

READY HEALTHY EAT

A partnership to develop great ready meals
for people that need them



REAL
FARMING
TRUST



NOW



Cyrenians



Research Centre
Agroecology, Water
and Resilience

What we achieved in 2020–2021

We served

500,000 MEALS

which were delicious and nutritious
to people that need them



We used **200 TONNES OF
SURPLUS FOOD**



from shops, farms, restaurants
and wholesalers

50 TRAINEES

learnt catering skills and are
on their way to employment



What we believe

Everyone should have
access to a good
nutritious diet, every day.

Food should come with
care, dignity and
kindness.

Given the chance,
communities do want to
help and work together.

Food systems should be
part of a thriving
biosphere. That means
agroecological farming
and no food wasted.

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Who needs ready meals?

Franco is an asylum seeker who came to the project with housing problems. He hadn't had a meal for several days and didn't have a kitchen. He loves cooking and volunteered to help. He made friends and went on to the catering training, where he excelled and improved his English. He has a job interview in a café.



Eva was ready for hospital discharge but not steady on her feet and unable to cook for a few weeks. She wanted to go home. Meal deliveries helped her through this patch and she was pleased to have a daily visitor.

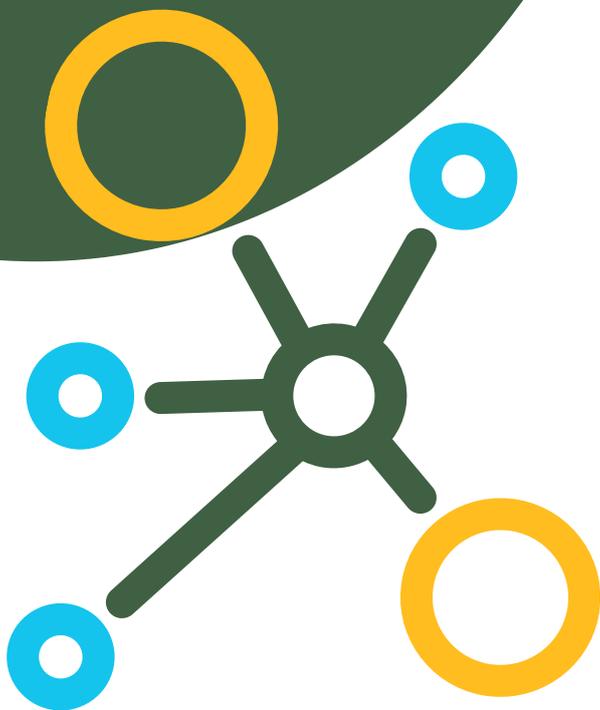


Mary has learning difficulties. She is a single mum with three children. She often goes to the chip shop. Recently the family have been trying healthy ready meals and Mary has been joining in with online cooking groups with her friends, learning to cook some cheap healthy suppers. She is pleased with what she can do.

Emma lost her job during Covid. She was used to a comfortable lifestyle. She found the low level of income provided by benefits very shocking. She was ashamed to ask for help but hadn't eaten for several days when she came to the project and was feeling stressed and isolated. She was warmly received by the volunteers and went on to volunteer herself. She enjoys being part of a friendly team. She no longer needs ready meals.

READY HEALTHY EAT

- Using data
- Listening
- Innovating
- Being kind
- Putting services in the hands of people that use them
- Building community



How we work together

NOW group are helping adults with learning difficulties to keep and review photo diaries of what they eat at home. This will help ensure that meals provided are not only nutritionally good but complement other food choices.

Beneficiaries and volunteer drivers told **Cyrenians** that social contact was important as well as the food delivery. They changed delivery routes so that drivers have fewer drops and more time to chat.

People who come for meals at the **Hornbeam Centre** are welcome to engage in the running and decision-making. Some go on to become volunteers and trainees, and contribute to a lively thoughtful community.

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership are working with gluts of surplus food which arrive in unpredictable quantities and need to be used quickly. They dehydrate fruit and vegetables and include them in meal packs with other ingredients. Households without a fridge can store these more easily.

Poverty must be addressed

The main cause of food insecurity is poverty. There are large numbers of people experiencing food insecurity. Many of these are under the radar. Some households are in desperate situations.

The projects are agile and collaborative

The projects improved their communities by enabling people to work with each other as volunteers. During Covid, volunteers gained new perspectives on their own neighbourhoods and valued their experience. Volunteers' wellbeing was improved by involvement with the project. There is a great deal of positive good will ready to be unleashed by community action.

Community groups are effective

Good voluntary sector groups can be better than business or government at responding to community need. Community groups can be flexible, directed by community need, welcoming, accessible to volunteers and beneficiaries and co-operate with other organisations. They often have ongoing relationships with vulnerable people and communities. During Covid, they scaled up and addressed food and social needs quickly.

Networks are best

Food projects that collaborate in networks bring the best results. The best projects engaged households, farms, distributors, hospitality businesses, other community groups, support agencies, wholesalers and processors.

People make better food choices

Community projects are well placed to change people's long term food choices towards a healthier diet including 'hard to reach' groups. Community projects that listen and make relationships help people to improve their diets by supporting them to try new things, understand healthy eating, learn to cook, change attitudes, make networks and change long term habits.

High quality local food is available

There is potential for food security projects to use high quality food from local ecological farms, for example by arranging 'Pay it Forward' or cross subsidy schemes. This potential is largely unmet.

Good quality ready meals are possible

It is possible to produce ready meals that are affordable, delicious, enjoyed by beneficiaries and nutritionally good. Nobody should have to survive on poor quality food.

A small investment can have a big impact

Community groups do need financial investment but often provide very good value for money. They effectively address hunger as well as social care, community cohesion and social capital. A small investment can bring a large impact.

People feel more connected

People value the 'more than food' support that comes with a food parcel, such as a respectful conversation, appropriate recipes and children's activities. Many people experiencing food insecurity face mental health challenges. They value the kindness and contact that community food projects bring along with the food.



Dignity matters, particularly at times of stress and need. It is difficult to ask for help when you most need it. Long term relationships and services matter and require long term stable funding.

We're saving food from landfill

Community projects are efficient at using large volumes of food that could otherwise be wasted to create delicious, nutritious meals - but a big challenge is that the quality and variety of surplus food can be limited.

Trainees are getting catering jobs

With social support and training, some people can go on to become employed as enthusiastic and competent chefs. Others become regular volunteers.

What people are saying



"Can't put into words what a burden has been lifted from me, I don't know what I would have done without this."

"It's been a life-saver to be able to volunteer in these times. I've always enjoyed the feeling of being able to contribute to the well-being in the community through volunteering but it feels especially important now."

"My boy is autistic so limited on what he can eat but is loving this and eating it all up. He sees the cycle volunteer as our friend, and wanted to meet him today. My boy never wants to meet anyone new."

"It made us feel really looked after, so much that it often made us cry."

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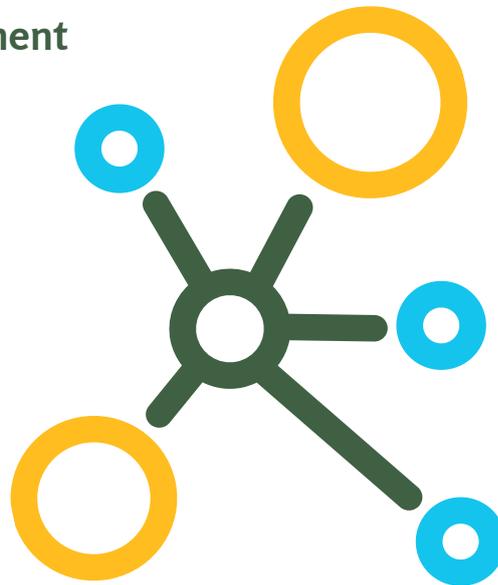


NOW

Experts in social care and social enterprise, supporting adults with learning difficulties and autism in Belfast. Providing specialist food training to create employment opportunities.

Cyrenians

Working with homeless people in Edinburgh, who are welcomed into training kitchens. Something to eat and someone to eat it with.



Research Centre
Agroecology, Water
and Resilience

Driving innovative transdisciplinary research on the understanding and development of resilient food and water systems.



Working in solidarity with communities in Walthamstow. Sister project to an organic vegetable growers co-op. Supporting mutual aid from a welcoming community café, supplied with rescued food.

To find out more:
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