



Lunch Clubs as a Sustainable Community Resource for Ageing Populations

Hosted by Age Concern North East Wales
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Lunch Clubs

- **Lunch clubs** are small community groups who
 - meet specific needs within their communities for companionship, a nutritious meal, and activity
 - make themselves accessible by using local venues
 - depend largely on volunteers for their operation
 - are popular with older people
- **For ageing populations**, meals provided in community settings can make an important contribution to health, nutritional intake and social well-being

(Wallace and Wiggin 2007; Burke et al 2011)

Sustainability of the Lunch Club Resource

- Lunch clubs are an important community resource providing examples of notable public health achievements
- They are also vulnerable to critical incidents that can threaten their survival

What can we learn about

the sustainability of the lunch club network?

*How can we use that information to support these small
community groups ?*

The Sustainability of Small Community Groups

- Small community groups are being encouraged to scale-up activities, but evidence on the challenges they face is fragmented and pathways to sustainability are under-researched (McCabe et al 2010)
- To survive, small community groups generate resources from within the group and reach outward for support (Soteri-Proctor 2011)
- Financial sustainability can be a challenge due to limited resources, capacity and infrastructure, and competition for grants and fundraising (Thomson and Caulier-Grice 2008, Reid and Mordaunt 2009)

Aims of the research

- To identify and map different lunch club models across NE Wales and West Cheshire
- To develop knowledge about operational and financial sustainability
- To understand how co-ordinators tackle problems
- To identify and share achievements
- To provide a body of evidence to policy makers, local authorities, health boards, voluntary organisations
- To raise the profile of lunch clubs as a community based resource for ageing populations

Geographical area for the research



Research Questions

What different lunch club models can be identified?

What internal/external factors impact on operational and financial sustainability within each model?

How have lunch clubs responded to incidents that have threatened their survival?

What notable achievements can be shared and what lessons can be learned to inform future development?

Research Methods

PHASE ONE : SURVEY

Identify lunch clubs in NE Wales & W Cheshire.
Survey questionnaire to all lunch club co-ordinators.

AIMS : To identify different lunch club models
To select 10-12 lunch clubs for case studies

PHASE TWO : CASE STUDIES

(one for each different lunch club model)

Face to face interviews with 10-12 lunch club co-ordinators.

AIMS : to explore factors impacting on operational
and financial sustainability

PHASE ONE SURVEY : SAMPLE AND RESPONSE RATE

67 lunch clubs were identified across three localities
28 completed the survey (response rate 41%)

Locality	Number of lunch clubs identified	Number of survey responses
Wrexham	35	13
W. Cheshire	22	9
Flintshire	10	6

VENUES FOR LUNCH CLUBS

VENUE	NUMBER OF LUNCH CLUBS (total n=28)
Community Village Hall or Church Hall	16
Community Cafe	3
Independent Living Unit	2
Pub / Restaurant	2
Hotel	1
Further Education College	1
Day Centre	1
Extra Care Facility	1
Sports Club	1

Models of Delivery

10 different models were identified, based on various combinations of

- **Financial Strategy and Funding**
(self funded / self & community funded)
- **Delivery Partnerships**
(self catered / catered)
- **Setting**
(community hall / adopted facility / 'eating out')
- **Scope of activities**
(meal only / lunch clubs 'plus')

Selection of Case Studies for Phase Two

	Self funded	Self & Comm Funded	Self Cater	Catered	Comm. Hall	Adopt Facility	Eat Out	Lunch Club 'Plus'
1 CH	Dark		Dark		Dark			Dark
2 W	Dark		Dark		Dark			
3 F	Dark			Dark				
4 CH		Dark	Dark		Dark			Dark
5 W		Dark		Dark	Dark			
6 W	Dark		Dark			Dark		Dark
7 CH	Dark			Dark		Dark		
8 CH		Dark	Dark			Dark		Dark
9 F		Dark		Dark		Dark	Dark	Dark
10 F	Dark			Dark		Light	Dark	Dark

PHASE TWO CASE STUDIES

Conceptualising 'Sustainability'

OPERATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Organisational Identity (vision, mission, values, leadership)
- Forward Planning (future needs, goals, activities)
- Development Activity (marketing & promotion, support networks, evaluation & review, recruitment & team building)

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Ability to manage finances
- Security of existing funding, ability to attract new funding
- Ability to communicate outcomes information to funders

Phase Two Case Studies

Data Collection

Face to face, semi-structured interviews with
10 lunch club co-ordinators
(one per model of lunch club)

Interview schedule designed to explore

- Operational sustainability
- Financial sustainability
- Ability to respond to critical incidents
- Achievements and contributions

Phase Two Case Studies

Data Analysis

Interviews tape recorded and transcribed, or recorded in note form.

Framework analysis, guided by the themes in the interview schedule (Bowling 2009).

Also identifying any sub-themes / new themes emerging from the data.

Threats to Sustainability

(Overview of Phase Two Data from Co-ordinators)

- Workforce challenges
- Maintaining membership
- Managing inter-personal relationships
- Access to transport
- Barriers to expansion and development
- Rising costs and money management
- Impact of external decisions

Further observations from the data

- Marketing, publicity, evaluation
- Responding to demographic change
- 'Breaking even' as a financial strategy
- Planning ahead for the long-term
- Seeking advice

Co-ordinators' Voices

- 'The lunch club gets people out of the house to meet other people and to have at least two hot meals every month. We are like a family, the members enjoy sharing their news' (Church Hall Lunch Club, Wrexham)*
- 'We want to sustain it (the lunch club); we like to keep our presence in the neighbourhood because we are one of the few sources of support' (Rural Lunch Club, Village Hall, W. Cheshire)*
- ' We give them somewhere to go that's more friendly than sitting in a cafe...it means a lot to them.....it's safe and comfortable...we give the best that we have for them' (Town Centre Lunch Club, Community Centre, Flintshire)*
- ' We don't know if we will get any more funding, and we're always trying to think that if we don't get any more, how long could we keep going with what we've got' (Lunch Club, Independent Living Venue, W Cheshire)*

The Data Resource

- **Ten descriptive case studies** (models, what can be achieved, ideas for new developments, anticipating hurdles)
- **Theoretical learning about sustainability**
 - from specific components or combined components of the models e.g. all the catered clubs; all the community venue clubs; all the self funded clubs, all the 'plus' clubs, and so on.....
 - from issues raised by new, maturing, established and embedded lunch clubs
- **Identifying 'locality' issues and priorities**, and for lunch clubs in rural /semi-urban /urban settings

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