

Moray Food and Health Project



What's it all about?

Every time we open a newspaper these days there seems to be another story pointing out the health implications of our expanding waistbands. There are increased demands being placed on the resources of the NHS to treat a wide range of health problems linked to this phenomenon.

Doctors and other health professionals use something called the Body Mass Index (BMI) to identify which of their patients are overweight. The BMI is worked out by dividing a person's weight in kgs by their height in metres squared. If the BMI figure is over 25, then that is when doctors begin to recognize that the patient is more likely to be affected by other longer term health problems if they are not helped to reduce their weight.

Without wishing to be alarmist, all of the medical evidence shows that those of us who are currently overweight (currently between 40-50% of

the Scottish population) run a significantly higher risk of being affected by conditions such as diabetes, chronic heart disease and high blood pressure.



National research has shown that over half of all pre-school children born in 1998 were overweight or obese by the age of three years old. Further research on 12 year olds carried out in 2002 showed that one third were overweight and over a quarter were medically defined as obese.

This is a major public health challenge and it is something we all have to be involved in tackling.

One of the best ways we can improve our health as individuals is to change the way we eat.

Food is one of those vital elements of life which we almost take for granted. In our increasingly hectic lifestyles the evidence shows that we are eating much more convenience and processed foods and not taking enough exercise.

Over the past six months or so the Moray Food and Health project has been trying to find out how accurate this picture is in Moray. We have carried out intensive community consultations in Tomintoul together with Glenlivet and Lhanbryde plus other research in Rothes, Dufftown, Aberlour and Craigellachie.

We have spoken to GP practices throughout Speyside and have gathered information relating to weight management and chronic illness.

We have also delivered some training to local groups and have worked with some schools.

This short report gives some feedback on what we have found out and outlines.....



what we are trying to do!

The Moray Food and Health project is a partnership project led by NHS Grampian which has been looking at food access within Moray.

The project aims to:

- engage with communities in Speyside and Lhanbryde to look at individual shopping and eating habits
- work with GP practices to establish how they currently identify and support patients who want to lose weight
- support individuals and groups to undertake food skills training
- work with schools to promote healthy eating



Once upon a time there was a hungry caterpillar

Tomintoul and Glenlivet

During the community consultation 100 adults in Tomintoul and Glenlivet area together with 17 young people from the youth club were interviewed.

People were asked a range of questions regarding what they ate, where they shopped, how healthy they considered their diet. Suggestions were invited about how to improve local access to good quality fruit and vegetables.

- 28% of the adults were eating 3 or less portions of fruit and vegetables per day compared to the recommended five portions.
- of the men surveyed 41% had not eaten fruit or vegetables in the previous 24 hours.
- 8.5% of the survey ate five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- 78% do their main shopping in Elgin although 28% also shopped locally.
- quality was rated more important than price when buying fruit and vegetables.
- local retailers are very dependent on suppliers who are prepared to deliver. Whilst they try to stock as many staples as possible there are problems as other goods are only available in bulk pack sizes.
- some people said they would like to see more locally produced food available. Ideas mentioned included farm shops, pick your own options and community association co-operatives.



healthy options - the next Generation Game?

Roths, Craigellachie, Dufftown and Aberlour

Questionnaires to record household information were sent out via the primary schools in these four communities. A total of 172 were returned and formed the data for this element of the study.

- adults in Craigellachie recorded the highest levels of fruit consumption with over 77% eating four or more portions a day. The average for the remaining communities was 67%.
- the percentage of children under 16 who ate less than 3 portions of fruit and vegetable a day ranged from 44-56%
- a significant amount of young people were reported not to be eating any fruit or vegetables in a typical day - 6.5% in Dufftown, 11% in Aberlour, 12% in Craigellachie and 15% in Roths.
- shoppers in Roths and Dufftown were the most unhappy with the range and cost of produce available in local shops



a scientific fact.... strawberries make you smile!

Lhanbryde

The total number of residents who took part in the face to face research was 155 (37 teenagers and 118 adults). Local retailers were also consulted during the study.

- half of the adults surveyed had an annual household income of £10,000 or less.
- the majority (78%) do their main shop in Elgin although half do "emergency" shopping locally.
- people claimed on a normal day to eat an average of 4 portions of fruit and vegetables which was in fact higher than the actual amount consumed in the previous 24 hours.
- only 7% of those surveyed said they bought fruit and vegetables in Lhanbryde.
- almost a quarter of the teenagers surveyed had not eaten any breakfast that day.
- 30% of adults felt that they did not have enough money to buy the types of food which they felt were healthy.

Weight Management

Interviews were carried out with all of the GP practices in Speyside. Information was gathered from the GPASS databases used by the practices. This data was then compared to the Scottish General Practice Comparative to assess the rates of chronic disease within Speyside practices relative to the national averages.

For reasons of confidentiality it is not possible to identify which information relates to a specific practice. However, it was found that the practices in Speyside had higher figures than the Scottish average in a number of areas.

Practice 1: higher for coronary heart disease, stroke/TIA, high blood pressure in over 35's, diabetes, asthma, under-active thyroid and cancers diagnosed since April 2003.

Practice 2: higher for stroke/TIA, diabetes and under active thyroid.

Practice 3: high blood pressure in over 35's, diabetes, asthma; under active thyroid, cancer diagnosed since April 2003 and mental health.

Practice 4: higher for high blood pressure and diabetes.

Practice 5: higher for high blood pressure.

One other interesting thing we found was that Speyside has a higher population of persons aged under 17 than the Scottish average. Based on the theory of prevention being better than cure, it would seem that efforts to promote healthy eating in this age group should lead to long term benefits in Speyside.



Is that inches or centimetres?

Food Skills Training

We worked in partnership with the Moray Council Community development Service to run a 10 session training course for youth workers.

The aim of the training course was to give the youth workers the confidence to develop hands-on food skills training with young people in youth groups. The youth workers were planning to use their new skills within youth clubs and when taking groups of youngsters away on residential activities.

We also delivered a "Now You're Cooking" programme with a group of young mothers in Rothes which covered areas such as food preparation and hygiene as well as practical cooking skills. The parents were particularly keen on making the course as practical as possible, for example, looking at preparing healthy snacks and treats for kids parties.



and my latest recipe is

Back to skool

We worked with Primary 4 and Primary 5 pupils in Rothes, Dufftown, Craigellachie and Aberlour. The sessions were led by a dietician and introduced the children to the concept of different food groups and the need to eat a balanced diet.

Whilst this was happening other members of the team were working with small groups of pupils to build up their individual health profiles which were then included within the wider community consultation for Speyside.

Aberlour had the highest percentage of children attending school meals (60.5%) although the pupils here ate the least fruit and vegetables at lunchtime. All of the children reported snacking during the day. Over 60% of children in Craigellachie had eaten fruit as a snack during the day. Elsewhere the figures were 48% in Rothes, 42% in Aberlour and 38% in Dufftown. A higher percentage of kids in Aberlour and Rothes reported eating two or more portion of fruit as a snack.



and I really like bananas and oranges!

What we plan to do next.....

work with retailers in Tomintoul to pilot a "healthy shelf" initiative to increase the range of healthy foods available.

work with local health professionals and agencies to offer a home delivery vegetable box scheme to individual households, together with recipe cards and food skills training if required.

design a training programme in weight management support to be delivered to health professionals in Moray.

produce a directory of weight management resources and make it available to GP practices.

work with young people in schools, particularly those who are about to leave.

work with local partners in Speyside and Lhanbryde to deliver training courses linked to food skills and healthy eating.

make links with local farmers and producers to assess the possibilities of farmers markets, box schemes and other initiatives which would make local produce easier to buy and sell.

develop weight management groups in communities with commercial organisations which do not currently have classes available locally.

work with the GP practices which serve the Lhanbryde community to profile what is currently happening in relation to weight management for patients.

What you can do to help yourself.....

One of the simple ways to improve your health is to try and eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetable a day. A portion could be:

an apple, an orange, a pear or banana ✓
a cupful of strawberries, raspberries or grapes ✓
a glass of fruit juice, a slice of melon or pineapple ✓
a tablespoon of stewed apples ✓

two tablespoons of green vegetables like broccoli or spinach ✓
two tablespoons of root vegetables like carrot or turnip ✓
three tablespoons of small vegetables like peas or sweetcorn ✓
(information from NHS Grampian "Strive for five to stay alive" leaflet)

Where you can get further information.....

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