

From mountain to sea

# Community Development Practice Exemplar

Sharing practice, encouraging  
reflection and recording success.

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Fraserburgh PEF CLD mini public

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062019

Aberdeenshire CLD Service

*Community Learning and Development  
Changing Lives Strengthening Communities*



<b>CLD Service Focus:</b>	<b>Community Development</b>
<b>Incorporated Themes:</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>
<b>Background – where did the need for the work come from?</b>	
<p><b>October 2018 Fraserburgh LLCP meeting -</b></p> <p>Through the work CLD (Community Learning &amp; Development) staff deliver in both primary and secondary schools we learned that some children in our community are going without regular meals throughout the year.</p> <p>CLD ran a pilot project, Summer Family Kitchen in North School, during the school holidays in 2018 that provided an activity and meal for families in one of our primary schools. The school was chosen because the issue of access to regular meals for some pupils were first raised here by the Head Teacher. The project aimed to build trust and develop relationships with families to find out what their views were and what issues most impacted on them in everyday life.</p> <p>The learning from this project was presented to our LLCP (Local Learning Community Partnership). Through discussion with partners and hearing from speakers we learned that Fraserburgh Academy has the lowest uptake of free school meals (FSM) across Aberdeenshire. We also learned that the FSM system could be adding more barriers for some families.</p> <p>We fed back our findings to our CLD Senior Management Team and a pilot project started in North Academies. A breakfast allowance was made available to all pupils who are entitled to FSM</p> <p>Fraserburgh Academy Pupil Equity leader, an Academy Teacher, and CLD school-based worker started a campaign to raise awareness of the FSM offer to pupils and to try and increase the number of pupils making use of the breakfast allowance and lunch voucher.</p> <p>At the end of the pilot there had been an increase in the number of pupils accessing both breakfast and lunch. 129 pupils were entitled to FSM at the beginning of the trial with just over 14% (18 pupils) using their allowance - this increased by 172% (49 pupils) by the end of the pilot. There was also a drop in the number of pupils arriving late for school</p> <p>CLD were interested in engaging further with pupils and parents to better understand why the uptake was so low and what could be done to improve the system.</p>	
<b>What did we do and who was involved?</b>	

CLD have used mini publics as a way of engaging with people who often do not take part in official consultations or surveys. Following the principles of the mini public process the planning group developed a selection criteria for pupils and parents and began to plan the recruitment and session contents. The participants were to be drawn from only those who were entitled to free school meals.

The participants in the pupils' group were recruited by school staff – 2 from a local Primary and 8 from the Academy. In the end 6 pupils participated.

CLD staff recruited parents who had children entitled to FSM. Letters were sent to all these families and each family was contacted by telephone. Based on the profile of families entitled to FSM our criteria included- married/single/employed/unemployed /male/female and English as an additional language

Not everyone who was called ended up taking part in the process, but all were asked general questions about the FSM pilot during the discussion - here are just a few of the comments collected

***“FSM is a great help as I'm on a low income and it takes pressure off and knowing my child is getting a decent enjoyable meal. “***

***“Not sure how much money they have & not good at maths. Ends up having sandwich and juice”***

***“My daughter refuses to use FSM and son likes to go into town with friends and he doesn't tell them he can't go with them”***

***“U/C is a joke. Clothing grant into bank is good”***

***“Daughter is happy to use FSM but when moving up to Academy we didn't know we needed new letter. Good choice of meals”***

***“Child will not use FSM all the time due to embarrassment, even the teacher has asked child if they have food, clothes, electricity, money and was told to ask teacher if she needs anything, child came home crying. Sometimes money has not been put on card and child was asked to put back food”***

This feedback was very helpful in designing the content of the mini public sessions. 4 sessions were planned and held a week apart. Two afternoons sessions for pupils and two evening sessions for parents.

15 adults agreed to take part but only 7 made it to the sessions. However, those 7 parents were representative of the wider sample criteria.

The sessions used a combination of interactive activities including guest speakers and Q&A sessions. Pupils created posters to promote FSM which will be displayed in the academy but mainly the sessions had time and space built in for dialogue and discussing the issues that were relevant to the group.

It was important to make the sessions a positive experience for the participants and we used dot ranking to gauge levels of confidence before and afterwards and confidential questionnaires were also completed at each session. All participants were nervous at first but soon settled into the process. At the end of session all said they felt comfortable to participate in the sessions and were glad they took part.



Pupils creating a positive poster campaign

In the final parent evening session, we displayed all the comments, posters and feedback gathered from the pupils. Parents were very interested in what the children suggested and agreed that they had some great ideas.

In the final 2 sessions we asked both groups to give us their recommendations



Parents put forward their ideas for improvements

### What was the impact and how do we know? What changed for the learners or community?

Statistics were gathered by our catering service showing a slow uptake at the beginning of the trial

We learned that word of mouth was the best way to inform pupils and parents about the breakfast and the numbers at Fraserburgh increased from 33% of eligible pupils (18) to 46.8% (46 eligible Pupils) on average by the end of the pilot.

One mum reported that she puts letters in a pile by the front door and doesn't read them. Parents on the mini public all said that the telephone call made the difference, and some had not read the letter.

Pupils were energised and enthused and have agreed to keep meeting as a group and work on the positive campaign. The school-based staff involved in the project will look at developing a portfolio with the young people and adding hours for accreditation towards Youth Achievement Awards. Pupils were very proud of their posters.

Parents have asked to be signed up for a new online forum being created by the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Group in Aberdeenshire. They will be consulted on changes and proposed improvements to systems that help to reduce stigma and improve support to low income families.

The evaluation reflected what often happens in the mini –public process. Both pupils and parents looked and said they were nervous about taking part initially but as the session developed, they felt more comfortable and relaxed.

The format allowed room for parents to speak to school staff and other professionals in a relaxed and informal way.



Parents listen intently as guest speaker, Annette Johnston, talks about her role and the improvements that Tackling Poverty and inequalities are trying to introduce

## What did we learn and what will we do next?

At the end of the deliberations both groups were asked about how we could improve access to and take up of FSM.

1. Both pupils and parents agreed that choice and quality of food in school is good, but they also told us that they can't always figure out what they could buy. It was suggested that having photos of meal deals – costs and what is on offer – rather like going into a McDonalds would make it easy and quicker to choose.

2. It was noted that the breakfast allowance is now reduced to £1 and for some this means either a drink or a snack but not both. Pupils also mentioned that when prices go up there can be a delay to the increase going onto the card.
3. Pupils did not like when the reduction on the breakfast allowance came in. Other bugbears were the fact that the bus does not always get in early enough for them to use the breakfast allowance and they can't figure out what they can buy/afford. Pupils suggested Instagram/FB/ WhatsApp for communication on things like changes to allowance levels and a ready reckoner to work out what they can afford
4. Pupils also said that not all primary schools are offering the same menu and they would like that to change.
5. Pupils suggested developing an app or QR code for their phone which would help identify if they are entitled to FSM and work out budgets.
6. Pupils would like to explore if they could design their own version of the Young Scot Card. If the card could be used outside of school for food, they would like to link in with local businesses for discounts etc.
7. For secondary pupils who go for FSM, they would like to have access to second helpings or the chance to take home any left-over food.
8. Everyone getting the same information (Parents on the mini public found out they did not all get the same information at the same time. The EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) was an example).
9. Parents expressed a view that they and their children have no freedom of choice about the FSM allowance or how it works. No other benefits they are entitled to work in the same way i.e. the fact that money is removed if they don't use it on a specific day.
10. One parent suggested putting the money into the bank but not everyone agreed to this as financial pressure could mean the money wouldn't be used for food.
11. Another suggestion was Leave FSM on at weekend – to support young people and to help them to take responsibility and learn to budget
12. Parents, like the pupils, asked why the Young Scot Card could not be used at local shops or if an app could be developed for phones to enable pupils to choose where they can eat and when.

*'I haven't chosen to be in the position I'm in'*

Freedom of choice was a recurring theme in the discussions and their personal experience often being made to feel 'small' by the person they were asking for help or information from. For example, parents have to go to more than one person, service or location for different benefits, housing, UC, FSM, EMA etc.

'Why can't we get all the information we need from one location?'

*'Why didn't the housing office tell me about other benefits I might be entitled to?'*

Some parents found out by accident that EMA was available to older pupils and did not know when to apply for EMA. Parents were also unaware of the additional benefits that come with the FSM – music lessons for example. They also did not like that they had to apply for the extras

- Parents would appreciate a one stop shop to help knowing what benefits are available and in filling in forms etc.
- Applying online is difficult for parents who can't afford or have access to internet, or a computer.
- Parents also mentioned that transport into town to update credits on your journal at the job centre is a problem
- Parents identified confusion on needing to re-apply when pupils move from primary to secondary school.

It was also noted that when attending taster sessions at the college there was confusion on how the voucher worked resulting in some the pupils going home

*'I think all kids should get free meals because not all working parents can afford school meals'*

### **What has changed**

The lunch allowance has been extended to be available from 8am to 2 pm. Fraserburgh Academy have agreed to use some of their PEF money and will supply cereal in the morning. It is hoped that ASDA, who support the yellow box project will supply tea and toast.

### **What has happened since**

- 1 15 academies are now offering a breakfast to pupils eligible for free school meals. The Local Learning Partnership have agreed to keep child poverty as a priority
- 1 The Academy are planning to continue the awareness raising campaign and have been in touch with Hannah Miley's management team who are happy to commit to making a short video clip promoting the FSM
- 1 An effort was made to contact the parents who took part in the mini public to gauge their interest in coming back together with everyone that was involved in the mini public but only two responded. One of those parents applied for and received music tuition for her child.

## **Author(s)**

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### **Glossary**

CLD - Community Learning & Development  
PEF - Pupil Equity Fund  
FSM - Free School Meal  
EMA - Education Maintenance Allowance  
LLCP - Local Learning Community Partnership



