

Expression of Interest – Policy Prototype CCIN Funding

CCIN Member Authority: Plymouth City Council

Name of CCIN Lead Member: Cllr Chris Penberthy

Name and Job Title: STP Lead for the VCSE

1. What is your idea?

Plymouth – The Plymouth Fairness Commission report published in 2014 spent a year of listening to Plymouth citizens in 2013 to find out what they thought was unfair about the city. Access to healthy affordable food was one of the things they told us they were concerned about. The Commission found that "many people are not accessing a balanced diet with the majority of convenience food being high in fat and salt" and "There is a need to broaden people's understanding of food, where it comes from and how to cook it".

Access to affordable healthy food was becoming a growing challenge for sections of Plymouth's community. Plymouth Foodbank had seen over 8,000 users per year for the last 5 years. In addition, almost 25,000 meals have been given out by the city's soup runs each year since 2013 with more women and children using the service than ever before. Things were desperate. In response, Plymouth City Council developed Grow, Share, Cook. This is a volunteer led project where volunteers grow food in and around the city, this produce is then shared with beneficiaries via volunteer drivers and volunteer cooks then assist the beneficiaries to use the produce via community cooking sessions. Essentially, disadvantaged households receive a free vegetable bag delivered to their doorstep once a fortnight for a year as a kick start to a healthier diet.

In 2017, at the request of a group of GP's in the city who knew about the project, we worked with them to develop Diabeaters which is Grow Share Cook for people on the cusp of, or who have just developed Type 2 Diabetes. This is against the background of almost 14,000 people in Plymouth having Diabetes in 2018 with the number expected to grow by 6% each year. To put it simply, Plymouth was unhealthy. To put it bluntly, Plymouth was hungry. However, we have made great strides. We have delivered 45,000 meals to almost 3,000 individuals which is no mean feat and held well over 300 community cooking sessions over the last 5 years, and our first cohort of Diabeaters are showing early promise in terms of their health and wellbeing. If we were successful with this extra funding, we would feed a further 3 households for a year to assist them with dealing with their Diabetes and produce a toolkit for others to follow.

2. Who will you work with?

The project operates as a partnership between Plymouth City Council who provide the strategic direction and project management, Plymouth Community Homes who provide the community insight and the communication strategy, Tamar Grow Local who look after the Grow and Share element, Food is Fun who provide the cook element and the Beacon Medical Group who work with us on referring the beneficiaries for Diabeaters. We also have a partnership with the Lifehouse Partnership who coordinate the soup runs in Plymouth and the Oasis Foodbank.

3. What are the outcomes you hope to achieve?

As part of the Grow Share Cook condition for receiving the free fortnightly food bag, we ask participating households to have a quarterly “interview” with a volunteer asking them a set of questions linked to a number of metrics that measure the impact of the project. To date 214 households have completed a full year’s worth of interviews and we have established that as a result of Grow Share Cook: -

- 99% of the people we worked with stayed with the project for the full 12 months
- 85% of households now have a healthier diet
- 86% of the people we worked with now regularly use fresh fruit and vegetables when they didn't before.
- 90% of people stated they have visited a health professional less in the last 12 months as a result of the project.

In addition, early indications are promising from our Diabeaters project. Of the 50 households taking part in the pilot project, 41 have said that they have visited their health professional less as a result of their improved diet.

4. How does your project support the aims and objectives of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network?

The reason why Grow Share Cook has been successful is because the people taking part (both beneficiaries and volunteers) have been the key developers of the project and we have been the facilitators. The cohort has decided what vegetables should be grown, what recipes would be demonstrated at the community cooking sessions and what other extras are needed for the ongoing success of the project e.g. volunteers advised us that a lack of pots and pans were a real issue for some of the households taking part. So Plymouth City Council held its first pots and pans amnesty where the citizens of Plymouth provided over 200 pots and pans to distribute to people on the project. This level of trust where we hand over the “power” and the project takes the course as decided by those people either directly delivering it or directly receiving it has been a key change of mind-set for us and a key reason why the project is agile and continues to be impactful.

5. How does your project demonstrate the Values and Principles of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network?

This project gives people the kick start they need to improve their diet and subsequently, their health and wellbeing. When we completed our evaluation of the project, we asked people what they most liked about the project and the overwhelming response was that it was delivered by “people like them”. It didn’t judge or stigmatise or label. It simply addressed an issue working with people and not working at people. Our local findings were also backed up by a very positive independent evaluation completed by Plymouth University in May 2016 that called Grow Share Cook “an exemplary and inspirational project that magnifies the power of people”. It found that of the 25 random sample households they asked who completed the full year, 21 were now buying fresh fruit and vegetables as part of their weekly shop where they hadn’t before, and 23 of them

were cooking from scratch at least 5 times a week where they hadn't before. In addition, 18 of our regular Grow Share Cook volunteers have been on the scheme themselves as a beneficiary and 2 residential cooking groups have started from families/households that have completed the scheme who live together in the same blocks of flats.

6. How will you share your learning with the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network?

We will produce a toolkit for others to follow as well as a video outlining the project that tells the story of the beneficiaries.

Deadline for applications is Friday, 20th December 2019. Please send completed applications to comms@councils.coop.
