



**Eating Well Project  
Impact and Evaluation Report  
June 2016**

**Background and outline of the project**

As a charitable organisation, Gateshead Older People's Assembly supports older people (50+) across Gateshead in a number of ways. The projects undertaken by the Assembly and the services it provides are guided by the organisation's Strategic Delivery Plan, which was driven by the charity's trustees, themselves older people from Gateshead.

The Strategic Delivery Plan is underpinned by nine strategic objectives:

- 1. Increase older people's knowledge of issues affecting them**
- 2. Be the voice of older people in Gateshead**
- 3. Reduce loneliness and isolation for older people in Gateshead**
- 4. Increase opportunities for older people to live fuller lives**
- 5. Improve the health and wellbeing of older people in Gateshead**
- 6. Reduce the number of falls suffered by older people across Gateshead**
- 7. Build stronger networks to support older people across Gateshead**
- 8. Increase opportunities for older people to participate in wider society**
- 9. Increase community safety and awareness of safeguarding issues**

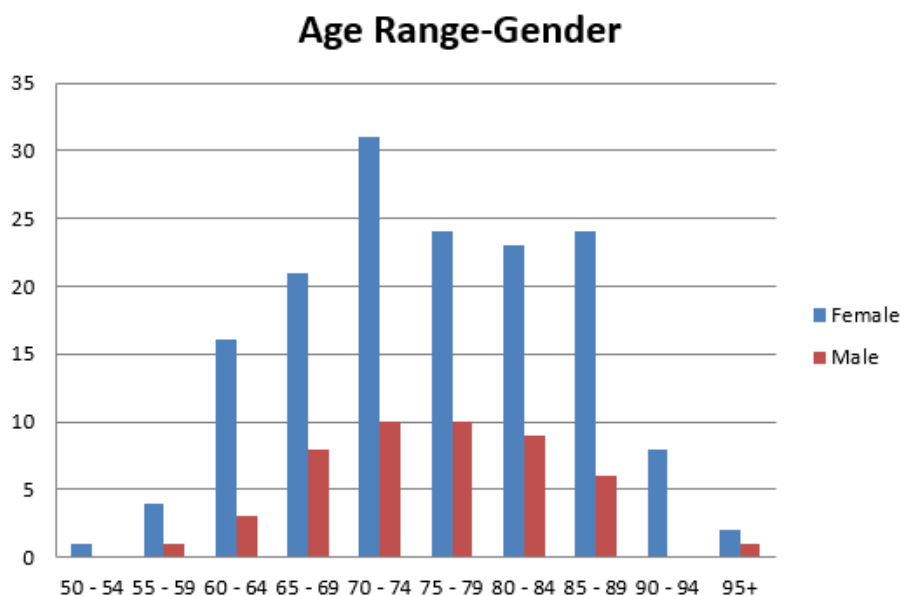
These objectives are not mutually exclusive and the Assembly's management aims to meet at least three of these objectives with every project it undertakes. The Eating Well project meets objectives 1, 3, 4, and 5.

Malnutrition amongst older people is an issue of serious concern. Lack of nutrition, whether as a result of not eating well or simply not eating enough, can contribute to an increased risk of infection, reduced bone and muscle strength, and poor energy levels. These problems can have a knock-on effect, putting older people at further risk of falls, longer hospital stays, and poor mental health.

According to recent research by the Malnutrition Taskforce Project, there are over 5000 older people in Gateshead experiencing or at risk of malnutrition. The project also established that 37% of older people admitted to hospital in 2014/15 were malnourished.

The Assembly conducted its own research in late 2015. Surveys were sent to 650 Assembly members. Replies were received from 212 members, resulting in an impressive return rate of 32.6%.

The age range and gender split of survey respondents was as follows:



Survey findings included:

- 19.9% of respondents **do not eat a hot meal on a daily basis.**
- 8.5% of respondents **would like to eat more than they currently do.** When asked what prevents them from eating more, respondents identified the following issues:
  - 16.7% **cost**
  - 16.7% **access to shops**
  - 11.1% **cooking facilities**
  - 44.4% **physical difficulty preparing food**
  - 16.7% **lack of enthusiasm for preparing food**
  - 11.1% **limited cooking ability**
  - 11.1% **lack of appetite**
- 29.8% of respondents **would like to learn to cook a wider range of healthy meals.**
- 32.1% of respondents **would like to learn more about how to live a healthy lifestyle**

The survey results indicated a clear need to provide Assembly members with information on how to prepare healthy meals, ideally on a budget. The application was requesting support to run 10 “healthy cooking on a budget” sessions for up to 6 participants per session.

An application was made to the Gateshead Housing Company Community Fund at the Community Foundation. The application was successful and delivery of the Eating Well programme commenced in April 2016. The programme was delivered at Springfield House, a Helen McArdle care home in Low Fell, by their Development Chef.

All survey participants who indicated an interest in learning to cook a wider range of healthy meals were invited to attend.

Each session lasted approximately two hours. Upon arrival, participants were greeted by a member of Assembly staff and had a chance to meet and mingle with their fellow attendees. Participants were then welcomed into the kitchen by the chef and were given a step-by-step demonstration in the preparation of two courses – a vegetable soup and a chicken casserole. The demonstration was fully participatory, with attendees encouraged to ask questions. The chef made a special effort to discuss ways to eat well on a limited budget, discussing the relative benefits of homemade stock v. stock cubes, how to use up leftover vegetables, and the benefits of frozen vegetables, etc. The chef also discussed and prepared vegetarian options when vegetarians were in attendance.



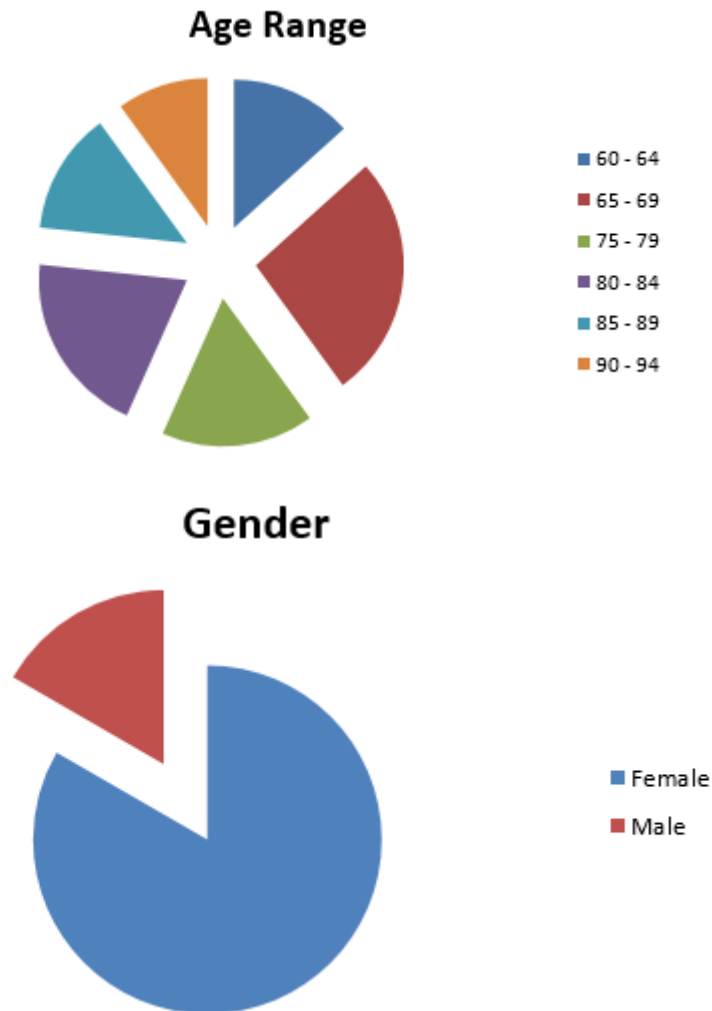
Following the demonstration, attendees were provided with information on maintaining a healthy weight in later life, signs of unhealthy weight loss, ways to add extra nutrition to meals, and a selection of healthy meal plans and recipes. This was followed by a chance to socialise while waiting for the meal to cook.

Finally, participants dined together, enjoying the food that had been prepared as part of the demonstration.



## Impact Measurement

All Eating Well participants were asked to complete an evaluation form at the conclusion of their session. The age and gender split of participants was as follows:



- 100% of participants said they **enjoyed the session**
- 90% felt that the session **increased their knowledge of preparing food**
- 93.3% thought that the Eating Well session **helped their cooking skills**
- 100% **enjoyed the social element** of the session
- 96.7% would like to **attend more cooking classes**, given the opportunity

All additional feedback on the surveys was positive, with comments including:

***“I enjoyed this evening. The demo was delivered at the correct pitch as it was easy to understand and remember. We enjoyed a tasty colourful meal. Many thanks.”***

***“The course was ideal, not too long just right. Chef was very friendly made people feel at ease and everything was so easy, simple to understand and food was beautiful. Overall an excellent night...”***

***“I have really enjoyed the company [and] meeting people.”***

The Eating Well project came to a formal end in May 2016. All participants gathered at Springfield House for a presentation and a chance to socialise. The Mayor and Mayoress of Gateshead attended to present each participant with a certificate.



## **Legacy**

Feedback from Eating Well participants indicated an interest in more cooking classes, and this is certainly something the Assembly is investigating.

Valuable information re: use of technology to stay connected and healthy (especially with regard to online food shopping) was gathered in the initial Eating Well survey. Ways in which to provide Assembly members with opportunities to learn more about technology are being investigated.

The social element of the sessions provided participants with an opportunity to meet new people. New friendships were formed and plans were made – and kept. Several participants have met up with their new friends at the Assembly’s pay what you can community café in Deckham.

Four Eating Well participants have become volunteers at the community café, helping to provide healthy meals and socialising opportunities to customers.

## **Conclusion**

The Eating Well project has provided participants with the opportunity to learn more about the impact and importance of a healthy diet as they age, preparing nutritious meals on a limited budget, and increased opportunities to socialise and dine with others.

Thanks to Gateshead Housing Company’s Community Fund at the Community Foundation, Tyne & Wear and Northumberland for enabling this project. Thanks also to



Springfield House, Sean McArdle, and Chris Bonner for their commitment and enthusiasm in helping to deliver the Eating Well programme.



For further information, please contact Craig Bankhead – [craig@gatesheadopa.org.uk](mailto:craig@gatesheadopa.org.uk)