Growing in Confidence – A Community Food Project

Health Promotion and Public Health Departments
HSE West, Department of Food and Agriculture in partnership with The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co Leitrim

Community Food Project

- Project now in its fourth year
- We have 6 Gardens across the North West
- Supported by HSE West, Department of Food and Agriculture
Background

- Since 2004, the Health Promotion Department of HSE West in partnership with the Organic Centre, Co Leitrim has supported active involvement to change patterns of food intake through a community food and gardening initiative.
- In 2007, the Department of Food and Agriculture match funded the HSE contribution.

Glor Na Mara, Bundoran
Project outline

- Six sites
  - 3 Urban based in Sligo/Donegal
  - 3 Rural based in Sligo/Leitrim
- Participants (approx 12 each site) recruited through variety of community and statutory contacts/groups. Particularly focused towards those managing on tight budget
- Participants have included clients of disability services and asylum seekers

Project outline

- Hands-on experience with professional gardener
  - March – October
  - Sessions 2-3 hours once a week
  - Theory discussions and handouts included
  - Finish with harvest event / celebration
- Cookery classes provided by Eat Well Be Well tutors on 2 occasions throughout the course
- Participants get to harvest, take home, and use the produce that they help grow
- Project was again replicated successfully in 2007
- Project co-ordinated by multi-sectoral Steering group
Aims

- To increase knowledge, awareness and skills among target groups in relation to fruit and vegetable production, preparation and consumption and to promote positive health and well-being
- Linked to recommendations of Cardiovascular Disease strategy, Obesity Taskforce report and the National Health Strategy
Objectives

- Improve participants' knowledge and skills in vegetable and fruit growing
- Enhance participants' skills in preparing and cooking fruit and vegetables
- Increase participants' consumption of fruit and vegetables
- Increase participants' knowledge of the nutritional value of fruit and vegetables
- Develop more positive attitudes towards consumption of fruit and vegetables
- Provide opportunities for physical activity outdoors
- Provide opportunities for positive social interaction and development
Examples of Community Food Initiatives

- Community Gardens
- Training / Education programmes
- Food Co-ops
- Allotments
- Community Cafes
- School Initiatives
- Community Kitchens
Impact of diet on health

- Poor diet – risk factor for malnutrition, coronary health disease, cancer and diabetes
- Modern malnutrition is combination of obesity and imbalance of nutrients
- Poor diet is related to 30% of life years lost in early death and disability (WHO, 2002)
Food Poverty

- ‘Inability to have an adequate and nutritious diet due to issues of affordability of and access to food’ (Dowler, 1998)
At risk groups

- Low income households
- Lone parents
- Children and young people
- Older People
- Disabled People
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Ethnic groups
- Homeless communities
- Travellers

Benefits of fruit and vegetables

- Reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke and some cancers
- Increasing fruit and veg is 2nd most important cancer prevention strategy, after reducing smoking
- Can help reduce blood pressure
- Help achieve other dietary goals including increasing fibre intake, reducing fat intake, aiding weight management and substituting for high sugar foods
Benefits of Community Food Projects

- Environmental – less waste, reduced food transportation
- Economic
- Community Development - regeneration
- Educational
- Health – physical activity, nutrition, mental health

Community Food Project

- HSE Funding confirmed for 2008
- Waiting List for New Gardens in 2008
- How to Guide
- Local Planet