



Evaluation of the ‘Get Cooking!’ pilot courses held in the Rhondda area

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Executive Summary

This report contains the results of an evaluation of a pilot of 'Get Cooking!' courses run with four groups of young people in four different locations. The details of the four groups are contained within Appendix 1. The pilot courses ran during the period November 2002 and March 2003. Information was collected about the 'Get Cooking!' course from the leaders and the young people for each of the six sessions and for the course as a whole.

1. Introduction and Background

The response to the 'Get Cooking!' course was very positive from all those taking part in this pilot. And although the numbers involved in the course were small, it is still possible to draw a number of recommendations because of the consistency of the responses.

The following recommendations are made in the report:

- **Ways of creating more opportunities for young people to take part in a 'Get Cooking!' course should be explored along possible funding avenues and partnership working to enable this to happen.**
- Consideration should be given to how the 'Get Cooking!' could involve the families and other community members whilst young people at a youth group are doing the cookery sessions. Ways should be explored so that the cooking skills and health and hygiene knowledge gained is both developed and reinforced in the home and so hopefully maintained well beyond the life of the course.
- Consideration should be given to providing more support materials. These are needed to back up the information provided in the recipe booklet and trainer's guide. This would benefit both participants and less experienced trainers. It would ensure that healthy eating and food hygiene messages were reinforced and provide activities for those parts of the session when the group are waiting for food to cook. This could involve developing new materials or could involve sourcing materials that are already available
- A wider range of recipes should be developed so that trainers could select a menu for a session with their group beyond the recipes currently in the 'Get Cooking!' materials, whilst still preparing healthy, good value meals.
- Consideration should be given to placing more emphasis on the development of budgeting skills during the course and providing support materials to assist trainers with this.

The 'Get Cooking!' cookery course was developed in the Rhondda during 1994 by Gilli Davies and Susan Lloyd. Since then has been used by both adults and young people. The aim of 'Get Cooking!' is primarily for the young people taking part to enjoy and learn about cooking. The course consists of six sessions with recipes for savoury and sweet dishes given for five of these weeks and the opportunity for the participants to devise their own menu for the final week.

The intention is that by the end of the course, the young people who have attended will:

- Feel more motivated about cooking for themselves and friends
- Understand and have applied some basic principles about healthy eating and food hygiene
- Have enjoyed the cooking
- Have enjoyed eating the food that they prepared
- Have developed basic food skills
- Have learnt budgeting and food shopping tips

The emphasis is on practical skills learnt in a fun environment.

2. Methodology

2.1 Youth Groups Profile

The four youth groups to take part in the 'Get Cooking!' pilot were identified for the Food Standards Agency Wales by the Wales Youth Agency. The 'Get Cooking!' pilot courses each ran for six weeks during the period November 2002 to the end of February 2003.

The groups were drawn from the following existing projects

- Ferndale Project: a youth partnership programme with young people at risk of disengagement from mainstream education. Core curriculum subjects are taught but outside a school setting. The group comprised both girls and boys aged to 16 years. Five individuals completed the 'Get Cooking!' course, which was run at Glynornel Environmental Centre.
- Viva Project: an integration project with young people aged between 14 and 25 years with the majority having some degree of learning disability. There was a group of 7 boys and girls who took part in the pilot course, which was run at Treherbert Youth Centre
- Books and Babies: a project working with teenage mothers and expectant teenage mums, aged 15 years plus. As would be expected the number of individuals able to attend each session varied. Four individuals completed the course, which was held at the Barnado's Family Centre, Llwynypia. Two other girls were able to attend two of the sessions at the start of the course.
- Rhydywaun Youth Group: a youth club run regularly twice a week for young people aged 14 to 18 years. Held at the youth centre in the village of Rhydywaun. A total of four girls and one boy completed the 'Get Cooking!' course

2.2 Purpose of the Evaluation

During 2002, the Food Standard Agency Wales undertook a revision of the 'Get Cooking!' trainers' guide and student booklet. This was done taking into account comments made by young people during the evaluation of the original pack about having recipes that were in line with their eating habits. The revision also took account of government dietary guidelines and food safety messages.

The revised materials were then piloted within four established youth groups in the Rhondda area, identified with the assistance of the Wales Youth Agency.

The purpose was to obtain information on:

- Young people's views on the sessions
- Young people's attendance at sessions
- Changes in confidence to cook
- Changes in knowledge regarding healthy eating
- Future intentions to cook
- Any further assistance that might be needed
- Trainers' views on the sessions
- Suggestions for improvements to the 'Get Cooking!' course

The four courses were each run for six weeks during the period November 2002 to March 2003

A qualitative research approach was adopted to undertake the evaluation. There were three strands to evaluating the 'Get Cooking!' pilot course and for each of these an evaluation tool was developed. A copy of each of these is contained within Appendix 1.

2.3 Feedback from the 'Get Cooking!' trainers

A structured questionnaire was developed to obtain feedback from the trainers running the 'Get Cooking!' courses. Telephone interviews lasting up to an hour were undertaken with the five trainers involved, all of whom were employed already within the Youth Service.

Once the final session had been completed, the 'Get Cooking!' trainers were contacted as prearranged and interviewed. One of the courses was run by two trainers and so both were interviewed. The questionnaire is contained within Appendix 2.

The information obtained from the 'Get Cooking!' trainers consisted of:

Contact details, experience of working with young people, impressions of appropriateness of format, content, timing and siting of courses, effects of attending course on young peoples' skills and confidence, attendance at sessions, improvements overall that might be made to the course, trainers confidence in running sessions and support needed.

2.4 Feedback on the 'Get Cooking!' course format and materials

An observation questionnaire was developed for use by the trainers after each of the six sessions. The questionnaire contained questions to enable the trainer to reflect on the content and format of each session as each was completed. This was to ensure that comments were captured and not lost as the course proceeded. The questionnaire also contained a series of prompts for the trainer to use as discussion points with the young people as the group sat together at the end of the session and ate the food that had been prepared during that session. The trainers were asked to record the response of the young people in terms of motivation, enthusiasm and evidence that they are taking in the healthy eating and food hygiene messages.

The researcher also attended two of the sessions – with two different groups- to get a feel first hand of how the groups were responding to the 'Get Cooking!' course.

2.5 Feedback from the young people taking part in the pilot courses

An evaluation sheet was designed for the participants to complete once the six sessions of the course had been completed. The groups involved in the pilot were all well established and meeting on a weekly basis

It was originally intended to attend the final session of each of the 4 'Get Cooking!' courses to conduct semi structured interviews to seek the views of the young people. However this was altered due to the small size of the groups and a questionnaire was designed for the young people to complete.. It was anticipated prior to the evaluation that there would be four groups each with ten young people. In practice the groups were smaller due to the nature of the premises, the level of commitment of the young people or to the personal circumstances of the group members. The questionnaire is contained within Appendix 1.

The information obtained consisted of:

Attendance at sessions, understanding of the information provided on cooking and healthy eating, enjoyment of the sessions, how far their ability and confidence to cook has been increased, whether they will cook more often at home in future and what type of meals they might prepare, what further assistance they might need to support their future cooking, any suggestions for

improving the sessions, whether they would recommend the course to others, how others might get involved in courses

3. Results

3.1 Feedback From the 'Get Cooking!' Trainers

3.1.1. Running the 'Get Cooking!' course

All of the five trainers interviewed enjoyed running the 'Get Cooking!' course with their youth groups. One commented on the problem of only having a two-hour session at the youth club, which meant the young people and the trainer having to shop in their own time.

3.1.2. Trainers' previous experience of working with young people

All the trainers were experienced youth workers, with between 2 and 14 years experience working in youth groups and community projects. Some were qualified youth workers, whilst others worked as a supervisor at their youth group.

3.1.3. Cooking sessions with young people

The experience reported of doing cooking sessions with young people varied very widely. For two of the trainers, the 'Get Cooking!' course was the first time that they had been involved in cookery sessions with young people.

Another trainer commented:

“I've only done bits and pieces, as suggested by the young people in the group”

The others had regularly run cooking sessions.

3.1.4. Training in cooking or food preparation skills, health eating or food hygiene

Four of the trainers reported that they held the basic food-handling certificate. Only one held a recognised cooking qualification – City & Guilds in cookery. But there was a feeling that they had the necessary skills and knowledge because of their experience – one had run their own catering business, whilst others felt their personal situation equipped them well. As one trainer said:

“I have a family!”

And thus all the trainers felt that their own cooking skills and knowledge were used on a daily basis.

3.1.5. First impressions of the 'Get Cooking!' materials- the trainers guide and the recipe booklet

The first impressions of the 'Get Cooking!' trainers' guide and participant's recipe booklet were overwhelmingly positive. The format was felt to be good for use with groups and the language used

was clear and appropriate. One trainer had used the recipes with her own young family. A typical comment about the participant's recipe booklet was:

"I thought it was straightforward and easy to follow"

Another said:

"The layout was easy to understand"

One trainer had not seen the trainers guide but the others who had, felt it was very good and easy to follow with groups.

3.1.6. Confidence in using the 'Get Cooking!' materials before running the sessions

Out of the five trainers, three reported that they felt very confident about using the materials before they used them with their groups. All of these had had considerable experience of running cooking sessions with young people. One commented:

"I knew I could cook all the recipes in the booklet"

Another said:

"I have lots of experience of cooking with groups"

One of other trainers reported feeling 'fairly confident'

"Even though this was the first time I had worked with this group"

The trainer who was unsure about using the materials with their group had been a youth worker for less than three years. She reported that she gained confidence once the course started because the group was very committed.

3.1.7. Concerns about using the 'Get Cooking!' materials

There were varied concerns about using the 'Get Cooking!' materials with the groups of young people but none were major ones and were concerns about the group itself or the youth group facilities rather than the materials.

These were as follows:

- The ability level of the group and whether they could use the booklet themselves
- How some of the recipes would be received by the group
- Only a small group being able to take part because of the small kitchen at the centre
- The length of the session and the cooking time required for some of the recipes

One trainer commented that she had 'no concerns because of the recipes being straightforward and the kitchen at the centre being fully equipped and homely'.

3.1.8. The healthy eating and food hygiene information in the 'Get Cooking!' materials

All the trainers felt that the materials put across well healthy eating and food hygiene messages. The trainers used their experience to reinforce the information as the course went along and used the following:

- Additional handouts on personal hygiene and kitchen cleanliness
- A questions section on the messages from the previous course session
- Working through the booklet with the group before starting the course

One trainer also commented that the material put the messages across well but:

“Our kids didn’t necessarily pick them up”

There may be a need to adapt the material to suit groups of young people with learning disabilities.

3.1.9. How far the groups identified the healthy eating and hygiene messages

This links with the comments made to the previous question. There was a need for constant reinforcement of the messages throughout the course. Three groups were felt to have picked up on the messages.

One trainer commented:

“The group got the messages towards the end of the course. They were aware of healthy eating and aware of the rest of the messages but not all the time and had to reminded”

Another reported:

“ They just go by how it tastes! They have limited understanding of these kind of messages”

3.1.10. Information about what was expected of the trainers in running the course

A pre-course meeting was held for the trainers to work through the material and to identify the different strands of the evaluation. All the trainers answered that they felt that they had sufficient information provided before they began working with their groups on the ‘Get Cooking!’ course material.

A typical comment was:

“We were well briefed. I went to the initial trainers’ meeting”

3.1.11. Training to run future ‘Get Cooking!’ courses

All of the trainers felt that the training provided had been sufficient for them to undertake the ‘Get Cooking!’ course. There were some comments about the degree of experience that a trainer would bring to the course. Individuals who did not themselves cook regularly or might not have any past training might be less confident. It would therefore be useful to ask what degree of cooking skill an individual possessed before undertaking the course. It was suggested that more opportunities to try out the recipes would be useful. Also it was again commented that having more backup information and leaflets would be useful. This had already been suggested for provision to the young people but could also be valuable for trainers who were less experienced.

One suggestions was:

“More practical demonstrations at the start of the course”

Another felt that that there should be training around:

“Maybe about making sure that hygiene levels are right and there’s the right equipment available”

3.1.12. Other support that would be helpful for trainers to run this course

There was only one suggestion made and that was putting trainers in touch with some one who has wide experience of cooking and food preparation skills. This would provide a point of reference but it is worth emphasising that this was not seen as a particular issue. It was felt that most youth workers would feel able to undertake running the course

3.1.13. Attendance across the 6 sessions

Attendance showed a different pattern in each of the groups. For one group there was wide variation. The trainer commented:

“Sometimes they did not turn up because they didn’t like what was being cooked”

This relates to having a wider range of recipes available.

Another said:

“There was no dropout because we collect our kids”

3.1.14. Issues around the timing of the course

The comments around timing reflected the length of time needed to prepare particular recipes, so there were a number of comments such as:

“Time was too short. It was a bit of a rush to get some recipes cooked”

This is an issue worth considering by anyone planning to run a ‘Get Cooking!’ course with their group. As that trainer went on to say, some groups are open for longer than others – her group ran just for two hours. There are financial implications about any group wishing to open longer in terms of paying youth workers.

There was also one comment:

“Some recipes needed less preparation therefore they were hanging around waiting”

Which links back to the availability of other information and activities to use with groups.

3.1.15. Appropriateness of the format of the sessions

All the trainers thought that the format of the sessions was fine, just that some sessions might need to be longer. The trainers reported that they planned a cooking session at one youth group session ready to cook at the next meeting.

3.1.16. Any suggested changes to the content or format of the course or sessions

Most of the changes suggested for sessions focussed on the time available to cook and the selection of recipes. One trainer suggested:

“Maybe need a little longer to do the theory to reinforce the message that they got from the practical work”

Another commented:

“A greater selection of recipes for the young people to choose but couldn’t fault the current recipes included”

3.1.17. Any sessions that were particularly liked or disliked

There were some sessions that were more popular than others. The trainers simple chose other recipes. The only item that was not liked by any group was the fish pie. Opinion about the other recipes was mixed and was not problematic. All the trainers commented that this was easily solved by the earlier suggestion of having several options for each session.

3.1.18. Comments on the venues in which the Courses were run

This is an important issue, particularly if the chance to run a ‘Get Cooking!’ course is to be offered more widely. The facilities available to the four pilot groups varied quite markedly. Only one trainer reported that the kitchen they used to run the course was good and well equipped. Two others commented that whilst the kitchens they used were a reasonable size, there was inadequate cooking equipment availability. One trainer reported that:

“I have to take what we need every week from home”

Another said that:

“Even though it was big it only had one cooker and lacked sharp knives and basic things”

For the others, the size of the kitchen within the youth centre was an issue. The small amount of space within the kitchen limited the number of young people who could take up the opportunity offered by the ‘Get Cooking!’ course. One trainer commented that it would:

“Not be a problem if we could use school cookery facilities”

This is an idea that would be worth exploring and although there would be a number of hurdles to overcome, it might be possible to do in some locations.

3.1.19. Overall impression of the ‘Get Cooking!’ course

The overall impression of the course was very positive from all of the trainers. The course was felt to be easily accessible and to enthuse the young people. The materials were felt to be well laid out and the recipes were easy to follow even for those without cooking experience. The hope was expressed by some of the trainers that the course could be repeated for other groups within their youth centre.

3.1.20. Enthusiasm of the young people taking part in the course

The levels of enthusiasm amongst the young people varied. One trainer reported that her group only became motivated when they realised that they would be doing the cooking themselves. Another group were reported to be enthusiastic from the outset.

One trainer said:

“We pushed two into it. They said that they ‘couldn’t cook, do toast or do nothing’. But they did really well”

3.1.21. Any change during the duration of the course

It was reported by the trainers that enthusiasm was maintained during the course for two groups and in the other groups it increased. As one trainer reported:

“They were always enthusiastic and then motivated other girls who joined the group”

Another commented that the course provoked considerable interest within the youth centre once it had started:

“The rest of the group were then so nosy that they wanted to come as well”

This contrasted with before the course began when the leaders had to persuade some individuals to take part so that they had a reasonable size group.

3.1.22. Attitude to cooking at the start of the course

There were varied attitudes to cooking amongst the young people who took part, which appears to reflect their experience of cooking. Those who had taken part in course before appeared to be most interested. The comments from the trainers ranged from:

“Good, quite positive, wanted to get on”

To: they started as ‘I can’t do’ and became ‘Shall I do this now?’

Which the trainers were really pleased with and thought was due to the easy to follow recipes and materials.

3.1.23. Levels of knowledge around healthy eating and food hygiene at the start of the course

The levels of knowledge amongst the young people varied according to whether they had much experience of cooking previously. The trainers reported levels from “practically nothing” to “good”. It was felt that levels of knowledge had increased during the course. One trainer said:

“More aware at the end than when starting off. Hygiene became more automatic”

One also acknowledged that they had to:

“Continually reinforce”

Another commented that the levels of knowledge were:

“Low but not untypical of the area they live in, so we need to extend this course into the families as well and get them thinking about alternative ways of healthy eating”

3.1.24. Levels of knowledge were around healthy eating and food hygiene at the end of the course

With the exception of one group, it was felt that doing the ‘Get Cooking!’ had increased the young people’s knowledge of healthy eating and food hygiene. One trainer reported:

“Their knowledge levels had gone up a lot by the end of the course. They started reading food labels, noticing things like fat content and choosing lower fat alternatives”

Another agreed but felt that:

“Needed a longer course. They were just getting into it at six weeks- need ten weeks to reiterate and affirm message”

This suggestion would clearly have financial implications, for example in funding the ingredients. Possibly the earlier suggestions for more support material would address this issue, although there would also be a cost implication.

The trainer who felt that there was no particular change in knowledge levels put this down to the nature of the young people making up the group rather than the ‘Get Cooking!’ course.

3.1.25. Changes in current cooking patterns or future intentions to cook

From the trainers’ feedback it is apparent that the ‘Get Cooking!’ course had motivated the young people in the groups to try out more cookery and different recipes. One trainer acknowledged that her group would only be able to cook in future if support was available. Other trainers reported that their group members took the recipes home and had made certain of the recipes at home:

“Some had cooked at home. We discussed what their mums cooked at home and how you could do a healthier version of it to make it more personal to them”

One trainer commented that her group was now not afraid to “have a go”. Another reported that:

“They want me to bring in my own cook books to try out different recipes”

3.1.26. The course and any effect on the young people’s confidence and skills

The course was seen as having a positive effect on both the confidence and skill level of the young people taking part, as this series of comments from the trainers shows:

“Their skills increased- their pastry was fabulous! They were very proud because other people were interested in what they were doing”

“A very positive effect. It’s easier to take away than give confidence. This kept giving them confidence and they absorb things without knowing”

“Yes, they were a bit more confident. Willing to do trial and error. One cooked a meal for his parents- one who said at the start that he couldn’t cook”

One trainer also commented that:

“Doing any practical activity always helps, not specifically this course”

3.1.27. The young peoples’ comments on this

Three trainers reported that their group had commented on their own increased levels of confidence and skills. Comments such as:

“Yes, they did, saying that they were now happy to go home and cook”

“Definitely they did, when they ate together in the dining room and others commented on how good their meal looked. The girls commented as they ate and praised one another”

The other two trainers said that their group members wouldn’t necessarily be aware of such changes unless it was pointed out and discussed with them. This is clearly dependent on the young people within the group and individual group leaders who would know their groups could discuss this accordingly. The introductory session for the ‘Get Cooking!’ trainers might usefully emphasise this element of the course as well as the cooking aspects.

3.1.28. Young peoples’ comment about the ‘Get Cooking!’ recipe booklet

The recipe booklet was well received by the young people. They all had their own copy of the recipe booklet and were keen to take it home. It was seen as being easy to read and the recipes were easy to follow. One trainer commented that her group:

“ Thought it was easy to read. It looked good and they could jot their own notes on it”

3.1.29. Feedback from the young people about doing further cookery

All the trainers reported that their groups were interested in doing further cookery. Some of the groups had a regular programme of cooking in place anyway. A typical comment was:

‘Yes they are keen to do more cookery now’

3.1.30. Other Comments

Some of the responses to this question reiterated points made earlier about the need for a selection of recipes. Others commented on the different positive aspects of the course:

“Eating the food together at the end of each session was a major plus and not necessarily something they do at home.”

“More students if possible. With the right group it would be great. The course is ideal for groups of all ages”

3.2 Feedback on the Individual Sessions

3.2.1. An observation sheet was developed for use after each session to make sure that information about possible changes to the six weeks of the course was not lost. Feedback was sought about:

- What the young people taking part said about the session. This was most easily done at the end whilst eating the food that has been prepared. There were some questions to be used as prompts by the trainer to gauge such things as motivation and what was learnt from the session.
- What the trainer observed happening during the session, how the menu for that session was received by the young people and about the structure and content of the session.

3.2.2. Session 1

The recipes for this session were pizza, salad and chocolate fudge brownies. All groups reported enjoying this first session and that these recipes were well received, although some of the young people were not keen on eating the salads that they had prepared. One trainer reported that just one young person out of the group had said that they would prepare salad again

These items were all foods that are a familiar part of a young person’s diet, although the use of yeast in cooking was unfamiliar. One group had an interesting discussion about the time involved in using yeast and waiting for the dough to prove (which they found interesting) versus the relative cheapness and convenience of shop bought pizza. Another trainer also reported that her group were surprised to be cooking chocolate brownies on what they saw as being a course about eating and cooking healthily. This opportunity was used by the trainer to talk about the fat and sugar content of foods.

The major hygiene message to get across at this session was seen by the trainers as being washing hands and wiping surfaces before beginning the food preparation. Some of this was known by the young people, but the need to remove rings and to rewash hands after

leaving the kitchen required constant reminders. One trainer reported that reminding her group about healthy eating and hygiene messages ‘got them annoyed, they hate any reminders about hygiene, about nutrition’. None of the other trainers mentioned such a strong response, although the need for different materials, such as quizzes to reinforce the messages in a different way, was suggested.

The techniques required to prepare the recipes were reported as being easily mastered by the young people. One group reported that they found judging when the pizza was cooked rather difficult but no other difficulties were identified. All the groups were reported as wanting to cook pizza again.

3.2.3. Session 2.

The recipes for this session were either Fish Pie or Shepherd’s Pie with stir-fry vegetables and fruit salad. The first two recipes provoked a strong response from the different groups. Only one group cooked Shepherd’s Pie and they reported enjoying both preparing and eating it. This group did not try the Fish Pie recipe. The other three groups reported that they did not like and so did not prepare these recipes. Instead, two groups made corned beef pie and one made Cornish Pasties. Some groups had low attendance for this session but those who attended were reported to have enjoyed making the recipe that they had chosen. There were no difficulties reported with the cooking techniques used to prepare the recipes in this session, other than the group who made Cornish pasties, who found rolling out pastry tricky.

One trainer reported that her students ‘found the budgeting very interesting to prepare and cook an economical, wholesome meal’ and were ‘amazed how quick and easy the meal was to prepare’. This type of reaction was common throughout the ‘Get Cooking!’ course. Another group were surprised that ‘vegetables could taste nice’. One trainer commented on the feedback sheet for this session that ‘the group are having a really good time!’

3.2.4. Session 3.

This session was popular with all the groups. The recipes prepared were roast chicken and apple flapjacks. One trainer reporting that ‘these youngsters love their roast dinners’. There were no problems with the cooking techniques, although some were nervous because they had not cooked a roast dinner before. Additionally some participants were reluctant to handle and prepare raw meat, which is no doubt due to a lack of experience in cooking with basic ingredients. Even so most of the young people were reported as being confident in tackling the recipes. The small size of the group, which allowed for individual attention was highlighted by one of the trainers.

One group found using a thermometer to check that the meat was cooked, particularly interesting. However the trainer of this group reported that her group became bored during the cooking time and that not all the group were involved because there was not enough to do to prepare the recipes. A suggestion to overcome this was to have worksheets, such as a picture of a kitchen with hazards to be identified, which could be used whilst waiting for food to cook. Videos were also suggested as being useful for these times.

The main concern with this session was the length of time needed to ensure that the chicken was cooked thoroughly. One group that only had a two-hour session, bought a ready cooked chicken but prepared the rest of the recipes. The group discussed the reasons for doing this so that the food hygiene messages were emphasized. The other groups had longer sessions available to them and so cooked the dishes as laid out in the recipe booklet. Again the items prepared during this session were familiar to the participants, but actually buying a variety of vegetables was seen as a factor in whether the participants would consider cooking the recipe again. One other trainer also commented that next time they would parboil the potatoes as they were waiting for them to cook and that the recipe book should be amended accordingly

3.2.5. Session 4.

The recipes for this session got quite a mixed reception, although all the trainers reported that their groups had enjoyed the session. The four recipes to be prepared were: Spanish omelette, savoury rice, potato wedges and pancakes. The Spanish omelette was not liked and only one group actually prepared this recipe. It is likely that the young people had not encountered Spanish omelette previously. The other three groups cooked alternatives drawn from the recipes given for other ‘Get Cooking!’ sessions. In contrast the potato wedges and the pancakes were popular. Some were not confident about making pancakes at first but went on to enjoy doing so. There was one negative comment made by a young person who did not eat anything at the end of their session and commented that it was mean to make them ‘make such grotty stuff’.

Having a selection of recipes would be useful, as it is apparent that the young people were conservative about even having a go at preparing dishes with which they were not already familiar. One group completely changed the recipes and instead of those in the booklet, cooked corned beef pie and rice crispie cakes. Only two of the group cooked, the rest went to the nearby sports centre instead. Those who stayed were reported as really enjoying what they did but were ‘not motivated at all – really didn’t want to cook omelette’.

3.2.6. Session 5.

This session involved making lasagne with garlic bread and salad and then quick trifle to follow. The savoury dishes proved popular, but the pudding less so. Only one group reported that they made the quick trifle, which they enjoyed. The only difficulty reported with this was making a trifle in the short length of time available in the session.

Another group reported that they had made the chocolate brownies recipe again and that they had proved popular with the rest of their youth group.

All the groups were reported as enjoying the lasagne. However for one trainer there was not enough for the whole group to be involved in. Instead one young person prepared the lasagne whilst the others watched and became bored. The young person who did the cooking was very confident and also proud of her achievement at the end of the session

Another comment made by a trainer was that ‘ they preferred their homemade lasagne to shop bought- they thought that the meal was very reasonably priced and delicious’. This highlights the important issue of the past experience of meals prepared from basic ingredients rather than reheated convenience foods. Young people may live in busy families who rely on convenience foods. In some cases this may be a reflection of the family members’ own lack of experience in food preparation which then perpetuates the situation. The ‘Get Cooking!’ course enabled its participants to discover the difference in cost and taste between bought and home prepared meals. The young people often expressed surprise at this difference as the course progressed.

3.2.7. Session 6.

There are no set recipes for this session, instead it is intended that the group put together their own menu made up of the recipes from the previous five sessions. Cooking pizza and chocolate brownies were the most popular options. One group reported that they had made the pizza recipe and other party foods, which they then shared with the rest of the youth group. This had added to their sense of achievement, as their food was complimented

Another group chose to prepare corned beef pasties. They were very proud of their work and would prepare them again, even though the group did not like actually making the pastry- too messy and unfamiliar were their comments. They would prefer to buy ready-made pastry. Another trainer reported being surprised that her group had chosen to cook shepherd’s pie and pancakes in their last session, rather than chocolate brownies.

The trainers reported that their groups had remembered what they had learned about healthy eating and food hygiene during the course.

3.3 Feedback from the Young People taking part in ‘Get Cooking!’ Sessions

It was originally envisaged that there would be a total of forty young people taking part in the ‘Get Cooking!’ sessions from the four youth groups. In the event, there were only 27 young people taking part out of whom only 18 completed the course. This obviously has an effect on the weight that can be given to the feedback, however there are still valid conclusions that can be drawn from the feedback obtained.

3.3.1 Number of sessions of the course attended

Those who completed the course attended between four and six sessions. There were a variety of reasons for participants not being at all the sessions. These ranged from a simple dislike of the particular recipes to be cooked that session and the alternative activities available at the same time to personal circumstances such as family illness or personal health issues.

3.3.3 What was enjoyed most about the course

All the young people enjoyed the food preparation and cooking. Others also commented that they enjoyed tasting the food and sitting eating the food together at the end of the cooking session. For a number of the participants eating a meal with others may have become an infrequent event in their

family life. Some of the trainers commented on this and the importance of the social aspect of the 'Get Cooking!' course. From the groups visited, it was evident that the young people enjoyed and took great pride in setting out the table for the group to have their meal together to conclude the session.

3.3.4 Anything about the course that was not liked

There was nothing that was particularly disliked about the course itself, although a few of the participants commented that they disliked peeling vegetables and doing the washing up after they had cooked. A view no doubt shared by most of us! And a reflection of the trend in society to pre prepared dishes and items such as vegetables as well as convenience foods.

3.3.5 Overall enjoyment of the course

As might be expected given that they completed the course and attended the final session, all respondents said that they had enjoyed the course. A number also expressed the wish to have more opportunities to do similar cookery sessions. The participants at the group session visited said that whilst they did some cookery at their individual schools, they had only had limited opportunities to cook as a small part of their timetable as a whole.

3.3.6 What was most useful about the course

There were four options to choose from: cooking, the discussions, the leaflets & recipes, other aspects but all answered that actually doing the cooking was the most useful. Several of the trainers were aware of this and suggested that additional material would be useful to reinforce the healthy eating and hygiene messages so that there was additional learning beyond the gaining of cooking and food preparation skills.

3.3.7. Trying the recipes at home

Out of the young people, only three had tried out 'Get Cooking!' recipes and all those who had cooked at home had used the pizza recipe. This highlights an issue about using and developing cooking skills in the wider community by involving families and so supporting young people doing the 'Get Cooking!' course. This possibility was also raised by one of the trainers who could see the potential both for supporting the young people but also providing the opportunity for other family members to develop food preparation and cookery skills as well as learning about healthy eating and food hygiene. One trainer also reported that one boy in her group had cooked for his family as a result of doing the course but had chosen to cook a favourite family meal. The trainer was sure that he would not have had the confidence to attempt this without being involved in 'Get Cooking!'

3.3.8. Recipes that will be cooked in future

The only recipes from the six sessions that were mentioned as likely to be prepared in the future were the pizza and the chocolate fudge brownies. These recipes were described as being easy follow and the dishes easy to prepare. This may highlight a perception held by individuals who do not have much experience of food preparation that cooking is more difficult than it actually proves to be in practice. This would be an important psychological barrier to be overcome. These recipes are also in line with young people's regular eating habits, which was an issue taken into account when the original 'Get Cooking!' materials were revised.

3.3.9. Anything that has stopped the trying out of recipes at home

There were no particular barriers given to trying out the recipes at home although one respondent identified their mother as preventing them from cooking for their family. This raises an issue of motivating and supporting the young people to take what they have learnt and the confidence they have gained from the course and transferring these to their home situation. One way of addressing this would be to look at extending the scope of the course to include families to increase cooking skills and confidence within the community.

3.3.10. Any suggested changes to the course

All of the respondents, except one, answered that there was nothing that they would change about the 'Get Cooking!' course. The one young person who answered 'yes' to making changes commented that the course should 'make nicer food'. This links with the suggestion from some of the trainers that there should be more recipes from which to choose for each session. It also links with attendance at the sessions, which with some groups was linked to the recipe to be prepared in a particular session. Attendance dropped down to only two youngsters at one group and the reason cited was that the food to be cooked was not liked.

3.3.11. Recommending the 'Get Cooking!' Course to friends

All the respondents indicated that they would recommend taking part in the 'Get Cooking!' to their friends, which is a very positive outcome. This echoes the comments from the trainers who were keen to explore ways of offering the opportunity to take part in the 'Get Cooking!' course to other young people. It suggests that young people can be readily motivated to cook if there are opportunities and the support available. It would be useful to explore ways of providing opportunities for young people to develop cooking skills within different community settings and also of developing support for them and their families to continuing this development in their home environment

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The feedback overall from the evaluation of the pilot courses was positive. The courses were enjoyed by both the trainers leading the courses and by the young people taking part. This means that the main aim of the 'Get Cooking!' course was achieved.

The young people were happy to recommend that their friends should try the 'Get Cooking!' course. It was clear that they really enjoy cookery but do not get many opportunities to prepare food. The course was able to demonstrate to the young people that they could prepare healthy food options and that these dishes tasted good. The feedback suggested that this was a valuable message put across by the course.

The levels of knowledge of healthy eating and food hygiene amongst the young people appeared to be quite variable. Overall their knowledge of healthy eating messages was patchy and sketchy. There was some evidence that this level had increased during the course but the lack of cooking opportunities may mean that this knowledge will tail off again, in terms of the young people remembering to apply their learning next time they have the opportunity to cook. It was also apparent that although some healthy eating messages were remembered, this did not necessarily translate into practice and actually change the food choices made by the young people. The 'Get Cooking' course would be one useful tool in a range of interventions around promoting healthy eating with young people.

The trainers were, in the main, happy with the course format and content but also made a number of suggestions as to how the course might be improved. The length of session was an issue for two reasons: the first was that extra time was needed for the young people to do the shopping, which was an important aspect of the course. The second was the cooking time needed for some of the recipes.

The recipes were liked to varying degrees. Some were universally liked, others were much less popular. To overcome this, it was suggested that a wider range of recipes were included in the materials. Trainers could then select an alternative recipe with their group. The recipes would need to use similar techniques to the existing recipes and to demonstrate healthy cooking. This would also meet the comment made by one trainer of how repetitive it would become for the trainers if they repeated the 'Get Cooking!' course, with the same five menus, a number of times with different groups of young people.

There was also a number of suggestions about having some support material for the trainers. This would fulfill two functions. Firstly, it would reinforce the healthy eating and food hygiene messages for the young people and give them material, such as leaflets, to take home, thereby also taking these messages into their families. Secondly, there would be activities for the group to do, such as quizzes or watching a video, whilst the food was cooking.

It is also worth noting that not all potential trainers will have in depth or up to date knowledge of healthy eating and changes to dietary guidelines. Most will have good knowledge and understanding of food hygiene since they will hold the basic food hygiene qualification. Trainer induction sessions would need to take account of varying knowledge levels.

The evaluation of the course also highlighted the importance of having the right facilities and equipment available. The kitchens used for the pilot courses varied considerable in terms of size and degree to which they were equipped. One youth centre had a kitchen that was large enough to hold a group of ten but had no kitchen tools. Another youth centre had most of the equipment to cook all the recipes in the 'Get Cooking!' booklet but was too small to hold more than three or four young people. If the opportunity to do the 'Get Cooking!' course was to be extended into other youth groups, the facilities available at other centres would need to be checked. Arrangements would also need to be made to supply the necessary equipment if these were lacking. During the pilot, one trainer had to take her kitchen tools from home, which is clearly not satisfactory.

Finally, it was identified that apart from gaining in confidence and developing their cookery skills, the young people on the course also gained important budgeting skills. In preparing for each session, they needed to plan what to buy and calculate the money available to them. The course showed them the difference in cost between basic ingredients and prepared dishes. It also increased their awareness of

the range of prices for the same ingredient in a supermarket. This aspect of the course is not highlighted in the recipe booklet or trainer's guide but would be useful to emphasise as it develops both numeracy and budgeting skills. Perhaps additional material could be developed and this aspect of the course covered during the familiarisation session with the trainers prior to the course starting.

Ways of creating more opportunities for young people to take part in a 'Get Cooking!' course should be explored along possible funding avenues and partnership working to enable this to happen.

Consideration should be given to how the 'Get Cooking!' could involve the families and other community members whilst young people at a youth group are doing the cookery sessions. Ways should be explored so that the cooking skills and health and hygiene knowledge gained is both developed and reinforced in the home and so hopefully maintained well beyond the life of the course.

Consideration should be given to providing more support materials. These are needed to back up the information provided in the recipe booklet and trainer's guide. This would benefit both participants and less experienced trainers. It would ensure that healthy eating and food hygiene messages were reinforced and provide activities for those parts of the session when the group are waiting for food to cook. This could involve developing new materials or could involve sourcing materials that are already available

A wider range of recipes should be developed so that trainers could select a menu for a session with their group beyond the recipes currently in the 'Get Cooking!' materials, whilst still preparing healthy, good value meals.

Consideration should be given to placing more emphasis on the development of budgeting skills during the course and providing support materials to assist trainers with this.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Evaluation Tools

Get Cooking! Evaluation

Now that you have done the ‘Get Cooking!’ course, please tell us what you think! It will only take a few minutes to answer these questions. Your comments will help us a lot.

1. How many sessions of the course did you come to?
(Please tick one box)

1 session 2 sessions 3 sessions 4 sessions 5 sessions 6 sessions

2. What did you enjoy most about the course and why?

3. Was there anything about the course that you did not like?

4. Overall would you say that you have enjoyed the course?

YES NO

5. What did you find most useful? (Please tick one)

- cooking
- the discussions
- the leaflets & recipes
- other (please give details)

6. Have you tried any of the recipes at home?

YES NO

If yes, which ones?

7. Which recipes will you cook in future?

8. Has anything stopped you from trying out the recipes at home?

YES [] NO []

If yes, what?

9. Are there any things that you would change about the course?

10. Would you recommend the 'Get Cooking!' Course to your friends?

YES [] NO []

11. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Trainer Observations

The observation sheet for each session is to make sure that we don't lose any information during the 6 weeks of the course. The attached observation sheet is to gain as much feedback as possible about how each of the sessions is received.

We would like to know about the sessions in two ways:

- Part A What the young people taking part said about the session.- this can most easily be done at the end whilst eating the food that has been prepared. There are some questions to use as prompts so you can gauge such things as their motivation and what they have learnt from the session.
- Part B What you observed happening during the session- this can be completed after the session and is about how you felt the session was received. This is not about your skills as a

trainer but about the structure and content of the session and how it went down with young people taking part!

There is one sheet for each session. When you've completed it please use envelope provided to send it back the researchers.

Many thanks for your help!

Linda Lawton & Lynn Stockley

Observation sheet (for completion at the end of each session)

Session _____ Date _____
Name of group & location _____

Part A: The group's impression of today's session.

Some prompts to use:

What did they think of today's session? Did they enjoy it?

What did they find particularly interesting? Was there anything they found difficult?

How confident did they feel about preparing the food today when they arrived? What about at the end?

What did they think of what they had cooked? Would they cook it again?

What might get in the way of them doing this?(prompts: budgets, lack of facilities)

What did they think they learned about healthy eating or food hygiene? Did they remember the messages that were covered in the session? (Prompts: messages such as reducing fat, eating fruit and vegetable, washing hands, keeping food chilled etc)

Any other feedback from the group

Part B From your own observations

Please comment as fully as possible

How many attended this session?

How motivated was the group- were they all fully involved?

Did everyone appear to be enjoying themselves? Were they enthusiastic about the cookery?

What were the particular hygiene & healthy eating messages you were putting across today? How well do you feel your group took these on board?

Did the group have any particular problems preparing today's recipes?

Are there aspects of the session that you would change or any suggestions for how the session might be improved?

Any other comments you would like to make?

Telephone Interview questionnaire for ‘Get Cooking!’ trainers

Name

Group & venue

Dates & time of Course

The trainer

1. Did you enjoy running the ‘Get Cooking!’ course with your group?

2. What has been your previous experience of working with young people?

3. What about doing cooking sessions with young people?

4. Have you ever had any training in cooking or food preparation skills, health eating or food hygiene?

5. What were your first impressions of the ‘Get Cooking!’ materials- the trainers guide and the recipe booklet?

6. How confident did you feel about using the ‘Get Cooking!’ materials before running the sessions with your group?

Unsure
Very unsure
Fairly confident
Very confident

7. Did you have any concerns about using the ‘Get Cooking!’ materials with your group?

8. Thinking about the healthy eating and food hygiene information in the ‘Get Cooking!’ materials, how well did you feel these messages were put across?

9. How far do you think your group would be able to identify these messages?

10. Did you have enough information about what was expected of you to run the course?
11. Do you think that future trainers might need some training to run 'Get Cooking!' courses? If yes what would be needed?
12. What other support would be helpful for trainers to run this course?

The Course

13. Did attendance hold up across the 6 sessions?
If No, were there any particular reasons?
14. Were there any issues around the timing of the course?
15. How appropriate did you feel the format of the sessions was for your group?
16. Are there any changes that you would suggest to the content or format of the course or sessions?
What would they be?
17. Were there any sessions that were particularly liked or disliked by your group?
18. Have you got any comments on the venue in which you ran the course?
19. What was your overall impression of the 'Get Cooking!' course?

The Young People

20. How enthusiastic were your group of young people to take part in the course?
21. Did this change during the duration of the course?
22. What would you say was their attitude to cooking at the start of the course?

23. What would you say their levels of knowledge were around healthy eating and food hygiene at the start of the course?

24. What would you say their levels of knowledge were around healthy eating and food hygiene at the end of the course?

25. Did you gain any impression about changes in current cooking patterns or about their future intentions?

26. Did taking part in the course have any effect on the young people's confidence and skills? YES/NO

If yes, please describe the effect?

27. Did the young people themselves comment on this?

28. Did they each have a copy of the 'Get Cooking!' recipe booklet? What comments did they make about it?

29. Have you had any feedback from the young people about doing further cookery?

Other Comments

30. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?