

October 2013

Evaluation of Eat Well – Keep Active (Stage 1)

Roma Robertson, SCPHRP and
Ruth Jepson, SCPHRP



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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the Course attendees who completed our survey and those who agreed to be interviewed. We would also like to thank Community Food and Health (Scotland) for funding this evaluation and Heather Cameron at CHANGES for her unfailing support and encouragement. Community Food and Health Scotland also supported the training of the course leaders.

Background

CHANGES was established in 1996 to “promote positive wellbeing and provide opportunities for people in East Lothian, Scotland to find ways towards healthier and less stressful living” and one of the activities that CHANGES provides is a six week course called ‘Eat Well – Keep Active’ henceforth referred to as ‘the Course’. The aim of the Course is to improve mental and physical wellbeing by increasing awareness and knowledge of eating well and exercising and to provide practical examples of healthy meals and ways to exercise. The free Course comprises 5 weekly two hour sessions and a 6th session after a 5 week break. In the sessions, participants take part in some light physical activity, are told about a healthy diet, and have a cookery demonstration (which they have the opportunity to taste as well).

In total, until the start of this evaluation in February 2013, it had been run four times with approximately 30 people having taken part. The majority of people who come to CHANGES have depression, anxiety or stress which is often related to social isolation and many of them are on state benefits. Those who have attended the Course are predominantly, but not exclusively, older women, living on their own.

Aims

The aim of this evaluation was to see whether the Course achieved its outcomes by assessing whether the key objectives have been met in the short term and/or the long term.

The evaluation had a number of objectives which were to:

- explore the parts of the Course that people enjoyed;
- explore the parts of the Course people found useful, and the parts that they found unhelpful;
- determine which outcomes the Course appears to have an effect on; what changes in eating and exercise behaviour people have made;

- determine whether short term effects are sustained in the longer term;
- explore and gain an understanding of the mechanisms of change as a result of the Course. For example, if people are buying healthier food, was it as a direct result of the Course, because they found out that it was cheaper, or for reasons unrelated to the Course;
- explore any unintended consequences (positive and negative) of taking part in the Course;
- make some general observations and help understand in which ways the Course may be beneficial, and where there seems to be no effect.

Methods

This evaluation was undertaken using quantitative (a postal survey) and qualitative (face-to-face interviews) methods.

All participants (n=31) were sent the survey by post in March 2013 and asked to complete and return it in a stamped addressed envelope to the external researcher. Basic analysis was carried out in SPSS v19.

In order to better understand and explore the ways in which the Course may have affected the outcomes, face-to-face interviews were carried out. Particular attention was paid to eliciting if and how participation in the Course affected the interviewees’ perception of their mental health and wellbeing, and if they thought any particular aspects of the Course were responsible for this. Data were entered into NVivo 10 to facilitate interpretation and reporting of pre-defined themes.

Both sets of data were considered together, to better understand and explain whether the outcomes of the Course were met.

Results

Twenty one (68%) people returned a completed questionnaire. Four (19%) were men. The age range was from 46 years to 83 years with a mean of 64 years.

The most common reason for taking the Course was to learn how to cook healthy meals and people wanted to do this to improve their physical health, particularly to reduce their weight. Being more physically active was less of a motivator. People also wanted to take the Course to socialise more.

Questionnaire respondents were very positive about the usefulness of all aspects of the Course with cookery demonstrations, information about fats, sugars and salts, and the eatwell plate being most popular. The exercise sessions and information about exercise and activities were least popular, but they too scored highly.

From the interviews it was clear that everyone had found the information about healthy eating useful. There was a high awareness of which foods were healthy and which were not. One of the most useful things spoken about by the interviewees was checking food labels to identify foods that would be 'bad for one's health' because of the amount of sugar, fat or salt they contained. They also found it useful to learn that pre-prepared meals often contained a lot of unhealthy additives. They learnt that it is easier to control the intake of sugars, salts, fats and chemical additives by buying the ingredients and cooking meals from the basics. As well as being aware of and reducing the amount of unhealthy food they ate, people spoke about foods that were good for their health and how they could be included in their diets at appropriate times of the day and in sensible quantities.

Course attendees also found the demonstrations of how to cook easy, healthy and economical meals very useful and enjoyed the opportunity to try out food that was not normally part of their diet and some went on to include these foods regularly in their own diets.

Many people mentioned how useful it was to be with other people many of whom, like themselves,

had difficulties controlling their weight or other problems. They also enjoyed meeting new people or people they had known in the past, the fun and camaraderie, the input about healthy eating from the other Course attendees and the fact that they all had a common purpose. The last meeting, 6 weeks after the first five weekly classes was appreciated as people liked to hear how their course-mates had got on and to be reminded of what they had learnt.

There was some polarisation between people who did not find the exercises useful and those who did. Some people found the exercises lacking in intensity for their level of fitness and this aspect of the Course less useful. However, they did realise that it was useful for other people and had no objection to it being included.

The change in behaviour that most questionnaire respondents had made since completing the Course was to buy healthier foods. Eating fewer high fat and sugar foods and checking food labels when shopping were also things they did more after the Course. Only one person did not use at least one recipe from the Course each month.

In the interviews, people described some of the changes they had made in their eating and exercise habits as a result of attending the Course. While a very small minority of interviewees admitted that they had made few, if any, changes, the vast majority had improved their diet in some way and some had increased their daily physical activity. Of those who had not increased their physical activity levels, quite a few were already active. In general, interviewees spoke more about changes they had made to their diet than to physical activity levels.

The changes people had made were quite varied and often quite simple ones and, similar to the questionnaire responses, the main changes to diets involved decreasing the amount of unhealthy foods and increasing the amount of healthy food. Methods used to achieve this included reading the information labels on the products in the shops, eating regular meals and snacking less, cooking fresh food and eating fewer pre-prepared meals.

While a few people had found it difficult to make changes, many reported making changes quite easily. It seemed that the ideas from the Course could be incorporated easily into their lives.

Various strategies were used including checking the cupboards and making a list before going shopping, freezing perishable foods and preparing food and freezing in advance which was also useful when cooking for one. Other people would go shopping more frequently to buy fresher produce. Levels of motivation, determination and external factors, such as family and friends' behaviours, were recognised as factors affecting the ease of making changes to their diets and activity levels. People appeared to continue to make changes as time went by. Some were keen to take the Course again so that they could learn more.

Although making changes to the level of physical activity interviewees undertook did not seem to be as prevalent as the changes made to their diets, there was a clear awareness that being physically active was important for a healthy life and some people had discovered what fun seated exercises could be and had joined seated exercise classes once the Course had finished. Some interviewees found it difficult to exercise on their own and appreciated the incentive the class provided. Others were keen to do other courses and find other ways to keep active or to learn more about healthy eating.

Questionnaire respondents reported that they were more interested in healthy eating and more aware of what they could do to stay healthy following the Course. They felt more confident about following a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight and knowing how to become fit. They believed that a healthy diet and exercise were the most important factors in improving their wellbeing and the vast majority thought the Course had had a positive effect on their wellbeing. Interview data suggest that people thought that it was the extraneous factors such as feeling satisfied that they were eating healthily, enjoying preparing food and

using colourful foods that lifted your spirits rather than the food per se that had an impact on their wellbeing. Taking part in the class also made them feel better.

Several people were very aware that exercising improved their mood and gave them more energy, but even knowing this people found it difficult to incorporate physical activities into their days. As with eating a healthy diet, the positive aspects of being physically active were often associated with indirect reasons such as sociable encounters, being out in the fresh air or through weight loss although one interviewee believed that exercise induced brain chemicals to improve mood.

Although questionnaire responses indicated that people would appreciate a longer course, the interviewees did not express a strong interest in further support.

Conclusions

The Eat Well - Keep Active Course has been well received and is effective in meeting most of its key indicators for improving the wellbeing of the Course attendees. It would be worth considering emphasising the relationships that are believed to exist between food types and wellbeing in order to increase participants knowledge about this.

Course attendees had made small to moderate changes in the food they bought, prepared and ate and in increasing their levels of physical activity. The effect this had had on their mental and physical health varied, but nearly everyone felt better for having done the course. Participating in this Course was a positive experience promoting positive wellbeing.

1 Introduction

CHANGES was established in 1996 to “promote positive wellbeing and provide opportunities for people in East Lothian to find ways towards healthier and less stressful living”.

In this evaluation and report wellbeing is considered according to the definition devised by nef (New Economics Foundation) (nef 2012) that wellbeing is a broad concept defining how people feel and function on personal and social levels and how they evaluate their lives as a whole. It encompasses feelings and situations such as happiness, satisfaction with life, autonomy and purpose and depends on external circumstances such as economic and social situations and internal or personal resources such as health and self-esteem.

Evidence for the links between the types of food eaten and our mental wellbeing is accumulating and indicates that diet can contribute to both the treatment and prevention of mental ill health (Cornah 2006; van de Weyer 2006; McLernon 2007). Likewise, there is strong evidence to suggest that being physically active is associated with improved mental health (Kruk, 2007; Stathopoulou 2006).

Accordingly, one of the activities that CHANGES provides is a six week course called ‘Eat Well – Keep Active’ henceforth referred to as ‘the Course’. The aim of the Course is to improve mental and physical wellbeing by increasing awareness and knowledge of eating well and exercising and to provide practical examples of healthy meals and ways to exercise. The anticipated outcome and indicators are described in full in **Appendix 1**. The Course is free for participants and comprises 5 weekly two hour sessions and a 6th session after a 5 week break. In the sessions, participants take part in some light physical activity, are told about a healthy diet, and have a cookery demonstration (which they have the opportunity to taste as well). The Course was started in 2010 and was developed by Heather Cameron and Diann Govenlock. It underwent some modification after the first Course, but has remained essentially the same since. In total, until the start of this evaluation in February 2013, it had been run four times with approximately 30 people having taken part.

The majority of people who come to CHANGES have depression, anxiety or stress which is often related to social isolation and many of them are on state benefits. Approximately two thirds of these people are women. The Course attendees, in comparison, are predominantly, but not exclusively, older (>60 years) women, living on their own – a group on which little research evidence is available.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this evaluation is to see whether the Course has achieved its outcomes by assessing whether the key objectives have been met (see **Appendix 2**) in the short term and/or the long term. The first stage is a retrospective evaluation of all the people who had been on the Course since 2010. A prospective second stage will be considered following the completion of this report.

This evaluation had a number of objectives which were to:

- explore the parts of the Course that people enjoyed;
- explore the parts of the Course they found useful, and the parts that they found unhelpful;
- determine which outcomes the Course appears to have an effect on; what changes in eating and exercise behaviour people have made;
- determine whether short term effects are sustained in the longer term;
- explore and gain an understanding of the mechanisms of change as a result of the Course. For example, if people are buying healthier food, was it as a direct result of the Course, because they found out that it was cheaper, or for reasons unrelated to the Course;
- explore any unintended consequences (positive and negative) of taking part in the Course;
- make some general observations and help understand in which ways the Course may be beneficial, and where there seems to be no effect.

2 Methods

This evaluation was undertaken using both quantitative (a postal survey) and qualitative methods (face-to-face interviews) in order to obtain data to meet the objectives and the key areas of investigation described above.

2.1 Survey

The survey is available in **Appendix 3**. The survey questionnaire was designed using a mixture of validated questions (questions 8 and 13), questions used in other evaluations of diet and wellbeing (question 12) and questions specific to this Course based on the knowledge of the Course leaders and researchers (questions 2,3,5,6,7,9,10 and 14). Volunteers at CHANGES piloted the questionnaire for clarity and ease of use.

All participants (n=31) were sent the survey by post in March 2013 and asked to complete and return it in a stamped addressed envelope to the external researcher. Respondents were given the option to answer the questions in the questionnaire verbally, by telephone, if they would prefer this approach. The covering letter was signed by CHANGES staff, but it was made clear that the responses would not be seen by anyone involved in running the Course. A reminder was sent out 2 weeks later to those who had not yet returned the questionnaire. To thank people for taking part, respondents were sent a £10 voucher for a local supermarket.

Quantitative data was entered into SPSS v19. Simple frequencies were calculated for each outcome and expressed as percentages.

2.2 Interviews

In order to better understand and explore the ways in which the Course may have affected the outcomes described in **Appendix 2**, face-to-face interviews were carried out with people who volunteered to do this. Particular attention was paid to eliciting if and how participation in the Course affected the interviewees' perception

of their mental health and wellbeing, and if they thought any particular aspects of the Course were responsible for this. The interview schedule used can be seen in **Appendix 4**. The interviews took place in locations which were convenient for the interviewees and were conducted by a researcher (RR) who is external to CHANGES. To thank them for taking part, participants were given a £10 voucher for a local supermarket.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed with permission from the interviewee. Transcriptions were entered into a qualitative analysis software package (NVivo 10) to facilitate analysis. Once collated in NVivo, data were assigned to the main themes being explored and thence interpreted and reported. A selection of quotes, illuminating the themes, were extracted and included in this report.

2.3 Combined data

Both sets of data were considered together, to better understand and explain whether the outcomes of the Course were met.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

The study complied fully with the ethical principles essential to research best practice and the requirements of the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) Research Ethic Framework and ethical approval was obtained from the University of Edinburgh School of Health in Social Science Research Ethics Committee.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Informed consent for the survey and interviews was obtained and supported by an information sheet. Interview transcripts were anonymised so that individuals could not be recognised and identity numbers used in the quantitative analysis and for quotations used in the report.

3 Results

3.1 Demographics

In March 2013 paper questionnaires were sent to 31 people who had attended at least one of the Eat Well – Keep Active Course at CHANGES inviting them to complete the survey. Seven (23%) were men. A reminder was sent to non-responders 2 weeks later.

No one requested to answer the questions with the researcher on the telephone, but one interviewee completed the questionnaire with the researcher following an interview.

Twenty one (68%) people returned a completed questionnaire. Four (19%) were men. The age range was from 46 years to 83 years with a mean of 64 years. The majority of the respondents reported that they were retired (**Table 1**).

Table 1. What do you do at the moment?

	n	%
Retired	14	67
Working part time	3	14
Unemployed	3	14
Volunteering	3	14
Stay at home carer	3	14
Working full time	1	5

Two respondents had been on 2 Courses and the rest had attended one Course. Most respondents came from the most recent Course. (**Table 2**) Attendees of more recent Courses were more likely to return completed questionnaires with 33% of participants of the most recent Course and 19% of those who attended the first Course returning questionnaires.

Table 2. Respondents and interviewees by Course.

Course	Date of Course	Questionnaires sent (%) (total n=31)	Number of respondents (%) (total n=21)	Number interviewed (%) (total n=14)
1	2nd November 2010 – 22nd February 2011	12 (39)	4 (19)	3 (21)
2	25th October 2011 - 29th November 2011	4 (13)	3 (14)	2 (14)
3	24th May 2012 - 23rd August 2012	5 (16)	5 (24)	2 (14)
4	6th November 2012 - 12th February 2013	8 (26)	7 (33)	6 (43)
1 and 4		1 (3)	1 (5)	0 (0)
1 and 2		1 (3)	1 (5)	1 (7)

Seventeen of the 21 (81%) people who completed the survey indicated that they were willing to be interviewed and 14 were interviewed of whom 4 (29%) were men. Six of the interviewees (43%) had been on the last course (**Table 2**).

3.2 Why people took part in the Course

Questionnaire respondents were invited to say whether, in retrospect, they ‘strongly disagreed’, ‘disagreed’, ‘neither agreed nor disagreed’, ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with statements about possible reasons for taking the Course.

The answers were given a score of 1 for ‘strongly disagreed’ up to 5 for ‘strongly agreed’ and the average score calculated for each statement. (see **Table 3**) The most common reasons for taking the Course were to help with cooking healthier foods and learning more about healthy foods.

Table 3. Reasons for taking the Course

I took the Course to ...	Mean Score (out of 5)*
.... help me cook healthier meals	4.43
.... learn more about healthy food	4.38
.... try new foods	4.10
.... help me feel better about myself	4.10
.... learn how to become more physically active	3.95
.... meet people	3.81
.... help lose weight	3.71
.... improve my mood	3.67
.... help cope with stress	3.29
.... for something to do	3.24

***The higher the mean score, the more people agreed with the statement**

In the interviews we discovered that people found out about the Course in two main ways. It appeared mainly to be from publicity by CHANGES either through newsletters that people got because they were on CHANGES mailing list or verbally when they were on other courses or CHANGES walks. One person was recommended the Course by a friend who had been on it before.

From the interviews it was also apparent that learning about healthy foods was the main motivator to attend the Course, and some people mentioned that they wanted to do this to reduce their weight. While some people hoped the Course would improve their mental wellbeing, it seemed that the majority of people were considering aspects of their physical health.

Because I enjoy cooking and I enjoy food and knowing about food and I thought that [it] would be something of interest to me. (ID1)

For myself, it's weight really. I do feel I've gained weight in the last five years and feel that it's harder to be as active. (ID 12)

I was determined because my weight had gone up so much...I mean, I wasn't physically...I was exhausted and my breathing was all to pot and I just knew that something had to change and it was through carrying the extra weight that it wasn't helping me at all. (ID 18)

I felt as though I was putting on a lot of weight and I was just heating up pies and pizzas and rubbishy junk food really..... Well, I wanted to learn to make quick and simple, healthier meals for myself, you know, where I could, like, I could be in control of how much salt I put in, how much sugar, how much ingredients, rather than buying ready meals where they're full of fats and sugar and salt and, you know, so, that was one aspect why I wanted to do it. (ID 22)

Some people lacked confidence in their own knowledge about cooking.

I'm bad about food..... Well, I never got domestic science or anything at school and I thought, well, this might be a good opportunity. And I suppose you become more aware of all the notices on the packs of food and try to find out just what it is that it is telling you. So, that was...I think, well, some of the reasons I did it. (ID 17)

Well because I was never a good eater. I lived on my own at the time and I found it really boring cooking. I just wasn't interested in food. I'd been really a big girl at school and I had a hard time because of the fat. Then I went anorexic and I always had this thing about my weight, so it was that kind of thing. Once the children grew up and left home, then I was living on my own, didn't see much point. So that was why I thought, oh, that'll be good for me. (ID 5)

Although exercise was not the main motivator it appealed to some people,

Well, it wasn't just going to be cooking, it was exercise as well, and I thought that helps, and also I'm interested in cooking. (ID23)

For many people the Course provided an opportunity for something to do and to go out and meet or spend time with other people. Because most of them had already had some connection with CHANGES and trusted the organisation they felt confident that the class would be suitable for them.

I heard about it and I thought that's a good way to meet people. (ID 8)

Because I had a nervous breakdown and I wasn't feeling very well and I wasn't really getting out and mixing with people. (ID24)

Well I'd been on several of the walking sessions with CHANGES and liked the people who were running it, it gets me out of the house to meet other people and I say the people running it are very nice. (ID13)

... it meant that I was meeting a group of people and it was giving me something to do on a [day of week] morning. (ID 3)

3.3 How useful people found different aspects of the Course

One question in the survey invited respondents to pick a score between 1 (meaning 'not very useful') and 5 (meaning 'extremely useful') to indicate how useful different aspects of the Course were to them. The mean score for each aspect is recorded in **Table 4**.

Questionnaire respondents were very positive about the usefulness of all aspects of the Course with cookery demonstrations, information about fats, sugars and salts, and the eatwell plate being most popular. The exercise sessions and information about exercise and activities were least popular, but it should be noted that they had a high score as well. (**Table 4**)

Table 4. How useful different aspects of the Course were

Aspect	Mean Score (out of 5)*
Cookery demonstrations	4.65
Information about fats, sugars and salt	4.65
Information about the Eatwell Plate	4.60
Information about healthy food	4.55
Information about food labelling	4.55
Information about milk and dairy foods	4.53
Food tasting	4.50
Information about starchy foods like bread, rice potatoes and pasta	4.40
Being with other people in a group	4.40
Information about fruit and vegetables	4.35
Information about fish, eggs and meat	4.30
Information about energy balance and weight loss	4.20
Information about food and mood	4.20
Gentle exercise sessions	4.10
Information about exercise and mood	4.10
Information about other activities to take part in	4.05
Information about ways to keep active	4.00

***The higher the mean score, the more people agreed with the statement**

They were also asked in the questionnaire if there were any other things that would have been useful to be included on the Course. Several people said that the Course was perfect as it was.

It was just the whole round Course. It was just put together so well and I think everything was equal. I don't think there was one particular thing. (ID 3)

Other people made the following suggestions.

- Soup recipes
- seeing what a healthy supermarket trolley would look like - 'all of what we buy should be healthy'
- a daily living plan of food and exercise
- costing meals
- a wider range of vegetable and legume recipes

- advice on supplements for the elderly
- how much alcohol is healthy
- portion control
- longer course
- catering for one.

From the interviews it was clear that everyone had found the information about healthy eating useful.

I enjoyed the food information; I enjoyed learning about the food... (ID 1)

I learnt about nutrition and that kind of thing, like cutting down on fat and not eating quite so much fat because we all know it's not good for us, we eat too much. (ID 8)

One person found it was useful to be made aware of the basic ideas which they could draw upon in the future.

So I always think that if they plant the seed, it's in you, isn't it. But it's when it comes out, how long will it take [laugh]? (ID 7)

Interviewees spoke enthusiastically about things they had learnt on the Course and subsequent changes they had made to their diet (see next section).

The interviewees were very aware of which foods were healthy and which were not and had tried to make adjustments to their diets to varying degrees. The knowledge about healthy foods was sometimes a revelation to people and other times it reinforced what they already knew and being on the Course often prompted them to make changes to their diet which they had thought about doing for a while, but not done. This was probably related to the clear demonstrations and instructions that were given on the Course. None of the interviewees appeared to feel guilty when they discussed food that they ate which they knew to be 'bad for their health' and they had a positive attitude to aiming for a healthy diet.

One of the most useful things spoken about by the interviewees was checking food labels to identify foods that would be 'bad for one's health' because of the amount of sugar, fat or salt they contained.

What's printed on the packets, you know, telling you about the calories, the sugars, the salt. Carbohydrates and all the other bits about the points and how much you are supposed to have in a day or a week, you know. (ID 18)

Salt, the level of salt - the level of everything that's in your food. It just made me more aware of what I'm buying in the shops. I used to read the labels but not as strictly as I do now. (ID 3)

Sugars are in so many things which you wouldn't realise, like baked beans and tins of things. You would just think that was really nice and healthy until you look at the labels. It made you aware of looking more to see the nutritional value of tins and foods that you're eating. (ID 12)

They also found knowing that pre-prepared meals contained a lot of unhealthy additives useful.

But these ready meals are all full of fats and sugars and salt and...you know, they're very

unhealthy...they're quick and easy but they're cheap but they're unhealthy. (ID 22)

Well, I think, really, as I say, it's made me really conscious of the fact that a lot of the foods have additives in them which, you know, if you eat too much of them they're really excessive and you'll never get weight off if, you know. (ID18)

They learnt that it is easier to control the intake of sugars, salts, fats and chemical additives by buying the ingredients and cooking meals from the basics.

Well I think we probably rely rather a lot on ready meals and I suppose we should really do more cooking from basic ingredients. (ID 13)

As well as being aware of and reducing the amount of unhealthy food they ate, people spoke about foods that were good for their health and how they could be included in their diets at appropriate times of the day and in sensible quantities. Some people found the concept of the eatwell plate very helpful.

I think the main thing was about probably the healthy plate and the amount of hidden salts and sugars that were in things. I've kind of carried that through into the family as well. (ID 24)

The main message was that you have to have a balanced diet. (ID 5)

The measurements as well. Not overdoing it and not underdoing it. Trying to get more balanced food on my plate and remembering the colours, all the different colours of things on your plate. A colourful plate as opposed to a bland plate. (ID 3)

Well, the quantities are very important as well. I mean, it's easy enough to buy food and know the things that you can eat but it's getting the plate size right and knowing just exactly how much you should be putting on your plate and getting used to eating smaller amounts. (ID 18)

It wasn't so much the cooking, but it was portion control, because that is really, really important, and I think that is one thing I really learned from that group, your portion control, because this is what we do wrong. (ID 23)

I know more about the importance of having a bit of protein, particularly at breakfast time because if you don't, if you skip breakfast or just have cereal or something, at about 11 o'clock you find you are going to the biscuit tin and doing too much snacking. (ID 13)

Course attendees also found the demonstrations of how to cook easy, healthy and economical meals very useful.

I think one thing we were aware of was one day they made a tomato pasta, cooked some brown pasta. The tinned tomatoes actually came out as a higher mark than fresh tomatoes, which I wouldn't have thought of. Tinned tomatoes in a little sauce with some brown pasta, with just a little bit of grated cheese, and then if you had some celery with it - how economical as well. They also pointed out costings of things which was nice. You can get very good nutritional food for not a lot if you just think about it a little bit. That was nice to have that pointed out to us. (ID 12)

Eating well, it doesn't have to cost you a lot of money, and sometimes actually...there is another thing we did, I remember now, they brought out that things that can be...fresh food can sometimes be cheaper than readymade. (ID 23)

They were doing it at that class, actually doing it. So I knew exactly what went into the various recipes and the sauces you could use and things like that. (ID 19)

People enjoyed the opportunity to try out food that was not normally part of their diet and some went on to include these foods regularly.

I have to say, I've tried all sorts of things with couscous and I still can't get a taste for it. I've tried it sweet, savoury, everything, but it just...it's something that I'll just never come to...but it was interesting to see the different things. (ID 23)

I just found it interesting. Trying foods that I'd never tried before, never eaten before. (ID 8)

Some people found it useful to be aware of how their mood could influence what they ate so that they could try to avoid this by eating healthy meals and getting out of the habit of snacking in between mealtimes.

They're very good at explaining to you just how your mood affects your eating as well. The simple fact that, you know, if you're anxious or depressed or whatever you tend to go for sugary things and...just to cheer yourself up, you know. (ID 18)

Many people mentioned how useful it was to be with other people many of whom, like themselves, had difficulties controlling their weight or other problems. This also helped them to understand difficulties other people had.

Just the social side of it as well, meeting people that were the same as yourself and realising that there's a lot of people worse off than yourself. (ID 24)

So, I suppose, I was becoming more aware of problems from others related to food and problems they have with mobility and how the two can, sort of, inter-relate. Yeah. Opened my eyes to their problems, I think. (ID 17)

And it's not until you go to something like that, that you realise that there's so many people with the same problems. Or slightly different problems from you. But were still going through the same sort of thing. (ID 19)

They also enjoyed meeting new people or people they had known in the past, the fun and camaraderie, the input about healthy eating from the other Course attendees and the fact that they all had a common purpose.

I enjoyed it because I was with the group. I think that reinforced it. I was with this group and we were all doing the exercise and it was good. (ID 3)

I've met some nice people. (ID 1)

I do like seeing other humans so, yes, you would feel the stimulus of that [going to a coffee morning] but not quite the same as the Course. There's just that little bit of feeling that we'll all trying hard to learn about the best foods and not to just end up as couch potatoes. (ID 12)

Well, I found everyone was attending it for the same reason as myself. They all were dissatisfied with the fact that they were probably overweight by a good few pounds or stones. I think, the fellowship side of it is excellent. And, I think, when you retire you miss the company of other people..... but I still like company and, I think, that's one of the major bits as well. It was something that was interesting and also you were meeting the people, you know, that were there. Yes. (ID 18)

The last meeting, 6 weeks after the first five weekly classes was appreciated as people liked to hear how their course-mates had got on and to be reminded of what they had learnt.

Just seeing how other people were getting on following the Course and what they'd done and you got some ideas from that but don't ask me for ideas I got. But...some of those things you just, sort of, take in...you know, you're shopping and think, oh, somebody said that. (ID 17)

Some people described how they had told others in the class about things they thought would be useful to them like reduced rates for other classes or information about health issues.

So, it's a good exchange system in passing on information and what have you. (ID 17)

One person commented that being in a group made it easier to learn, partly because of concentrating more to prevent making a fool of themselves and partly because things other people said stuck in their mind.

There was some polarisation between people who did not find the exercises useful and those who did. Some people found the exercises lacking in intensity for their level of fitness and this aspect of the Course less useful. However, they did realise that it was useful for other people and had no objection to it being included.

Exercises was okay, but depending on what kind of exercises you're wanting to do and they wouldn't have burnt off any calories because there wasn't enough activity there, you know. I would say, to be honest, that bit [the exercise] was maybe a wee bit unnecessary in my opinion. I think, it could have just been better if it would have just been...just healthy eating. You know. (ID 22)

I thought that was very nice. We stood up and did quarter of an hour's exercises at the end. It was usually at the end. Yes, I thought that was nice too. (ID 12)

In that Course, I think it was probably the feel-good factor as well because everybody got a good laugh. It wasn't really strenuous but you felt you had done something, like marching and things like that. I think it was just the social side of it and it introduced people to give people a wee bit of exercise. I think it does make you feel better and most people at the Course had suffered similar circumstances to what I had been through so it was a feel-good factor for them, exercise. Everybody after it used to - we always used to chitter and chatter and they used to say, "I felt good after I did that" and I think it encourages you to do a wee bit more when you get started. It has me anyway. (ID 24)

3.4 Changes made to diet and physical activity

Questionnaire respondents were invited to say whether they ‘strongly disagreed’, ‘disagreed’, ‘neither agreed nor disagreed’, ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with statements about changes in eating and exercise behaviour since taking the Course. The answers were given a score of 1 for ‘strongly disagreed’ up to 5 for ‘strongly agreed’ and the average score calculated for each statement. (Table 5)

The change in behaviour that most people agreed they had made since completing the Course was to buy healthier foods. Eating fewer high fat and sugar foods and checking food labels when shopping were also things that people agreed they did more since the Course. The statements they disagreed with most suggest that they don’t eat more fast foods or larger portions or spend time with other Course members now. (Table 5)

Table 5. Changes in behaviour since the Course

Statements	Mean score (out of 5*)
I buy healthier food now than I did before I took the Course	4.19
I eat fewer high fat and sugar foods now than I did before I took the Course	4.05
When shopping, I look at food labels more often now than I did before I took the Course	4.05
I am more interested in trying different food now than before I took the Course	3.95
I am more physically active now than I was before I took the Course	3.90
I cook meals from basic ingredients more now than I did before I took the Course	3.81
I sleep better now than before I took the Course	3.52
I weigh less now than I did before I took the Course	3.43
I go out and about more now than I did before I took the Course	3.43
I spend time now with other people from the Course	2.67
I eat larger portions at mealtimes now than I did before I took the Course	2.24
I eat more fast food meals now than I did before I took the Course	1.86

*The higher the mean score, the more people agreed with the statement

Only one person admitted that he/she did not make any of the recipes shown on the Course and the vast majority of respondents were using 2 or 3 of them each month (Table 6).

Table 6. Course recipes used each month

Number of recipes each month	Number of people	% of people
0	1	5
1	1	5
2	7	33
3	8	38
4	4	19

In the interviews, people described some of the changes they had made in their eating and exercise habits as a result of attending the Course. While a very small minority of interviewees admitted that they had made few, if any, changes, the vast majority had improved

their diet in some way and some had increased their daily physical activity. Of those who had not increased their physical activity levels, quite a few were already active. In general, interviewees spoke more about changes they had made to their diet than to physical activity levels.

Dietary changes

The changes people had made were quite varied and often quite simple ones and the main changes to diets involved decreasing the amount of unhealthy foods and increasing the amount of healthy food. One person said that she had cut out Chinese meals and introduced home-made soups to her diet. Gradually, she had stopped liking 'heavier' meals like mince and potatoes and had come to prefer beans and pulses and had downloaded recipes from the internet. One common method for eating less unhealthy food was to read the information labels on the products in the shops.

... being more aware of what's in convenience foods and the salt intake. That was quite a big shock, because the salt was loads for what you have in a day and then you're adding, so I really am careful about that. (ID24)

Definitely aware now of watching for fats and sugars and things as a result of going on this little course. (ID 12)

Several people talked about eating regular meals so that they did not need to snack at other times and others spoke of eating something healthy as an alternative to sweet or fatty foods.

I have my meals at the set times that I do and I very rarely...I look at it [packet of crisps] and I think, no, I'm not allowed it and I just...that's why it's beginning to have a good effect on me, you know. (ID 18)

I'm not eating as much fat now. If I want a snack I try to opt for a piece of fruit, an apple or a banana. (ID 8)

I did used to take a good scraping of butter on my bread and toast and I've cut that out altogether now. I usually just take a wee bit of low fat cheese spread or a wee bit of low fat jam, which I'm actually quite used to now. I used to use semi-skimmed milk and I've gone to skimmed milk because I've been on a diet because I'm going on holiday but I managed it fine. (ID 24)

Yes, we have consciously become aware of the things from the Course. We're not buying as many cereals now, or if we do buy muesli, we're doing it half and half. Half the cup would be the packet of muesli you've bought and the

other half would be just the plain oats on the top, so that you're diluting it, if you know what I mean. If it is a little sweet, you're not having a whole cupful, you've changed it to half and half. We've tried to drink water more. (ID 12)

There were samples of things that they [course leaders] bought in the supermarket and things, which I have done since - bought the raisins in their little packs rather than having the biscuit. (ID 12)

I picked up a lot and a lot of things that I do do now that I wouldn't have done before like that. Not eating crisps and biscuits and things. Finding alternatives, which I mean I knew at the back of my mind before, but this made me really focus on it. I do drink more fruit juice and instead of sugar I put fruit and nuts in my porridge and have the benefit of nuts. (ID 3)

Several people had made changes by cooking fresh food at home.

I do more cooking at home. I've stopped buying ready made products. I've stopped buying cooked meats and that. I'd rather get a joint and cook it myself and get my cooked meat from that for sandwiches etc. Yes, it's made a big difference to the way I think about food. (ID 3)

I'm cooking more now. I'm not buying frozen foods so much because that's not really good for you. It's better to cook from scratch. (ID 8)

We have not made big changes but we are more conscious of what we should be doing. (ID13)

And I'm not drinking so many rubbish...well, tea, coffee. Although it was decaff coffee, I'm juicing more. It doesn't keep me so hyper. Coffee makes you hyper, right, but I'm also getting more nutrition into my body because I'm mixing...say I put a strawberry in, a bit of mango or something, a bit of carrot even, things like that, mix and match. Well, that's your five a day. (ID 7)

Another thing I use now, I always use fresh ginger. I used to have prepared ginger, but now I use fresh ginger for recipes and things, and I like to have a bit of fresh ginger in the house, so things like that. They don't cost a lot, because you don't need a lot, so these are things the Course made me aware of. Ginger's good for you, because it's good for your digestion and things like that. (ID 23)

Making changes

While a few people had found it difficult to make changes, many reported making changes quite easily. It seemed that the ideas from the Course could be incorporated easily into their lives. Various strategies were used including checking the cupboards and making a list before going shopping, freezing perishable foods and preparing food and freezing in advance which was also useful when cooking for one. Other people would go shopping more frequently to buy fresher produce.

No, it's not been difficult. Just rather than buying convenience things, I've been making homemade soups and homemade casseroles. A wee bit longer time preparation-wise but that's what I've been doing. Just using no salt and not really using so many convenience foods because of the hidden salts and sugars and you've not got the same nutrients in them as well. I've kind of changed it all, just making more and cooking more. (ID 24)

... because I'm not really buying frozen meals now, I'm starting from scratch, it is a wee bit more time consuming, especially when you're working, but on a Sunday what I usually do, me and [name of partner], is we make homemade lasagne. We make mince and freeze it just that sort of basic idea. (ID 24)

Not difficult. Just a matter of putting your mind to it, buying the foods or thinking a case of, "I really don't want to put this salt on this item. I don't need it. It's unnecessary." Instead of getting a biscuit, getting a piece of fruit. It's no different, just picking up a different thing really. No it wasn't difficult. (ID 3)

Oh yes, it was quite easy. It was a bit scary to start with because I was a bit afraid of getting everything wrong. (ID 3)

I tend to go shopping more frequently and buy fresh fruit and fresh all sorts. (ID 3)

Well, it's just really being strong, isn't it, really and trying to be strong. And try and keep your mind off it. And eat something before you go shopping....So, that way you're not hungry and you're not tempted. (ID 22)

And I'm delighted with all new changes that I have made. I'm delighted with the whole thing. I buy everything fresh.I buy fresh, my meat and pork and things that...and I spend one whole day cooking for the next week." And I put into containers in the freezer. (ID 19)

Motivation to change

Some people had reasons to be highly motivated and this helped them make changes to a healthier diet.

.... the determination side was the fact that I felt, you know, I wasn't fit, you know. I wasn't enjoying anything that I was doing because I was always tired. And I just...I wasn't enjoying things at all and I thought, well, I've got to make that change desperately. (ID 18)

Commitment and determination to change

As well as motivation, making changes to healthier foods could require considerable commitment and determination and changing the way one behaved with family and friends. This was especially true when the person's partner did not share their desire to make changes.

I think, just the main changeover was really getting my own self involved in actually making the meals. (ID 18)

And I now find that...whereas before if I sat down to a meal...whether it be at a friend's house or at a restaurant and I thought, oh, dear...that's great, I'll eat all that. I now find when I look at it I'll think I'm never going to finish that and I don't. And I don't feel guilty about not eating it all. I used to do because I was brought up in an age where, you know, money was scarce and my mum used to say, eat all your food up because it costs money. So...but now I don't feel guilty and if I've left quite a bit, especially in a restaurant, I don't feel embarrassed about asking to take it home and have it another day if it's suitable. (ID 18)

Just by using, as I said before, being strong and will power and...you know, I'm not saying I don't get tempted when I go to supermarkets and that...everybody does. Because it's in your face from the minute you walk in the door. (ID 22)

The financial cost of making changes

Most people said that when they were shopping the ingredients of the products were the most important thing for making decisions about what to buy, but they were aware of the price too. One example given was sachets of coffee which the interviewee thought were addictive and difficult to give up, but that they contained a lot of sugar and in order to get control of their sugar intake they now bought more expensive coffee.

A bit of both because obviously nobody's got money to waste, but I do look for the salts and the sugars and then I try and find the one that's the best price with the least - usually I would say the middle range is about right for the salts and sugars plus the prices because sometimes the really cheaper things have got more additives in them. (ID 24)

I go for quality. Just because it's cheap it doesn't mean to say that it's good. I look for quality. (ID 8)

One interviewee changed a habit of a lifetime and stopped stocking up on things in general (and ending up with too many) and followed the example she had been shown on the Course of buying the things required for a particular recipe.

So one day this suddenly clicked and I thought, "oh, why am I giving myself all this grief when I could be doing what [name of course leader] doing? She's telling me, now, this will work with this and she dictates it all and, that's what I'm going to do". So I went home and I got fishcake [recipe], and I made fishcakes. And they were only pennies at the end of the day and they're nice. (ID 7)

Changing over time

People continued to make changes as time went by. Some were keen to take the Course again so

that they could learn more.

At first, like everything, you go 100 per cent into it and then I lapsed a wee bit because I wasn't working and now I'm back working and I've got a wee bit more money I would say I'm carrying it through more. (ID 24)

I think, it has been a gradual awareness because I know I keep that card [credit sized card with traffic light food information] and, you know, everything just began to gel afterwards and possibly after the final Course - the final session. (ID 17)

.. there are still some things that I could learn and I do look out for new things. If there's anything in the supermarket and I think about something that I did on the Course and I think "oh yes, I still haven't done that or tried that". So yes there's still things to learn. I still look at the fats and the fat contents. Even in spreads that you put on bread, I'm still thinking about that one. Trying to decrease that. (ID 3)

Changes to physical activity levels

Although making changes to the level of physical activity they undertook did not seem to be as prevalent as the changes made to their diets, there was a clear awareness that being physically active was important for a healthy life and some people had discovered what fun seated exercises could be and had joined seated exercise classes once the Course had finished. Others spoke about using an audio-tape that was given to them on the Course or having been motivated to walk more or start swimming.

It introduced me to going back to doing a wee bit exercise. As I say, I'm not Olympic-standard or anything like that but there's never a week goes by that I don't do something, even if it is getting off at the bus stop earlier. That's what I do. (ID 24)

Some interviewees found it difficult to exercise on their own and appreciated the incentive the class provided.

I do take exercise anyway. I try to do a little bit of the gentle exercise, but I don't do it every day. It's just now and again I think, "oh I should be doing this and really moving my hands and that", you know. But not regularly, which is a shame, but what I liked about it was that we're all doing it together. I tend to like exercise where I'm in a group. I do an aqua class and I go to swimming but again it's with group sessions. So I tend to - that's my excuse anyway. I know I could do it sitting at home I could be moving certain parts of my body when I'm reading or whatever. But I don't. So maybe I should. (ID 3)

Some interviewees explained that, following the Course, they were keen to do other courses and find other ways to keep active or to learn more about healthy eating. Two respondents had taken other healthy eating courses in parallel with the CHANGES one.

But I'm always looking for other things, so it has made me aware of there are lots of things going on out there to keep yourself active, your mind and your body. (ID 3)

3.5 Perceived mental and physical wellbeing outcomes

In the survey respondents were asked to think back to how they felt before and after the Course and whether they agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements. They could 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with statements. The answers were given a score of 1 for 'strongly disagree' up to 5 for 'strongly agree' and the average score calculated for each statement. (see Tables) A score of 3 indicates a neutral position.

The statement that people agreed with most was that since they took the Course they have more of an interest in healthy eating. There was also strong agreement that they were more aware of what they could do to stay healthy and that they were more confident about following a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight and how to become fit. However, this increased confidence in eating more healthily and being more active did not translate equally to a general increase in confidence or going out, although these did have positive scores (above 3). Respondents in general did not agree with the statement that they felt more stressed now than before the Course (**Table 7**).

Table 7. Changes in how people feel since taking the course

Statements	Mean Score (out of 5*)
I have more of an interest in healthy eating now than I did before the Course	4.24
I feel more aware of what I can do to stay healthy now than before the course	4.19
I feel more confident about knowing how to follow a healthy diet now than I did before the Course	4.14
I feel more confident about shopping for healthy food now than I did before the Course	4.10
I feel more confident about how to maintain a healthy weight now than I did before the Course	4.00
I feel more confident about how to become fitter now than I did before the Course	4.00
I feel healthier now than I did before the Course	3.95
I feel more confident about being able to cook meals from basic ingredients now than I did before the Course	3.90
I feel happier in myself now than I did before the Course	3.81
I have more confidence in general now than I did before the Course	3.81
I feel less isolated than I did before the Course	3.48
I feel more confident about going out and doing things now than before the course	3.48
I feel more stressed now than I did before the Course	2.19

***The higher the mean score, the more people agreed with the statement**

Questionnaire respondents were given the opportunity to make open comments about the difference the Course had made to them. The responses reflect the topics in this report and included:

- Thoroughly enjoyed the Course. Makes me think more about healthy eating. Feel happier when I go to the Course. Enjoyed debates and talks about different food.
- Enjoyment of trying out new recipes
- Learning about fruit and vegetables
- Am making an effort to eat more fruit and veg as well as juicing them
- It has taught me to eat simply and healthily on a low budget – great!
- Feel more educated about food
- Have made small changes – brown bread instead of white, more fruit and veg, more attention to protein – especially at breakfast time.
- Have cut down on the amount of fat that I eat
- The importance of home cooking and how the ingredients are then better controlled
- I disliked cooking before the Course and I now enjoy it more all the time.
- Cooking with a rainbow of colours
- Awareness of food labelling
- Has got me checking contents of food packages. Find most of the things I like to buy have fat and sugar, but I am diabetic and therefore try to be careful.
- I have an 'idea' of understanding food labels.
- I am more aware of food labels and calories have cut down on the amount of fat that I eat
- Even the smallest exercise can help me keep active.
- Going out walking with my dog
- Really enjoyed the exercises – not too strenuous + was great fun!! Gave me ideas to do myself at home.
- It has made me more aware of the things I need to do to help me stay healthy and active.
- The Course was very helpful and thought provoking.
- Feeling better
- It made a great difference to me. I have now started working and feel good about myself.
- Have more energy, sleep better. Toilet habits more regular
- To think about the effects of what I put in affects my life
- It has made me more organised where food is concerned. Preparing food and cooking it the night before just to heat up when you come in from work late. Make up salad etc. the night before for next day lunch etc..
- Would love to keep going to these courses
- Course has helped me but I still have a lot of stress in my life
- Awareness of a person's need to get out and meet new people
- It was really good to meet and talk with other people and listen to their points of view. I think it is fair to say we all gained a lot from the Course.
- I found the Course very informative, and I enjoyed all aspects of the Course
- Both the tutors were very helpful in giving us support in the gentle exercise class, excellent recipes and ideas for meals. Always answered our questions to our satisfaction.

Mental wellbeing

We report here on the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) (Stewart-Brown, 2009), which measures wellbeing in the previous two weeks. Because it was not completed at the time of the Course the score cannot be related to the impact of the Course. For those completing the questionnaire the mean SWEMWBS score was 24.9 (range: 16-33) which is close to the average population mean of 25.3 (www.nef-consulting.co.uk). The SWEMWBS score did not vary significantly by age group, sex or date of Course taken.

In the question where people were asked to place on a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 meant 'Extremely

dissatisfied' and 10 'Extremely satisfied') how satisfied they were with their life nowadays, there was a range in responses from 2 to 10 with a mean score of 7.38 which falls between 41% and 60% of responses from a representative sample of the population in Scotland. (ref: <http://www.nef-consulting.co.uk/services/wellbeingmeasurement/>)

Questionnaire respondents were asked to rate from 1 to 4 (where 1 meant 'Not at all' and 4 'a lot') how much their wellbeing improves in certain circumstances. The mean scores are shown in **Table 8**. Eating healthily and being active had the top scores with spending time with friends and family last, although all scores are high.

Table 8. Factors that improve wellbeing

How much does your well-being improve when	Mean (out of 4)*
..you eat healthy foods	3.57
..you are physically active during the day	3.48
..you have things to do and go to during the week	3.43
..you get out of the house and mix with people	3.43
..you maintain a healthy weight	3.19
..you spend time with family and friends	3.05

***The higher the mean score, the more people agreed with the statement**

Another question in the survey was about changes in wellbeing since attending the Course and 19 (95%) of respondents reported feeling better since they had taken the Course and one person said they felt the same (one missing answer). Of those reporting a positive change in their wellbeing since the Course, 13 (72%) thought the Course contributed a lot to this, 5 (28%) that the course had contributed a little and one person did not answer.

The answers to these questions on wellbeing show that at the time the questionnaires were completed (March 2013) the wellbeing of the respondents was, on average, similar to the general population. They felt that their wellbeing benefitted from the Course and they rated highly eating healthily and being active in maintaining their positive wellbeing. In future work, it is planned to record wellbeing scores for Course attendees before and after the Course in order to measure any effect that the Course has made.

In the interviews some people spoke of how taking part in this Course had had an impact on their wellbeing in general.

It's just made me aware of what I'm doing to myself. It's up to me to look after my body. If I want to save my life then I've got to do these changes. (ID 3)

Well I'd have been lethargic and I'd have eaten rubbish and I wouldn't be getting the proper fuel in me, stuff that I knew already, but didn't think about. Whereas now, it's like two or three years down the line since I was on the Course, I think if I'd continued like that, I'd be a lot worse than I am. So I think it gives you the kick up the bum you need. (ID 5)

Happier. I feel happier and a bit more positive. [because of] what I'm eating and taking exercises and that helps. (ID 8)

For at least one person, taking part in the Course enabled them to regain their confidence and become better at coping with life's difficulties. They thought that different aspects of the Course had interacted together to cause this – the eating, the exercise, taking part with other people who each brought their own perspectives and problems, and the way the Course was run.

Wellbeing and Food

In the questionnaire people were asked 'How much, if at all, do you think the following food and drinks affect your mood or feelings? They were not asked how they thought the items affected their mood or feelings – whether they had a positive or negative effect. **Table 9** shows how many people ticked each box.

Table 9. Effect of food and drink on mood (the number of people ticking each cell)

	Not at all	A little bit	Quite a lot	A great deal	Do not eat/drink	Don't know
Alcohol	4	2	2	-	9	3
Fish	2	5	10	2	-	-
Fizzy drinks	6	2	-	2	10	1
Brown rice or pasta	2	6	7	2	2	2
Fast food meals	4	8	2	2	4	-
Fruit and vegetables	3	2	9	7		

The food or drinks people thought most affected their mood or feelings were fruit and vegetables. Fish and brown rice or pasta were also associated with mood or feelings. These answers compare favourably with those given in a NOP survey and reported in 'Feeding Minds' (pages 36 and 37) (Cornah 2006) where the majority of respondents did not think fruit and vegetables, fish, or brown rice and pasta affected their mood or feelings. Although the numbers are small, it would appear that Course attendees had a greater understanding of the relationship some foods have on our mood.

In the interviews many interviewees found it difficult to associate what they ate directly with their mental wellbeing or mood.

No, [I don't feel energised if I eat healthy food] I just think, no I've got to eat that, it's good for me. Yes, I'll just have broccoli now...yes. (ID 5)

It's not so much from the food it's the interest mentally in your own wellbeing that is important, you know. And, healthy living, it helps your mental feeling about how you feel about yourself. You know, it gives you a more positive side to your own wellbeing, I think. That's the only way I can describe it. (ID 18)

I've heard of one or two people talking about it [the effect of food on mood] and thought, you know, maybe it does. (ID 17)

However, interviewees did say that they felt better by eating a healthier diet through a variety of indirect relationship. Mechanisms they mentioned for this relationship included:

- satisfaction at improving their lifestyle by preparing healthy food
- satisfaction of knowing that by eating healthy food they are doing something good for themselves and friends and family they are cooking for
- conversely, eating less healthy foods makes you feel bad because you have been told they are bad for you
- the therapeutic effect of preparing vegetables or a healthy meal; if could be a distraction from worries and relieve stress
- colourful fruit and vegetables lift your spirits because of their appearance
- knowing there is something (preparing healthy food) that they can do to help themselves be healthier (mentally and physically)
- the negative effect on their physical health if they ate foods with a lot of fat or sugar ('stodgy foods')
- healthy foods help you concentrate and enable you to achieve and therefore feel better

I suppose it [food] does [affect how you feel], it's hard to draw a link. [Pause] I mean if you, if you feel hungry it's difficult to concentrate and if you can't concentrate and feel you don't get the things done that you wanted to do, you'd probably get a bit depressed about that, so one thing leads to another. (ID 13)

I think that if you're eating well, you feel better, which then gives you a different approach and a different outlook on anything else you partake in.I used to go out in the morning and I'd not have anything to eat and I'd wonder how I didn't feel well, which then stopped me from doing things. (ID 5)

I think colourful veg and that do lift you, because – I don't know – when I think of that, yeah, veg does lift you on a plate, and fruit, whereas if it's... if it's stodgy, you don't feel...you might feel full after stodge, but you don't want to do anything, do you? (ID 23)

Sometimes I feel things still get on top of me, but I did find that the eating – and I enjoy cooking as well, which is a good thing, helped me to realise that there is different things I can do for myself, help me to do that. (ID 23)

When I'm eating healthy I feel healthier inside. (ID24)

The act of preparing food was thought to have benefits on mood.

I wasn't aware of the fact how stress relieving it can be to be in the kitchen and looking up the recipes and deciding what you're going to try to make. (ID 18)

I think if you've made something from scratch, you made a meal from scratch, and it's fresh food, it's more satisfying, not just food wise, but it's satisfying to know that you had it, to see that it's been enjoyed, and it makes you feel better because you've made that. There's no connection between that and taking something out a box and pinging it in the microwave. I felt that coming home and cooking was relaxation. It was ... it was relaxing to come home and cook a meal. (ID 23)

I think when you're making something healthy it's a wee bit of a better feeling than making a chocolate gateaux. Maybe not quite as tasty but, yeah, I do think it is better because you've taken time and you've made something that's good for you. I think when you're eating something that's good for you, it makes you feel good about yourself as well, I think so. (ID 24)

Although people often found it difficult to articulate a direct connection between healthy foods and good mental wellbeing they were aware of negative impacts that certain food and drinks had on how they felt.

I think if you eat stodgy food for instance, you just feel lethargic and you just want to sit and do nothing. Whereas if you eat something refreshing you know, a lighter meal maybe, you don't feel like that, you feel more alive and more maybe like going out rather than sitting in the chair and that sort of thing. So yes, it's made a difference. (ID 3)

Well, processed foods make me feel low because there's fat and salt and sugar and that affects you. So after a wee while you go to sleep, your body takes over and it just...it knocks me out, like a man with a drink, you just fall asleep. (ID 7)

You do feel happy. It [eating more healthily] makes you feel more satisfied. I think if you're eating a lot of fat you tend to start to feel sluggish, lethargic and tired and not much energy. (ID 8)

I buy the decaf coffee now...I don't buy anything that's got caffeine in it. I think, it makes me a wee bit hyper. (ID 18)

I think when it's fresh food, I think fresh food's much better for your mood. I don't know... prepared food, well, you read all these things, they've got stabilisers and things like that, but if you buy it from the fishmonger, the butcher, the fruit shop, they've not got these things. at least you know what you're eating, but things like that, so these things I got from the Course. (ID 23)

Some people expressed an awareness of how their mood had an impact on what they ate. One person felt that they were better able to control urges for sweet food since the Course while another felt more contented and without desire for more food at the end of meals now.

I think, to an extent I do get mood swings and I want something...I just get this urge...I've got to have something sweet, I've got to have something savoury. So, I suppose in some ways...in some ways I have been much better about it but I do have my bad days. I try not to go shopping on a bad day. (ID 17)

The impact of the Course also appeared to have positive effects on people's mental wellbeing without that being related to what they ate.

For me, it was the getting out and taking part in things that I really enjoyed. (ID 24)

Possibly becoming more aware that I should be doing something. Now, I can be quite negative and, sort of, lacking in confidence whether...I don't know whether the two...having done the Course I'm becoming more aware of this and I can do something about it but whether it's just looking at the CHANGES programme and seeing what they offer. I don't know but they all...it's just, sort of, coming together. I can't say whether it's related or not. (ID 17)

And I'm delighted with all new changes that I have made. I'm delighted with the whole thing. (ID 19)

Some interviewees took pleasure and pride from passing on what they learnt on the Course to their children and grandchildren and friends.

Well, he's only 18 months so peas and cauliflower and broccoli - he says, balls and he just plays with it but, yeah, he's eating a lot more fruit and veg. He loves strawberries so I just usually chop up - rather than say, I'll just give him a packet of Wotsits I chop up some fruit and veg and give him it and he likes to play with it because, as I say, he's only 18 months. He eats it and he enjoys it so I'm trying to carry it to the next generation. (ID 24)

Wellbeing and physical activity

Several people were very aware that exercising improved their mood and gave them more energy and one person consciously used walking as

a way of managing their mood. However, even knowing this, it was often reported to be difficult to make oneself be active.

I think now if I don't feel right, going out a walk or doing something energetic helps me. I've learnt that through - I didn't know that before I did the Course, so that part of it I have learnt through the Course. If I don't feel 100 per cent, I know that going a brisk walk or doing something calms me down. (ID 24)

It [exercise] kick starts you. It gives you energy, it makes you feel that feel good factor, it hits the serotonin. I know, but unfortunately I can't quite get myself back to doing what I was doing I've got in a bit of a rut, with my back not being...but that's just an excuse. I'm alright now, I could do it, I just choose not to. It's just something I need to get sorted in my own head, a mind thing, you know. (ID 5)

When I'm doing exercise I feel like I've done a wee bit good for myself. (ID 24)

Yes, I definitely feel better after doing any exercise. It kind of gives you a get up and go feeling. Like this morning I was in bed and I was just lying there awake, and I started just doing the gentle exercises with my hands. I started moving my hands and it just kind of woke me up. I thought, yes, I felt like getting out of bed then. So yes, it does make a difference to your mood. I don't know what goes on in your body when you're exercising, but that's obviously because you have the right chemicals. (ID 3)

While one person thought that exercising had an effect on brain chemicals other people thought that its benefits stemmed from sociable encounters, being out in the fresh air or through weight loss.

When I go out for a brisk walk it does perk my mood up. It does because you're out and usually you meet people along the way. If you're having a chat, if you're meeting someone you know that perks you up. (ID 8)

Well, the motivation was there. And I was surprised how quick the weight started coming off because I was eating and doing more exercise and...you know, and I was getting into my clothes better and...so it was giving me a boost, you know. (ID 22)

Wellbeing and the Course experience

While the content of the Course was useful and appreciated, one of the main aspects of the Course that people commented on a lot was the way the Course was run. It had been a very enjoyable experience for everyone interviewed and one which contributed to their wellbeing at the time. People also appreciated the handouts that they could use later.

And that's the other thing. And the girls [Course leaders] were brilliant because they photocopied the menus for you and everything and I thought, I've never met two ladies so hard working and we're all, we've all said the same. (ID 19)

And the tutors are absolutely first class. (ID 19)

I've found the tips, the way it was put over, you didn't feel they were preaching to you. It was done...you were included. (ID 23)

It was a good Course and, as I say, the ladies were so nice and understanding and everybody was sitting chatting at the end of it. It was good, I would recommend it to anybody. (ID 24)

Older people in particular appreciated the opportunity to be in a class and learn things that would improve their lives. They enjoyed the friendly and helpful atmosphere in the class which was probably quite a contrast to their experiences in the past.

It really surprised me how much I got out of that Course, for the simple reason I had never been in a situation of that before. Yes, I'd been to plenty meetings and things that go on in life, but never... once I got older and started putting on the weight that I got interested in what was good for me and what wasn't good for me. (ID 19)

If you go out to something like that you forget it [pain] for the morning and then even probably all the afternoon because you're still enjoying the feelings of being in the group and company. It's a very nice feeling doing a group thing altogether. (ID 12)

For me, it was the getting out and taking part in things that I really enjoyed. (ID 24)

I think that's a good thing as well, that they're bringing out all these things to keep you

entertained and to give you a social...and that was my social activity, going to the class. I looked forward to it. And I think, that's it gone for the week [laugh]. But I enjoyed that. And that's what you need. You get together, you have a laugh together, you cook together, you taste it, you know, it's nice. (ID 7)

I found both [exercises and healthy eating information] useful. Because it was possible to do the gentle exercise and there was no pressure. So no, I found both useful, but as I say I enjoyed it because I was with the group. I think that reinforced it. I was with this group and we were all doing the exercise and it was good. (ID 3)

Physical wellbeing

One of the main focusses of this evaluation has been the effect of the Course on the attendees mental wellbeing. In addition, interviewees described a variety of physical outcomes that they attributed to changes they had made in their diet or levels of physical activity since they had taken the Course. These included:

- Weight loss
- Asthma improved
- Less painful back
- Feeling fitter
- More energy
- Feel their health has declined slower than it would have done otherwise
- Fewer colds
- No more eye styes
- Less problems with sinuses

Some interviewees reported losing weight through the changes they had made to their diet and through exercising more. Others felt more energised or less tired and fitter.

Well, I used to feel quite tired and now I'm less tired, so that's a change. (ID 8)

The Course as a whole was seen by many to be of great benefit.

..... that came from the Course, look after yourself physically and mentally; it all affects your body and the way you think about things. (ID 3)

3.6 Future support

Questionnaire respondents answered a question relating to how useful they thought a variety of options would be in helping them eat well and keep active in the future. The answers to this (**Table 10**), suggested that having a longer course was the most favoured option. People were more interested in the food options than the physical activity and weight watching options.

Table 10. How useful respondents thought various activities would be to help them eat well and keep active.

Activities	Mean score (out of 5*)
A longer course e.g. 10 weeks rather than 6	4.48
Meeting monthly to get a new recipe	4.00
Meeting 2 months after the end of the Course to make a recipe book of favourite healthy recipes with the rest of the people on the Course	3.90
Meeting monthly to practise ways of keeping physically active	3.90
Going on a led walk each week with others from the Course	3.81
Meeting monthly to get weighed after the Course has finished	3.75
Meeting weekly to take part in a gentle exercise session	3.71
Meeting every 2 months to have the opportunity to ask questions about healthy eating	3.57
Meeting weekly to get weighed after the Course has finished	3.14

***The higher the mean score, the more people agreed with the statement**

Other suggestions of things people think would help them eat well and/or keep active:

- Different breads – perhaps low fat variety.
- The best meats to buy and cook with.
- Best choices for people who find it difficult to chew.
- Fast healthy meals on a budget.
- Ways of keeping food fresh; what foods have the best shelf life?
- Able to find out information (recipes, healthy foods, exercises) on the computer
- Regular classes (weekly).
- Being able to share with others in group variations to recipe ideas and things you have tried to eat.
- Personal diet sheet
- Group gentle exercise ideas.
- Short walks for older people.
- To be kept informed by CHANGES of future events/courses which may be of use to me, i.e. meeting people, managing change in life through age/retirement, course to keep the mind alive and active, to give thought to new life changes.

In the interviews many people did not feel strongly that there was much further in the way of support

that they would like.

I think I know the basics, I think I'm fine now. It's just like everything else, it's trial and error, but I think if you've got the tools there - and I've kept the books and things like that and got a picture of the plate and how much veg and things like that. I've kept that but I think it's common sense as well but I think once you know the things to avoid... (ID 24)

I doubt whether anything, it's really down to us isn't it, I think we have to do it ourselves. (ID 13)

Well, I think, I really...for the now I've really got enough to be going on with because I've got a really good healthy eating book and I've got quite a good stack of recipes and things I can go into and I know what to do. (ID 22)

I don't think there is any [further support needed]. But, certainly, not for me. I think, the break of however many weeks it was, was a good idea. A good way of finishing it. (ID 17)

Some were disappointed that the Course that they were enjoying had ended and missed the weekly contact and one person suggested that it would be nice to catch up with the others on the Course every 6 months.

I think, once you've established yourself with people...you know, in a group with people...you do make friends, you know, and people miss the friendship if the group goes altogether. (ID 18)

Others thought it would be helpful to do the Course again.

I wouldn't mind going back on it again...because I'm not very good on first courses. I'm always best if I have another go. I've been on a lot of the courses at Changes and they've been really beneficial for my mental health, but I've always found that I've gleaned more knowledge on my second visit, for some reason. I mustn't retain it too well the first time. (ID 5)

4 Discussion

4.1 Reflections on general findings

There was a very good response rate (68%) to the survey. This might well arise from the esteem that the respondents and interviewees felt for the Course leaders and the benefits that they perceived they had gained from attending the course. Unsurprisingly, attendees from the more recent Course were more likely to respond than those from earlier Courses as the Course would have been fresh in their minds and the circumstances that enabled them to attend the course were unlikely to have changed before they received the request to complete the questionnaire. People who took earlier courses may have moved or become less able to complete the questionnaire in the intervening time. Notwithstanding this, we had 6 responses from the 14 people who were on the first course. In addition, over 80% of questionnaire respondents volunteered to take time to be interviewed.

Interviewees spoke more about the healthy eating than the physical activity aspect of the Course and the questionnaire responses also showed a preference for healthy eating over exercise in terms of usefulness or behaviour change. This may reflect the greater amount of time on the course devoted to healthy eating. Alternatively, as learning about healthy eating was the main incentive to take the course for most people, this could have been what they found most interesting. Interviewees spoke about becoming more physically active as challenging while changing their eating habits was often seen as easy. Others felt that they were already physically

active and were more interested in changing their diet. Whether emphasising the exercise aspect of wellbeing more than at present in the Course would change the balance and help more people become more physically active is hard to know. However, the responses from the survey suggest that people increased their physical activity more after the Course than started to cook meals from basic ingredients, albeit by a small amount, and so the Course appears to have had a positive impact on physical activity.

The Course was clearly a very enjoyable experience for all the respondents and this appeared to be for many reasons. One reason was the contact with other people and several people have maintained contact with people on their Course. However, many haven't, as evidenced by a below average score for the question about spending time with other people from the Course (**Table 5**) and interview data which suggest that people appreciated and now miss the social contact they had in the class.

Course attendees clearly learnt a great deal about healthy eating and to a lesser extent about being physically active and have made changes to their lives since then. On their own admission, there are still things most people could do to improve eating well and keeping active, but they appeared rightly pleased with what they had achieved which they felt had improved, in some generally small ways, their physical and mental wellbeing. Their satisfaction with the Course is likely to have also improved their feeling of wellbeing and it is evident that the Course is meeting most of its objectives to a major degree.

Table 11 summarises the level of evidence that this evaluation has uncovered to show how well each of the outcome indicators identified by CHANGES has been met. The results of the survey and interviews have been considered and the level of evidence summarised as substantial, moderate or minimal. **We stress that in many ways this is a subjective opinion and should only be used as a quick guide.** Further information on how well each indicator has been met should be examined in the main text before any alterations in the Course content are considered. In addition, where there is minimal evidence this may be because the evaluation did not approach this topic in the best way to elicit the information. However, the table in our opinion does provide a useful visual summary of which indicators are clearly being met.

Table 11. Level of evidence for outcome indicators

Outcomes	Indicators	Level of evidence that outcome has been met		
		Substantial	Moderate	Minimal
Improved mental wellbeing	Feeling better able to cope with stressful situations		√	
	Feeling less anxious or irritable			√
	Feeling more relaxed		√	
	Enhanced good mood		√	
	Improved personal appearance			√
Improved physical wellbeing	Increased activity levels by taking part in the gentle exercise sessions and continuing exercises at home		√	
	Reporting weight loss in relation to changes in eating habits		√	
	Taking part in other exercise classes and/or increasing activity levels	√		
	Asking for information on how to exercise at home			√
Positive changes to wellbeing through increased awareness and knowledge of the aspects of healthy eating that lead to improved health	Participants try new healthier foods and make changes to eating habits	√		
Positive changes to wellbeing through increased awareness and knowledge of the Government's physical activity guidelines for adults and older adults	Participants are keen to try out the exercise sessions on the Course and continue to do the exercises at home		√	
New ideas and recipes to inspire a well balanced approach to healthy eating	Knowledge of healthier options is increased	√		
	Shopping habits change	√		
	Interest in food and cooking at home is reignited – especially cooking for one		√	
Improved confidence and self-esteem	Having a sense of achievement from completing the Course		√	
	Feeling more motivated to attend the group		√	
	Being more confident in taking part in a group and joining in with the activities	√		
	Asking what next and what other groups/courses to link in to		√	
Knowledge of gentle exercises to work all the major muscle groups	Knowledge of exercises used to improve balance, muscle strength and flexibility is increased		√	
Increased support networks, contacts and interests	Linking into other activities		√	
	Making new friends			√
	Enjoying a chat and cup of coffee with other participants		√	
	Knowing that people with similar issues are also coming along and can offer peer support	√		

4.2 Reflections on diet and wellbeing

One of the main focusses of this evaluation was to determine to what extent Course attendees related any changes in their mental wellbeing to their diet and changes in it following what they had learnt on the course.

From the survey, answers to a question on the effect of food and drink on mood suggested the course attendees had a better understanding of this than respondents in a NOP survey (cited in Cornah, 2006). However, this NOP survey was carried out at least 7 years ago and knowledge in the general population may have improved since then.

During the interviews, people were hard pressed to explain why they thought their wellbeing had benefitted from the Course, although they did think this had happened. The reasons they gave were valid, but rarely directly related to the effect of the food they ate on their brain functioning. For example, they thought that the fact they were eating healthily pleased them because they knew it was a good thing to be doing and it was this that made them feel better. This would suggest that in addition to the current topics covered on the Course more information could be included on how eating healthily affects the brain and our mental health.

Our findings that, in addition to outcomes directly related to healthy eating, participants enjoyed the social contact and camaraderie, the 'classroom' experience, the opportunity to learn new things and having an extra activity in their lives supports informed belief that food activities in general can have a positive impact on our wellbeing. (Community Food and Health Scotland 2012; Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health 2010).

4.3 Limitations of the evaluation

Most evaluations have limitations that should be considered when reflecting on the results. In this study, although the response rate was very good it is possible that participants who completed the questionnaire and agreed to be interviewed were those with the most positive experiences of the Course and the data could be biased in this respect.

The questionnaire responses could also be biased because participants wanted the Course to be seen in a favourable light. It was clear that the Course leaders were held in high regard and participants might have been tempted to emphasise positive factors despite being asked to be honest and told that negative factors were very valuable in an evaluation. In the interviews the independent interviewer tried hard to elicit negative factors and felt that the interviewees genuinely could not think of many and this suggests that this limitation should not detract from the positive messages in this report.

The responses could be inaccurate because respondents could not remember exactly how they felt in the past. It is hoped that the planned before and after survey will provide further, more robust information about outcomes of the Course.

Because this has been a retrospective evaluation we were only able to measure objectively people's current state of wellbeing and have relied on their memories to gain some understanding of how the Course has affected their wellbeing. While it appears that the Course affected people in a positive way, we intend to carry out a prospective survey in the future to address this issue.

There was no control group so it is not possible to say for certain that the Course was the cause of any changes in outcomes. However, the benefits of a controlled study come at a high cost and this evaluation has shown consistently positive impacts on people's lives that they attribute to the Course and it is hard to believe that the two are not linked in some way.

5 Conclusions

The Eat Well - Keep Active Course has been well received and is effective in meeting most of its key indicators for improving the wellbeing of the Course attendees. It would be worth considering emphasising relationships that are believed to exist between food types and wellbeing in order to increase participants' knowledge about this.

Course attendees had made small to moderate changes in the food they bought, prepared and ate and in increasing their levels of physical activity. The effect this had had on their mental and physical health varied, but nearly everyone felt better for having done the course. Participating in this Course was a positive experience promoting positive wellbeing.

It is planned to carry out a before and after qualitative survey on future courses to determine the size of any effects the course has on healthy eating, physical activity and wellbeing.

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Appendix 1

Eat Well-Keep Active Course - Outcomes and Outputs

Aim

- To improve the mental and physical Wellbeing of people living in East Lothian

Outcomes

(the difference we make)

- Improved mental and physical wellbeing through participation in an Eat Well-Keep Active Course
- Positive changes to wellbeing through increased awareness and knowledge of the aspects of healthy eating that lead to improved health
- Positive changes to wellbeing through increased awareness and knowledge of the Government's physical activity guidelines for adults and older adults that lead to improved health
- New ideas and recipes to inspire a well balanced approach to healthy eating
- Knowledge of gentle exercises to work all the major muscle groups
- Reduced social isolation through contact with other Course participants
- Improved confidence and self-esteem through taking part in the Course

Outputs

(what we do)

- A six week Eat Well-Keep Active Course covering the Scottish Government's Eat Well Plate, information on food and mood, exercise and mood, food tasting, cookery demonstrations and gentle exercise
- Information leaflets and booklets relating to the above
- Information about other activities for participants to progress onto

Appendix 2

Eat Well-Keep Active Course - Outcomes and Indicators

Outcomes	Indicators
Improved mental wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling better able to cope with stressful situations • Feeling less anxious or irritable • Feeling more relaxed • Enhanced good mood • Improved personal appearance
Improved physical wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased activity levels by taking part in the gentle exercise sessions and continuing exercises at home • Reporting weight loss in relation to changes in eating habits • Taking part in other exercise classes and/or increasing activity levels • Asking for information on how to exercise at home
Positive changes to wellbeing through increased awareness and knowledge of the aspects of healthy eating that lead to improved health	Participants try new healthier foods and make changes to eating habits
Positive changes to wellbeing through increased awareness and knowledge of the Government's physical activity guidelines for adults and older adults	Participants are keen to try out the exercise sessions on the Course and continue to do the exercises at home
New ideas and recipes to inspire a well balanced approach to healthy eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of healthier options is increased • Shopping habits change • Interest in food and cooking at home is reignited – especially cooking for one
Improved confidence and self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a sense of achievement from completing the Course • Feeling more motivated to attend the group • Being more confident in taking part in a group and joining in with the activities • Asking what next and what other groups/courses to link in to
Knowledge of gentle exercises to work all the major muscle groups	Knowledge of exercises used to improve balance, muscle strength and flexibility is increased
Increased support networks, contacts and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking into other activities • Making new friends • Enjoying a chat and cup of coffee with other participants • Knowing that people with similar issues are also coming along and can offer peer support

Appendix 3

Evaluation of the Eat Well – Keep Active Course (previously called The Healthy Eating and Exercise Course)

Questionnaire

The Evaluation team would like to know what you thought of the Eat Well – Keep Active Course (previously called The Healthy Eating and Exercise Course and referred to as 'the Course' from here on) and what difference, if any, it has made to you. More information about this Evaluation can be found in the Information Sheet.

Over the page are some questions for you to answer. You can answer them in one of two ways:

- a) by filling in this questionnaire and posting it back to the researcher (Roma Robertson) in the envelope provided – no stamp is required

OR

- b) you can speak to the researcher on the phone and she will ask you the questions and write down your answers. The researcher will phone you back so that you do not have to pay for a long phone call.

Although it looks a long questionnaire most of the answers just involve ticking a box or circling a number and it should take about 25 minutes to fill in.

If you are not sure which answer to give, just give the one you think is probably best for you. The first answer you think of is often the best. Please answer all the questions as well as you can when you get to them. There are no right or wrong answers.

All answers will be treated confidentially and reported anonymously. Please be honest - it is important to get negative feedback because this helps to improve the Course. Staff at CHANGES will not know that you have returned this questionnaire or what your answers are – only the researcher will see them. Your data will only be used for the Evaluation described in the Information Sheet enclosed with this questionnaire.

If you have any problems or questions please contact the researcher (Roma Robertson) on 07749 895032 or by email: ruth.jepson@ed.ac.uk. We understand that the questions are not always easy to answer and we are very happy to help you fill in this questionnaire.

Thank you.

We would like you to know that:

- a) this Evaluation has been approved by the University of Edinburgh, School of Health in Social Science Research Ethics Committee.
- b) your data will be treated confidentially.
- c) the evaluation results will be reported in such a way that you will not be able to be identified.
- d) by completing and returning this questionnaire we assume that you are giving consent for the data in it to be used for the evaluation described in the Information Sheet 'Evaluation of the Eat Well – Keep Active Course'. If you do not wish to take part in this evaluation please do not complete and return this questionnaire.
- e) Only the researcher will know whether or not you take part in the evaluation - the staff at CHANGES will not be told.

1 When did you take the Course?

Please tick a box for each Course you took.

- 2nd November 2010 – 22nd February 2011
- 25th October 2011 - 29th November 2011
- 24th May 2012 - 23rd August 2012
- 6th November 2012 - 12th February 2013

2 Why did you decide to do the Course?

Please tick the box that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

STATEMENTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I took the Course to help lose weight					
I took the Course to learn more about healthy food					
I took the Course to help me cook healthier meals					
I took the Course to learn how to become more physically active					
I took the Course to improve my mood					
I took the Course to try new foods					
I took the Course for something to do					
I took the Course to meet people					
I took the Course to help cope with stress					
I took the Course to help me feel better about myself					

2a If took the course for another reason

Please write the reason here

3 How useful to you were the different aspects of the Course?

Please circle the number that best describes how useful you found the following aspects of the Course where 1 means 'Not very useful' and 5 means 'Extremely useful'.

Aspect	Not very useful ←————→ Extremely useful				
	1	2	3	4	5
Information about healthy food	1	2	3	4	5
Cookery demonstrations	1	2	3	4	5
Gentle exercise sessions	1	2	3	4	5
Information about food labelling	1	2	3	4	5
Information about the Eatwell Plate	1	2	3	4	5
Information about energy balance and weight loss	1	2	3	4	5
Information about ways to keep active	1	2	3	4	5
Information about fats, sugars and salt	1	2	3	4	5
Information about milk and dairy foods	1	2	3	4	5
Information about exercise and mood	1	2	3	4	5
Information about fish, eggs and meat	1	2	3	4	5
Information about fruit and vegetables	1	2	3	4	5
Information about starchy foods like bread, rice potatoes and pasta	1	2	3	4	5
Food tasting	1	2	3	4	5
Information about food and mood	1	2	3	4	5
Information about other activities to take part in	1	2	3	4	5
Being with other people in a group	1	2	3	4	5

4 Is there anything else you think would have been useful to have been included on the Course?

5 We would like you to think back to what you did before you took the Course and let us know what is different now compared to before the Course by indicating how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Please tick the box that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I buy healthier food now than I did before I took the Course					
I eat fewer high fat and sugar foods now than I did before I took the Course					
I am more physically active now than I was before I took the Course					
I eat more fast food meals now than I did before I took the Course					
I am more interested in trying different food now than before I took the Course					
I eat larger portions at mealtimes now than I did before I took the Course					
When shopping, I look at food labels more often now than I did before I took the Course					
I sleep better now than before I took the Course					
I weigh less now than I did before I took the Course					
I cook meals from basic ingredients more now than I did before I took the Course					
I go out and about more now than I did before I took the Course					
I spend time now with other people from the course					

6 On average how many of the recipes you were shown on the Course do you use each month?

Please tick one box.

None 3
 1 4
 2

7 We would now like you to think back to how you felt before you took the Course and let us know what is different now compared to before the Course by indicating how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Please tick the box that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel more confident about knowing how to follow a healthy diet now than I did before the Course					
I feel more confident about being able to cook meals from basic ingredients now than I did before the Course					
I feel more stressed now than I did before the Course					
I feel happier in myself now than I did before the Course					
I feel healthier now than I did before the Course					
I feel more confident about how to maintain a healthy weight now than I did before the Course					
I feel more confident about how to become fitter now than I did before the Course					
I feel more confident about shopping for healthy food now than I did before the Course					
I have more of an interest in healthy eating now than I did before the Course					
I have more confidence in general now than I did before the Course					
I feel less isolated than I did before the Course					
I feel more aware of what I can do to stay healthy now than before the course					
I feel more confident about going out and doing things now than before the course					

The following questions are about how you feel about your life.

8 Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.

Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future					
I've been feeling useful					
I've been feeling relaxed					
I've been dealing with problems well					
I've been thinking clearly					
I've been feeling close to other people					
I've been able to make up my own mind about things					

“Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS)

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9 Your well-being is defined as ‘how you feel and function and how you evaluate your life as a whole’. How much does your well-being improve in the following circumstances.

Please circle the number that best describes how much your well-being improves if 1 means “Not at all” and 5 means “A lot”.

How much does your well-being improve when	Not at all				A lot
	1	2	3	4	
..you get out of the house and mix with people	1	2	3	4	
..you are physically active during the day	1	2	3	4	
..you spend time with family and friends	1	2	3	4	
..you maintain a healthy weight	1	2	3	4	
..you eat healthy foods	1	2	3	4	
..you have things to do and go to during the week	1	2	3	4	

10 Do you think your well-being has changed since you did the Eat Well – Keep Active Course?

Please tick one of these boxes.

- No, I feel just the same *Go to question 14*
- Yes, I feel better than I did before the Course
- Yes, I feel worse than I did before the Course

11 If you answered 'yes' above do you think this has anything to do with having been on the Course?

If you ticked 'No, I feel just the same' please go to the next question, otherwise please tick one box.

- No, not at all
- Yes, a little
- Yes, a lot

12 How much, if at all, do you think the following things affect your mood or feelings?

Please tick the box that best describes how much you think each food/drink affects your mood or feelings.

	Not at all	A little bit	Quite a lot	A great deal	Do not eat/ drink	Don't know
Alcohol						
Fish						
Fizzy drinks						
Brown rice or pasta						
Fast food meals						
Fruit and vegetables						

13 How satisfied you are with your life nowadays?

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means 'Extremely dissatisfied' and 10 means 'Extremely satisfied', please circle the number that best describes overall, how satisfied you are with your life nowadays

Extremely dissatisfied		←—————→						Extremely satisfied		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

14 To help you eat well and keep active how useful would the following be?

Please circle the number that best describes how useful you would find the following activities where 1 is means 'Not very useful' and 5 means 'extremely useful'.

Activities	Not very useful ← → Extremely useful				
	1	2	3	4	5
A longer course e.g.10 weeks rather than 6	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting monthly to get weighed after the Course has finished	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting weekly to get weighed after the Course has finished	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting monthly to get a new recipe	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting every 2 months to have the opportunity to ask questions about healthy eating	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting 2 months after the end of the Course to make a recipe book of favourite healthy recipes with the rest of the people on the Course	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting monthly to practise ways of keeping physically active	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting weekly to take part in a gentle exercise session	1	2	3	4	5
Going on a led walk each week with others from the course	1	2	3	4	5

15 Please add below any other suggestions of things that would help you eat well and/or keep active.

16 Please use this space to make any comments you would like to make about the difference the Course has made to you.

And lastly, some information about you..

17 Are you..

Male

Female

18 What age are you? years

19 What is your postcode?

20 What do you do at the moment? (Tick all boxes that apply to you)

Retired

Working part time

Working full time

Unemployed

Volunteering

Stay at home carer

Stay at home parent

Apprenticeship

Full time education

Part time education

Other (*specify*)

Please turn to next page..

In order to keep your answers to the questionnaire anonymous this page will be detached from the rest of the questionnaire and kept separately.

Interviews

The information sheet provided with this questionnaire tells you about interviews the researcher is carrying out as part of this Evaluation. You are invited to be interviewed and if you are willing to do this please tick this box and complete your name and phone number below. If you would like more information please phone the researcher, Roma Robertson on 07749 895032 or fill in your name and telephone number below.

I am willing to be contacted about being interviewed

Name:

Telephone number:

Summary of Evaluation results

If you would like the researcher to send you a summary of the results of this Evaluation when they are available please tick the box and write your name and address below.

I would like a copy of the summary of the Evaluation results

Name:

Postal address or email address:

Voucher (£10) for local supermarket

Please write your name and address here so the researcher can send you a voucher.

Name:

Address:

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

Please return it in the envelope provided (no stamp required).

Roma Robertson
Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP)
20 West Richmond Street
Edinburgh
EH8 9DX

Tel: 07749 895032
email: ruth.jepson@ed.ac.uk

Appendix 4

Evaluation of the Eat Well – Keep Active Course (previously called The Healthy Eating and Exercise Course)

Semi-structured interview topic guide

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this evaluation and in this interview. Just to re-cap, we are interested in what you thought about the Eat Well Keep Active course, why you took part and what difference, if any, it has made to your life.

Is it OK for me to record the interview? It will be transcribed and it will be treated confidentially and reported anonymously. Please would you take the time just now to complete this consent form?

How did you first hear about the Eat Well- Keep Active Course?

Why did you decide to do it?

Prompts: Why did you think it was something that you would be interested in?
Did you think it was a good idea? Why?
Did you tell your family and/or friends – were they supportive?

What did you like about the Course and why?

Venue, leaders; the other people; days and times? Frequency? Information
How did you feel about?

What didn't you like about the Course and why?

Venue; leaders; being with other people; days and times? Frequency? Information, being in a group?
Did you miss any of the classes? Why? How did you feel about that? Did you feel you had missed anything important?
Have you done any other courses since Eat well – Keep active? Would you like to? Which ones? Did you do many before the course?

What are the main messages that you learnt on the course?

Have you changed the things you eat and drink since you went on the course?

What sort of food did you eat before you went on the course and what do you do now?
If it has changed, **why?** Do you buy different foods since you went on the course? What's the difference nowadays? **Where do you buy your food from?** Do the different foods you buy now cost more or less than before? Do you think the cost of the food or the ingredients influence you most in what you buy?
How has what you buy and eat *changed over time* since you did the course? Why have you made these changes? Compared to just after the course is your shopping and cooking different?

Were there things you tried because of the course and found you didn't like? How did you cope with this?
How much do you cook at home? Is this the same as what you cooked before the course? Just after the course? Now? What sort of things? How often? What have you eaten this week? Do you like cooking?



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