

social



guide

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ambition
 For
 ageing



COMMUNITY
 FUND

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This guide and accompanying technical handbook was written in collaboration with a range of partners.
 Both proudly designed by TLC: Talk, Listen, Change

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Rachel,
Rochdale Boroughwide Housing

“

It's a gathering of people who have a natter and eat with company. People make new friends, try something new and find something in common.

”

01

INTRODUCTION

What is social eating?

Social eating means people coming together to share food. The social aspect can have a positive impact on wellbeing and connectedness to others. Food also tastes better and people are likely to eat more when they eat together with others; something which can be particularly important as people age and their appetite decreases.¹

What is Ambition for Ageing?

Ambition for Ageing is a Greater Manchester wide cross-sector programme led by GMCVO and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. The programme aims to create more age friendly places by connecting communities and people through the creation of relationships, development of existing assets and putting older people at the heart of designing the places where they live.

About the social eating project

The Ambition for Ageing Social Eating Project brought together eight partner organisations from Greater Manchester to deliver social eating activities between July 2018 and March 2020. The project was managed by TLC: Talk, Listen Change and commissioned by GMCVO. It tested out different models and approaches to social eating, in order to learn what works and what doesn't, with a focus on developing social eating opportunities for older people over the age of 50 at risk of social isolation.



How to use the Guide

This Guide is designed to support you through the first steps of setting up a successful social eating project based on learning and insights gathered from delivery partners and participants. The Guide explores some of the key factors or “essential ingredients” required to create social eating environments. Every social eating project is unique and the context you are working within will influence the steps you need to take. What we offer here are some of the key aspects to consider. To accompany this Social Eating Guide, we have created a Technical Handbook which can be found on the TLC: Talk, Listen, Change and Ambition for Ageing websites. See the Links section at the back of the Guide for website addresses.

1. Herman, C. Peter. (2015) The social facilitation of eating: A review. *Appetite*, Vol. 86, pp. 61-73.

“

Michelle, Groundwork

Just because we are ageing doesn't mean we aren't ambitious, as soon as you get people into a room you have your resources.

”

“

Kim, HMR Circle

People must feel they are involved in the event and it's not just being done to them. Allowing the participants to select timings, venue, menu and activities helps to build an organic and sustainable event.

”

03

CO-PRODUCTION & CO-DESIGN

Thinking about who your project is for is a key part of planning your social eating activity. If you have already been working within a locality, it is likely that you will have some sense of who you want to engage and whether there is a need. Organising co-production or co-design activities early on in your social eating journey can ensure that people shape what is offered.

Building in the requirements of everyone from the start is more effective than responding to individual access needs as they arise. It should also result in greater engagement of people from marginalised communities, and diversity can bring wider benefits such as increased cohesion within communities.

Co-production and design are based on the following principles :

- Recognising people as assets
- Building on capabilities
- Mutuality and reciprocity
- Organisations as agents of change not just “service providers”
- Peer and personal networks ².

The partners in the project used co-production approaches with varying levels of formality; some held focus group sessions or taster sessions, whilst others co-produced activities in conversation with older people; a process which then continued throughout the delivery of activity.

2. Social Care Institute for Excellence <https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/what-is-coproduction/defining-coproduction.asp>



CONTINUED...

Gathering feedback is important, both at the beginning of the project and on an ongoing basis, as your project grows and evolves. The person hosting social eating activities plays a key role in collecting feedback on an informal level, for example through a simple conversation, or by creating activities that provide opportunities for people to share their views.

One of the projects found that people who shared their thoughts and ideas at the focus groups and taster sessions didn't end up participating in the social eating activities. It is possible to put a lot of time and resources into co-production methods and people may not attend. However, co-production is still essential to the planning process and always a valuable source of learning.

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Bolton at Home/ Video Box CIC

We shape our sessions around what they like and try to make it a fun, enjoyable afternoon where they can eat, chat and feel connected to others.

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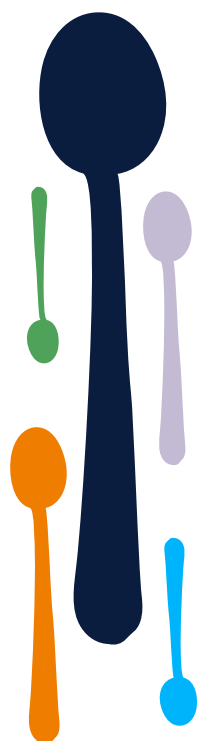
“

Rachel, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing

As part of a person-centred approach, older people need to feel empowered, so they take ownership of the project and tell others about it too.

”

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



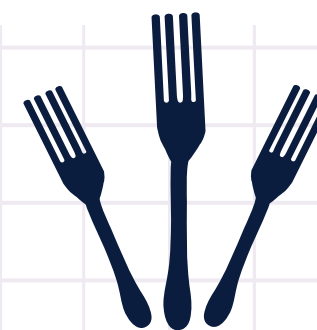
Our project aimed to reach older people who were socially isolated. Some of this provision was targeted at specific communities, for example: men from the Somali community, women refugees and asylum seekers, men and women from the Chinese community, people with disabilities, carers and men from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

We recommend partnering with organisations that have good reach into minority and marginalised communities whether you want to work with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community, with carers, with BAME or refugee or asylum seeker communities. Ensuring that these voices are heard during co-design and co-production is essential to the success of your project.

It might be helpful to consider using Universal Design Principles in the planning of any social eating activities. Universal Design means creating an environment or service, which is designed to meet the needs of everyone who might wish to use it. It involves considering diversity of need and ability of everyone, from the very beginning of a project.

07

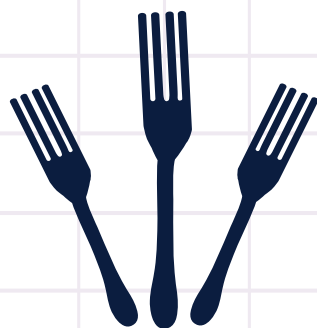
Please see Technical Handbook for more information about Diversity and Inclusion - Key Design Principles



Janine

Janine age 67 came from the Congo to escape from the war where two of her sons died. She has great difficulty walking and was diagnosed with type two diabetes. Through attending the Women's Group at Befriending Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Bolton, Janine has experienced a massive improvement in her English speaking and understanding, her confidence has grown, and she has made friends and goes to her local church with other women from the group. She has also lost weight because we have been cooking healthy foods which she has been able to continue at home. For example, a change of oil to frylight, sugar to sweetener, chocolate to fruit.

"It is very nice to know that I will be able to meet people and speak in my own language if I want to but be able to speak in English without being judged that I am saying it wrong. I have lost weight because I can cook food healthier and I am able to walk further. I feel happier and feel more confident to speak to my doctor. I feel less isolated and part of a community now which I wouldn't have known about had it not been for the social eating project."



Mary

Mary, age 75, attended the Cracking Good Food Cook and Eat Sessions in partnership with Southway Housing Trust, Manchester. Mary is the primary carer for her daughter Abby, which means attending events is difficult for her and leaves her socially isolated. We learned that it is important to create opportunities for carers to attend events by also inviting those they care for along.

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“

The sessions give myself and Abby something to look forward to; a chance to learn and try new recipes that we wouldn't usually cook.

I've also gained a new friend since joining the sessions, who I regularly speak to now, away from the group.

I feel this type of activity can have a really a positive impact for those who care for adult children. It has been such a positive experience.

I treasure the camaraderie and the memories we can share through food, as a group coming from different backgrounds but the same generation.

**Mary, Cracking Good Food
Participant**

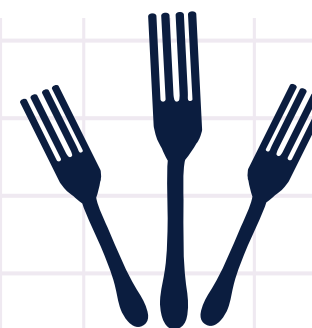
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KEY LEARNINGS....

- Locating social eating in places close to BAME communities was important and meant that projects could use door-knocking and conversations to reach out to people.
- Offering single sex activities can be beneficial. Social eating for female refugees and asylum seekers found it helpful to offer a safe space, where only other women would be attending. One of the projects was attended predominantly by Somali men – the men said they felt the single sex focus “takes some of the awkwardness away”.
- Age limits can sometimes present difficulties. Some social eating participants had been assigned arbitrary ages by their Home Office case worker. One woman had been given a date of birth putting her at 40 years old, when she was actually in her 50s.
- Projects working with Muslim communities found that timing activities so that they did not coincide with Friday Prayers was important. One project, working with Somali men, found that holding social eating on a Friday afternoon from 2pm worked well.
- Being able to provide a hot meal that is meat based has been important. Meat needs to be halal and the person cooking be trusted to prepare food correctly. Greater use of meat meant that these projects have had a higher cost – normally between £3-5 per person.
- Cooking familiar foods from people’s culture was seen as key, especially in the early days of our social eating projects. The learning was that people were not as motivated to attend if the food being cooked was not from their own culture.
- Projects found that it works best to introduce healthy eating ideas such as using less oil, sugar and salt and including more vegetables, gradually, once relationships with participants are established. Projects found that diabetes was a common health issue and providing food appropriate for diabetics was important.

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- Volunteers are identified as key in these projects; allowing a more flexible approach to food preparation and cooking. Having volunteers who share the same language as participants was also seen as helpful, particularly if project workers weren’t bilingual.



case study

Groundwork sessions with the Attic Project

When Groundwork were planning community cooking sessions with the Attic Project, one of the participants Joe said he was not interested in community cooking, even though he felt isolated and was struggling to eat well. When Michelle the Social Eating Coordinator talked to him, it turned out that he struggled with mobility issues, he was embarrassed about how much he could contribute due to arthritis in his hands and he was self-conscious about eating with others after spending so much time alone. Knowing about these barriers was valuable in designing a successful community cooking programme:

- The venue was adjusted so that wheelchairs could be accommodated in the kitchen as well as in the dining space.
- The group put together a task list as part of the planning, so not all tasks included the use of hands.

"Volunteering has helped me get in touch with the elders in my community and better understand their feelings, needs and stories. I came to the UK as a young refugee and I've enjoyed hearing their stories about back home."

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

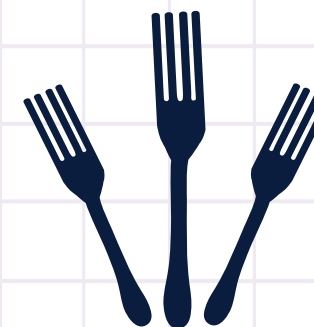
GETTING THE MOST FROM PARTNERSHIPS

Projects worked across communities with varying levels of affluence. In every type of area, the key determinants of success that emerged were good local knowledge and an existing network of relationships within the community.

Working with local partners can help get your social eating off the ground, through providing support with the following:

- Generating ideas and 'sense-checking': it can be invaluable to share thoughts and ideas. It can also help you to establish whether there is a need for the project to avoid offering something that isn't wanted.
- Working with partners: joining up with those who can reach into different marginalised and minority communities, will increase the likelihood of involving a wider diversity of participants and volunteers. This can also be applied to marketing and promotion.
- Shared resource and contributions in kind: you may be able to access free use of great community venues and transport. Working with partners can help with attracting funding and recruiting volunteers to facilitate the project.

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case study

Southway Grow, Cook and Eat Sessions - Withington Fire Station

Bringing together Southway Environment Team, Old Moat Greenies, St Cuthbert's Primary School, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and older people to grow produce at Withington Fire Station.

The aim of the project was to encourage long-term intergenerational links and build a partnership with the local fire station to utilise their land for a community growing space.

They engaged older people who wanted to grow and share food and were finding it too difficult to manage their own gardens. Older people chose crops to grow and the themes for the social eating events. The events were advertised through word of mouth, social media and on local noticeboards.

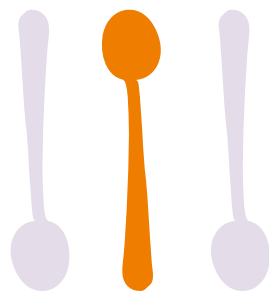
Some of the highlights were seeing bare raised beds transform into lush, food filled spaces, which was exciting for all the participants.

DIFFERENT MODELS

Working across a range of localities in Greater Manchester, projects all shared the same aims of reducing social isolation and increasing connectedness and they used a variety of different approaches and models to deliver social eating. Some of them employed people to deliver the projects and others relied on the support of volunteers; some projects paid to hire venues whilst others used venues for free. Whatever your model, there will be a cost attached, so understanding what your budget is will help you decide which model/s will work best for you.

COMBINING FOOD & ACTIVITIES

Social eating projects have combined eating with activities, which have all contributed to reducing social isolation, for example:



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- quizzes
- themed discussions/reminiscence
- learning to grow food together
- learning to cook new recipes
- watching a film
- playing bingo
- chair based exercise
- day trips to museums or other cities
- activities themed around religious celebrations, for example Eid

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Participant, Bolton at Home/ Video Box CIC

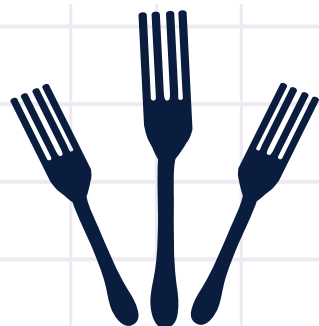
We play games such as bingo and dominoes and have some kind of quiz. We try to lay the room out in a way that prevents any cliques from forming and make sure that people can sit with friends but also mix. Some now see each other outside the sessions.

Pearl, Bolton at Home

After lunch we all sit and chat about various topics; from politics, holidays, music, dancing, their families, “the good old days” reminiscing. I did a session where everyone brought in old photos which we all passed round, laughing at fashions, hairstyles etc, but more importantly showing an interest in their lives.

”





case study

Bowl and Plate, Debdale Park, Gorton

Southway Housing Trust worked with a local bowling group with the aim of combining crown green bowling with opportunities for people to eat and relax together. Attendees were taught how to play bowls and then enjoyed lunch together.

"It has given us the opportunity to encourage local people who otherwise would be isolated, to come out and enjoy an afternoon, make new friendships and be introduced to new and exciting activities."

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HMR Circle have used various methods to engage participants and made good use of private sector assets within the community for example; offering Tea and Chatter sessions in the local Morrisons, Tea and Talk in a local café, Breakfast for Blokes at Wetherspoons and social eating events at residential venues.



Groundwork have asset mapped their local area and have been working in partnership with established projects; adding value to their provision. Examples include: United Reformed Church, who were establishing a new community café, East Ward Growing Together community allotment project, Ramsbottom Community - a partnership with Great Places, Persona Care and Support, and the Attic Project a local charity offering community courses for people experiencing isolation through poor mental health.



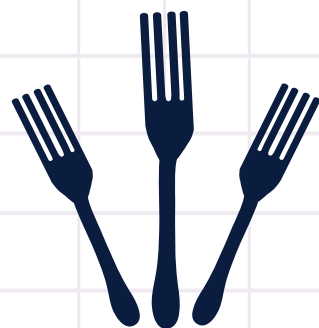
Rochdale Boroughwide Housing have been predominantly delivering social eating projects for residents of their housing schemes. They delivered cook and taste sessions encouraging residents to come together and cook, they invited carers to take part in social eating, established the Grow a Bowl Full project (giving residents grow-boxes of veg to make their own meals) and delivered a "Feeding the Forces" eight week cooking project sharing cooking techniques with veterans and their families.



Southway Housing Trust have worked in partnership with a range of organisations: creating a grow and eat project at a local fire station, delivering intergenerational work with schools, utilising university halls of residence for one off social eating events, creating "Munch at the Museum" to explore the history and culture of food, social eating at a local bowling club and working with sheltered housing schemes. They also worked in partnership with Cracking Good Food to deliver cook and eat sessions.



Bolton at Home have worked closely with local community organisations, social enterprises, community centres and sheltered housing. Activities range from eat and meet at a local community allotment, lunchtime social eating and activities at community centres and working together with a community café to build community cohesion. They also collaborated with local community groups to offer social eating activities for people from BAME communities and female asylum seekers and refugees.



Eddie

Eddie, age 71 has been experiencing anxiety and depression for 36 years which affects his confidence. He has recently been diagnosed with high blood pressure and heart problems. Since his health has declined, he doesn't go out as much and therefore doesn't see anyone from the flats where he lives.

Since coming to the social eating events that HMR Circle have been running, the Breakfast for Blokes and the events at Falinge Mews, Eddie feels like his Wednesdays are much brighter.

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It can be depressing when I have nothing to do, I need to fill my time. I know people now; we chat and it's good company.

I look forward to Wednesdays. It makes me realise I am not on my own, there are other people in a similar situation; we can help each other just by being there for each other. Nobody puts you down- we are all in the same boat- there is no judgement.

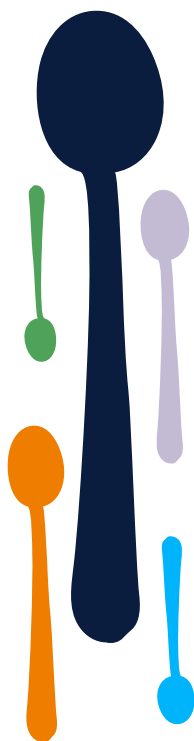
It is worth giving it a try, even if you don't know anyone, you might meet someone you know or someone you can talk to, it's great, it's bingo!

Eddie, HMR Circle Participant

”

DIFFERENT MODELS

LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY



Depending on what you want to achieve and whether you want a one-off event or regular social eating activity, it's important to consider the long-term sustainability of your project.

What will happen after funding ends and how could the work continue?

Overleaf are some examples of how partners addressed this issue:

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Rachel, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing:

"To make the project sustainable we have put a charge of £2-2.50 per session to cover the cost of future cook and taste sessions. Thinking about the long-term has steered the project in a new direction with the introduction of Grow a Bowlful; where participants grow their own food to keep cost to a minimum. We have also been working on a recipe book to encourage participants to invite each other over to their schemes to keep the social side of the project running."



Kim, HMR Circle:

"HMR Circle found that people came to their first few events until the price was increased from £1 to £2; they said it was too much to pay. Be prepared that people will vote with their feet. Even the slightest change in an activity can put people off attending in the future."



Michelle, Groundwork:

"We made sure that all projects were customer led and because of this some groups have organised outings which they are paying for, and others are actively taking ownership and bringing contributions to gatherings, which minimises future costs and builds long term sustainability."



Chris, Bolton at Home:

"We are also exploring a pay as you feel model for some of the projects and a model where we would purchase and store supplies centrally, to reduce costs further."



Cathy, Southway Housing Trust:

"We have successfully built capacity within local groups and recruited volunteers, who can help to make the activities sustainable."



HOSTING SOCIAL EATING

All of the social eating activities have been hosted by either a paid staff member, or a combination of staff and volunteers. The person hosting needs to have the time to come out of the kitchen, to welcome and include participants, to sit and chat, to encourage connections and to help people feel known and cared for. Relationships are built through conversations and taking an interest and it is important that this is seen as an integral part of the role, not just an adjunct to serving food.

Partners identified the following as important qualities for volunteers or community leaders to have, when they are working together to host social eating activities:

- a solid understanding of the value of social eating
- a clear vision of the aims and objectives of the social eating activity
- a passion to make a positive difference to the lives of older people
- friendliness and warmth
- person centred in their approach and very flexible in delivering what older people want and need
- able to remember details about people's lives and have a genuine interest in people.



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Jamie, Southway Housing Trust

When you are working with isolated people it is hard not to form an attachment – you have to be able to talk about your personal life. You're not just a professional. They are building trust in you!

Participant, Deepdale, Bolton

Pearl looks after us. The company makes it enjoyable. I've been coming for 6 weeks. I found out from Margaret (another resident). It was really welcoming. Pearl's a diamond – she looks after us and she cooks good food.

Participant, first time HMR Circle attendant

I came last week to see what was going on, I spoke to Kim and thought he was a nice bloke so decided to give him a go this week, the food is lovely, I have enjoyed myself.

Participant, Willow Hey Allotment, Bolton

Chris knocked on my door. We get a lot out of working with each other – sharing skills – someone knowing you and having a history here and feeling that you contribute to things here. You are known here.

”

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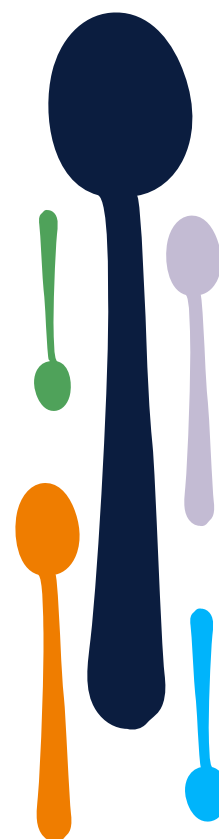
I enjoy meeting
everyone...
I help out as well.
I enjoy it,
I enjoy helping

Participant, Huddle Up, Bolton

”

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HOSTING SOCIAL EATING WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS



Many of the social eating projects used a relaxed and informal approach to volunteering with participants offering to “help put away, do the pots” and a sense of “everyone mucking in”. Group leaders recognised volunteer qualities in participants and then asking those people to help out. The emphasis has been on people helping as an extension of their participation, rather than volunteering being seen as a separate role. This approach has also been beneficial in avoiding some of the power dynamics that can come when people take on a more formal volunteer role. It has also enabled people to feel they are helping in a way that is spontaneous and does not require them to make a regular commitment of time, or to go through a recruitment process.

VENUE & FACILITIES

Finding the right venue for social eating is one of the key factors for success. Gathering ideas and feedback about suitable venues can form part of your initial asset-mapping and co-production work with older people. If you have some people who want to be actively involved, you could invite them to come and look around venues with you. Venues need to be culturally accessible to all participants.

MAPPING THE ASSETS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Mapping local assets is a great way to make the most of the resources you have on your doorstep. Taking time to visit places is invaluable; don't assume that because it is a local resource that it will be suitable for your project. Consider who in the community does and doesn't use the venue.

Groundwork mapped their local assets in Bury and found barriers to accessibility:

"Pub quizzes and bingo sessions targeted for older people sounds great however the venues had steps and small corridors so not accessible for those in wheelchairs. Even town centre activities people were not confident getting transport alone."

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Participant, Deepdale, Bolton

It's warm, a nice room with big windows, you can see what's going on. It's different to looking out of your own window.

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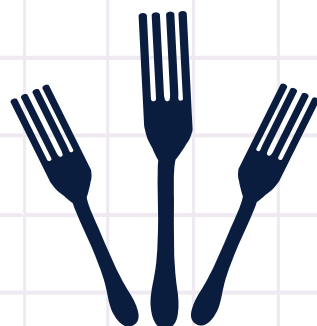
“

Carol, BRASS, Bolton

The venue has to be right for the client group. For us this meant being accessible to women who are disabled and a friendly, welcoming environment. We have had issues of racism in the past choosing venues that are in areas that are not so welcoming to refugees.

”





Anne

Anne aged 91 attended the Ramsbottom Social Eating project run by Groundwork in Bury. Anne uses a wheelchair and struggles to get out, combined with poor eyesight simple tasks are becoming more difficult to carry out. Before Social Eating, she said she would sit at her window, watching others coming and going, she became very lonely as she could no longer get out herself.

Since coming to the social eating project Anne now has her hair done in the morning of events and makes sure she is feeling her best when meeting new friends. She really looks forward to all events and enjoys chatting to everybody and meeting new people.

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I have really struggled getting out of the house for the last 5 years, so was very excited when I found out the event was happening really close to where I live and with help I could get there in my wheelchair.

Social eating changed my life and enabled me to get out again and re-connect in my community.

Anne, Ramsbottom Participant

”

VENUES & FACILITIES

EXAMPLES



- Community centres
- Community hubs
- Sheltered housing schemes
- Churches and Mosques
- Community allotments
- Community cafés
- Museums
- University halls of residence
- Local fire station
- Bowling club
- Dance studio
- Private businesses – for example local pubs or cafes, garden centres with cafes

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TRANSPORT TO VENUES

Social eating projects found that considering people's journeys and routes to and from activities is key to ensuring attendance. Check whether the venue is close to a bus, train or tram stop or if it is within easy walking distance of people's homes. As people age, they may develop mobility issues or visual impairments and even short journeys can require a taxi. Make links with local Volunteer Driver Services along with other transport solutions such as Ring and Ride or Local Link. Having the ability to organise car sharing can also help alleviate issues around transport.

“ Paying for a taxi to an event or first session of a project is a way of allowing people to attend without worry.

Providing transport takes away concern about how someone might find a venue they are not familiar with.

Once people attend a session and make a couple of contacts, they might share transport or travel together by bus.

Cathy, Southway Housing Trust

”

VENUE & FACILITIES

KEY FACTORS...

- How do you plan to prepare the food? Do you need a fully fitted kitchen or just a preparation area?
- Socially isolated people are less likely to go to a venue which already has an established group of people. This can create anxiety and a fear of being an outsider, leading to further exclusion.
- Room temperature and ambiance is key to ensuring it is a place people will feel comfortable and will want to return to.
- Are the toilets easily accessible and close to the eating area?
- Is it accessible for wheelchair users and people with mobility restrictions i.e. wide electric doors, ramps, walking bars/rails?
- If you are using a religious venue, consider whether this prevents a barrier to people from a diverse range of backgrounds attending.
- Does the venue comply with Health and Safety regulations? Consult the UK Health and Safety Executive for latest guidance, and ensure you do your own risk assessment of the activity.

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MARKETING & PROMOTION

How do you tell people about your fantastic social eating events and how do you encourage them to attend? This was an area of considerable learning for the partners in the project and it is worth putting time and energy into getting it right, by considering your target audience and thinking carefully about how to reach them.

When planning how to market social eating events and activities, consider how the following factors may influence your choice of messages and images:

- There is often stigma and shame around being socially isolated or feeling lonely, so avoid using these words in your marketing materials
- People may be embarrassed or worried about their physical health, mental health or dementia so ensure you use words like 'friendly atmosphere', 'amongst friends', 'like-minded people'
- In some communities, there may be stigma around being in receipt of "charity". Offering a 'pay as you feel' option may help counteract this
- Retaining information can be more challenging for older people. Keeping information concise and holding sessions at a regular time, date and venue can help
- Feeling a personal connection to a social eating activity, or knowing someone there, makes it more likely that people will attend so make the most of word-of-mouth
- There may be a perception amongst men that social eating activities will be mostly attended by women, so try and come up with new names for projects and avoid the term 'luncheon club'

We found that pitching events as being about community and social connections (meeting new people, getting out of the house), rather than using the word isolation, has been effective. Project partners ensured that initial invitations were followed up and repeated over time.



Kim, HMR Circle

I get to know the blokes; I have built up a rapport with them. I phone them up the day before and encourage them to come. I use blokey language- banter, get to know them, blokes need to feel wanted and to belong, so it helps to be persuasive

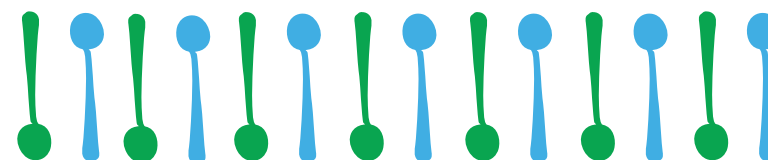


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MARKETING & PROMOTION

DIFFERENT METHODS

- Door knocking within the local area
- Phoning people and reminding them about upcoming events
- Distributing flyers in the local area
- Word of mouth
- Features in social housing magazines for tenants
- Tailored social media content
- Linking with local services and building relationships with potential referrers
- Partnering with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations who have local community-specific knowledge of geographical areas where minority and marginalised groups might live
- Sharing information through existing older people's networks



When planning your marketing strategy, it is invaluable to consider lots of different ways to attract your audience. Even though the projects were targeted at over 50's, we found that the perception was it is an "older persons project" and under 70's didn't self-identify as being "old". The partners found that people over 75 appreciated a personal touch; a knock on the door, a quick phone call the night before the event. Participants valued the sense of being wanted, and of being looked after and cared about.

“

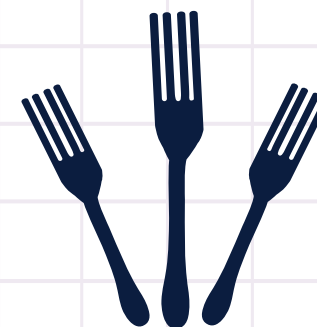
Word of mouth is the most effective tool. There are some literacy issues in the group, making sure you talk to people in your community and let them know what's going on really helps.

We've found conversations at bus stops and at local shops has helped attract people who might not read posters.

VideoBox CIC/Bolton at Home

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”



case study

Choosing an appropriate name for your event

Groundwork learnt a lot from feedback on their 'Lunch and Learn' Social Eating Project. The project was aimed at older people at risk of dehydration or malnutrition, where they could learn how to improve their food intake, whilst socialising with others.

The feedback was that people did not want to lunch and learn at this stage in their life and thought that to suggest this was more of an insult than inviting.

The new and improved programme, 'Come Dine with Me', was relaunched and has proved to be a big success.

“

Michelle, Groundwork

If we'd said
come and have a
loneliness chat
and a glass of
water it wouldn't
have worked- food
is the hook to bring
people together.

”

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FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD



According to research by the National Lottery Community Fund 'The Role of Food in Building Connections and Relationships',³ food can serve the following functions, when working with older people:

- A hook and a welcome
- Helps to create a less formal atmosphere
- Acts as an icebreaker and a way to connect in social situations that is safe and informal
- A practical tool for isolated people; providing a focal point to help people connect

3. <https://www.nlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Role-of-Food-in-Building-Connections-and-Relationships.pdf>



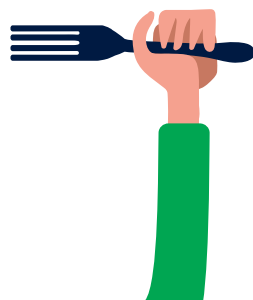
FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD APPROACHES

Partners tried out several different approaches to the preparation and serving of food. These included:

- Staff member preparing food in advance and then re-heating at community venue
- Volunteers cooking at home and bringing food to the event
- Food being prepared at a community café
- Cooking demonstration and taster sessions
- All the participants cook at home and bring food to share
- participants collectively prep and cook at the venue and then eat together
- Food is bought pre-prepared/cooked e.g. cake and tea
- Participants meet at a pub or café and purchase their own meal

However you prepare food you need to consider Food Safety and Hygiene standards. The Food Standards Agency provides comprehensive, up to date guidance for anyone handling food.

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CULTURE



BRASS/Bolton at Home

Our client group like to eat specific food; for example, most of our clients will only eat halal meat. It is important to them to know where the food has come from and how it has been prepared. We also have a vegetarian or a vegan option.

Bolton at Home/Bolton Solidarity Community Association

Passion on the plate it important for this group, also needing to trust who's peparing it. We charge £5 per person; it is high costs but this good expects a good spread.

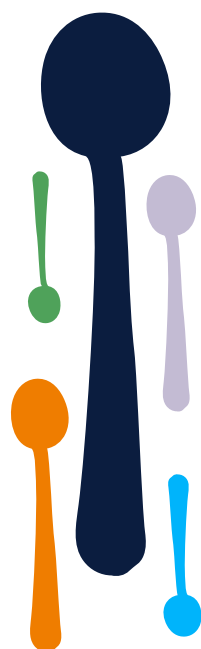
Kim, HMR Circle

The over 70's from White British communitites like traditional food like meat and two veg. The under 70's are ok with spag bol and lasagne, however they don't like spicy food.



FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

CULTURE



There are many factors which shape the way we eat: taste preferences, food availability and access, convenience and routine. Perhaps the most significant factor is a person's cultural background and their relationship with food. There is also a difference in hospitality expectations within different cultures. In some cultures, a tasty free meal is enough, whereas in other cultures, when people come together to eat, it is expected to offer more of a banquet; showcasing the best quality, skills and presentation.

Having a varied menu that reflects the tastes of your participants is key to ensuring that people come back time after time. Take into consideration cultural influences and dietary requirements such as gluten free and offer options that people might not have considered, such as veggie meals.

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“

Willow Hey (Social Eating project location) is a special place in Farnworth on the site of an abandoned allotment with roundhouses, yurts, vegetarian menu, forest school – a lot of people now love veggie food.

Other projects are also putting on vegetarian options and they are now popular

Chris, Bolton at Home

”



COST

Cost considerations should not override the need for adequate nutritional content in the planning and preparation of food for older people. Typically, the ingredients for a 2-course meal can be provided for £1.50 per head. Low-cost supermarkets and International food stores typically offer the best value. Most social eating projects offer free lunches, but some work on a pay as you feel basis, in order to be more sustainable.

HYDRATION

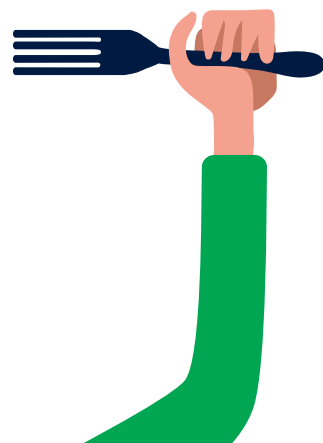
The risk of dehydration is much higher in older people. With ageing, body water stores decrease, thirst sense is reduced and kidneys are less able to concentrate urine, putting older people at risk of dehydration. Access to water can be a life and death issue for older people.

Preventing and treating dehydration:

- Offer fluids regularly
- Ensure liquids are easily accessible and within reach
- Provide preferred beverages

Please see Technical Handbook for more information about malnutrition

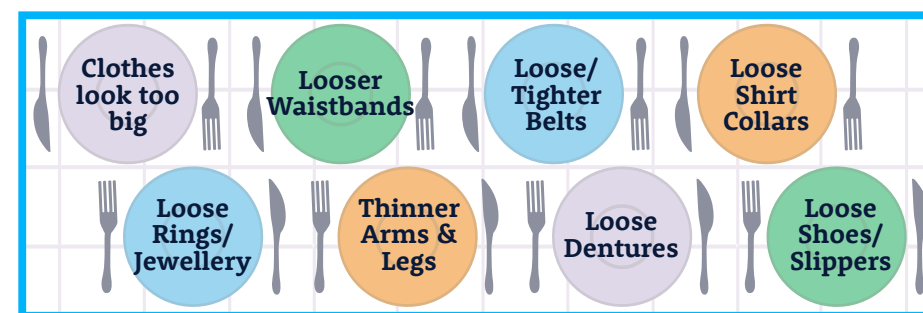
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MALNUTRITION

Food is an essential part of sustaining a happy and healthy life and older people are more at risk from malnutrition and dehydration. Offering good quality, healthy food also helps to reduce this risk.

Malnutrition is a serious condition that happens once a person's diet does not contain the correct quantity of nutrients (energy, protein etc). One in ten people over the age of 65 are undernourished or at risk. It is important to be aware of and alert to the signs of malnutrition:



FoodSync, 2020

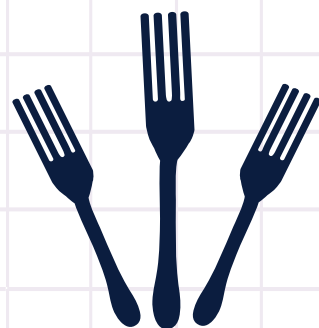
If you are concerned for an individual's welfare, here are some tips for opening up the conversation:

- What did you have for your tea?
- How do you get your shopping?
- What do you like to eat?
- Are you a good cook?

Then look to find out more information about:

- Their dietary habits
- Challenges they may be facing
- What they know about what they should be eating
- Family members and carers may be influencing their relative's diet so sharing information to take home is important

Please see Technical Handbook for more information about malnutrition



wayne

Wayne, aged 63, uses a wheelchair due to injuries from his time in the Armed Forces 15 years ago. He takes medication daily to alleviate pain. His wife cares for him and he also has carers that assist with day to day activities. He leads an active role within the veteran community and his passion is diving; he helps run diving sessions and organises diving holidays.

Wayne attended the first 'Feeding the Forces' session with Rochdale Boroughwide Housing with low morale, as he didn't think that cooking was for him; he only came because his wife said it would be good idea. Since taking part in the 8 week course, he has grown in confidence, not only with cooking but also within himself. He has gone from an "I can't do this" attitude to "I will give it a go and try" and has found his niche in bread making, which he now does at home. He particularly enjoys coming together with the other participants at the end and eating what they have made together.

“

I feel part of something, it gives me a reason to get up in a morning.

I felt honoured when we cooked for the VIPs, there were 24 guests who attended, and the feedback was amazing.

I was absolutely buzzing.

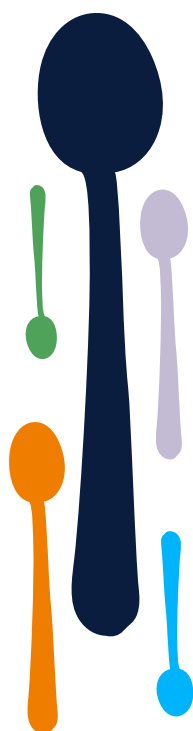
I have formed a special bond with the other veterans on the course, we all bounce off one another.

I am looking forward to mentoring the next group of people.

**Wayne, Rochdale Boroughwide
Housing Participant**

”






RECIPE FOR SUCCESS







- 1 big dollop of passion
- Hot out of the oven warm welcomes
- A scoopful of volunteers
- A dozen or so eager participants
- 1 locally sourced venue and fully equipped kitchen
- Spices, flavour and tasty healthy goodness
- A variety of seasonal vegetables
- Transport to the mixing bowl
- A bunch of freshly picked community partners

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SPECIAL INGREDIENTS

-  Sprinkle generously with the joy that social eating brings
-  Surprise your participants with a dessert
-  Add in activities such as chair-based exercise, bingo or singing
-  Provide an endless amount of tea
-  Have fun!

METHOD

-  The ideal person to mix up the ingredients will be creative, friendly, sociable and interactive
-  Make sure participants have a say in how your menu will be created and actively involve them in the preparation and serving
-  Mix your ingredients into a community venue that is clean, accessible, warm and atmospheric with accessible facilities
-  Provide low cost, good quality sustainable and nutritious food



RESOURCES

We hope you have enjoyed reading this guide and have found it useful. There are a range of resources available online, that can also support you with establishing and developing social eating.

We have produced a range of technical handbooks to accompany this guide, which can be freely downloaded from the TLC website. The Technical Handbook provides in depth information on the following topics and also include a range of useful links to websites and further information:

1. Finding the right venue
2. How to plan cook and eat sessions
3. Nutrition and malnutrition
4. Diversity and inclusion
5. Involving volunteers

Our social eating project was a collaboration between a number of different partner organisations. You can find more information about the valuable work they do through their organisations' websites, or by contacting them directly.

To access the Technical Handbooks visit:

TLC: Talk Listen Change
www.talklistenchange.org.uk

Ambition for Ageing
www.ambitionforageing.org.uk

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This project has been kindly funded by:
 Ambition for Ageing & The National Lottery Community Fund

LINKS

Funder's Website

The National Lottery Community Fund
www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk

Ambition for Ageing
www.ambitionforageing.org.uk

Project Partners websites

TLC: Talk Listen Change
www.talklistenchange.org.uk

Southway Housing Trust
www.southwayhousing.co.uk

HMR Circle
www.hmrcircle.org.uk

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing
www.rbh.org.uk

FoodSync
www.foodsync.co.uk

Cracking Good Food
www.crackinggoodfood.org

Bolton at Home
www.boltonathome.org.uk

Groundwork
www.groundwork.org.uk/hubs/greatermanchester



This guide and accompanying technical handbook was written in collaboration with a range of partners.



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