



COOK, LEARN, GROW

Project Report



We were really excited to have launched our first project 'Cook, Learn, Grow' in collaboration with Lincolnshire County Council's Day Opportunities Team at Ancaster Day Centre - a day centre for people with Learning Disabilities. We delivered a course covering safe food management, food handling, knife skills, cooking techniques and recipe design; all culminating in wonderful food! Our students created stunning and tasty dishes, many of which they took home to share with family or friends.

GoGro CIC received funding through the Greater Lincolnshire LEP Employment and Skills ESF Grant Programme. As well as teaching our students to make lovely food, we wanted to offer an opportunity to learn new skills and experiences that could help them back into education, volunteering opportunities or paid work.

In the early stages of the course (when we still wore masks!), we went through basic theory, including health and safety, hygiene and knife skills

We quickly realised that the project and the manner in which it was delivered did so much more than teach people to cook. Within a six - eight week period, our students made us proud, surprising us (and themselves!) and showed us the transformations that are possible when we enable people, some of whom have Autism, anxiety issues or past trauma, to learn new skills and to create things that make them say “Wow!”.

Project Statistics

Numbers of students supported 20.

Time spent with us 6-8 weeks.

A minimum of two sessions per week.

Over the course of the project, we covered more than 50 recipes.

We produced nearly 450 portions for students to take home to their families, housemates or friends.

We provided over 250 meals for both the Lincoln Community Grocery Store and ECHO (East Coast Homeless Outreach), on one occasion we were supported by Octopus Energy.

“xxxxx just started his first shift...he is doing great, so much better than he was. You really helped him.”

- A STUDENT'S MOTHER

We flipped 150 pancakes on Shrove Tuesday for staff and service users at Ancaster Day Centre.

We created a Jubilee high tea and BBQ celebration for over 50 support workers and Ancaster Day Centre service users.

We created hundreds of cakes and pastries for an open day aimed at Social Workers and Lincolnshire County Council staff.



A beautiful pear and almond frangipane. All of our students will be given a personalised recipe book inspired by the course and created exclusively by GoGro CIC

Who We Worked With

BGFutures, Bishop Grosseteste University (with funding from the European Union European Social Fund), Greater Lincolnshire Economic Partnership, Lincolnshire County Council's Day Opportunities Team and Ancaster Day Centre, Bridge Church Lincoln, Community Grocery Store, ECHO, Octopus Energy, Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation NHS Trust, Eden Futures, Linkage



Outcomes and Achievements

Our students' outcomes and achievements were many, they ranged from small but very important incremental improvements in their daily lives, up to gaining employment, volunteer opportunities and admission into colleges.

Individual Examples and Outcomes

Individual 'A' was practically house bound for years, non communicative and seemingly in a world of their own. They ended up being able to walk from home to the kitchen unsupported, as well as becoming much more conversational. It was amazing to see their confidence levels dramatically increase and their participation on the course becoming more constructive.

Individual 'B' - there have been many magical moments food wise, one notable example on 'pasta day', where individual 'B' created a mushroom, ricotta and quails egg ravioli. It literally blew us away,

Students helping out at our Jubilee Celebration (left). The inside of a steak and mushroom pie and Eton Mess (middle) and proud students taking photos of their chicken parmigiana and hasselback roasted potatoes (right)

“It was great to meet you. xxxxx is really excited. This is such a lifeline”- a student’s mother

a dish that could have graced any top restaurant. This individual wishes to go on to further education within the industry and has used the course as a stepping stone to achieve this goal.

Individual 'C' - over the timespan of the course, their confidence levels rose to such a degree that they were able to take their first steps towards independent living. This is another example of how focussed care and attention can have dramatic outcomes on individuals' lives.



A panna cotta with cherry sauce



Events

Linking in with the Lincoln Community Grocery Store (LCGS), they provided GoGro CIC with locally sourced ingredients, our students then went on to create over 50 portions of cassoulet. We returned these completed meals to LCGS for them to make available to the community. It was so rewarding to our students and us to obtain food that was about to be thrown out and then to create wonderful meals for those on lower incomes, it also helped us all to find out more about the amazing work that the LCGS do.

ECHO is a community group who wholly rely on donations in order to help some of the most vulnerable people in Lincoln society. Our students created 50 nutritious meals which we delivered to ECHO on two

Octopus Energy volunteers posing with some of the ingredients donated to us by the Lincoln Community Grocery Store. The 'circular economy' was complete when we made 100 delicious meals that we gave back to the store

occasions who in turn fed homeless people in Lincoln, our students very much enjoyed the opportunity to give back to the community.

We shared a wonderful day with Octopus Energy volunteers creating much needed food for the LCGS. They made 50 portions of spiced parsnip soup and 50 portions of tofu and green chilli curry, the food donated to us from the Lincoln Community Grocery Store and returned to them as before (this is another example of zero waste, creating a circular economy and collaborating with others). Our thanks to Octopus Energy for their engagement, enthusiasm and cooking skills!

On Shrove Tuesday two of our students were unexpectedly called upon to provide pancakes for staff and service users at Ancaster Day Centre. 150 pancakes later, they had mastered their technique, enjoying the buzz around the day centre.

At the end of the course all students gathered together to create a two-day celebratory Jubilee event at Ancaster Day Centre providing a BBQ on day one and culminating in a magnificent high tea. They quite rightly were incredibly proud of their efforts and achievements, the applause from the guests, a fitting end to an amazing course!



Eamonn with ECHO prior to handing out 100 meals to the homeless

Quotes

“The best course I’ve been on not just because of the food but because of me expanding my mind, working in a brilliant team and Eamonn has been the best. I just want to help future projects and help out, for older men and veterans.”

“Without doubt I have learned so much on this course thank you”

“Just wanted to say xxxxx did something that made him proud of himself today, not seen him like that in a while! It was delicious too! Thank you”

“After months of rejection for pretty much everything he tried, all the good things seem to have come to him at once. Thank you again”

“Today xxxxx made home made ice cream flavoured with orange zest and preserved ginger, it was the best thing ever, thank you for everything you’ve done for him”

“xxxxx just started his first shift... and he is doing great, so much better than he was. You really helped him.”

“Food, by its very nature, is fundamental to each and every one of us and therefore there is a commonality, something to talk about, something in common. The moment you start talking about something you have in common with others, conversations flow and confidence levels rise.”
GoGro CIC June 2022

You can also see this report online at <https://gogro.org.uk/cook-learn-grow>
We can be found on Instagram and Facebook @GoGro_CIC please get in touch if you want to find out more!

