

<b>Institution:</b> Leeds Trinity University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26 – Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism
<b>Title of case study:</b> The promotion of practical cooking skills and community cohesion through after-school cooking clubs.
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>This case study highlights the impact of Leeds Trinity's Cooking Communities Project in promoting intergenerational and multicultural community relations through afterschool cooking clubs. The project established school-based community cooking clubs in 17 schools in disadvantaged areas of West Yorkshire, bringing together children and adults from varying ethnic backgrounds to share cooking and eating experiences. These clubs developed practical cooking skills and knowledge of healthy eating in 250 young people, and helped break down social barriers between individuals from different generational and cultural backgrounds. Educational resources were developed and distributed to schools across Yorkshire and Humberside, and the materials developed were used in the development of a new Food Specialism Course for Higher Level Teaching Assistants. Furthermore, local economic activity was stimulated through the sourcing of local ingredients.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The work of Gatenby has evaluated the eating practices of children (9-18) from varying social-economic backgrounds, focusing primarily on the nutritional impact of school meals and the role of after school cooking clubs in developing practical cooking skills. This work was initiated at the University of Hull (2003 - 2006) and has been continued at Leeds Trinity University (2006 – to date). Her work has included an evaluation of Hull City Council's healthy school meals scheme (initiated in 2004), which provides free school meals to approximately 20,500 children in primary and special schools to help reduce health inequalities. Gatenby recorded lunch time intakes using weighed records and weighed food diaries to capture details of food consumed at home. The research established important differences between the food portions provided in school and the actual food consumed, which resulted in children failing to meet the recommended School Food Trust nutritional guidelines (Gatenby, 2007; Gatenby, 2010a; Gatenby, 2011a).</p> <p>This work has been extended by evaluating the impact of developing practical cooking skills in school children. While it has been suggested that teaching young people practical cooking skills may improve dietary quality, schools have reported that the current food technology lessons are unable to include enough practical food preparation and cooking sessions to help children develop the necessary life skills (Gatenby, 2010b).</p> <p>The need for such cooking clubs that develop practical cooking skills in children was clearly demonstrated by initial survey work which highlighted that 27% of the secondary school pupils who participated in the after school cooking clubs did not know how to open a tin, 34% did not know how to boil an egg and 20% could not follow a recipe (Gatenby, 2011b). However, an evaluation survey of the project indicated that the cooking clubs significantly improved the children's ability to prepare food and cook healthy foods/meals (Gatenby, 2011b). Importantly, by bringing together children and adults from varying backgrounds, individuals were also able to share cooking and eating experiences, which helped break down barriers between generations and cultures. The evaluations demonstrated that when different age groups worked together, respect increased across the generations (Gatenby <i>et al.</i> 2010). Furthermore, the older adults who acted as cooking champions also reported increases in their sense of self-worth and contribution to their community (Gatenby, 2011b).</p>

### 3. References to the research

#### Peer review Publications:

- **Gatenby, L. A.** (2011a) Children's nutritional intake as part of the Eat Well Do Well scheme in Kingston-upon-Hull – a pilot study. *Nutrition Bulletin*. **36**, pp. 87-94.
- **Gatenby, L. A.** Donnelly J, Connell R (2011b) *Cooking Communities: using multicultural after-school cooking clubs to enhance community cohesion*. *Nutrition Bulletin*. **36**, pp. 108-112.
- **Gatenby, L. A.** (2010a) Experiences and expectations for school food; research conducted as part of the 'Eat Well Do Well' scheme in Kingston-upon-Hull. *Education and Health* **28** (4), pp. 68-71.
- **Gatenby, L. A.** (2010b) *Cooking Communities: An intergenerational approach to after school cooking clubs*. *Complete Nutrition Focus* **2**, pp. 5-7.
- **Gatenby, L. A.** (2007) Nutrient intakes in school children across two local education authorities. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* **20**, pp. 538-548.

#### Key grants:

- All Saints Education Trust (2007-2010)- £125,000
- Big Lottery Fund/Local Food (2010-2011)- £10,000

### 4. Details of the impact

In light of the research findings from Gatenby's work detailed above, she and other staff members within Sport, Health & Nutrition established the Leeds Trinity Cooking Communities Project. This was a four year project (October, 2007 – November, 2011) funded by the All Saints Education Trust (£125,000) and the Big Lottery Fund/Local Food (£10,000). The Cooking Communities Project established a series of school-based community cooking clubs (17 in total) in disadvantaged areas of West Yorkshire, and aimed to develop young people's (11-18 years) food preparation and cooking skills while also enhancing their understanding of different generational and ethnic cultures. These clubs delivered 10 week cooking courses (to approximately 250 children), which were led by food technology teachers and 'cooking champions'. These cooking champions were older adults (between 50 and 85 years) from the local community who volunteered to take part in the project (25 took part in total).

The impact of the Cooking Communities Project can be summarised in the following areas:

**Nutritional Awareness:** The project was successful in increasing the practical cooking skills and nutritional knowledge of both the children and cooking champions, helping to promote an awareness of healthy eating. The after-school cooking clubs succeeded in increasing pupils' enthusiasm and skills in food preparation and cooking. Interest in cultural foods and cooking increased among those who participated in the project, in addition to an increase in the frequency of cooking at home as well. Importantly, the older adults who volunteered as cooking champions also increased their food knowledge. For example, there was an increase in the number of

Champions making spicy and Asian foods at home after the pilots. One of the cooking champions commented: "I have thoroughly enjoyed being part of this pilot project; it has been a learning curve for me. I can now make a hot curry sauce and use spices I have not tried before and which I will continue to use."

**Community cohesion:** By bringing together children and older adults from the community, social barriers were broken down and the level of respect between generations increased. Furthermore, involving community elders in this manner increased their sense of self-worth and contribution to their community. The project team established links with local charities/organisations within the community, such as Caring Together in Little London and Woodhouse, Meanwood Elderly, STEP (Supporting the Elderly People) and the Extended Services Inner North West Hub to recruit these cooking champions. Before the cooking clubs, the cooking champions reported young people to be 'loud and bad mannered' and 'intimidating when in groups on the street', whereas after being involved in the project they reported that young people are 'fun, energetic and enthusiastic.' One Cooking Champion commented: "Best bit was spending time with a group of young people, they were keen to learn and it was great to help and be part of this project."

**Local economic activity:** The cooking clubs also helped to support local businesses and stimulate local economic activity. All ingredients used in the cooking clubs were provided freely to the schools. Importantly, all ingredients were sourced from local suppliers such as Doorstep Organics and Sykes House Farm, and from community based projects such as Fresh 'n' Fruity (a lottery funded initiative that provides affordable fruit and vegetables by establishing market stalls in deprived communities). During the course of the project over £6,000 was spent at these outlets, providing significant financial support to local businesses and helping to educate children and their families about the benefits of local food.

**Educational training & course development:** Alongside the afterschool cooking clubs, a range of educational training resources were developed and freely distributed to schools across Yorkshire and Humberside. These resources included information regarding nutritional guidelines, hygiene training and recipe packs, and were designed to allow schools to establish their own cooking clubs. To date, over 150 resource packs have been dispatched to schools across Yorkshire and Humberside. Furthermore, the course materials developed as part of the Cooking Communities Project have been used in the development and delivery (by Gatenby) of a Food Specialism Training Course for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA) run by Leeds Trinity University.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Details of the project have been added to the Food Vision website (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health) as an example of best practice:

<http://www.foodvision.cieh.org/pages/leeds-trinity-cooking-communities->

2. Details of the evaluation of the Cooking Communities project are available in:
  - a. Gatenby, L.A., Donnelly, J., Connell, R. (2011) Cooking Communities: using multicultural after-school cooking clubs to enhance community cohesion. *Nutrition Bulletin*. 36, pp. 108-112.
  - b. Gatenby, L.A. (2010) Cooking Communities: An intergenerational approach to after school cooking clubs. *Complete Nutrition Focus* 2, pp. 5-7.

3. Leeds Trinity University Cooking Communities - <http://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/cooking>.