Network (FPN) 1998;
- To raise awareness about the joint FPN/HEA food and low income database;
- To widen the membership of the FPN and encourage the building of new partnerships for community food projects.

Rather than organising the seminars centrally, it was decided to hand over the responsibility, and the money, to people working on food and low income issues locally. It was felt that, in this way, it would be easier to ensure that the seminars reflected local needs and priorities and that the relevant local people attended. It would also mean that there would be people willing and able to maintain the momentum generated by the seminars and help to implement some of the ideas that arose.

This approach worked well. The seminars were all extremely successful, reflecting the energy and enthusiasm put into arranging the events by the local organisers in each area. All the events were very different, reflecting the fact that not all areas are at the same level of thinking or development when it comes to tackling food poverty. For the organisers in Barnsley, for example, the main priority was trying to get the issues on the agenda of local politicians. In contrast in Brighton, where there is a great deal of work on food poverty issues already, the priority was to find out exactly what was going on and look at how to network these projects most effectively.

The range of projects and organisations that were involved was considerable and there has been a great deal of interest from organisations in other regions who want to do something similar. As well as fulfilling the aims of the two national organisations, local goals were achieved, particularly promoting networking among people working on food and low income issues locally. The value of such networking cannot be overstated. It provides people with encouragement and inspiration, can mean projects can cut down on resources by sharing (transport, for example), and means that the impact of individual projects is multiplied. As Mike Lavender, a public health consultant speaking at the conference in North Tyneside put it, *"What is needed now is a change from exclusively small, local, short term projects, to a co-ordinated network of projects seen as a mainstream service, with secure, longer term support, active participation and ownership by the local communities, providing a real choice to low income families. Let's move on from rhetoric to reality"*.

## 2) Seminar success

### 2.1) National outcomes

The seminars brought together people working in food and low income projects, and people thinking about working in this area, to exchange information about good practice in planning, developing and carrying out community food initiatives. Local contacts were funded to arrange and run these seminars, which encouraged a community development approach and increased the range of delegates by using local networks, in addition to existing food poverty network contacts. Local people have also been able to take forward some of the recommendations made or ideas that have emerged at the seminars. In contrast, in London where, for a number of reasons, the Food Poverty Network itself took the lead in organising the seminar, there is no obvious organisation to co-ordinate activities arising from the seminar.

*Making links: a toolkit for local food projects*, was launched and promoted at each of the events. The first 500 copies of the report have now almost sold out and, at the time of writing, the Food Poverty Network is getting the pack reprinted to meet the continuing demand for advice and information. The joint FPN/HEA food and low income database and evaluation report was also disseminated. Not all the delegates at the seminars had been aware of this database and there was a general feeling that it would be a good way of networking when people were establishing new projects. There has been an increase in the number of enquiries made to the database since the seminars were run.

In addition, the number of people subscribing to the Food Poverty Network has increased by over 50 since the beginning of the seminars. Other people benefit from the network indirectly by buying publications, using the database or obtaining general information. There are also over 50 new projects on the food and low income database and there is no doubt that some of this growth is due to the seminars. In addition, in terms of helping to form new local partnerships around food and low income, the seminars were directly responsible, as the reports show.

A total of five seminars were run with between 60 and 120 people at each. Over half the delegates that attended were not already members of the food poverty network. Positive steps were taken to involve individuals from the public, voluntary and private sectors and whilst it has not been possible to calculate the percentage of individuals that came from each group, it can be said that there was a fairly even mix of public and voluntary sector groups, with only the private sector under-represented. This is not unusual for work of this kind, but it would be interesting to know for the future how, if at all, other people have managed to get people from the private sector involved in similar work.

The seminars were linked to relevant government initiatives including Health Action Zones, Healthy Living Centres, and Primary Care Groups, as appropriate. There was a general consensus that these were suitable vehicles from which to drive community food initiatives.

There were requests from people who attended the seminars from outside their region to have similar programmes in their areas, including in Teeside and in Yorkshire.

*"This is to say how good the Community Foods Seminar was - inspiring!"*  
**Community Liaison Manager, Chorley.**

*"Let's keep the networking going and develop it further"*  
**North Tyneside**

## 2.2) Local outcomes

*"I would like to see a similar programme in Teeside"*

**North Tyneside**

The seminars encouraged people working on similar issues in one area to come together to discuss where they could form partnerships to work more effectively. Local interest in food issues was generated or revived as a result of the seminars. People who attended any of the five seminars reported that they had been able to make contacts and exchange ideas and information at the seminars. Links were made between people working on existing community food projects locally. New ideas for developing and supporting community food initiatives were developed and people became better informed about government initiatives such as Health Action Zones and Healthy Living Centres and how they could be harnessed to take forward work on food poverty and support community food initiatives.

Everyone who attended the seminars received a copy of the local conference report to remind them of the issues and ideas that emerged. This included a list of the names and addresses of all the delegates to facilitate further networking. In Brighton, the audit of community food projects undertaken meant that anyone with a copy of the conference report could now see where all the different community food projects within and around Brighton were located, what they did and how to contact them.

These local reports could also be used to stimulate further interest in the issues. Some, for example, were sent to local policy makers to encourage them to put food poverty on their agendas and urge them to act on the recommendations made in the report.

*"Explore all the links! Don't forget the school caterers"*

**Brighton**

The innovative techniques used to evaluate the seminars were inspiring. In Chorley, methods included 'snapshot' comments about the presentations, a 'before and after' sheet on feelings, a semi-structured questionnaire administered by interview by two student dietitians, evaluation sheets and verbal comments. The local evaluation report that has been produced from this day would be useful for anyone interested in running a similar event.

Many people were inspired to do new work as a result of attending the seminars. In Brighton, a delegate who worked at a centre for the unemployed contacted the chef of a local vegetarian restaurant who had also been at the seminar. This resulted in a gourmet meal and cooking advice for the users of the unemployed centre, paid for by the restaurant. Details of other types of action are given in the summary of each of the seminars, but included:

- setting up new community food projects such as breakfast clubs, community cafes, cooking on a budget courses or breastfeeding initiatives;
- convening the Health Action Zone co-ordinators to look at community food initiatives;
- doing community work with residents around food and low income issues;
- having a quarterly local newsletter with information on the development of initiatives;
- setting up a steering group to co-ordinate work on food and low income issues;
- lobbying local MPs;
- employing local community food project support workers;
- setting up practical training workshops on different food projects;
- learning more about participatory appraisal techniques and how they could be used to address food poverty.

*"We are in a HAZ area and need to take hold of this opportunity if we are to gain from this government initiative."*

**North Tyneside**

### 3) Recommendations

It was generally agreed that there was no better time to deal with these issues. Both the wide range of government initiatives and the new focus on constructive partnerships were seen as effective mechanisms for addressing food poverty. The need to relate local programmes to the wider national public health agenda was stressed as was the need for “joined up” thinking at national and local government level. It was recognised that this would represent a fundamental cultural change in the way people worked but agreed that change could be good for everyone.

There was a great deal of lively debate and discussion at the seminars. A summary of the issues that arose and the recommendations made for promoting and supporting community food projects are in Section 6. In addition to these, it was agreed that:

- All sectors, public, voluntary and private, need to work together to improve the quality of life for people on low incomes;
- Inadequate income levels must be addressed through the redistribution of wealth, promotion of savings and provision of a reasonable minimum wage, irrespective of age;
- There needs to be tighter controls on retail developments to ensure adequate access to shops for people on low incomes;
- Transport needs to be improved so that people are able to reach the shops. Where there are no adequate transport facilities to shops, food delivery services should be established;
- People need to be empowered through education and skills, including cooking, and allowing people to make informed choices about what they eat through comprehensive labelling;

In addition, Sustain and the HEA feel that the innovative way of organising the seminars using local contacts was extremely effective in stimulating the development of local networks to tackle food poverty. They recommend that:

#### **Locally:**

- Seminar reports are distributed as widely as possible, not just to the people who attended the event.
- An attempt is made to assess the longer-term impact of the seminars by keeping track of any activities that occur as a result of the events, including further meetings, the development of specific projects or local policy changes.
- Any surplus money that was generated from the seminars should be used to finance new food and low income activities locally.
- Ways of ensuring that the contacts made during the seminar are maintained and that new partnerships are built up are examined, for example by developing local databases, producing a local newsletter, and holding further meetings.

#### **Nationally:**

- Further seminars are organised to build upon the success of this first series and to facilitate the development of networks in other locations.
- Support is provided to enable local organisers to examine the long term impact of the seminars by keeping track of any activity that occurs as a result of the seminars.
- Examples of successful public/private partnerships to tackle food poverty are collected and disseminated to people working on food poverty.
- New ways of involving the private sector, particularly food retailers, in any future events are investigated.



## 4) Organising the seminars

### 4.1) Planning

After an initial planning meeting, a request was put in the Summer 1998 edition of the Food Poverty Network newsletter, *Let Us Eat Cake!* for people interested in organising local seminars to get in touch with Jacqui Webster, the food poverty project officer. Local organisers would be expected to:

- identify a suitable venue;
- organise food;
- prepare the agenda in consultation with the Food Poverty Network;
- publicise the event using local networks;
- prepare relevant materials for the event;
- produce a report of the day.

Representatives from Barnsley, Brighton, Bolton, North Tyneside and London came forward. The conference organisers in each of the local seminar areas were visited once by the food poverty project officer to discuss what this commitment entailed and to help plan the seminars. This included:

- explaining what the aims of the FPN and HEA were in organising these seminars;
- helping local organisers to think through their own aims and objectives;
- beginning to develop an agenda that would meet all these requirements;
- discussing potential dates and venues;
- developing a checklist of tasks;
- explaining the support, both financial and other, that would be available from the Food Poverty Network.

A great deal of emphasis was placed on discussing and clarifying the local objectives for running the events, as it was important for the event to reflect local needs and priorities as well as national ones. How the event was to be publicised was also given detailed thought. This was to ensure that all the relevant people involved in food and low income issues locally were made aware of the event and encouraged to take part, so that the most effective partnerships could be formed for taking forward any issues after the event.

The local organisers were then left to arrange the events with support from the Food Poverty Network as required. This included advising on the agenda and helping to identify appropriate speakers and workshop facilitators.

### 4.2) Practicalities

#### ⌘ Finance

Each area organiser was given £1,300 to go towards the cost of the venue, food, speakers and travelling expenses, crèche and materials. It was recognised that this may fall short of the actual amount required and that it may be necessary for the local organisers to contribute some of their own funds to running the day. It was also recognised that the cost of the time required to organise the event would not be covered by this amount. In one area it was suggested that additional funding would be useful to cover the cost of the administrative time required. In general, however, it was felt that the amount was adequate provided that delegates fees were charged.

### ⌘ Delegates Fees

Each area was encouraged to charge a fee for attendance at the seminars. A sliding scale was suggested and the example of the Food Poverty Network subscription rate was recommended. (£15 for individuals and local food projects; £45 for large voluntary or statutory organisations; an optional £60 for organisations with adequate finance or who were happy to cover the cost of people or organisations who otherwise would not be able to afford to attend). It was also recommended that there be free places for people who could not afford to pay and that these should be given on request. It is the experience of the FPN that it is better to charge for events because otherwise it is likely that people will sign up to attend and then, finding that they have other commitments on the day, not turn up. When people have paid for an event, occurs much less frequently. This was not the case in Brighton, however, which was the only place not to charge a delegate fee.

### ⌘ Profits

As the aim was to have at least 80 delegates, it was possible that the local organisers would be able to generate a small cash surplus from the event if they charged delegates fees. An agreement was therefore made that the local organisers would use any profits from the day to finance future work on food and low income in the area, including funding any suggestions that came out of the seminars. Two of the five generated modest surplus and their plans for spending it are outlined in the individual reports.

### ⌘ Food

Given the focus of the seminars, it was suggested that the local organisers make every attempt to use local food projects to provide some of the food for the delegates' lunch. However the complexities of doing this meant that the contribution was token, rather than integral to the catering.

### ⌘ Delegate Pack

It was suggested that delegate packs were prepared for the seminars which should include:

- name badges
- agenda for the day
- speakers' profiles
- names and addresses of delegates
- relevant promotional materials including fliers for the food poverty network and publications and the food and low income database.

This was not a problem for any of the seminars.

### ⌘ Publicity

It was suggested that local organisers publicise the events using local networks in the health and local authority as well as voluntary organisations through the local Council for Voluntary Services. It was also suggested that they use local media and community newsletters. Each area used a variety of methods and there were no problems in attracting enough people to any of the events.

### ⌘ Report

It was requested that the organisers ensure that the day was fully reported including asking the speakers to provide transcripts of the talks and making sure that scribes were available to take notes from the discussions both at the plenary sessions and at the workshops. Local organisers were asked to produce a report of the day which could be distributed locally and also form the basis of the national

report. All these reports are now available from the contact details at the end of each summary.

⌘ Crèche

Organisers were encouraged to consider the possibility of providing a crèche to ensure that people with children were able to attend the seminar. Only one out of five did so, as there was no demand in the other locations.

⌘ Evaluation

The conference organisers were asked to consider their own ways of evaluating the events. This could include using questionnaires, having roaming evaluators and having suggestion boxes. It was recommended that, as part of the evaluation, the organisers found some way of establishing what people intended to do as a result of attending the event. This information has been very useful for assessing the outcomes of the seminars. Details of how each seminar was evaluated can be found in the summary of each of the events.

## 5) Summary of each of the events

The following section summarises the proceedings and outcomes of each of the events. Individual conference reports can be obtained from the conference organisers (contact details at the end of each summary).

### 5.1) Food, Health and Low Income - Opportunities for Change

*in partnership with community dieticians at North Tyneside General Hospital Riverside Centre, North Tyneside, 12 January, 1999.*

The community dieticians at North Tyneside General Hospital have been running accredited nutrition courses in the community for several years now and have been active members of the Food Poverty Network since it started in 1996. They were keen to act as partners in organising the seminars so that they could:

- raise awareness of the work on food and low income in North Tyneside;
- raise awareness of food poverty issues locally and get them on the agenda of local policy makers;
- stimulate networking between people working on food and low income issues locally;
- examine the role of the North Tyneside Health Action Zone retailer scheme in addressing food poverty.

Over 80 people attended the event, including community dieticians, community food project workers, health promotion specialists, local authority workers and representatives from a wide range of local voluntary organisations.

The day began with an overview from Councillor Rita Stringfellow who highlighted the problems associated with food poverty and listed a series of recommendations to overcome them, including those outlined in the recently published *Acheson Inquiry into Inequalities in Health*. This was followed by a presentation from Martin Craig, from Meadowell Health Project, which looked at how the situation had changed over recent decades and outlined the current government initiatives, including Primary Care Groups, Health Action Zones, Health Improvement Centres and Healthy Living Centres, which could potentially address the problems.

Trudy Turner, from the Health Education Authority described the benefits of the food and low income database and how it could be used. Jacqui Webster, then explained the benefits of community food projects and local networking, and gave an introduction to *Making Links: a toolkit for local food projects*.

There followed presentations from three local food project workers. Anita Attala, the Food and Health Advisor at North Tyneside, described how the accredited nutrition courses worked and explained the many positive outcomes that they had produced, including the informal dissemination of information, sharing cooking skills through cooking sessions, increased knowledge of nutrition, and increased confidence. She explained how she hoped that further accreditation levels could be developed and that, in future, courses would be run for, for example, staff working with the homeless population in North Tyneside. Rob Errington, the Community Participation in Health Co-ordinator for Newcastle East End, described his project's last 15 months work, outlined the various different food initiatives and

gave a detailed case study of the food co-operative. Lionel Hehir, the Executive Director of Groundwork South Tyneside gave a presentation on community nurseries (for plants!).

The final presentation was by Dr Mike Lavender, a consultant in public health from Newcastle and North Tyneside Health Authority, who discussed where community food initiatives fit in with the wider public health agenda. He explained that the gap between the health of the rich and the health of the poor was getting wider and urged people to link community food initiatives with Health Action Zones, Health Partnerships and Healthy Living Centres in order to meet the ambitious public health goals set by the government.

Later there were workshops on funding, project evaluation, the potential for Health Action Zone wide initiatives and Get Cooking accreditation.

There was a very enthusiastic atmosphere throughout the day and delegates at the conference were eager for the links that had been made that day to be strengthened through further work. There were many requests for future meetings and stronger networking between projects in general. It was felt that retailers should be involved in any future meetings.

#### ☞ Evaluation

An evaluation questionnaire was included in the delegates' packs. Of the 34 respondents that returned the questionnaire, most were happy with the overall organisation, the venue and food were rated as average and people were satisfied with the information from the individual presentations. All 34 respondents said that they had found the conference useful. They reported that they found the speakers interesting and that they had obtained lots of information, particularly on setting up community food projects, and had been able to link up with people working on similar issues. They were very keen to continue networking and develop the work further.

#### ☞ Outcomes

The organisers were very pleased with the outcomes of the seminars and arranged focus groups within North Tyneside to look at the work that they have done and where they should be going with it, including setting up a Food Action Group. From this, they hoped to be able to formulate plans for using the £500 surplus that had been generated from the seminar.

A follow up questionnaire was also sent out to delegates several months after the seminar to explore certain issues that had arisen in more depth and gain agreement on how to implement the suggestions made. Fourteen were completed and returned out of the 48 sent out. The results were as follows:

- Everyone was interested in having their name kept on the database to receive future mailings.
- Four projects had added their details to the food and low income database since the seminar, and two were already on.
- One had made use of the database and one other intended to in the near future.
- Four people had joined the FPN since the conference and two were already members.
- More than half of the respondents said that they had made use of the contacts

made at the conference to pursue work in this area and another two said they would in the near future.

- The majority of the respondents said that they had developed/planned local initiatives since attending the conference. These included:

- working with a local college to provide a 'cooking on a budget' course
- a children's breakfast club at a local leisure centre
- development of a breast-feeding initiative
- identifying nutrition and food poverty as an issue in the local HAZ plan
- discussing possibilities around the development of allotments
- a horticultural training and cookery project
- arranging a diet/nutrition session with a dietician to promote to minority ethnic groups.

When asked what topics people would like to see addressed at future events, the following issues came up:

- methods of preparing healthy food
- growing your own food on a small scale
- evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives
- nutrition and child health
- organic food production / retailing
- how to link with HAZ structures
- the role of nutrition and food in healthy living centres
- budgeting.

11 out of the 14 respondents said they would be willing to be involved in the planning and organisation of such an event. Other ways of using the network that they had pulled together included:

- involving food processing/retailing sectors
- holding regular meetings to share ideas etc.
- poster presentations at conferences
- using the delegates list for future meetings
- developing a group to steer development of food, diet and nutrition initiatives
- having a quarterly newsletter with information on the development of initiatives.

***For more information or a copy of the local report contact Brenda Milson or Anita Attila at North Tyneside General Hospital on 0191 259 6660 Ex 2916.***

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## 5.2) Community Food Initiatives in Action: The Way Forward

*in partnership with community dietitians at Barnsley Community and Priority Services NHS Trust*

Barnsley Metrodome, 13th January, 1999

*“In my opinion, the money being allocated through the New Opportunities Fund to establish Healthy Living Centres - some 300 million pounds over the next few years - is possibly one of the main windows of opportunity open to communities, particularly in Health Action Zones, to establish community food initiatives.”*

**Jeff Ennis, MP**

The seminar in Barnsley was organised by the dietitians from Barnsley Nutrition and Dietetic Service who had been involved with Get Cooking Projects in Barnsley. As it was felt that there was limited awareness of the problems of food poverty in Barnsley at the time, the local aims of the conference were to:

- raise awareness about food poverty and get it on the agenda of local policy makers;
- bring together those working in the food and low income field to exchange best practice in planning, developing and carrying out community food initiatives and help others new to the field;
- encourage new partnerships for community food projects.

The seminar was attended by over 60 delegates, including representatives of local voluntary organisations, community dietitians, health promotion workers, local agenda 21 officers, catering services, local authority workers, regeneration workers, health visitors and community project workers.

Jeff Ennis, MP for Barnsley East and Mexborough and the Parliamentary Private Secretary to Tessa Jowell, Minister for Public Health, gave the opening address at the conference. He outlined the Government's health strategy, highlighted the problem of poor diet and nutrition and put forward criteria for the success of community food initiatives, including the importance of evaluation.

This was followed by an overview of national policy by Jeanette Longfield, co-ordinator of Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming (then the National Food Alliance).

Brigid Kane, Health Action Zone co-ordinator for South Yorkshire Coalfield HAZ, then gave an overview of the government HAZ initiative, described the vision, beliefs, values and programme areas of the HAZ, discussed how it might address food and outlined possible food and low income projects. These included:

- using HAZ to enable community groups to use derelict land to grow their own food (improves diet and provides exercise!)
- expanding the availability of “how to cook” courses in community settings
- healthy eating work with young people.

Trudy Turner, from the Health Education Authority described the benefits of the food and low income database and how it could be used. Jacqui Webster then explained the benefits of community food projects and local networking, and gave an introduction to *Making Links: a toolkit for local food projects*.

Following lunch, two actors from Sheffield performed the ‘Food Show’ a funny yet poignant drama about some of the typical problems faced by someone on a low income when they try to eat a healthy diet.

There were then presentations from a variety of community food project workers, not all from Barnsley. Cyd Harrison and Sandy Tuohy, community dieticians in Barnsley, gave an overview of four years of experience of running Get Cooking! schemes in Barnsley and explained how in future, because their time is so limited, they would like to train other community workers to run the sessions and had produced a training pack for this purpose.

*“The people on Kingswood are not looking for a handout but a hand up!”*

**Our Cafe,  
Kingswood  
Community  
Estate**

Bob Dillon, community development worker for Corby Borough Council and Val Smith, local resident/volunteer gave a summary of ‘Our Cafe’, a story of local people’s determination to run their own community venture.

This was followed with a description, by Anthony Milroy, of the Arid Lands Initiative - a charity helping poor communities in the UK and overseas. The work includes the Urban Oasis gardening project where produce grown organically among high rise flats on a poor estate is sold cheap to tenants, and will soon supply the community cafe at the base of the high rise flats.

Following questions, there were workshops on Get Cooking, Community Cafes and Food Growing, to continue debating the issues that had emerged in the presentations. There was then a brief period of discussion before the conference was closed. It appeared that most people had been inspired by what they had heard and learnt and were stimulated into taking positive actions as a result of this and the contacts they had made.

#### ☞ Evaluation

The conference was evaluated simply by asking participants to put their comments on post-it notes throughout the day under the following headings:

- Positive
- Negative
- What you will do as a result of attending the conference?

Many positive comments were made about the quality of the speakers, presentations and initiatives portrayed. The programme was well received and the conference was thought to be well organised. The day was valued for its educational content and for the opportunity to network. The “Food Show” presented by Theatreworks was a real highlight of the day.

However, there was some concern over the venue, namely the seating, acoustics of the room and the overhead projector. Some people thought that the programme was too full and that there should have been more time for workshops and discussion. Others felt that there should have been more lay people in attendance. There was disappointment that some of the people who had presented in the morning on the national picture, had not stayed around to find out what was happening locally.

#### ☞ Outcomes

As a result of the conference, many people were inspired to look at the possibility of community cafes in their areas of work. Others intended to approach their communities to discuss the general possibilities of work in this field. Some planned to network with each other, to contact speakers, MPs or people in their place of work.



The profit from the conference, in conjunction with a grant obtained from the local Health for All, is being made available to fund local community food projects.

Said the conference organiser *"I felt that the conference went very well and it was a great opportunity for networking. I think that the joint working between our organisations went extremely well and I have appreciated working with you. Thank you very much for the support that you showed me whilst setting up the day."*

***For more information or a copy of the local report contact Jenny Daniels at  
Barnsley Hospital on 01226 730000. Ext. 2626***  
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### 5.3) Making Links - Taking Action

*in partnership with Bolton Food and Health Advisors*

Woodlands Conference Centre, Chorley, 11th March, 1999

The work of the Food and Health Advisors (FHAs) is to plan, implement and evaluate work with infants, children, young people and adults in Bolton, by exploring food and health issues in an empowering way to facilitate healthier eating habits. Socio-economically disadvantaged groups and ethnic minority communities are a priority as they are at greater risk of poor nutrition and ill-health. The FHAs also aim to form healthy alliances with, and provide a consultancy and training service for health, local authority and other professionals, community workers, the voluntary sector, retail organisations, the media and the public.

The FHAs saw the food and low income conference as a way of gathering local people, community workers and some professionals from across the North West region. They aimed to share ideas and experiences and stimulate interest in and facilitate the development of food projects which could be supported by the FHAs and Community Nutrition Assistants (CNAs). They were particularly keen to attract a large number of local people who could take initiatives forward, rather than have a professionally dominated event. They therefore decided to have a very practical seminar, rather than a formal conference with lots of theoretical presentations, as this would be more likely to attract community group members and interested individuals.

The local aims of the seminar were:

- to promote and support the development of local food projects;
- to facilitate networking between people working on food and low income issues in Bolton;
- to highlight the work of the Food and Health Advisors and examine how they could further support local projects;

Over 100 people attended the event and many more applications had to be turned down because of lack of space. The seminar was aimed at community workers and members of community groups who were interested in running community food projects. A number of places were made available to health professionals whose work could support such projects, but these were limited. There was a crèche for children of Bolton Community Group members.

The introduction was provided by Jane Sephton from Bolton Food and Health Advisors who welcomed everyone to the conference and set the scene for the day. Jacqui Webster then spoke on the benefits of networking between community food projects and described *Making Links: a toolkit for local food projects*. Simon Lea from the HEA briefly outlined the food and low income database. A practical evaluation of community food projects was presented by Marie Brookfield, from Bolton Association and Network of Drop-ins (BOND), who described the different methods that can be used and the need to keep it simple and relevant, using a food co-op as an example.



After refreshments, the delegates split into workshop groups which continued for the rest of the day. There were six or seven workshops running simultaneously, with a good variety of projects from around the North West area represented. Topics included Food Co-ops, Community Nutrition Assistants, Growing Food, Cook & Eat, Healthy Living Centres/Health Action Zones, Vouchers, Healthy Schools, and Community Cafes.

#### ☞ Evaluation

The event was evaluated by the organisers, as well as by participants, speakers and facilitators, to provide an insight into the different perceptions of those involved. A variety of methods were used, including “snapshot” comments about the presentations, a ‘before and after’ sheet on feelings, a semi-structured questionnaire administered by interview by two student dietitians, evaluation sheets and verbal comments. In addition, one community development worker undertook her own evaluation with the group of 15 people she brought to the seminar. She was particularly interested in issues relating to the provision of the crèche and transport arrangements and what support she could offer them to pursue issues raised on the day.



An attempt has been made to summarise this complex evaluation, but that has entailed ‘cherry picking’ some of the comments. Whilst it is felt that it represents a balanced view, people should consult the report of the conference in Bolton for a more thorough evaluation. Bolton Food and Health Advisors produced a very detailed evaluation of the planning process which will be extremely useful both to the Food Poverty Network and to other local groups planning to organise similar events.

Most people felt that the speakers and the workshops had been “informative” and they had “enjoyed them”. Negative comments included that they were “too noisy” as a result of being “too close together” and that the timing was “difficult”. Members of community groups seemed to feel better able to “look at the issues involved in starting up a project” and to “see the whole picture”. There was a suggestion that it would have been useful to provide language interpretation for speakers to be able to reach the Asian population.

Other positive aspects included the enthusiasm of the organisers who felt it was a good opportunity to find out about some of the needs of local people and about local projects and meet others interested in food issues. Early aspects of the planning went well. There was a lot of interest in the seminar which made them feel they were offering something to meet people’s needs. All the organisers felt exhausted but satisfied that they had done the best they could to provide a seminar that was relevant to community members, as well as practical, participatory and enjoyable.

Difficulties encountered included the time required to administer the event, both in the preparation and in preparing the report afterwards. They recommend that

additional funding be provided to pay for the necessary administrative support in future.

⌘ Outcomes

Locally, interest in food issues has been generated or revived as a result of the conference. Some of the people who attended are now planning activities using the information and confidence gained. The organisers recognise the importance of continuing to offer encouragement to professionals wanting to support groups starting or developing food initiatives, as well as to the groups themselves.

The community worker who brought a group of 15 to the seminar asked for their opinions of the day and whether or not they would like to get involved in setting up local projects. She put their views in a newsletter to be circulated across four wards of Bolton to see if there was interest from other members of the communities who were not able to attend the seminar. The FHAs included a piece asking what support, advice or information people would like from them. One possible outcome already requested is more (smaller scale) local workshops, each on a particular type of project with groups intending to set these up.

A worker from one of the Bolton food co-ops, which has been running for many years, attended the seminar. Since then they have been discussing with the FHAs possible developments they would like to achieve. One example is updating the Food Co-ops video which was produced and has been sold widely since its launch. The Food Co-op gets many requests for advice in helping groups to set up new co-ops and many visits (approximately 75 over the last 5 years) from people wanting to see a food co-op in action.

Some community groups were determined to start a food co-op and try a cook and eat session. Another group thought that “the cafe idea would be good to try”. One dietitian commented that she would like her department “to use CNAs but funding would be a problem”.

Bolton FHAs intended to offer support to those interested in pursuing the development of food projects after the day. This might be in the form of network meetings or training on specific issues, depending on what was requested by participants.

***For more information or a copy of the local report contact Julie Holt at Bolton Healthcare on 01204 360 094/5.***

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#### **5.4) Local Initiatives - National Perspectives**

*in partnership with the Food and Low Income Group of Brighton, Hove and Lewes*

Brighthelm Centre, Brighton, 24th March, 1999

The Food and Low Income Group of Brighton, Hove and Lewes has done a wide range of work on food and low income issues in the area. It has recently published *Get Cooking ..... and beyond* a report looking at the lessons learned in facilitating the setting up of Get Cooking Groups to incorporate work on food and low income. Brighton is also one of the areas where the Food Poverty Network, in partnership with Oxfam, Development Focus and the Brighton Food and Low Income Group, is piloting its Community Mapping project. This is using participatory appraisal methods to help local communities to understand their local food economy and develop solutions that are rooted in the community. Part of this seminar consisted of an audit of community food projects carried out by Development Focus (a local participatory appraisal consultancy) which, in turn, contributed to the Community Mapping project.

The local aims of the seminar were to:

- put food and low income on the local policy agenda;
- identify the range of existing local food related initiatives and projects;
- promote and develop local networks and partnerships.

Over 70 people attended the event, including speakers and organisers, and the majority were already involved in food projects of some kind. There were also representatives from the local authority and health authority and local voluntary organisations.

Ruth Finlay, Health Promotion Officer from Brighton and Hove Council, gave the opening address and outlined the aims of the day, explaining that it had been organised by the Food and Low Income Group of Brighton, Hove and Lewes as part of their continuing work in this area. An introduction to the Food and Low Income Group was then given by Penny Burns, Community Dietitian at Brighton Healthcare NHS Trust and Joy Dillon, Community Development Worker at East Sussex, Brighton and Hove Health Authority. They explained how they used a community development approach to look at shopping, budgeting, food hygiene, cooking, nutrition and raising self-esteem, bringing the community together and promoting healthy cooking.



There were then presentations from four local projects to provide a taste of the range of local initiatives. Michael Hamilton from Care Co-ops described a non-profit community organisation that runs a community farm in Stanmer Park and urged people to approach the farm if they were interested in having stalls in community centres or vegetable box schemes. Katherine Rayner, from the Common Cause Co-operative, outlined its mission to “*work towards a framework for a local food strategy*”. Common Cause is a small, non-profit making, community organisation focusing on a range of

issues around food availability, local economies, and distribution. It is concerned with the low income aspect as well as with the environment.

Caroline Crawford explained the work of the Moulscroomb Community Supermarket Group, a market stall selling fresh fruit and vegetables once a week outside the community centre called the '67 centre' close to a school. Jane Painter and Shanti Haft presented the Brighton Oasis Project, a drop-in centre, crèche and a day programme offering group work and educational opportunities, as well as activities related to drug use prevention. The project also runs 'Get Cooking' groups for women who, either currently or historically, have had drug use problems.

There followed an outline of the national perspective by Jacqui Webster who explained the work of Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming (then the National Food Alliance) and the Food Poverty Network and some of the relevant current government initiatives to tackle food poverty. Simon Lea from the HEA then described the food and low income database and how to use it.

An outline of the pilot project on Community Mapping and the Local Food Economy in Hollingdean was presented by Nicky Foreman, the local community development worker. She explained how the project aimed to look at food, low income and health issues, access to low cost food, and wider issues like education and housing. She explained that research was being carried out using participatory appraisal methods, that local people who live in the area were being trained in participatory appraisal and a local festival would be used to give feedback on the research. A report would be produced and disseminated locally.

The Local Food Projects Audit Exercise was then facilitated by Vicky Johnson and Marilyn Denbigh, participatory appraisal consultants from Development Focus. The audit was undertaken because it was recognised that many projects exist in the area but were not connecting with each other. Contact names and details of projects were written on cards to form a card index and the corresponding dots were placed on a map of the area to show where the projects were taking place. The information gathered will be made available as a directory of local groups and will help networking. The results can be found in the report of the Brighton Seminar (*see end of this summary for contact details*).

After lunch, Ron Turner, the Principal Health Promotion Manager, discussed new partnership opportunities including Health Improvement Programmes and Healthy Living Centres and Steve Barton, the Development Manager Social Services, explained further partnership and funding opportunities presented by government initiatives. He pointed out that if partnerships were not community-led and community-based then they would fail.

There was also an opportunity for work in small groups as part of an information exchange / networking session in the afternoon. Groups were asked to discuss how food and low income could be put on the local policy agenda and how they could promote and develop local networks and partnerships. This generated a range of interesting ideas including:



- writing to local councillors
- putting fliers in local community halls, doctors' surgeries, schools, hospitals etc.
- making local TV programmes

- setting up community food projects
- inviting local policy makers and funders into projects to listen and to work alongside 'real' people
- working in partnership with other agencies
- putting notices in free local papers and on radio
- employing area co-ordination workers/facilitators
- organising local markets and
- holding a presentation day to hear about more projects.

⚙️ Evaluation

The seminar was evaluated very simply, using basic questionnaires. People were asked to rate six questions using "smiley" and "grumpy" faces. 26 people returned the questionnaires.

The results were as follows:

					
Did the day meet your expectations?	74%	26%			
Was the information presented relevant?	74%	26%			
Was the format of the day good?	56%	39%	5%		
Were the workshops useful?	52%	30%	9%	9%	
Venue and food?		65%	17%	9%	9%
Did you enjoy the day?		78%	22%		

When asked what people liked most about the day, people replied:

- "People who came"
- "Friendly and informal"
- "Local initiative presentations"
- "Listening"
- "Networking with others"

When asked what they liked least, people replied:

- "Lighting and excess heat in the room"
- "Rushed workshop"
- "Not enough information on projects that have failed and why"
- "Couldn't always hear speakers and see overheads"
- "Food"

Other comments included:

- "A very useful and informative day"
- "Great fun and information"
- "I liked the map exercise"
- "Good to have this kind of seminar, it gives me hope for the future"
- "Great to hear so many positive things going on"

⚙️ Outcomes

The organisers of the seminar were pleased with the outcomes and felt that the local aims of the project had been met. The very fact that two Food and Low Income workers are due to be appointed in the area, and that policy makers were prepared to speak at the seminar indicates that food and low income is continuing to stay on local policy agendas.

The local food audit was the first of this kind to be carried out in Brighton, Hove and Lewes and everyone there was amazed to see how much was already happening. One of the first tasks of the new Food and Low Income worker will be to build upon this information.



There are some positive signs that local partnerships have been developed as a result of the seminar. One delegate who worked at a centre for the unemployed contacted the chef of a local vegetarian restaurant who had also been at the seminar. The outcome was a gourmet meal and cooking advice for the users of the unemployed centre paid for by the restaurant. Another task for the new worker will be to promote and develop more of these links.

*For more information or a copy of the local report contact Ruth Finlay at Brighton and Hove Council on 01273 290000.*

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## **5.5) Making it happen! Community Food Initiatives in Action**



*in partnership with Health First, specialists in health promotion for Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham*  
Regents Hall, London, 18th May

Health First exists to promote good health for the people of Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham in London. It has established links with a number community groups tackling food poverty by, for example, sitting on the health committee for Green Adventure's organic delivery scheme and helping to identify funding opportunities for Surrey Docks city farm to move towards an organic food delivery scheme. Health First is currently undertaking a food availability project in the Rockingham Estate in Southwark which it hopes will affect the development of Health Action Zone priorities.

The seminar in London was organised slightly differently from the others as the Food Poverty Network itself took the lead in organising the event. As a result, the 'local' feeling that was achieved at the other four seminars was not as strong here and there were fewer opportunities for local networking. This further supports our view that local people are in the best position to plan and organise such events.

Around sixty people attended the seminar. There was a mixture of representatives from local and health authorities, local and national voluntary organisations and researchers and academics. About 80% of the participants were from London.

Peta Cottee gave the opening address setting the seminar in context of the sympathetic political climate and outlining the aims of the day which were:

- to launch *Making links: a toolkit for local food projects*;
- to raise awareness about food poverty and put it on the agenda of local policy makers;
- to examine the benefits of community food projects and promote the Food Poverty Network and the food and low income database;
- to stimulate local networking between people working on food poverty issues in and around London; and
- to examine how Healthy Living Centres and other government initiatives can support local food projects.

Brigit Puntis from Health First provided a very clear overview of the national policy initiatives that could potentially address food poverty and explained the work of Health First. This was followed by presentations from Jacqui Webster and Trudy Turner on the benefits of local food projects, *Making links: a toolkit for local food projects* and the food and low income database.



David Lloyd, from the Pioneer Health Centre in Peckham, explained how the Peckham Experiment had shaped the work of the centre today and outlined why the Pioneer Centre was used as a flagship example for potential Healthy Living Centres. He described a three year project funded by the Department of Health that they were undertaking to support the networking of Healthy Living Centre projects.

The presentations were followed by parallel workshops on Healthy Eating Schemes, Grow Your Own, Food Co-operatives, Involving the Local Community and Measuring Success (evaluation).

A vegetarian buffet lunch was served by Cafe Pushka and people were given the chance to network informally before being split up again for the afternoon workshops which were on Breakfast Clubs, Homeless Projects, Healthy Living Centres, Developing a Community Business and Project Management.

In the final session the delegates were split into mixed groups and asked to consider:

- How could access to food for people on low incomes be improved?
- What needs to be done?
- How can we make this happen?

Whilst the processes and outcomes of each group were quite different, the issues that arose can be summarised as follows:

- Community involvement and participation is essential to tackle the problem of food poverty.
- Access to and continuation of funding is vital for successful community projects.
- Statutory organisations must let community groups take control of their own agenda.
- Inadequate income levels must be addressed through the redistribution of wealth, promotion of savings and provision of a reasonable minimum wage, irrespective of age.
- People need to be empowered through education and skills, including cooking, and allowing people to make informed choices about what they eat through comprehensive labelling.
- Transport needs to be improved so that people are able to reach the shops. Where there is no adequate transport facilities to shops, food delivery services need to be established.
- All sectors, public, voluntary and private, need to work together to improve the quality of life for people on low incomes.
- Community groups and people on low incomes need to be included at all stages, including setting up, managing and making decisions about community projects.

Tim Lang then concluded the day and presented a ten point manifesto for change stressing the importance of building cross-sectoral alliances, listening to the poor, and not leaving it to the government to develop solutions. "In a country as wealthy as ours, we cannot afford to let 10%-20% of our fellow citizen's sink. We can't leave it up to the local community to solve the problem. Solutions must be rooted institutionally. Somewhere, alongside other strategies, some kind of equalisation will have to occur. What we need, as well as helping people into work, is a better welfare system, and increased taxes to take money from the rich and distribute it to the poor".

### ⌘ Evaluation

The day was evaluated using a simple questionnaire which was put in the delegates' packs. Only 13 people returned the questionnaire, but the comments were generally positive. The reasons that people came to the conference were varied including to obtain information and advice about projects and how to set them up, to learn about healthy living centres, to make new contacts, to learn about project evaluation and to find out about *Making Links: a toolkit for local food projects*.

Most people felt that the seminar had been a good opportunity to network, that it was well organised and the time was used constructively, that the speakers and workshops were excellent, that there was a good range of people and projects present and that it was very participative. Some people felt that there wasn't enough time to cover all the issues effectively and network, that it was not practically focused enough and that the venue was not really appropriate.

People seemed generally happy with the speakers and with the workshops, although some felt that there was not enough time to feel confident about carrying out the practical advice given.

### ⌘ Outcomes

The respondents intended to do a range of things as a result of attending the day including:

- maintaining the links just established
- contacting Crisis Fareshare about possibilities in Islington
- following up contacts made, doing more reading and research
- revisiting food projects and drawing up directions for long term plans
- informing colleagues about what is going on at community level
- learning how to grow food and finding others to work with
- buying *Making Links: a toolkit for local food projects*
- learning more about participatory appraisal techniques
- helping develop a healthy living centre in Peckham
- setting up a community restaurant

***For more information or a copy of the local report, contact Victoria Williams at Sustain on 0171 837 1228.***

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## 6) Summary of key themes and recommendations

### 6.1) Linking with national policy initiatives

The term 'food poverty' was seen as being useful in that it implied, not only low income, but also poor quality produce (saver shops, sub-standard goods etc.). Health Action Zones and Healthy Living Centres were seen as playing a very important role in tackling food poverty and supporting community food projects. However, despite the rhetoric, they were still perceived as being 'top down' rather than 'bottom up'. It was agreed that Healthy Living Centres should belong to the community that they are serving and not be imposed from outside if they are to help that community.

In order for HAZs to be more effective in addressing food poverty it was suggested that:

- they provide common resources for food initiatives, such as support staff or training in project development and evaluation;
- retailers be invited to any similar conferences in future;
- they look to support and develop existing community projects rather than starting new ones;
- there is a common effective mechanism for evaluation.

### 6.2) Developing partnerships

As growing, preparing and eating food touches on economic, social and environmental aspects of the community, it was recognised that the different statutory sectors needed to be working in partnership so that:

- the objectives and activities of different the partners could be co-ordinated to make them more effective
- the validity of diverse activities was fully recognised
- there was greater awareness of the wealth of opportunities afforded by community food projects
- there was an holistic approach to tackling food poverty issues.

The fact that partnerships are now part of government's agenda was discussed and the following ideas emerged:

- Building partnerships takes time and can be difficult.
- People can take different roles as long as everyone is involved, especially those marginalised and isolated.
- There is a problem around tackling fears (of losing control and status) within statutory organisations.
- Individuals and community groups may need funding to participate in partnership work.
- It is important to get rid of jargon and find a common language.
- Workers from statutory organisations and professionals should be trained to participate effectively with community groups.

It was agreed that:

- statutory organisations must let community groups take control of their own agendas;

- anyone involved in or interested in being involved in a community food initiative should find out about the Healthy Living Centre bids in their area and try and link with them when applying for funding;
- government initiatives such as Health Action Zones, Healthy Schools and Education Action Zones needed to support projects such as breakfast clubs and cooking clubs as part of a more holistic approach to changing children's eating habits
- Community food initiatives should be set up as part of local Health Improvement Programmes and be funded as part of these partnerships.

### **6.3) Local Networking**

The need to avoid jargon and use appropriate language when talking about community food projects was stressed. It was agreed that local networking was crucial to the success of individual projects and it was felt that local processes should be adapted to support projects rather than developing new ones.

Local networking was seen as important for the following reasons:

- It avoids the isolation of individual projects and can co-ordinate the objectives of different partners.
- Projects can learn from each other and identify examples of good practice.
- It is good to talk and share ideas - this can lead to new areas of work and useful new contacts.
- It is reassuring that there are people around who want to help.

The joint HEA/FPN food and low income database was seen as a good way to help new projects to network with other similar projects in the future. In addition it was felt that:

- smaller projects should be networked to pool resources, e.g. sharing overheads such as storage and transport and collaborating through skills sharing
- local databases of local initiatives would be useful
- there was a need for more meetings between local initiatives
- projects needed better funding to allow the time to network
- there was a need for co-ordinator type roles to cover local food initiatives, but this would have to add value to existing projects
- there should be links to other community development initiatives that create jobs, improve the environment and empower the community e.g. food co-operatives linked to local food producers linked to credit unions.

### **6.4) Community Involvement**

The importance of involving the community in all aspects of the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects was highlighted and the following issues were raised.

- getting community members involved in projects is sometimes hard
- it is difficult to maintain community involvement in the management and development of projects
- there are problems with too heavy reliance on volunteers
- there is a lack of support from statutory groups

- maintaining momentum where there is no key person who can be identified is problematic.

It was agreed that:

- community involvement and participation is essential to tackle the problem of food poverty
- projects should be community-led and have realistic timetables
- food co-operatives (and other community projects) need to be 'tailor-made' with a specific community, as all communities have different needs and wishes
- it is important to be clear about why you are consulting the community on an issue and the extent to which their views will be represented.

### **6.5) Evaluation**

It was generally agreed that evaluation was essential to the long term success of projects and to obtain adequate funding, but that it created many problems for community food initiatives including:

- evaluating projects to meet the requirements of funders rather than projects
- the tendency to focus on reducing disease in the long term, and not on more immediate benefits such as increasing confidence and obtaining skills.

It was agreed that it is important to recognise that:

- the process of working with local people is as important as the outcomes (regardless of the 'success' of the project)
- projects should be accountable to local people
- food projects have value beyond purely nutritional/health benefits
- projects should be evaluated throughout the process and not just at the end
- there is a need for debriefing when projects fail as well as when they succeed
- projects could be evaluated through partnerships with researchers to gain access to research methods, to measure the impact of the initiatives and to ensure continued support.

### **6.6) Funding**

The continuing problem of short term funding and confusing and competing funding channels is an issue that cannot be avoided when discussing community food projects. It was felt that:

- obtaining funding and evaluating projects is time consuming and not usually what people get involved in projects for;
- funding was the main obstacle to breakfast clubs (and other projects) expanding and improving their provision.

It was agreed that:

- access to and continuation of funding is vital for successful community projects;
- initial funding is needed to identify problems with local food initiatives and to find out what the community want;
- there needs to be more emphasis on activities by funders to make sure that the projects they are funding are successful, by visiting them, for example.

## **6.7) Research**

It was felt that more research needed to be done to establish:

- what are the best methods for finding out what the community wants?
- what are the priorities for local food initiatives?
- what are the best ways to initiate projects?
- Targets/indicators that could be developed to monitor change - e.g. green shelf index, healthy food basket index, food access index.





# **Developing Local Networks To Tackle Food Poverty**

A summary report of five seminars organised by The Food Poverty Network in partnership with local food and health workers between January and May 1999.

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