



Community  
Food Initiatives

# Community Food Initiatives 2022–2024

Case studies of projects and events

Facilitated by:



# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CFI Leader's Small Projects and Community Events</b>	<b>6</b>
The ARC Healthy Living Centre	7
Ballyhoura Development CLG	11
Carlow County Development Partnership	14
County Armagh Community Development (CACD)	16
County Kildare LEADER Partnership (CKLP)	18
County Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG	20
Empower Local Development CLG	22
Galway City Partnership	25
The Liffey Partnership	28
Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC)	31
The Old Library Trust Healthy Living Centre	34
ReachOut Healthy Living Centre	36
South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP)	40
<b>CFI at Home Projects</b>	<b>42</b>
Crisis Café CIC	42
Dublin South City Partnership	44
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	46

# Foreword



**Dr Gary A Kearney**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Safefood

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**Since 2010, Safefood has been funding community food programmes and putting healthy eating on the agenda in local communities.**

We have supported more than 50,000 people across the island of Ireland. Our innovative Community Food Initiatives Programme shows how a community-led approach can improve eating habits and also have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our citizens.

These wonderful initiatives are inspirational examples of how community-driven actions by local people can lead to lasting, positive changes in people's lives.



Safefood was set up under the British-Irish Agreement and is an all-island implementation body with a general remit to promote awareness and knowledge of food safety and nutrition issues on the island of Ireland. Organisations delivering the programme are from both Northern Ireland and Ireland: 4 projects in Northern Ireland and 9 projects in Ireland.

# Introduction

**The Community Food Initiative (CFI) aims to have a positive influence on the eating habits of families with children in low-income communities across the island of Ireland. It uses a community development approach to promote greater access and availability of healthy food in the community.**

**The CFI aims to identify and promote best practice under the following themes:**

1. Healthy eating
2. Healthy shopping
3. Budgeting and food/meal planning skills
4. Cooking skills
5. Improving the availability and access to safe and healthy food in the community
6. Preventing food waste, and promoting food safety and hygiene

To date, Safefood has funded 5 programmes, each lasting 3 years. The programme is funded by Safefood and administered by SECAD Partnership CLG. Since 2016, SECAD has worked with Safefood to develop and deliver the programme.



# CFI Leader's Small Projects and Community Events

## The 2022–2024 Community Food Initiative Leader organisations include:

- The ARC Healthy Living Centre
- Ballyhoura Development CLG
- Carlow County Development Partnership
- County Armagh Community Development
- County Kildare LEADER Partnership
- County Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG
- Empower Local Development CLG
- Galway City Partnership
- Liffey Partnership
- Offaly Local Development Company
- The Old Library Trust Healthy Living Centre
- ReachOut Healthy Living Centre
- South Kerry Development Partnership CLG

This booklet provides a summary of some of the community events and small projects hosted as part of the CFI programme 2022–2024. More information on the programme can be found at [www.safefood.net/community-food-initiatives](http://www.safefood.net/community-food-initiatives).



**Ryan Howard**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
SECAD Partnership CLG

Through the Community Food Initiatives (CFI), Safefood has provided the opportunity to invest in an impactful, logical and expanding programme of supports that is delivered within existing local partnerships. This approach ensures that CFI resources are used with maximum efficiency, directly helping those who need it most in ways that are likely to achieve lasting results. We are proud to be the co-designers and coordinators of this programme. Well done and thank you to all involved.

**SECAD** 

SECAD is a community-based, not-for-profit enabler of rural development and social inclusion. Since 1995, SECAD has supported individuals and groups to develop approaches and plans to address local issues. These include local volunteer-based services, creating employment and social enterprise opportunities, and bottom-up environmental initiatives.

# The Arc Healthy Living Centre

## Community event: Love Your Lunch Picnic

The ARC Healthy Living Centre (HLC) hosted a picnic and food treasure hunt for families in 2023. It was held before the 2 primary schools in Irvinestown broke up for the summer holidays.

At the event there was:



### Food treasure hunt

Food items were hidden around the garden and each family received a sheet containing clues to find the foods.



### Picnic

Families were given a picnic of wraps, fruit, berries and ice-cream.



### Goody bags

Each family received a hemp shopping bag containing the ingredients and recipe to make a Mexican bean salad or tuna rice salad. They were also given other locally available staple food items, recipes for all of the dishes at the food tasting, and a copy of the "Are you packing a healthy lunch?" leaflet. Northern Ireland Water provided reuseable water bottles for each child.



### Food tasting

3 salads from the 101 Square Meals recipe book were prepared for parents and children to taste. Samples of different fruits, cheeses and salad vegetables were also available for tasting.



### Healthy eating talk

There was a short talk about nourishing lunch choices for children, especially over the holidays. It also covered the importance of lunch in making sure that families' nutritional needs are met, as well as food safety and hygiene, and food storage.

The picnic was a new way to encourage families to attend a community event. Discussions with the 2 local primary school principals had revealed concerns about the content of packed lunches. Everyone thought that a fun event with food would be appealing to families.

Good organisation and co-operation between everyone involved was important. The schools promoted the event and recorded the details of people who were interested. The ARC HLC organised the activity, food tasting and goody bags. It was a great event and thoroughly enjoyed by both parents and children.

The weather was the uncontrollable factor and while alternative arrangements for holding the event indoors were ready, these were not necessary.

The organisers felt that this would be an event to hold again. Another time, they would create a slightly more adventurous treasure hunt and make better arrangements in case of bad weather. The idea of a picnic and the goody bags to take away afterwards appealed to the families and these elements have been included in other CFI events organised by the ARC HLC throughout the year.

Children tasting different fruits, cheese and salad vegetables at the ARC Healthy Living Centre's Love Your Lunch Picnic.



## Small project: Big Cook, Little Cook

**This project provided an opportunity for parents to cook with their toddlers. They learnt how young children can be introduced to food and how it is prepared, from an early age.**

The project was developed for Cherish Sure Start in Irvinestown and delivered by Claire Holmes (CFI Co-ordinator and registered dietitian) and Susan McDonagh (Cook it! Tutor, Cherish Sure Start).

Two recipes from the 101 Square Meals recipe book, one baked item and one main meal, were cooked at each session. Recipes were chosen that could be completed within the 1½-hour session time. Where possible, ingredients were measured/weighed out in advance to reduce mess and save time.

The baked item was prepared first and then the main dish. There was time to taste the recipes during the session and the remaining food was taken home in foil containers for cooking or reheating at home. Toys and games were available for the children to play with when they become bored with cooking.

Each session includes a short “Nutrition nugget” which was delivered by the dietitian during the session. The recipes and topics covered were as follows:

Session	Recipes	Nutrition nugget	Focus
1	Wholemeal scones Spaghetti Bolognese	Fibre and fluid	Fibre sources and adequate fluid for young children
2	Apple or rhubarb crumble Chicken curry (using pre-cooked chicken)	Fruit and vegetable portions	Portion sizes for small children and adults. How to include fruit and vegetables in meals and snacks
3	Ultimate basic muffins Beef tacos	Iron sources	Importance of iron-rich foods to prevent iron deficiency
4	Simple sponge using berries or other fruit Lentil and vegetable stew	Calcium	Sources of calcium and vitamin D that promote healthy bones

In order to cater for food allergies, parents were consulted before each session to discuss any changes that needed to be made to recipes and ingredients.

At the end of the programme, participants said that they felt very welcome and enjoyed taking part. The recipes were easy to cook and tasty, and their children loved cooking and helping. They found the nutrition nuggets very useful and it was helpful to be able to ask questions to the dietitian involved.

A family enjoying making muffins together at one of the Big Cook, Little Cook sessions.



# Ballyhoura Development CLG

## Community event: Milford Summer Fair

This community fair, is organised by Milford Community Council and provides a variety of activities from a vintage car display to a kid’s tractor run. Visitors to the event enjoy the exhibits and all the different stands at the show. Over 100 people visited the fair in 2023, providing Ballyhoura Development with the opportunity to connect with people in a community setting.

Ballyhoura Development hosted a stand at the fair where they provided Safefood healthy eating resources and invited parents and children to take part in the Know your Food Pyramid competition. Participants were challenged to complete the food pyramid. To be in with a chance of winning fresh food prizes, they had to complete it correctly, against the clock. This was particularly popular with parents with young children. They could also get ideas for healthy snacks and try new fruit combinations and snacks.

Ballyhoura Development also invited School Fitness Ireland to the event. It organised activities which were designed to get the whole family involved, including gymnastics and yoga. The combination of the Safefood information and the School Fitness Ireland activities gave families lots of information about an overall healthier lifestyle. It also gave families an opportunity to discuss how they can make small steps towards achieving a healthier lifestyle. Coaches from School Fitness Ireland were also available to talk to families about how they could have a more active lifestyle.



Over **100** people visited the fair in 2023



Ballyhoura Development invited School Fitness Ireland to organise family activities at the Milford Summer Fair. School Fitness Ireland also talked to families about how to achieve healthier lifestyles.

## Small project: Family Cookery Programme

**The Family Cookery Programme helped parents of children of primary school age to learn how to cook easy nutritious meals from the 101 Square Meals recipe book.**

This project was delivered by Hospital Family Resource Centre as part of a number of supports for vulnerable families across east Limerick. Parents and their children learnt about food preparation and healthy choices during this project.

The class was delivered weekly by a Limerick Clare Education and Training Board (ETB) tutor. The tutor is trained in food preparation and cookery and is a Healthy Food Made Easy tutor. An ingredient pack was provided each week to the families so they had what they needed to cook in class.

Each week, they got practical hands-on experience of what is involved in preparing a family meal. Each family was also given the chance to join the Hospital Family Resource Centre (FRC) Training and Education mailing list which provides information on the supports and services that are available at the centre.

Each family received their own cookbook folder. It included their weekly handouts on healthy eating, the food skills topics discussed, and the recipe they were preparing together that week. Recipes were chosen from the 101 Square Meals recipe book. These resources were provided by Safefood and partnering bodies such as MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service).

The sessions covered the following topics and recipes:

Session	Topics covered	Recipe
<b>Week 1</b>	Registration, introductions and group contract, Building a food pyramid	
<b>Week 2</b>	The fibre providers – using wholemeal versions of ingredients alongside lots of tasty vegetables	Chicken fajitas using wholemeal tortilla wraps
<b>Week 3</b>	Focus on fats, using alternatives	Apple crumble, using low-fat butter instead of margarine
<b>Week 4</b>	Food for life, healthy fake-aways	Beef burgers and spicy potato wedges
<b>Week 5</b>	Shop smart and using leftovers. MABS resources – Tips to Save on your Weekly Food Shop	Coronation chicken with rice
<b>Week 6</b>	The road ahead	Rice and vegetable hotpot with chickpeas

This programme had a positive influence on the family as a unit. It helped both parents and children learn to cook together and enjoy their time in the kitchen with easy-to-prepare meals that are fun for all the family to eat. This project improved cooking skills, promoted healthy shopping and helped prevent food waste by developing the children's understanding of what goes into making meals.

It also provided a fun environment for the parents and children to spend time together and cook together. For example, on the first day, one of the Ballyhoura team dressed up in a bear costume. This immediately engaged the children and added a story-telling element to the topic they were discussing.

The programme was a great success. Parents said that they learnt new tips about cooking and were given freedom to try something new with their children.

Families at the Ballyhoura Family Cooking Programme prepared a different recipe each week.



# Carlow County Development Partnership

## Community event: Food for your Mood

This community event was delivered in conjunction with Mensana Fest. Registered nutritionist, Ellen Roche, gave a talk on food and nutrition and how it influences people's mental health. Mensana Fest is an annual event organised by Carlow Mental Health to promote positive mental health in Carlow.

The talk focused on explaining the connection between diet and emotional wellbeing. During the talk, Ellen spoke about substituting certain items in the food shop for healthier options. She also talked about the benefits of meal planning to reduce stress and costs.

At the event, Carlow County Development Partnership gave an overview of the CFI programme. It hosted an information stand to promote the programme and recruit participants for the small projects. Other organisations, including Carlow Mental Health Association and Healthy Ireland, also hosted stands, providing information and resources.

A number of organisations involved in Mensana Fest worked together to promote the event. It demonstrated an interest among the public for similar events to be held as part of the CFI.



A number of organisations hosted stands at the Food for your Mood community event which was organised by Carlow County Development Partnership in conjunction with Mensana Fest.

## Small project: Home Cooking Skills

**This was a practical and skills-based project, to teach participants how to prepare and cook meals for their families. The aim was to help participants develop skills that they could use at home. Meals that could be adapted for dinners and school lunches were chosen.**

The project also included “fake-away” recipes, where participants learnt to recreate traditional takeaway foods in a healthier and more cost-effective way. Tutors gave a demonstration and participants were encouraged to try the techniques at home when they were preparing the meals.

Each participant received an ingredient pack containing all items they needed to cook the recipes. Each week, they were encouraged to identify what ingredients would be needed for the following week’s recipes. The tutor helped participants plan their meals for the week and talked about the importance of shopping for the planned meals. The tutor also explained how to make meals go further and how to prepare multiple meals at one time, to help with budgeting and meal planning. Participants were given the estimated cost of each meal cooked during the classes. They also discussed how these costs compared to the price of quick or instant meals and takeaways.

Every participant received a comprehensive pack, which included the 101 Square Meals recipe book, portion plates for both children and adults, and relevant materials from Safefood. Throughout the project, they talked about their current food choices and shopping

habits. The tutor regularly referred to resources such as: tips for quick meals, eating on a budget, promoting healthy eating habits for children, reducing salt intake, managing portion sizes, making healthier dishes, meal planning, and the significance of family meals.

Weekly communication was maintained with participants by the CFI Leader, who reached out individually to ensure ongoing engagement. Classes were highly interactive. There was plenty of discussion and participants were encouraged to ask the tutor questions, providing an engaging learning environment.



Participants learnt how to prepare and cook meals for their families at the Carlow County Development Partnership Home Cooking Skills course.

# County Armagh Community Development (CACD)

## Community event: Feel Good Armagh

**Feel Good Armagh is an annual event organised by Armagh Locality Planning Group and brings together the local service providers and support organisations working with children, young people and families in Armagh City and the surrounding areas.**

The event was advertised as a Community Information Day with information provided on support services for adults and families. It was felt that by linking into this established event, CACD would be able to engage more effectively with more young families.

The CACD information stand handed out healthy fruit pots to the children so they could try fresh fruit. At the same time, it gave staff an opportunity to talk to the parents. CACD's interactive stand included an activity which helped

people to understand food labelling. It had examples of healthy lunch box ideas (with resources available from the Public Health Agency) and a visual display of the sugar content in different drinks, cereals, biscuits and other foods. The stand also provided a wide range of information leaflets and resources (from Safefood and the Southern Health and Social Care Trust Cook It! Team) for participants to take home.

CACD also used this event to promote its upcoming small projects and to recruit participants. For those unable to attend, the Feel Good Armagh organisers produced a booklet. This contained all the relevant names, contact details and services of the information stands that were there on the day. This booklet is also available online.



The County Armagh  
Community Development  
stand at the Feel Good  
Armagh event.

## Small project: Making the Most of your Slow Cooker

**Making the Most of your Slow Cooker is a 4-week programme developed by dietitians within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT). Staff from CACD are trained to deliver the programme.**

The programme is designed to encourage participants to use a slow cooker, shop smarter and make healthier food choices. Topics covered include the Eatwell Guide, basic food safety, batch cooking, store cupboard essentials, meal planning and shopping tips.

As CACD covers an area which is mostly rural, hybrid delivery has been popular, with the first session taking place in-person and the remaining 3 sessions online. Families with young children have found it easier to join online rather than arranging childcare or making other arrangements to get children to extracurricular activities. One of the benefits of the hybrid method is that extra sessions can be delivered online if anyone misses a night.

Each week, participants received an ingredient pack (which they collected from the supermarket), containing the ingredients for that week's recipe. During the sessions, the participants had the opportunity to talk to the trained facilitator and to each other.

At the end of each session, participants could ask questions and share ideas.

With permission agreed in advance, a WhatsApp group was set up for participants. This allowed them to discuss the programme with each other and to forward their photographs taken during the preparation and cooking of the recipes. Through the WhatsApp group, people were able to comment and give the tutors feedback. After the project had ended, the participants continued to share recipes they used and talk about changes they had made to their family meals.

The participants received a slow cooker if they did not already own one. They were also given a slow cooker recipe book – a step-by-step guide to help families make healthier meals which is based on the Eatwell Guide. The slow cooker and recipe book were provided by the SHSCT. Participants were also given a resource pack. This contained information on frozen vegetables, recipe costs, food safety, using leftover food, the 101 Square Meals recipe book, child and adult portion plates, a portion-size serving cup and the Healthy Lunchbox leaflet from the Public Health Agency.

Participants in the Making the Most of your Slow Cooker Course learnt lots of healthy slow cooker recipes and had the chance to interact with the tutors and other participants.

# County Kildare LEADER Partnership (CKLP)

## Community event: Celbridge Family Fun For All Food Event

This event promoted educational activities and discussion around healthier eating habits. There was a cookery demonstration of budget-friendly recipes which included discussions about balanced meals, meal planning and batch cooking. Attendees were able to taste samples from the recipes cooked, including lasagne, vegetable soup and brown bread.

In addition, there were several stands in the hall promoting various services and providing entertainment for the children. A HSE dentist discussed the importance of healthy eating habits for healthy teeth. The local Family Resource Centre and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) team also promoted their work and the services

they provide to the community. Visitors were entertained with Zumba dancing and face painting for children. Children could design their own healthy breakfast plate at the arts and crafts table and there were worksheets to help them to understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods.

This was CKLP's first community event. They learnt about the importance of interactive stands for encouraging interest from visitors. Providing children's activities meant that parents and guardians could take their time with the other information stands.



Participants trying meals they prepared with County Kildare LEADER partnership.

## Small project: 4 Weeks 4 Meals

**This interactive cooking and nutrition course was delivered by a Healthy Food Made Easy Peer Leader. It centred on how to cook healthy, balanced meals from the 101 Square Meals recipe book.**

Participants learnt how to cook 4 dishes over 4 weeks. Within each session, there was also a discussion around nutrition and meal planning. Participants each received a copy of 101 Square Meals recipe book, Safefood leaflets and links to additional healthy eating information on the Safefood and HSE websites. The meals prepared during the course were cottage pie, spicy lentil and tomato soup, Thai butternut squash curry, and apple and mixed berry crumble.

Participants prepared the meal alongside the demonstrator during the sessions. This provided valuable experience to help participants bring what they learned into their own home and boost their confidence around cooking. During each session, there was a discussion about healthy eating, including why each meal had been selected and the nutritional benefits of each of the recipes. Food safety and hygiene were also discussed as well as the advantages of batch cooking, how to reduce food waste and meal planning.

The informal delivery of the programme allowed participants to ask questions and really engage with the programme. This was key to the success of the programme.



A participant cutting vegetables for a meal prepared during the 4 Weeks 4 Meals course, run by County Kildare LEADER Partnership.

# County Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG

## Community event: Euro50 Family Food Event

As part of the celebration for Euro 50, Cranmore Co-op received some funding to run a celebratory event. The Co-op (as it is known locally) is a charity that provides community development, youth services and community support for Cranmore and all communities in the Sligo East City Area and beyond. Euro 50 marked Ireland's fiftieth anniversary of joining the European Union.

It was decided to run a food-themed event as the Cranmore Community Garden was aiming to promote the development of the community pizza oven. This event gave an opportunity to connect with local families and promote healthy eating through inclusion, diversity and fun.

The event happened at the beginning of the summer, so a BBQ cookery demonstration was hosted. The demonstration had a strong focus on healthy cooking on a BBQ and showed how vegetables and fruits can be used in BBQ cooking. The event also showcased traditional dishes from European countries prepared by families from other countries who are living in the area. The demo showed how to use a BBQ for cooking food safely and how to ensure the correct food temperatures. Hygiene and preventing cross contamination were discussed, along with how to maintain and clean your BBQ.

There was an information stand focusing on healthy eating for babies, children, young people and families. The event had a family fun aspect, with face painting, music, and arts and crafts.

Members of the CFI Steering Committee had recommended basing the event on BBQ cooking as it is very popular in the area during the summer months. There has not been a focus on healthy eating at community events in the area before. It was felt that this would be an innovative approach to showing how easy it can be to eat healthily even while enjoying a BBQ.



How to prepare healthy and safe BBQ meals at the Euro50 Family Food Event.

## Small project: Cookery on a Budget

**Cookery on a Budget was a 4-week cookery programme, where families learnt how to cook a different dish each week. The aim was to teach families how to cook from scratch on a budget, how to batch cook and reduce their food waste, and how to reduce their food bill.**

At the end of the first session, there was a discussion among the participants and tutor to get feedback and decide on the recipes for the following 3 weeks. This allowed the participants to learn how to cook meals that they knew they would want to eat in their own home. The types of dishes included summertime salads, pesto pasta, lasagne and turkey pittas.

The programme had a very strong focus on family participation and each member was encouraged to take part from the very beginning, from food preparation to cooking and cleaning up. The programme was hands-on, which proved to be effective and engaging.

The tutor talked about food safety, hygiene and batch cooking while making the dishes. Although the participants were not involved in shopping for the ingredients used, the tutor explained the shopping list and what options are better than others.

Each participant received a copy of the 101 Square Meals recipe book, adult and child portion plates and a measuring cup. The programme took a holistic approach and, alongside cookery skills, included information on food shopping, meal planning and preventing waste. This worked well and Co Sligo LEADER Partnership plans to use this approach again.



Participants in the Cookery on a Budget session preparing to taste the foods prepared.

# Empower Local Development CLG

## Community event: Nutrition for children and athletes involved in sport

**This event took place in Mulhuddart Boxing Academy in 2023 and was attended by young people and their parents.**

The interactive session was led by CORU-registered dietitian Sonja Lynch who provided nutrition information on the following:

- Nutrition when exercising
- Food to fuel the body
- Proper hydration
- Importance of 3 meals and snacks a day

Information was provided on how to use the food pyramid to plan meals and participants learnt about portion sizes for both adults and children. Sonja advised on the best snacks/food to eat before training/exercising. She also talked about the best foods/snacks to eat after training or engaging in physical activity and the importance of proper hydration.

The second part of the evening involved a cookery demonstration of 2 Safefood recipes, which the attendees were invited to try. The recipes chosen were egg muffins and a smoothie – from the 101 Square Meals recipe book and Safefood website.

Participants received Safefood leaflets, recipe cards for the recipes prepared during the cooking demonstration, and the Irish Heart Foundation Food Shopping Card.



A community event for young people and their parents held by Empower Local Development CLG, with discussions about nutrition and a cookery demonstration.

Feedback from the parents and young athletes was very positive:

**“I’ve learnt a lot about what I should be eating and when, how to eat healthily and to make sure I include lots of different foods. I know what foods to eat to give me more energy. Sonja was excellent and explained everything so well. I’m less confused now.”**

**“Sonja was lovely and gave us loads of great information and tips on nutrition for training, what foods are good for the body and how the body works.”**

**“The dietitian was excellent. She has a lovely, easy approach. I’ve learnt how to balance my meals.”**

**“The dietitian was excellent. From now on, rather than eating the same food, I’ll add more variety. I really like the egg muffins and the smoothie tonight and I’m delighted to have the recipes for them.”**



## Small project: Parent and Child Nutrition and Cookery Course

**This small project was delivered in Balbriggan in 2023 to support parents with children aged 12 years and under. The purpose of the project was to allow parents and children to learn about nutrition and how to improve their cooking skills together.**

During the course, participants learnt how to use the food pyramid to make healthier choices for meals and snacks, and how to make sure they are getting the correct amounts of each food group. They also learnt about the importance of good nutrition for their overall health and wellbeing.

There was also a focus on how to shop for the family on a budget, how to avoid falling for promotions in supermarkets, and how meal planning can help when trying to stick to a budget.

The practical cookery element of the programme saw parents and their children preparing and cooking healthy, delicious recipes together. Parents learnt how to double a recipe when cooking and how this can help with both budgeting and use of time. Food safety, how to freeze and defrost food safely, and the advantages of freezing meals was also covered.

Parents discovered how their children love helping with preparing and cooking family meals. It was also about having fun too, so the parents and children learnt how to bake bread, scones, banana bread, and other tasty treats such as buns. They also made children's favourites such as home-made burgers, pizzas and smoothies, proving that eating healthily does not have to be boring!

Each participant received a copy of the Healthy Food Made Easy participants' handbook, the Cool Dudes book for the children, the 101 Square Meals recipe book and the Safefood ingredient measuring cup. They also received information leaflets from Healthy Ireland, Safefood and the Irish Heart Foundation (including Healthy Food for Life, Healthy Lunchboxes, 5-Day Planner, Food Shopping Card and a copy of the Children's Food Pyramid poster and stickers).

# Galway City Partnership

## Community event: Halloween Harvest Event

**Galway City Partnership and Healthy Galway City partnered with the volunteers from Ballinfoile Mór Community Garden to organise and host a Halloween Harvest Event in October 2022. This event aimed to introduce families to the community garden in their area, learn about growing vegetables and how to use fresh, locally grown produce in their cooking at home.**

Visitors to the garden were given a tour by the head gardener. They learnt about the seasonal vegetables that grow naturally at specific times of year, how a community garden operates and about the variety of fruits and vegetables that can be enjoyed fresh from the garden. Following the tour, small groups of children and parents enjoyed an interactive demonstration from Healthy Food Made Easy Leader and chef Fiona McEnroy.

Fiona and the participants prepared a warming soup and brown bread lunch from the 101 Square Meals recipe book which everyone shared, along with some fresh fruit. Each family left with a goody bag containing the ingredients and recipe for farmhouse vegetable soup taken from 101 Square Meals, and recipes for autumn vegetable soups and brown bread. In addition, they received a pumpkin and instructions on carving it safely, a recipe for pumpkin soup, and tips to reduce waste. It was interesting to hear that many of the children and adults did not realise that pumpkins for carving are edible.

Safe cooking and hygiene practices were demonstrated and the goody bag contained detailed instructions for children and parents about food safety and hygiene. During the event, children took part in Drumadore workshops – a high energy, rhythm-based workout incorporating music and movement – and a face painter was also on hand. Families were encouraged to use their goody bags over the Halloween mid-term break and try out healthy soup and snack recipes, minimise food waste and enjoy the experience of cooking together.

This was the first event that Galway City Partnership ran in the Ballinfoile Mór Community Garden and it was very successful. The garden volunteers were very engaged and took real ownership of the event. The older members of the community were delighted to see young people showing an interest in the community garden and in their work and took great pride in explaining what goes on in a community garden, and the benefits of gardening.

Feedback from attendees was very positive. The children enjoyed visiting and exploring the local garden in their community and participating in the range of activities available. Parents reported that both children and adults enjoyed preparing the soup at home using the recipe and ingredients and that the activities were helpful during the autumn mid-term break.

## Small project: Healthy Food Made Easy Ballybane

**Healthy Food Made Easy (HFME) was a six-week nutrition education programme held in Ballybane Community Resource Centre. It aimed to provide practical information on healthy eating and improve skills by showing participants how to prepare healthy, nutritious, low-cost meals and snacks for themselves and their families.**

Healthy eating advice included how to read food labels, budgeting and meal planning. New recipes and demonstrations were provided each week. The sessions covered the following topics:

- Session 1: Building a Food Pyramid – introducing healthy eating guidelines
- Session 2: The Fibre Providers – fibre in cereals, fruit and vegetables
- Session 3: Focus on Fats – learning about the good and bad fats
- Session 4: Food for Life – family eating, children’s diets
- Session 5: Shop Smart – shopping on a budget, food labelling
- Session 6: The Road Ahead – planning long-term changes in eating habits

There was group participation in the cookery/cook-along session and participants were encouraged to try the recommended recipes out at home with their children and family.

CORU-registered dietitian Regina Rattigan provided a virtual session for participants towards the end of the course to provide an input and answer any specific dietary questions.

Participants received copies of the 101 Square Meals recipe book to encourage them to continue their learning and exploration of healthy eating at home. Galway City Partnership worked with Galway Roscommon Education Training Board (GRETB) to provide a tutor, which was a key element that contributed to the success of the sessions. Their involvement ensured that the coordination and implementation of the programme was seamless, swift and beneficial to all involved.

Involving a dietitian for the week 5 session proved challenging but, thankfully, dietitian Regina Rattigan rose to the challenge of delivering a virtual session. Participants were asked to submit questions and queries, and Regina recorded her responses which were then played at the next session.

Another challenge was that Covid restrictions meant classes could not use the kitchen in the centre due to social distancing requirements. The course was instead delivered in a larger room at the centre and used the Healthy Galway City portable stove.



Children trying soup at the Halloween Harvest Event, organised by Galway City Partnership, Healthy Galway City and the Ballinfoile Mór Community Garden.

# The Liffey Partnership

## Community event: Halloween Hullabaloo

**This community event in Ballyfermot Family Resource Centre was a very busy, fun event for parents and children. They spent quality time together, while learning about manageable healthy eating habits.**

The food and fun attracted the crowd and gave the opportunity to promote accessible ways of eating healthily in a relaxed and non-intrusive way. There were plenty of activities and attractions for both parents and children.

Lauren Corbet, the Health Programmes Officer with Liffey Partnership and CFI Leader, hosted an information stand with Safefood resources. She talked to parents about the information on the stand and answered questions about children's eating habits. To encourage healthy eating over Halloween, printouts of Colcannon and Barmbrack recipes were available to take home. There were also promotional videos on Healthy Food Made Easy and We Can Quit on display on an iPad.

Fun educational activities included guessing the sugar content of the most common fizzy drinks and playing a food pyramid card game. A video explaining how to check your urine for your hydration levels was played along with tips on how to boost your fluid intake. Water samples flavoured with fruit, mint and no-sugar cordial were on offer.

The food room had nutrition information on display and treats including colcannon, fruit pots, popcorn, barmbrack, and low-sugar yogurts and cordial. Kids enjoyed a variety of traditional foodie Halloween games like Bobbing for Apples, Guess the Veg, and Slime Buckets for prizes such as

colouring pencils, colouring books and skipping ropes. An art table was set up with materials to make scary Halloween masks and the face painting station was a big hit. Children also gathered around to hear enchanting tales about the importance of making nutritious choices.

There was Halloween music throughout the event and prizes were given for the best children's costumes. As the event wound down, families sat to watch Hocus Pocus on a big TV screen. Comfortable blankets and small chairs were provided.

Timing the event to coincide with a well-established local festival and school holiday worked well because recruiting parents for additional activities during regular school days can be very difficult. Using popular fun activities was a great attraction, rather than advertising a health promotion event which can be off-putting to some people.



The Halloween Hullabaloo community event provided healthy food for attendees to try including popcorn and yoghurts.

## Small project: Healthy Food Made Easy with Cherry Orchard Food Bank

Before this project started, a cooking demonstration table was set up at the Cherry Orchard Food Bank every Friday morning for 4 weeks. This provided an opportunity to talk to families and understand their needs.

During this process, it emerged that these families experience many barriers to healthy eating – not just food poverty. These include low literacy resulting in difficulties reading recipes and packet instructions, illness, poor mental health and difficult life circumstances. All these things make it particularly hard to prepare fresh home-cooked meals.

Feedback from families showed that they struggle to know what to do with some of the food given to them by the food bank. They also feel overwhelmed at the thought of cooking at home. In response, a Healthy Food Made Easy course was planned. It was held at a familiar community centre and with a focus on ingredients that families receive in their bi-weekly food bank box, such as rice, pasta and porridge.

Liffey Valley Partnership partnered with Cherry Orchard Food Bank to provide a Healthy Food Made Easy course for food bank users.



The focus was on easy recipes that need only a few ingredients and little equipment. Face-to-face training was thought to be the best way to help boost confidence and overcome barriers such as low literacy. Classes were designed to be interactive, collaborative cooking sessions where participants get hands-on experience. The hope was that the classes would help participants to feel much more confident about trying things at home.

In addition to the ingredients that they received from the food bank, €20 in supermarket vouchers was given to each person who attended a class. This allowed them to buy other ingredients not provided by the food bank so that they could cook the meal at home.

Videos, visual aids, simplified written materials, graphic recipes (instead of text-heavy ones), interactive games and team verbal quizzes were used. Hands-on group learning and discussions during the programme also helped anyone with literacy challenges. The team regularly reached out to participants and offered additional one-to-one support if needed. In this way, a supportive learning environment was created where everyone felt comfortable asking questions. Everyone received a copy of the Healthy Food Made Easy handbook and the 101 Square Meals recipe book, as well as Safefood and HSE booklets.

This was Liffey Partnership's first collaboration with Cherry Orchard Food Bank. It worked extremely well and helped the organisation to support "difficult-to-reach" families within the community. Hosting a demo table and fruit stand at the food bank, where people were already going, resulted in great footfall and engagement. Having the cooking demo provided a focal point and an easy conversation starter. It meant people could be approached in an informal and discreet way. The attendance was consistently high for this programme.

# Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC)

## Community event: Moneygall Celebrating Community and Food

**This community event brought together and showcased 3 social enterprises: the local community café, garden and gym. This was also supported by Moneygall Development Association and the Church of Ireland Community Hall Committee. All 3 social enterprises participated, with the main role being to advertise and recruit attendees.**

The Community Garden held an open morning between 10am and 12pm. Attendees could meet the committee, take a tour of the garden and learn more about the aims and objectives of the garden. They also joined in with some gardening activities, learnt about the produce (and where it goes) and could ask any question about gardening/ planting fruit and vegetables.

Refreshments were served in the newly opened community café. This gave visitors a chance to see inside the new café and hear about the activities, events and volunteering opportunities there. A cookery demonstration and tasting took place between 1pm and 3pm in the Church of Ireland Hall in Moneygall with Yvonne Carty from Hey Pesto! Aoife Kelly, a HFME tutor, helped by providing further information.

Local groups and enterprises had set up information stands in the community hall. A representative from the community gym talked about exercise classes and events coming up over the summer.

The main theme of the day was improving access to safe, healthy food in the community. The event was designed to support local services and events that promote a healthy lifestyle, by showcasing the community café, community garden and the community gym. A wide range of leaflets on healthy eating were available and visitors had the chance to talk to representatives from OLDC and many local groups. Local groups and social enterprises were able to display their pop-up banners, to hand out leaflets and to take part in the events.



A cookery demonstration and tasting at the Moneygall Celebrating Community and Food event, organised by Offaly Local Development Company.

## Small project: Parent and Child Cookery Project

This small project consisted of 4 parent and child cookery sessions which took place in Birr Theatre during the 2024 summer holidays. The sessions were led by cookery tutor, Yvonne Carty from Hey Pesto! who has been involved in the delivery of the CFI in Offaly since 2016. Yvonne is a trained Healthy Food Made Easy tutor.

The project allowed children and adults to learn about food together, while providing space for children to sample new foods. Parents were able to try out new recipes and could immediately see if their children enjoyed the food. All the recipes chosen had things that children of all ages could help with, such as picking the fruit for the fruit salad or choosing toppings for the pitta-bread pizzas.

The children who attended covered a large age range and therefore they were given age-appropriate jobs. With 20 children taking part, the group was divided into older and younger children. Yvonne led the cookery part with the older children and the HFME/Cool Dudes instructor involved the younger children in some no-cook recipes.

As the cooking was taking place, Yvonne explained the ingredients. She talked to the children about what foods they liked and why, whether they were willing to try other things and what was preventing them from doing so. As they saw the ingredients being used and everyone talking about different foods, they were much more willing to get involved.



A child involved in the Offaly Parent and Child Cookery Project, showing the food made.

Everyone got to taste the food and this gave time for the tutors to chat to the group on a wider range of topics. These included shopping on a budget, ways to involve children, recommended serving sizes and the differences between child and adult portions. They also chatted about fun healthier swaps when preparing children's snacks and lunches. This format allowed space for peer support and all the parents swapped recipes and ideas.

Each week, the parents received printouts of the recipes from the session. They were encouraged to take samples and ingredients to try at home with the rest of the family. At the end of the project, they received a copy of the 101 Square Meals recipe book. They also received leaflets from Safefood on healthy snacks and the sugar content of drinks, handwashing booklets, and packs with leaflets on handwashing. They also received printouts of some of the recipes and activities from the Cool Dudes programme (Youth Healthy Food Made Easy books) as some of these activities were incorporated into the sessions.

The format for the project developed as parents talked about the difficulties they faced when trying to choose healthier recipes and shop more healthily, all while keeping children occupied. During the cookery demo at the CFI Community Event in Birr, many participants said they would welcome further opportunities for children and adults to learn about healthy eating together. Having seen the success of the CFI event, a small project following the same format was planned.

The classes were slightly chaotic because of having both older and younger children. Having 2 tutors worked well because it meant that there could be 2 separate groups when needed. Moving away from the formal class structure was extremely effective for both parents and children. The children were more open to being involved and trying new things when they were having fun and did not feel that they were being forced to do things in a classroom setting.

# The Old Library Trust Healthy Living Centre

## Community event: Air Fryer Masterclass

**This community event in 2023 showcased how busy families can prepare and cook different healthy food options. During the interactive masterclass, tutor Seana McCafferty gave a series of hands-on demonstrations, sharing her expert tips on cooking with an air fryer. Seana also introduced Insta-Pot cooking, where she demonstrated how to make soups and stews.**

The Old Library Trust (OLT) Healthy Living Centre staff member Julie White opened the event with a fun introduction to the Eatwell Guide and the importance of good nutrition. She also gave tips on healthier shopping and shopping on a budget. Julie linked this discussion to the recipes and ingredients that were going to be used during Seana's demonstrations.

In her live demonstrations, Seana introduced each recipe and showed, step-by-step, how to prepare and cook the ingredients. This allowed people to see in real time what is involved in creating quick, delicious meals, along with how simple and easy it can be. Seana also spoke about meal planning and the importance of kitchen hygiene when preparing food. Once each dish was created, attendees were invited to taste the food and provide feedback.

Everyone was encouraged to ask questions and chat with Julie and Seana throughout the event which created a relaxed and enjoyable environment. The OLT has found that organising events like the Air Fryer Masterclass has allowed them to meet with people living in the community

and to introduce the other services and programmes they provide, including their healthy eating programmes.

Before the event, OLT staff members talked to some of their clients about what should be included in the event. As a result of these conversations, staff decided to add in InstaPot recipes as many people in the area had started to use them. Through their work, the OLT found that many families and adults wanted to learn how to make quick, cost-effective meals. This element was easily added to the running order of the evening after initial planning with Seana.

As people tasted the food, gave feedback and asked questions during the live cooking demonstrations, their knowledge and confidence increased. They also learnt about portion sizes and got copies of the OLT cookbook from the information stands. Other displays highlighted the importance of fresh ingredients and reducing the consumption of sugary drinks and foods in children's diets.



The Air Fryer Masterclass community event, run by The Old Library Trust Healthy Living Centre.

## Small project: Come Dine with Me

**At events like the Air Fryer Masterclass, the OLT is able to introduce people to their healthy eating programmes. They also collect feedback that helps design new initiatives. One programme coming out of the feedback was the Come Dine with Me project.**

During July and August 2022, the OLT offered local young parents and their children a family dining experience over 4 weeks. Families were provided with nutrition sessions and live cooking demos with a popular local online cooking tutor, Seana McCafferty. The programme focused on building the confidence of young parents to enable them to recreate well-balanced healthy meals at home.

Families took part in live cooking demonstrations of healthy meals with the aim of building their confidence to cook meals at home. Each week, they received key nutrition information about healthy eating. Families were given recipes and information about cooking with slow cookers and air fryers, as well as learning

about affordable cooking costs and bulk cooking. They also discussed meal planning and budgeting. Food safety and hygiene were key components of each session.

Each week, at the end of the session, the families sat together to eat the meal that had been prepared during the session. The OLT (with the CFI funding and through linking with Foyle Food Bank) provided ingredients for the participants so that they could cook the meal at home.

The OLT ran this programme across summer months, linking with the community plan to support families facing holiday hunger during the school holidays. This project provided an easy and accessible way for families to learn and share meals together without judgement or stigma. They also benefited from an inclusive and friendly learning experience when they were introduced to a new topic each week.



Each week, at the end of the session, the families sat together to eat the meal that had been prepared during the Come Dine with Me project.

# ReachOut Healthy Living Centre

## Community event: Halloween Family Food and Fun Day

This Halloween-themed event was held in 2022 in Duncairn Community Centre in Belfast just before Halloween. The range of stalls and activities included entertainment for the children and information for the parents. Everyone was provided with a healthy early dinner.

A cookery demonstration showed attendees how to make pumpkin soup. Families were given a pumpkin so that they could make the soup at home.

There were a number of competitions, including Guess the Produce, when 23 seasonal fruits, vegetables and herbs were displayed and attendees were invited to identify the items. Many people took part in this activity – the facilitators were very surprised at how some people struggled with naming some common fruit and vegetables. Participants could then enter a prize draw. Each winner received a prize of a food goody bag consisting of soup ingredients, vegetables and fruit. There was also a free draw for 4 sets of pots and pans funded through the Belfast City Council Kitchen Equipment Grant.



Children and adults enjoying the Halloween-themed Family Food and Fun Day at ReachOut Healthy Living Centre, Belfast.

A number of other organisations participated in the event:

- Smile Surestart support very young families in Belfast. They hosted an information stand where parents could find out about how to access their services.
- Kiva's Café @ the Duncairn provided food for all participants including a veg box soup, vegetarian sandwiches and wraps.
- Tesco provided 60 bottles of water for participants free of charge.
- Duncairn Community Centre provided the venue free of charge.
- Food Standards Agency hosted an information stand and gave families goody bags containing leaflets, the Eatwell Guide, water bottles, cotton aprons.
- Belfast Health & Social Care Trust Dietetic Service hosted an information stand featuring sugar and fat displays, healthy lunchboxes, energy efficient cooking, better deals on meals, healthy breakfasts for pre-school children, and healthier Halloween treats.
- There was a physical dance activity session to engage the children while the parents were viewing the information stands.
- Belfast Sensory Bus, funded by Belfast City Council, was staffed by the ReachOut HLC sessional team, who looked after the children while parents attended the cookery demonstration.
- There was arts and crafts for children. Children could paint pumpkins on tote bags.
- ReachOut HLC hosted an information stand which showcased the 101 Square Meals recipe book and the Eatwell Guide. It also ran a map game and a Know Your Sugars game, and provided healthy lunch-box tasters. Children enjoyed learning about dental hygiene from puppets and took home toothbrushes and toothpaste.
- Children's entertainment was provided by a Hocus Pocus character, Winifred Saunderson, who was fabulous at entertaining children, parents and staff. She walked around the venue, sang and read ghostly stories.

The event allowed people to come together in an informal way to enjoy some activities with their children, participate in the cookery demonstration, taste new foods, ask questions at the information stands and meet new people. For ReachOut HLC, the importance of connecting with people living in the communities is critical and events like this are important opportunities for promoting CFI small projects.

## Small project: Food Values Programme with the Young Mums Group at YEHA

This project was delivered to the Young Mums Group at YEHA. YEHA is a Youth Education Health and Advice project based in North Belfast. It aims to support young people aged 12 to 21 with their mental health and wellbeing and to promote awareness of youth health issues.

The Food Values programme was delivered in-person as 2 sessions of 4 hours each, covering the 4 Food Values topics. A 2-course meal was demonstrated during each session and, each week, participants received an ingredients pack so that they could cook the meals at home. Recipe clips were sent to participants using WhatsApp to demonstrate how to cook the recipe.

They also received links to Safefood website pages on basic cookery and food hygiene skills.

It had originally been planned to deliver the project over 4 weeks but the group could only meet on the 2 days of delivery, so it was agreed to go ahead with the 2-day format. ReachOut HLC had not delivered the Food Values programme over 2 longer sessions before, so were hesitant at first, but it worked well and was a great success.

The group were all fully engaged and most of them cooked from scratch for their young children who ranged from 6 months old to 6 years old.



Young mums tasting the lentil soup they prepared during ReachOut HLC's Food Values Programme.

It worked well that the participants were in a familiar space – a clean and warm kitchen where there was space to discuss, prepare and eat the meal together. This was a new group of young mums. They had come together in October so by November, when the project was delivered, they had already got to know each other. There was great peer-to-peer discussion on what they and their children liked and disliked, and how to encourage fussy eaters.

A WhatsApp group was set up so that the group could chat together after the sessions and share advice and support. At the start of the programme, they each received a bag which contained the Know Your Sugars leaflet, the Little Book of Green Light Recipes, the Eatwell Guide and the Healthy Lunchbox leaflet, as well as feedback questionnaires. They also received the adult and child portion plates and a serving cup. All the recipes demonstrated during the project were taken from the 101 Square Meals recipe book and everyone was given a copy to take home.

The theme of week 1 was shopping savvy and the recipes were lentil soup and wheaten bread. The theme of week 2 was the cost of convenience and the recipes included shepherd's pie and apple crumble.

# South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP)

## Community event: Killorglin Healthy Community Day

**This community event was held at the JP O’Sullivan Park as part of the Kerry Mental Health and Wellbeing Fest. The Fest is based around the 5 Ways to Wellbeing – Keep Learning, Give, Connect, Take Notice and Be Active. The aim was to include talks and demonstrations which tied in with these themes.**

Activities included a healthy eating cooking demonstration by TJ O’Connor, Senior Lecturer in Culinary Arts at Munster Technological University (MTU) Kerry, and nutrition information from registered nutritionist, Aine Coleman. There were also 3 CPR and AED Training workshops with Laune First Aid Solutions.

Information stands were hosted by a number of different community organisations. These included community support organisations such as South Kerry Development Partnership and Killorglin Family Resource Centre and local volunteering opportunities with groups such as Tidy Towns and Fáilte Isteach. Members from Killorglin Tidy Towns talked about volunteering and its impact on mental health, the importance of social connection, and the environmental benefits of volunteering.

Outside, attendees were able to practise their football skills. Back in the centre, they attended the cooking demonstration and tasted some healthy snacks. TJ cooked beef chilli con carne soup, Mexican bean salad, overnight oats, pineapple smoothie, and apple and pear slices with peanut butter. The recipes were taken from the 101

Square Meals recipe book. While cooking, TJ talked about cooking skills and food safety practices. Aine talked about the nutritional value of the food and what replacements could be made to suit food preferences while preserving the nutritional value of the meals.

Healthy snacks, fruit, crackers and water were available for everyone.

As part of the Fest, a Gaelic for Mothers and Others football training session was organised. Including the CFI elements into this event allowed the organisers to widen the offering to include other aspects of a healthy lifestyle and this worked very well. Attendees learnt about the impact of healthy eating on overall physical and mental health. SKDP hopes to team up with other similar events as part of the Kerry Mental Health and Wellbeing Fest.



A cookery demonstration organised by South Kerry Development Partnership as part of the Killorglin Healthy Community Day.

## Small project: Mid Kerry Healthy Food Project

**This 4-week project was run with 2 groups during 2023. Each week, there was a 2-hour cooking skills session where a number of meals and snacks were demonstrated. The main courses, desserts and snacks covered during the projects were chosen from the 101 Square Meals recipe book.**

Participants joined in the cooking during the session. They each received an ingredient pack to take home so that they could cook the meals with their own families. At the beginning of each class, the group discussed the meals they had made during the previous week. They talked about any difficulties they had found, with tutors and other participants giving ideas and suggestions.

Throughout the sessions, the tutor included lots of tips on reducing waste when cooking and showed how leftover ingredients could be used to create simple healthy meals. She also suggested lots of ways to make food preparation easier, including focusing on preparation, and cooking economically by cooking a number of items at the same time.

Reducing food waste, food safety and preventing cross-contamination were key themes during the sessions. Suggestions for using up leftovers such as making potato croquettes from leftover mashed potato and a quick vegetable pasta using leftover veg was something that came about organically during the programme but was something everyone in the class was very interested in.

Starting each class with a discussion on what was covered during the previous week and including the participants' successes and difficulties helped everyone relax into the class. Everyone really opened up as the weeks went on. As participants shared their attempts, their interest and confidence in cooking and baking grew each week.

Meals being prepared during one of the sessions at the Mid Kerry Healthy Food Project.



# CFI at Home Projects

The purpose of the CFI at Home Programme is to help families to develop their food and cooking skills in their own homes. Organisations not already part of the CFI programme 2022-2024 can apply for funding to deliver CFI at Home projects.

## Cooking Made Easier

Crisis Café is a youth-led organisation which supports the mental health needs of young people and their families in Newry. The service operates a variety of different support focused cafés which are all drop-in and free of charge. The Cooking Made Easier project worked with 8 families, 10 adults and 13 children, to deliver a holistic and supportive approach to helping those most at risk from food poverty.

There were 6 sessions in total which were all delivered online. The first was an introduction and planning session. This was followed by 4 live cooking tutorials and a final session with the dietitian. Support was provided by an online tutor and through a WhatsApp group that the participants were invited to join. Participants received a £25 supermarket voucher to purchase ingredients for each of the 4 live cooking sessions.

Throughout the project, families learnt about healthy eating and cooking healthy, low-cost meals from scratch. They developed new skills in meal planning and preventing food waste and were supported to improve their families' eating habits. They developed confidence in following a recipe and adapting it to suit their own tastes. They learnt about food groups and the nutritional value of meals and recipes.



Following the Cooking Made Easier course at the Crisis Café, 8 families now meal plan each week, shop from a prepared shopping list and cook from scratch from generally fresh ingredients.

Many children engaged in the sessions with their parents. This encouraged them to become interested in food, eat more healthily and understand portion sizes. It also encouraged them to try new foods that they had not tasted before.

Families were able to come together to prepare food and eat together, with everyone having a role. The sessions were fun and educational. They highlighted the nutritious benefits of cooking with fresh ingredients and explained how cost-effective and healthy it is compared with processed foods.

The online session with the dietitian functioned as a good summary of the course, with information and discussions about nutrition and eating healthily and well. Everyone was given a copy of the Eatwell guide which helped them think about lifestyle and food choices – in particular, food groups, balanced nutrition, lifestyle and mood. The discussion around hidden sugars proved very popular with participants who were largely unaware of food which contained hidden sugars.

Each participant was also given a copy of the 101 Square Meals recipe book, health and wellbeing information, and a leaflet on preventing food waste. There were lively discussions at the end of each session about meal planning, the cost of ingredients and planning recipes which contained similar ingredients to reduce waste.

The project facilitators reported that it was lovely to observe the enthusiasm in the group and how participants began to give each other advice about what could be made with leftover ingredients. Group members grew in confidence and enthusiasm as the programme progressed. This was particularly encouraging as many of the participants experienced poor mental health and had limited connections with others. There are now 8 families who are continuing to meal plan for the week, shop from a prepared shopping list and cook from scratch from generally fresh ingredients.

# Dublin South City Partnership

## Make Yourself at Home

**This community event in Ballyfermot Family Resource Centre was a very busy, fun event for parents and children. They spent quality time together, while learning about manageable healthy eating habits.**

This project was delivered in the setting of a Family Hub in Dublin 12. Building on established relationships, a simple project was designed to encourage families and their children to develop their understanding and skills in preparing healthy food options.

Families find themselves in Family Hub accommodation for many different reasons. The common factor is that they have all experienced homelessness and

probably a complexity of associated issues. In the Family Hub, families are waiting for housing and the opportunity to live independently. In the meantime, the Hub is their home. This project presented an opportunity to support and prepare families with skills and knowledge that would positively influence their wellbeing.

Over the course of 5 workshops, the families had a lot of fun. Bringing them together over food was such a natural thing to do. There were lots of discussions, as parents and children tried new tastes, chopped, mixed, poured and decorated many simple dishes. Timing was critical. At 4pm, children were back from school, homework was done and they were ready for an activity.



Healthy breakfast pancakes decorated with fruit during the Make Yourself at Home sessions at a Family Hub in Dublin.

Each of the 5 workshops had a simple theme:

- Week 1: Fun with fruit
- Week 2: Healthy breakfasts
- Week 3: Healthy lunchboxes
- Week 4: Healthy dinners
- Week 5: Healthy desserts and cakes

The first workshop – Fun with fruit – set the scene for fun, active learning. With 2 template pictures to copy (a funny face and palm trees), everybody got creative in recreating the pictures with food. In week 2, the pancakes for Healthy breakfasts continued the theme. After mixing and making the pancakes, children used fruit to make faces, and the porridge could be decorated too. Slightly amending the initial idea, the Healthy Food Made Easy tutor adapted to the group and focused the workshops more on food preparation and experimentation, rather than the original plan of cooking demonstrations.

Healthy lunchboxes involved preparing and tasting fillings, and designing a wrap, based on people's preferences. Some interesting food choices emerged but they were all healthy, fresh ingredients! The final "celebration" workshop saw fruits and frozen yogurt layered in a cup – decorated with a star. The planned tray bake had to be abandoned, as a child with severe nut allergies had just arrived at the Hub. The fact that this was flagged immediately and the project facilitators could respond appropriately highlights

the importance of close collaboration and clear communication between Hub staff and the tutor.

Taking photographs of the end results was a great success, as children competed with each other to have their dish photographed and appear on the weekly Results posters. These posters were displayed during the week, acting as a reminder of the project and the "lesson", and increasing the impact throughout the Hub. This impact was maintained by the ongoing involvement of the Hub staff, who provided follow-up information and support to participants.

Much of the feedback from participants was achieved through a show of hands and "thumbs up, thumbs down", as language and literacy did not facilitate traditional feedback. The most popular topic was healthy breakfasts – in particular, the pancakes!

The tutor and the facilitators also provided feedback, noting in particular parents' enjoyment as their children tried new food such as cucumber and also the children's enthusiasm for creating funny faces with blueberries and bananas. The Hub keyworkers felt that the project enabled them to have more conversations about healthy eating, giving them an opportunity to underline learning and to support families in making healthier changes. The project also coincided with Hub initiatives such as Healthy Lunchbox week and Breakfast Club, where staff could talk about discussions and foods that had been used in the project.

# Kilkenny LEADER Partnership

## Global Kitchen Healthy Food Made Easy

**This 6-week course was held in 2023 and designed for the migrant community. It was delivered in-person in Noreside Education Centre as the participants were living in accommodation centres in Kilkenny city.**

The course was based on the Healthy Food Made Easy curriculum and provided support to parents and guardians of children under the age of 12. There was a focus on affordable, nutritious meals and accessing fresh ingredients in Kilkenny. Foods from participants' own cultures were incorporated and the class had the opportunity to design a final class menu, where they could cook and eat together on the last day of the course.

Throughout the course, the trainer emphasised how these meals could be prepared with very basic and limited kitchen equipment and training was geared towards participants' circumstances. Following the training, people said that they felt better equipped to plan nutritious meals for family and friends.

The course was broken into 6 sections and covered the food pyramid, fibre, healthy shopping, meal planning and food safety. Several recipes were prepared including smoothies, hummus and a tuna sandwich. At the final session, the group gave feedback on the course and discussed ideas for future initiatives. Participants were also invited to a follow-on HACCP Level 2 food safety training course.

This course tied in with the Community Kitchen initiative and the participants were encouraged to use the facilities after the course ended.

Facilitated by:





Community  
Food Initiatives