

# Community Food Outreach and Communication Lead's Report 2024, and Plans

March 2023 – April 2024

## What is my role?

- Community food and sustainability projects: the majority of my time (23 / 27 hrs a week) is ring-fenced for community food projects.
- Fundraising
- Communications: to raise the profile of the Community Carrot, support engagement with and provide information to its membership and the wider community through managing and maintaining communications relating to the Community Carrot.
- Community engagement: to create and strengthen links between the Community Carrot and the Dunbar community, enabling people to make the most of the services the shop offers, and for the shop to make the most of opportunities to buy and sell locally.
- Partnerships: to work closely with local agencies, schools, businesses, voluntary and community groups around shared aims.
- Community Benefit Society support: to provide day-to-day support to the Board of the Community Carrot and the shop manager covering the work above.

## Cooking Skills

**196 people have been involved in food skills projects since the last AGM.**

### Cook Club

This currently takes place at Dunbar Primary School, after school on Tuesdays. It's a five-week course for eight children at a time, teaching basic cooking skills. So far 69 children have attended the course, and many report that they are cooking more at home and eating a wider range of fresh foods. I repeatedly have children asking to come back and do the course again, even though they'd be cooking the same things as last time. I will soon be starting a skills-building club for children who have done Cook Club, more on this below.

"Just wanted to say how fulfilled R was after yesterday...he was buzzing for hours afterwards. Please let me know if you are planning to run this club outwith the school programme. I've honestly never seen him so excited about learning / doing anything as he was last night."

**KidsFoodJourney** five-week course at West Barns Primary School.

'Life-changing'

"Just wanted to say what a MASSIVE hit your course today was! I have had kids and parents alike absolutely raving about it. Apparently crispy kale is the best thing ever!!"

**Holiday cooking:** 4 kids' summer fire cooking sessions at The Ridge's Backlands community garden and a Countess After School Club holiday pizza session.

**Apple Pie & Soup day** at Empire Close, using apples from The Backlands' amazing tree.

**Crunchy Cook bags:** these are meal kit bags that come with a step-by-step how-to-make video, which we give weekly to The Ridge's Recovery Café. They can be purchased by anyone, and customers can also donate towards a free community bag: we then give vouchers for these to our community partners to distribute, and to cooking class attendees. I've handed out 58 vouchers since the last AGM: a huge thank you to our generous customers for donating so many bags!

### **Sunny Soups**

This food waste programme is generously supported by Dunbar Parish Church, and uses surplus ingredients to make nutritious food which is then given away for free. There is a freezer at Dunbar Foodshare from which soup is offered to those who come to the weekly social café. I also take soup weekly to Dunbar Day Centre and to The Ridge's Recovery Cafe.

Since the last AGM we have used 1065 kg of surplus ingredients in Sunny Soups, representing 2,663 portions of soup, or 13,905 portions of food made since the Sunny Soups programme began. We have developed relationships with local growers for surplus produce year-round: we're really grateful to Phantassie Organics for weekly donations.

### **Sunny's Kitchen**

This weekly community meal launched in June 2021: some people come along to help cook, some to eat, some for both. We've had 20 volunteers in the last year (not including everyone who helps clear up!), and around 60 guests, with many folk coming regularly. We welcome around 30 attendees each week, and we use as much surplus produce in our meals as possible.

It was held at the Bleachingfield Centre until December, when we expected to move into a new venue. The build on that is taking longer than projected, however, so we are currently operating a 'mini Sunny's Kitchen' at Dunbar Day Centre. This serves soup made in Sunny Soups with good quality bread (currently using surplus from Dunbar Bakery – thank you for the donation – and from the Scottish Festival of Real Bread), cheese and cake. A big thank you to volunteer Kirsten Maguire for setting this up: we were going to have to pause the project between January – March and she put this in place to prevent that. This is particularly helpful as the 'between venues' period is going to be longer than expected – we now expect to move into the new venue in June.

We use surplus produce from FareShare, the Crunchy and other outlets including linking with Dunbar FoodShare on items they can't use. This year we've used 430kg surplus ingredients, and so far we've used 1,288kg of surplus in Sunny's Kitchen, both that which is used in the meals and extra fresh produce that we regularly give away.

### **Sustainability**

Much of my sustainability work this year has focused on cutting local food waste. In total, my food projects have diverted 1.5 tonnes of ingredients from being thrown away since the last AGM. This produce is all either made into nutritious food that is given away for free, given to group participants or dropped off to Dunbar Foodshare or The Ridge to offer out to clients, which I do on a regular basis when I have more than we can use. I also use our communications platforms to let people know

about the ways in which shopping at the Crunchy helps them increase the sustainability of their weekly shop, from plastic reduction to local food chains.

### **Communications**

Keeping the Crunchy's customers and supporters informed about what's happening in the shop and with my outreach work is an important part of my job. I run the Facebook and Instagram pages and compile the newsletter.

My aim is to spread the word about what makes the Crunchy different, give reasons why people should shop with us, champion small independent business and highlight stock as it comes in. I try to highlight our suppliers, our short supply chains, ethical sourcing policies and the personal touch offered by shopping in a community business. Our social media pages help us create and maintain links with other local businesses and organisations and widen our customer base. They help improve our bottom line by showcasing our products and encouraging more people to shop at the Crunchy.

### **Partners Old & New**

Without the support of The Ridge, Dunbar FoodShare, the Bleachingfield Community Centre, Dunbar Parish Church, our schools and after-school clubs, local volunteers and others, I couldn't run our programmes.

I'm really grateful to Dunbar Primary School for giving us free weekly use of a room for Cook Club, which will now be twice weekly for a couple of months when we introduce the new club.

### **Funding and Support Thanks**

#### **The National Lottery Community Fund**

In May 2021 we received a National Lottery award of £91,800 from The National Lottery Community Fund to fund three years' work on community food and sustainability projects, including Sunny Soups, weekly cooking lessons and Sunny's Kitchen, a weekly community meal. We also received £5,836 in cost-of-living uplifts to this grant. This funding is coming to an end in May, and I am delighted to have been awarded a two-year extension of £70,500 to continue funding Sunny Soups, Sunny's Kitchen and a new children's cooking club 'Cook Your Tea'.

#### **Investing in Communities Fund**

A huge thank you to The Ridge for coordinating the application and administration of this community bid and the delivery of Dunbar Skills Partnership. We were awarded £26,020 to fund two years of Cook Club, five children's holiday cooking sessions, and some cooking kit.

#### **Donation £150**

We received a generous donation from a couple (who wish to remain anonymous) towards Sunny's Kitchen ingredients, which came at the perfect time to help us pay for the mini Sunny's Kitchen – for a while this was an extra project not budgeted for, so it was really useful.

**Sunny Soups** has received funding from:

- Project partner Dunbar Parish Church: since 2018 we have been granted the generous use of the church hall and kitchen for free each week.
- Vegware have sent us a free monthly supply of compostable soup pots since 2018, slashing our single-use plastic waste.

## Plans

**Cook Your Tea** club, which started on the 17<sup>th</sup>, was set up after listening to the feedback from children who have taken part in Cook Club and from their parents. When the current Cook Club courses are advertised they fill up overnight, and children are keen to continue learning after the five sessions are over. This club will be a child-led skills-building space, where children continue to learn how to make a wide variety of food and hopefully continue to widen their taste horizons at the same time. The children set the menu and will help pick seasonal produce from the Backlands garden when we move into that space. I will invite parents along to some sessions so they can see their children cooking and engaging with the process and ingredients. I will offer volunteer opportunities for young people or those looking to gain experience working with children by having a volunteer or two along each week to support the club.

I'll be continuing with **Sunny Soups** on a weekly basis. I plan to run more **summer kids' cooking sessions**, hopefully outdoors, through the holidays, and will continue to run weekly term-time **Cook Club** sessions.

**Sunny's Kitchen** will be taken on by a new community cook, who we will be recruiting over the next few weeks. This will free up enough time for me to start Cook Your Tea club.

Over the last year or so I have been helping design The Ridge's kitchen at Black Bull Close, with the view to moving my activities into that space when it is complete (hopefully end of May or early June).