

The Health and Well-being Network (HWN)

The HWN is managed by [MACC](#) (Manchester Alliance for Community Care), which is an alliance of VCS organisations, formed in 1981 to challenge inequalities in health and social care. It was set up five years ago as a part of Manchester's community empowerment network ([CN4M](#)), and provides a structure for *engaging* representatives of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in planning and strategic decision making processes about the delivery of services in the city. The HWN has several health related priorities: food; sexual health; well-being; and alcohol. Through a consultation in 2005 food was identified by HWN members as the most important issue, and the one that they thought they could most do something about. Since then the HWN has maintained two representatives on the board of [Manchester Food Futures](#), which is the city's sustainable food strategy, and a positive relationship has been built with the statutory sector partners. In 2006 HWN produced an online Community Food Resource Pack, which is [available for download](#). In 2007-08 HWN supported Food Futures in the delivery of their Community and Voluntary Sector Commissioning Programme, which engaged a wide diversity of groups in a portfolio of food related projects.

Interest in community food issues has risen dramatically in recent years, and in July 08, the HWN initiated a sub-group called Food & Well-being (F&W), in order to free-up capacity to enable HWN to focus on its other priorities areas, and to test the demand for a food and well-being group as a separate entity. F&W has met three times since its inception, and each meeting has been enthusiastically attended by representatives from diverse community food interest groups. F&W helps facilitate the engagement of VCS representatives in Manchester Food Futures, and other strategic decision-making and planning structures concerned with food and well-being. It acts as an information conduit, sharing information between VCS and statutory organisations, plus meetings act as a forum in which VCS groups can share knowledge, information, and best practice. Other activities undertaken by F&W since July include:

- Improving communications within Food Futures, and making it more accessible, particularly to adults with learning disabilities;
- Exploring ICT solutions to develop new ways of sharing information between Network members, and assisting in the trial of Open Strategy, online strategic mapping tool;
- Consulting network members on a Food Futures led funding strategy to use the Lottery Local Food Fund to support the Manchester VCS;
- Issues relating to climate change and peaking oil supplies.

Full reports on F&W at: http://creativelocalsolutions.co.uk/roblog/Food_and_Wellbeing_Network

What we would like Esmee Fairbairn to fund

We would like Esmee Fairbairn to fund the HWN to deliver further activity based project work around food and well-being:

- F&W is a group of active practitioners, developing community leadership through engaging representatives in policy mechanisms like Food Futures, and connecting people working within diverse food-related interests. We seek funding to run a series of training and skills-sharing activities, in order to better connect, and enhance the leadership potential of participants;

- Many of the organisations involved in F&W activities are delivering front-line work, and using food as a means for improving quality of life for their beneficiaries. Examples of this include projects that promote healthy eating through social inclusion for older BME groups, and food aid for homeless people, and refugees and asylum seekers. We would like to demonstrate how food contributes to community cohesion, by highlighting and showcasing existing projects doing this kind of work in the city.
- Also we would like to demonstrate the positive role of food in a social context by designing a series of healthy and sustainable eating activities, to be delivered collaboratively by F&W group members and their beneficiaries, at high profile events throughout Manchester;
- Finally we would like funding to deliver a one-day seminar, bringing together F&W group members, researchers, and policy makers, to explore and enhance understanding, and influence local policy makers and strategic planners, around the impact of food on wider well-being.

Why we want to do this work

The HWN has been doing this work since 2003. Interest in community issues around food and well-being have risen dramatically in recent years, and the existing Network no longer has the capacity to handle the work load. There is no other independent structure within the city existing to network VCS food and well-being projects. The F&W pilot has therefore been enthusiastically attended since it began in July, and participants are keen for it to continue, and there is a lot of scope for new innovation. Funding (provided by MACC) for the pilot F&W is about to run out, and at the F&W meeting in September, participants decided collectively to apply to the EF Food Fund, to support further activity based projects relating to food and well-being.

How the project meets the criteria of the Food strand

1. F&W explores and enhances understanding of the impact of food on wider well-being, by linking individuals and professionals, from diverse community interests, to share information, knowledge and best practice about these issues.
2. Community cohesion and social inclusion are priorities throughout the Manchester community empowerment network infrastructure, and F&W connects, supports, and advocates projects that achieve this through food related activities.
3. Leadership is developed through the provision of a structure for engaging and supporting VCS representatives in citywide processes concerned with planning, strategic decision-making and policy.
4. Greater connection amongst diverse food-related interests is enabled by regular network meetings, and the development of ICT solutions. In the future, more events and training activities will be planned to better achieve this.

How much the project will cost and how much we are asking for

Activity	Breakdown	Cost
Training / skills sharing activities	?	?
Showcasing community cohesion	?	?
Healthy and sustainable eating activities	?	?
Food and Well-being seminar	?	?
Total	?	?