

## Libraries and Food

At the beginning of November, we circulated an enquiry from Simon Wallace at Southend:

“I've been approached by a new community project ... called "The Southend Food Culture Project" (see: [http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/seh/info/2/about\\_us/53/community\\_development\\_projects/4](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/seh/info/2/about_us/53/community_development_projects/4)) which complements some earlier work around healthy eating here in Southend (see: [http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/seh/info/2/about\\_us/53/community\\_development\\_projects/5](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/seh/info/2/about_us/53/community_development_projects/5)).

Libraries here have done some work previously (eg Culture Kitchen, Southend Soup, Reading and Weeding, Growing Together, Southend in Bloom etc) but I wondered of any other authorities or library services had undertaken any food-related partnership work? eg foodbanks, green reading groups, etc?”

Here is a summary of responses.

### Devon

We are working with Food Banks, families and Bookstart as below from our Bookstart Outreach Officer:

“I have sent out batches of Bookstart picture books to be given out to families using foodbanks, along with blank library cards to encourage joining the local library. This was undertaken in Barnstaple, Bideford, South Molton, Exeter, Ivybridge, Dartmouth over the summer. Following a message about it in the Bulletin, Holsworthy Library contacted me to see if we could do the same in their area. I believe that following the initial book gifting, they were looking into the possibility of collecting donated books to give to the food bank to be gifted with food parcels.

More recently, I have sent books for gifting through food banks in Axminster, Honiton, Newton Abbot and Tiverton. I think that Newton Abbot are intending to discuss with their food bank the possibility of continuing book donations.

I think that it was established a while ago that libraries could not be food donation points but I think that some libraries do some partnership working with their local food bank, e.g. book donating or, as in Crediton, giving food bank vouchers out at work clubs. Beatrice would have more information on this.

I like the idea of somehow linking up food partnerships and mood boosting/Reading Well ...”

And feedback from the Dartmouth food bank below:

“We've given all the books and library cards out. They went quite quickly.

For us it was a way of taking the child's mind off the awful situations parents are facing when they come to the food bank. The parents need to speak to someone and if one of our volunteers can take the child's attention away with a story during this we think it makes a big difference.

Children pick up on the tension even when you try to speak in code in front of them, the books help us to limit this. When they realise they can take the book away, the food bank is no longer a place to be worried about for them. It's a place they feel safe and included.

I know from my childhood even during the worst times, when a teacher gave me a book to take home everything was better, I could be somewhere else.

We should never underestimate the power of words on paper and how it stays with you for a lifetime.

We stock second-hand books at the food bank and give books out at our toy bank appeal every Christmas ...”

Colin Bray, [colin.bray@devon.gov.uk](mailto:colin.bray@devon.gov.uk)

## **Gloucestershire**

Gloucestershire was asked to take part in a hamper collection, and we collected 329 boxes for local needy families.

Partners included:

- Gloucestershire Libraries & Information
- Housing Association
- Gloucestershire Rural Community Council – Village and Urban Agents
- Local paper Gloucestershire Citizen

Further info at: <http://www.gloucestercitizen.co.uk/Help-need-Christmas-donating-hamper-appeal/story-25705786-detail/story.html>

Carole Bowe, [carole.bowe@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:carole.bowe@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

## **Kirklees (1)**

In Kirklees we have a “Plant It, Grow It, Eat It” scheme run in partnership with Kirklees Council and funded by Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, they were formerly funded by Lottery funding.

They have been in contact with libraries recently looking for spare garden space and grounds to turn into vegetable plots to encourage local people to grow their own food and eat healthily.

The project can help groups of people who want to get together to grow by helping them buy their own tools, share tools and buy seeds. The scheme also offers courses on cooking using healthy ingredients.

Nicola Mason, [Nicola.mason@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:Nicola.mason@kirklees.gov.uk)

## **Kirklees (2)**

I'm responding to your email about libraries and food. I manage two libraries in South Kirklees – Holmfirth Library & Information Centre and Honley Library.

In January of 2014 I was approached by a local community group called 'Holme Valley Foodbank' which is run and administrated by Melanie Armstrong and her volunteers. HV Foodbank already has sites in a number of local churches. Numbers are very sporadic and they felt the church was a potential barrier stopping some people receiving much needed help. They approached Holmfirth LIC / Honley library asking if they could have a weekly stall within the libraries but run by their volunteers.

The HV Foodbank aims to help people to fill the gap before proper arrangements can be made by providing an emergency food parcel. The scheme is run on vouchers which are gifted from nominated Health centres and GP surgeries within the Holme Valley, some schools also hold vouchers. There is no assessment and the criteria they use are very relaxed. They do monitor individuals who use Foodbank more than once and signpost these individuals onto the appropriate service, if necessary.

In terms of numbers the Foodbank regularly receives an average of 4 enquiries per week at Holmfirth LIC and 2 per week at Honley library; this includes gifting the food parcels.

From a library point we have helped people who have used Foodbank, gained access to much needed entitlements/benefits they were not aware of. Raised the profile of the libraries and gained new library borrowers. Some of these new borrowers now realise what they can access for free. On the same day as the Foodbank we have someone from the location Jobcentre helping people search for jobs or give advice.

I hope this helps, if you need more information please contact me. I have also provided the link to HV Foodbank

<http://holmfirthevents.co.uk/holme-valley-food-bank-latest-newsletter/>

Mark Redman, [mark.redman@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:mark.redman@kirklees.gov.uk)

## **North East Lincolnshire**

During Get Online week in October, Lincs Inspire Libraries (formerly North East Lincolnshire Library Service) hosted two IT Taster sessions with a difference. We worked with colleagues from the Specialist Health Promotion Service to combine IT tasters with healthy food tasters – so they were literally IT "Tasters". Our colleagues

demonstrated healthy recipes and encouraged people to make their own wraps, brought a healthy Mexican bean soup and a booklet with 3 healthy recipes. Library staff helped customers look at recipe websites and healthy eating sites including this one:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx>

The sessions were in the main very successful although attendance, which was based on an informal drop-in arrangement, was better at our larger central library rather than a small branch library.

Jennie Mooney, [jennie.mooney@nelincs.gov.uk](mailto:jennie.mooney@nelincs.gov.uk)

### **Somerset**

With reference to foodbanks I made a point of passing on all of my World Book Night titles to the Taunton foodbank.

Janet Blake, [jblake@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:jblake@somerset.gov.uk)

### **Southend**

Although the event happened a while ago, Southend's "Culture Kitchen" was a popular libraries-and-food event. Please see Appendix.

Simon Wallace, [simonwallace@southend.gov.uk](mailto:simonwallace@southend.gov.uk)

### **Southend Children's Services**

Booktrust gave foodbanks free books to give out for National Bookstart Week and we followed up with Storyrhyme sessions at The Storehouse during the summer and in September. We also gave them a collection of books (we have other community collections of Bookstart books in clinics and children's centres) and a big wall picture promoting sharing books. We also do Storyrhyme sessions in other venues and for different community groups, but not so frequently these days. We've given resources to the neo natal ward at Southend hospital and have links with our local Family Health Partnership.

Further info about the work of The Storehouse at: [http://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/11180646.Economy\\_on\\_the\\_up\\_but\\_food\\_banks\\_busier\\_than\\_ever/](http://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/11180646.Economy_on_the_up_but_food_banks_busier_than_ever/)

Simon Wallace, [simonwallace@southend.gov.uk](mailto:simonwallace@southend.gov.uk)

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**Women's  
Environmental  
Network**

South East Essex

## **Culture Kitchen Event Proves a Recipe for Success**

A multi-cultural menu from around the world was enjoyed by 75 guests at a recent community “Culture Kitchen” event to mark World Food Day on Saturday October 16<sup>th</sup> 2010.

(<http://www.fao.org/>).

Home-made delights on the day included samosas and bhajees, veggie burgers using produce from local allotments, Scandinavian salads, barbecued meat with Zimbabwean corn meal, bean salad with Chakalaka sauce, finished off with a selection of delicious Polish cakes, accompanied by fresh juice from locally grown organic apples.

The event was organised by South East Essex Women’s Environmental Network, (SEEWEN) and was held at St Mark’s Church Hall, Southend. The aim of the day was to bring together peoples from the many different cultural traditions living in the town with a focus around the subject of food.

Local guests from the Zimbabwean, Asian and Polish communities were joined for the day by women from London who work a community food growing plot which was started by the national Women’s Environmental team among the tower blocks of Tower Hamlets.

Before lunch an ‘open mike’ session allowed for an interesting mix of information about the food on offer. Jane Lovell, who for some years ran the Demi-Veg restaurant in Leigh, and whose veggie burgers had ingredients from local sources, described her burgers as cheap, nutritious and tasty. Martin Murrell described the influence of nearby countries on Scandinavian food over the centuries.

Nirmal Gupta of the Essex Asian Women's Association said she'd be surprised if most people in England didn't know about Indian food – but that she had kept her cooking for the day 'not too hot', being uncertain whether the hot curries favoured by the Indians would be OK for the guests on the day.

Jadzia Haughton (Chairman of the Polish Saturday School) spoke of the cultural importance of food in Poland and the vast regional differences. Washington Ali, Chair of the newly formed Southend Zimbabwean Network also contributed, talking about the delights of food such as sadza, a traditional cornmeal dish, served with meat or vegetables..

Graham Burnett and Ron Bates demonstrated apple juicing, using, of course, local apples – much enjoyed by the children who helped with the pressing.

Rutendo Chitiga highlighted her role in promoting Southend's Community Recycling Champions – and gave out goody bags with cookery books packed with simple recipe ideas on how to use up left-over food (<http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>).

Simon Wallace, Southend Library's Community and Diversity Manager spoke of the focus of World Food Day this year, which was 'United Against Hunger'. In 2009, the critical threshold of one billion hungry people in the world was reached. The United Nations campaign claims *'On this World Food Day 2010, when there have never been so many hungry people in the world, let us reflect on the future. With willpower, courage and persistence – and many players working together and helping each other – more food can be produced, more sustainably, and get into the mouths of those who need it most'*

During the afternoon WEN members put on a 'Fruity Beauty' demonstration when they made a facial cleanser from cucumber, apples & oats and applied it to volunteers who all agreed the treatment made their skin feel great! WEN were emphasising the importance of thinking about what we put on our skin. Many people forget that skin absorbs what we use so we should be sure it doesn't contain any harmful ingredients.

At the end of the afternoon guests were invited to visit the WEN community food growing plot at Manchester Drive allotments in Leigh.