



Real Food Works

Annual Report March 2011

A year of Development

Apart from having our busiest and most varied year to date, we also put in place a number of important developments to support the continued growth of the organisation.

During the early part of the year we benefited greatly from having extra help with delivering our sessions. Firstly from Rebecca Lilly who was on a short placement from Northumbria University and who, apart from helping deliver sessions, did sterling work to produce a book based on recipes we had developed on the cultural cooking course we ran with families at the Hirst Welfare.

Lucy Richardson joined us in June as a trainee on the Future Jobs programme, coincidentally Lucy had attended one of the 'Fired Up!' courses we ran for Northumberland fire service and so was aware of what we did and how we worked. She stayed with us for five months providing vital help with some of our busiest events and having gained work experience and confidence she left to start a part time job.

Through Wansbeck Volunteer Bureau we were able to recruit a number of volunteers who were looking for interesting experiences and were keen to support our work. This took some of the pressure from our staff and allowed a bit more time for 'back office' work and development.

Having 'evolved' as an organisation from a voluntary sector project into a 'not for profit' business, we identified the need to put in place some strategic planning and development and to further this we made contact with Phillip Angier, a consultant with considerable experience in the 'third sector', who was able to access funding to allow him to work with us on strategic development.

This led to identifying some key areas for improvement including management and board development, marketing and staff training and culminated in a staff and board 'away day' facilitated by Social Enterprise Northumberland. We were also able to access marketing support from Go Wansbeck.



In order to strengthen their skills base two staff members undertook training for a PTTLS qualification as this is increasingly being expected for work in schools and further education.

In September we added a new, larger van to our 'fleet' which has significantly streamlined the process of setting up and clearing away sessions.

From The Chair

It is thrilling to see the range of activities undertaken by Real Food Works. I have seen first hand how the enthusiasm of our staff relays itself to participants and witnessed the sudden awareness of how much we can use the microwave to produce **Real Food!**

As an organisation we continue to seek opportunities to spread the word, and taste, of healthy, economical and 'fast food'.

I would like to extend my thanks our staff, board members, partners and funders, without their commitment, enthusiasm and support this valued and important work could not happen.

We could not deliver our Real Food messages without help from a wide range of partners, here are just a few of the 80+ organisations we have worked with this year:

- Sure Start Newcastle East
- Choppington First School
- The Food Chain N.E
- Hexham Selefest
- Fire Service 'Fired Up' Course
- Cramlington Extended Schools
- Powburn Show
- Northumberland Play Rangers
- Age UK
- Morpeth Housing
- N.E England Farmers' Markets
- A Greener Hawick
- Trinity Youth
- Hartlepool Council
- Bedlington Extended schools
- Barnabas safe and sound
- Community space challenge
- Food in Schools
- Eat Gateshead Newcastle
- Bennet Enterprises
- Gallery Youth Project
- Lookwide
- Hirst Welfare
- Groundwork
- Newcastle United Foundation
- Norcare



Cool Food Dudes.

The year started for our cook n' taste demonstrations with a visit to Alnwick farmers' market, the first of many this year for **NEEFM**. The aim was to promote the market and local produce whilst getting over some 'healthier eating' messages. One of the most popular dishes we prepared, which we called 'North Africa meets Northumberland', was a Venison Tagine using ingredients sourced from the market - meat, root vegetables, spices and cooked on the spot on a hob. We went on to demonstrate at ten markets across the region, with our favourite being Hartlepool – with its superb setting on the historic quays.

We worked throughout the year with Northumberland councils 'Food in Schools' coordinator on a project to promote food growing in schools and at the end of the project provided a cooking demonstration and tasters for over 100 pupils and staff attending a celebration event.

We were successful in accessing funding from **The Food Standards Agency** to deliver a series of demonstrations and workshops to older members of the community, in support of their campaign to raise awareness of the risks of Listeria, caused by poor food storage practices, and also to generally promote healthy eating messages. This took us to a range of venues from Bellingham W.I to Segedunum Museum on Tyneside, where we participated in an event organised by **Age UK**.

"I can't believe that I have just cooked that delicious soup in less than 15 minutes - I would expect to be stood at the stove for at least an hour!"

We returned to Alnwick later in the year to work with **The Gallery Youth Project** supporting a consultation event at the playhouse where more than 100 young people turned up, or gave their opinions electronically on a range of issues affecting their lives.

Running throughout the year we were delivering healthy eating demonstrations funded by Northumberland's '**Communities for Health**' fund. These included; **National Playday** events at Prudhoe and Bedlington, a family barbeque at the Learning village at Cramlington, Ashington Community festival and a cultural cooking group in North Seaton.



Cooking's Cool!

Our hands-on cooking workshops have been as popular as ever this year and we have worked with groups of people from 4 to 94 years of age, helping them to see that, as well as being good for your health, developing cooking skills can be creative, economical and fun.

We have augmented our cooking workshops with a new programme: **i-Skills 4 Life** which is aimed at developing independent living skills in young adults. We delivered a number of pilot courses throughout the year working with a range of partners including **Norcare**, who provide services to and support people aged 16 and over who are homeless and socially or economically excluded including veterans, and **Barnabas Safe & Sound**, a supported housing project offering temporary, furnished accommodation with support provided to help young people become more independent. We are working with Norcare to raise further funding to enable us to deliver more courses for their clients and others.

A new experience this year was to deliver 'whole school' hands-on cooking sessions. These were delivered in three schools throughout the year and involved us in working with all of the children in the school over a period of 7-10 days. **Whitehouse First School** in Bedlington was quite a challenge as they wanted the food to have an international theme, with each year group working on a different country! By the end of our time there each child had taken part and had produced some food to eat – everyone was particularly impressed by the Spanish Tortillas produced by the nursery and reception children.

Enterprise was the theme of a course we delivered for **Northumberland Scout's 'Lookwide'** project. We worked on cooking and enterprise skills with a group of teenagers for a number of sessions, culminating in them marketing and providing food to the staff at their college. The facilities which they had to work in were far from ideal but they delivered the food on time and in budget, demonstrating high levels of commitment and resourcefulness.

The funding we secured from the **Food Standards Agency** also supported sessions which we delivered to older people in sheltered housing settings. The aim was to get across some important health messages within the context of our hands-on cooking workshops, with each session ending in an opportunity to 'taste the product'. Although not a specific aim of the programme, the pleasure the participants got from making and sharing food, along with the opportunity to socialise, led one group to decide to continue meeting, as a lunch club, after the end of the course.

Public Events

These were a significant part of our work during the year taking us from the Cumbria in the West to Hartlepool in the East where, at the Tall Ships Festival, we had our biggest audience to date.

One reason for event organisers taking an interest in what we have to offer was our ability to provide a varied package; cook and taste demonstrations, children's cooking workshops and our SmoothieBike and fruit shy activities - fun with a health message. We were invited to the prestigious **Holker Hall** horticultural and food festival to provide children's activities, and over a very exhausting weekend we provided workshops for 150 children, gave away over 600 pieces of fruit on our fruit shy and eager peddlers created more than 500 smoothies on the 'Cool Green Smoothie Machine'.

"It was great to see children's activities which encouraged them to enjoy good, healthy food rather than junk!"



The following weekend we were at work at the **Newcastle 'Eat' Festival** providing a range of activities around our theme of 'Eat a Rainbow' these included workshops making rainbow filled pancakes from flour the children had milled, rainbow fruit smoothies and of course a rainbow of fruit on our fruit shy. We were fortunate to have help from Lucy our trainee and Rebecca a student volunteer and they helped us deliver a varied package of activities to hundreds of participants.

After an outing to Gosforth racecourse to work with The Food Chain N.E, promoting local fresh food at the civil service **'Big Day Out'** and a trip to **Powburn Show** to take part in this very traditional agricultural show, where we were providing our 'Real Food' cook and taste demonstrations and children's activities, we were off to **Hartlepool Tall Ships** festival for our highest profile event. At Hartlepool we were booked to provide cooking demonstrations in the Northumbria Larder Demo kitchen, alongside celebrity chefs Aldo Zilli and Lesley Waters. Rather than aiming to impress the audience with our skills we concentrated on demonstrating simple accessible dishes, which had the audience snapping up our recipes and more than one saying they intended to "buy the ingredients on the way home". The audience, over 800 each day, was very impressed with the number and range of dishes we were able to 'conjure up' using our microwave cookers and we were inundated when we offered tasters at the end of the demonstrations – not something that always happens with the celebrity chefs!



The Cool Green Smoothie Machine!

As a fun activity to make the important link between food and exercise being essential to a healthy lifestyle, the smoothiebike has proved to be a fantastic success. The process of selecting the ingredients provides an opportunity to get over simple nutritional information, the cycling part enables us to talk about the importance of exercise and finally the tasting often converts reluctant fruit eaters into enthusiastic smoothie connoisseurs!

Our enthusiastic smoothie makers have peddled nearly 700 miles in the past year to produce over 8,500 smoothies. We have delivered SmoothieBike sessions right across the region and even extended our work internationally, with events in Scotland!

We worked with Northumberland Council's recycling officer in a number of schools on a smoothie making challenge where, working in teams, the pupils had to produce (and drink!) the maximum number of smoothies in an hour, this was won by King Edwards School on Morpeth who were rewarded with a 'Cooking's Cool!' session for a group of the pupils. We also had a busy day working with the recycling officer at the county show under the **'Love Food Hate Waste'** banner promoting smoothies as a way to use unwanted fruit.

The SmoothieBike was also used by other organisations to raise awareness of a range of other issues, as well as our traditional health messages, at events such as an alternative energy event Blyth on quayside and a series of **Active Travel** events across Tyneside.

Our foray north of the border was to take part in an environmental awareness event organised by **Greener Hawick** and was followed up by the organisers hiring the smoothiebike to deliver sessions in schools using their own staff.

Further evidence of the versatility of the SmoothieBike to deliver a range of messages was; a request from a Tyneside school to work with pupils in promoting **Fair Trade**, using the bike and a heart monitor to promote heart health to pupils studying sport in a school in Morpeth and taking part in an event to promote **Social Enterprises** in the Grainger market in Newcastle on the coldest day in November ever – the hot mulled fruit smoothie was much appreciated!

Impact of our work

In health improvement work it is notoriously difficult to prove the impact of interventions - certainly over a short timescale.

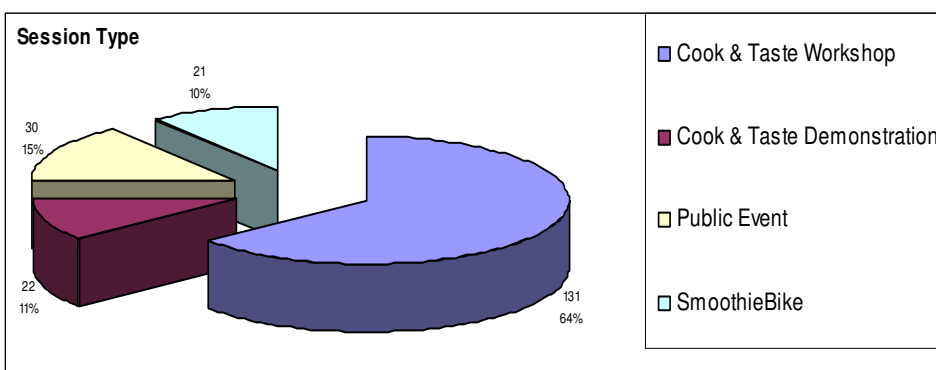
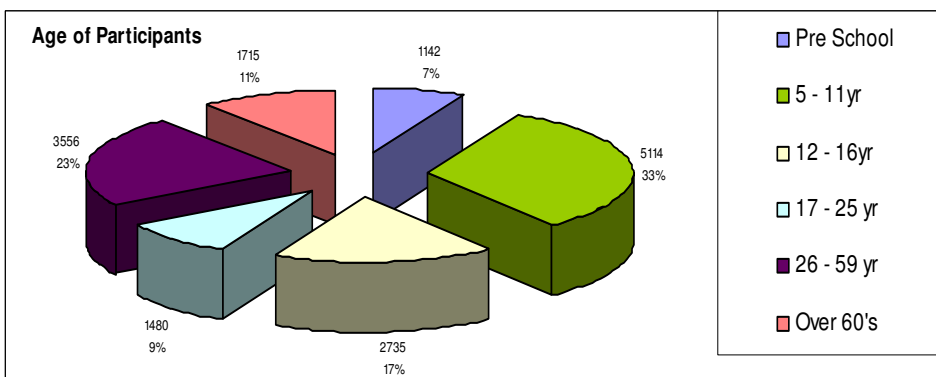
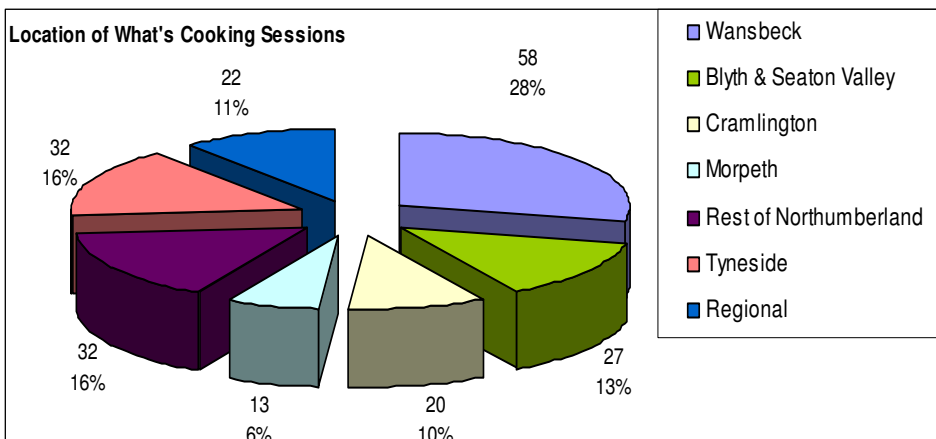
We collect information about the number of people we work with and use feedback and evaluation schemes to try to ascertain the impact of our work.

Throughout 2010-11 we delivered 204 sessions and engaged with over 15,700 individuals - many of these as brief interventions, at an event or demonstration where it is difficult to obtain anything but anecdotal evidence of impact - however we are aware that what feedback we do get supports the evaluation evidence which we collect after a longer engagement.

Feedback from our sessions shows that over 80% of participants:

- Have increased their knowledge of healthy eating
- Have increased confidence in preparing meals from scratch
- Intend to make changes to their diet as the result of working with us
- Will use/recommend our recipes

As an indicator of the usefulness and popularity of our sessions, the retention rate for our courses is over 90% and many participants tell us that they pass on the information and recipes to friends and family.



REAL FOOD WORKS

Cleaswell Hill Healthy Living Centre,
The Square, Guidepost,
Choppington. NE62 5DW

Phone: 01670 827955

Mob: 07951 500258

Fax: 0870 7065716

Email: info@realfoodworks.co.uk

Web: www.realfoodworks.co.uk