

Progress in Practice

The Good Food Project

A project in Lancashire to promote healthier eating and raise awareness, particularly among children, of the relationship between food and the environment

Summary

The Good Food Project began with the partnership of Daneshouse & Stoneyholme Sure Start and the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Primary Care Trust, to help improve the eating habits of local residents.

The project is funded by The Lancashire Children's Fund, Sure Start and Lancashire County Council National Institute of Adult Continuing Education Fund, and the team working on the Good Food Project includes a dietician, a community food co-ordinator, seven multilingual community food workers and two community gardeners. Sure Start also works together with a wider network of support organisations, such as schools, nurseries, local producers and community groups.

The Good Food Project teaches children to appreciate the whole life cycle of the food they eat and includes a healthy schools programme, with gardening clubs, cookery clubs and healthy snack schemes to help increase knowledge and exposure to good food. Also available are baby food preparation demonstrations and a healthy and ethical catering service social enterprise run by local women. Holiday activities for children and parents are organised - including visits to farms, gardens, markets and bakeries.

Lancashire County Council has now also joined the partnership to develop the Learning Through Allotments Project, which teaches children, and also their parents, about growing food, as well as healthy cooking and eating habits. This work addresses diet in the Daneshouse local ward after high incidences of diet related diseases were identified.

Jenny Slaughter, community paediatric dietician, believes that teaching healthy habits at an early age can help prevent many diseases later on. Activities such as cooking classes and gardening help foster independence, responsibility and creative thinking. The repercussions of the project in the wider community are also beneficial - it generates profit for the local economy by helping the school to purchase local food; the local environment has been enhanced through the new and improved allotments; increased cultural awareness is taught by drawing on cuisine from different cultures; and disadvantaged people have found work opportunities and new support.



A recent evaluation of the project by the Centre for Evaluation Studies and the Nationwide Children's Research Centre found considerable improvements in the diets of children related to the number of food project sessions attended. Plans are now underway for expanding the Good Food Project, and working with the Burnley Community Farm to introduce livestock tending to the scheme. The project team also hope to develop a nature trail along the banks of the canal between the new farm and allotments and set up a barge classroom to travel the canal.

Links and organisations involved: Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale PCT (www.bprpct.nhs.uk); Sure Start – the government's programme to support children, parents and communities through the integration of early education, childcare and health and family support services (www.surestart-daneshouse.co.uk/services); The Soil Association (www.soilassociation.org); Lancashire County Council (www.lancashire.gov.uk); for information on Healthy Eating and the National Healthy School Standard see www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/cat.php?catid=886&docid=7218; and for more general information about the Good Food Project, see the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale PCT press release at www.bprpct.nhs.uk/press60.pdf.

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