

Get Togethers Campaigns for Community Enrichment and Engagement

Get togethers' **Cook and Share** and **Plant and Share** campaigns were launched to promote positive attitudes towards multigenerational and diverse community activities through planting, cooking and sharing events that would bring people together from a range of backgrounds and communities.

Since 2021 the campaigns substantially grew their reach and attracted a remarkable range of small-scale organisations and groups serving different communities of place and interest.

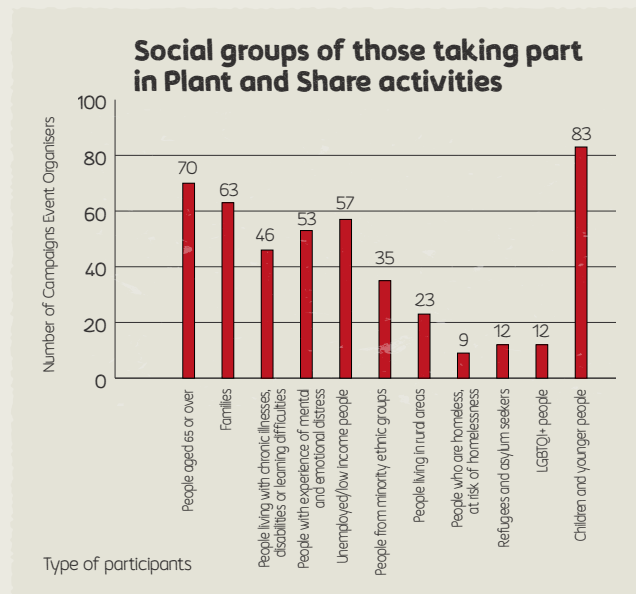
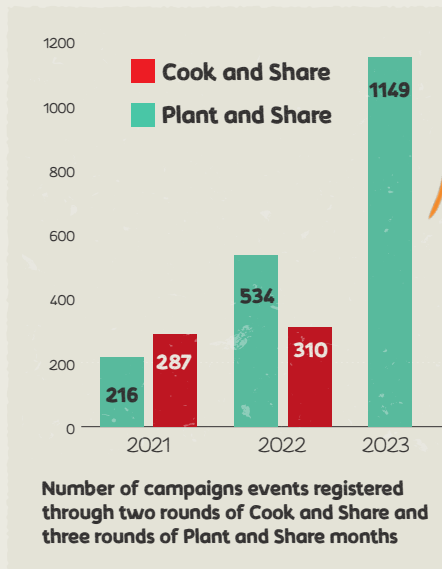
2496 Plant and Share and Cook and Share events were organised to date! These events were often social occasions, with the estimated number of participants ranging from **10 to 400**, with an average of **39** participants per event, expanding the reach of events to thousands of participants per campaign month!

Get Togethers campaigns supported event organisers with themed resources. In total across all the campaigns run, these resources were downloaded on: **50,478** occasions during the Plant and Share months and **29,207** occasions during the Cook and Share months.

A wide range of different social groups were engaged in the campaigns' activities. While most groups of participants involved **multiple generations**, there was also strong engagement with people living with **mental health issues, emotional distress, long-term conditions, on low income**, or with other forms of **social and health disadvantage**.

- Food-based events provided opportunities to make conversation, find out about others, and generate ideas for other community activities.
- With varying cultural experiences and opinions about what makes food 'good', organisers provided a choice on what was grown or cooked at the events.
- Organisers varied the approach on how the link between good food was made to the environment, learning, local production, culture, and celebrations.
- For some groups, shared meals and growing activities were a way to provide nutritious food to those experiencing food poverty in a way that preserved the dignity of recipients.

*Some of these changes involved including more diverse groups of people, involving new partners such as local businesses, training up volunteers and using different ingredients or cooking new dishes.



Reflecting on their event campaigns event organisers reported:

81% sought to run their events on more than one occasion

98% decided to continue or grow their community food activities

51% stated that they intended to make changes to social food activities in future*

Get Togethers Microgrants to Support Community Capacity and Leadership Building

During the second round of campaigns (mid-2021 for Cook and Share and early 2022 for Plant and Share), £150 grants were made available by Get Togethers to hundreds of community groups to deliver cooking, planting, and sharing activities that would bring people together from disadvantaged and diverse communities.

The evaluation of Cook and Share and Plant and Share campaigns' small grants scheme provided a window into a rich field of over 900 community and voluntary groups across the UK.

Evidence shows that small grants benefited organisers differently depending on their experience.

Some grant recipients used the initial grant as a catalyst to further successful funding bids or to attract in-kind funding.

- Tidemill Residents Group used their grant as a motivation to bring on board local businesses to meet the resourcing requirements not covered by the grant whilst for Penrose Root Community the grant was a way to bring in match funding to satisfy the requirements of their core funder.

Some gained experience and used creative means to make the grant funding stretch further.

- The Nigerian Catholic Community were able to multiply the benefits of this and other grants by purchasing at discount through the charity Project In kind, which enables them to make a grant of £150 translate into £500 buying power.

Aside from the financial benefit, the grant affirmed the ideas of organisers, helped them extend their ambitions and feel connected to other groups engaged in community and gave them a chance to extend their social networks.

- Friendly Faces of Kent used a portion of the grant to create 'legacy' resources such as recipe cards or plant give-aways.

Event organisers reported that the grant helped their group promote:

- the use of healthy food (**77%**)
- in-season food (**52%**)
- locally produced food (**50%**)
- sustainably produced food (**27%**)
- food with the highest animal welfare standards (**16%**)

Groups that were first time recipients of external funding stood to gain **basic skills in setting up community cooking events**, felt **an enhanced sense of the status of their group** and had **a new perspective on what the group could potentially accomplish in the future**.

Whereas those with more experience in running events set more ambitious goals to work on community food issues.

Following success with the small grant a minority had applied for further funding and almost all organisers reported going on to run further activities after their first event.

LEARNING: grant givers can work with community food groups to grow the capabilities of people who get involved.

On one hand the £150 wasn't much, but on the other it was. This was a way of us being able to go "Oh look, we've managed to get a little grant!" It gave us the drive to think, "We've done this, we can fundraise." **Live Active Unst, Shetland**

The 'Plant and Share' grant has meant we can purchase all our seeds, compost and pots for the community to all get together and learn together and that is what community is all about – the warmth of togetherness.

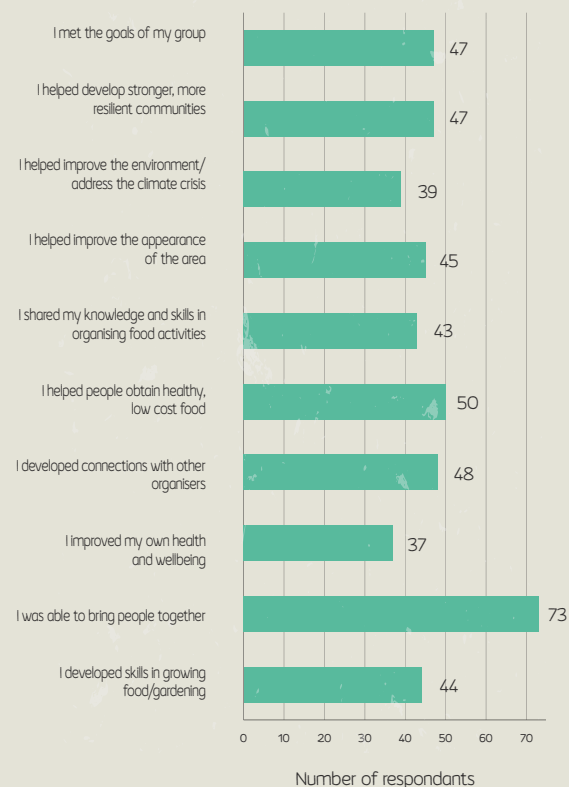
Friends of George's Park, Birmingham

Impact of 'Plant and Share' Campaign

- 'Plant and Share' activities: helped participants connect with others in the community (97%)
- enhance positive attitudes towards diversity (60%)
- address isolation and loneliness (89%)
- improved attitudes towards ageing (53%)



Number of campaign event organisers who indicated what they got out of the Plant and Share event



Event organisers named growing a wide range of produce, including at least 61 different types of fruit and vegetables.

For most organisations, it was their first experience of running a Plant and Share type activity (81%).



Linking communities through sharing flowers and vegetables

RainbowBIZ, a CIC based in the market town of Flintshire, has been incorporated as a Social Enterprise since January 2015. Sarah, one of the four Directors of RainbowBiz CIC said, "Some other allotment holders attended our Plant and Share event and brought flowers and vegetables to share with others which was really lovely. We had some drop-in visitors who were originally from Romania and Hungary. We hope that the links we have made will continue to come along to our projects in the future." It was the first time that RainbowBiz CIC had run an event like this.

Friendships flourish through edible hanging basket community project

Nestled in four acres of land in Caerphilly, Groundwork Wales runs several projects, all based outdoors, and include a Wellbeing Project, a Kickstart scheme and one of the key projects is Routes2Life (R2L). Rachael, who has been with Groundwork Wales for nearly 20 years said "Plant and Share is such a good theme and gave us a platform and a way to direct people to the online Get Togethers, we shared the online 'how to' session on our website and it has been watched hundreds of times, which is incredible" She continued; "Plant and Share Month is so beneficial, you get to meet people, get out in the fresh air and it is so nice to be around people. All my volunteers love Plant and Share month, we are like a family now and we all look forward to it."



Impacts of 'Cook and Share' Campaign

Organisers reported that by bringing people together their 'Cook and Share' events:

- enhanced positive attitudes towards ageing (64%) and diversity (68%)
- addressed loneliness and isolation (83%)
- helped people connect with each other (99%)
- almost all organisers go on to run further activities after their first event



Bringing People Together Through Good Food:

Many of the volunteers live by themselves. Like myself – my husband died six years ago. We get more out of it than we put in really. We thoroughly enjoy it.

Balfon Lunch Club

Even though people have a language barrier or a different economic and political agenda, it doesn't matter when it comes to food...we can easily communicate through the food.

Women's Cultural Arena CIC, Buckinghamshire



A lot of what we do is very hands on and busy. I think that having the meal was good for was just people relaxing, and actually coming together and talking about what they've been doing.... There wasn't one person around that fire who didn't talk to everybody.

Helping Hooves Derbyshire CIC



Meals help people communicate

