

Evaluating Food-related Practices In Post Diagnostic Community-based Group Support For People Affected By Dementia In The UK



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Shirley Evans, Thomas Morton and Ruby Swift, Association for Dementia Studies, University of Worcester, UK; Rebecca Oatley, Cardiff University, UK; Karan Jutlla, Wolverhampton University, UK; Sophie Knight, University of Worcester, UK; Geoff Wong, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, UK; Nigel Hullah and Marilyn Williams, 3 Nations Dementia Working Group, UK

- Food in community support group settings can play an important role in setting a relaxed tone, providing routine and orientation
- Food is also a powerful social connector, supporting identity and purpose, and the sharing of conversation, memories and experiences
- However, food sharing can have unintended consequences with risk of deepening people’s feelings of stigma and exposure

INTRODUCTION		METHODS	KEY FINDINGS		
Food can be important to how we live our lives, and at the heart of opportunities to socialise, maintain skills, celebrate culture and reminisce. Community groups supporting people with dementia often aim to offer food, or involve food, in their activities. However, there are challenges to working with food. The Food Glorious Food project investigated the benefits and difficulties of involving food in community group support, to establish how practices can be a vehicle for/ barrier to engagement, inclusion and wellbeing, and to help such groups with their decision-making about food. The project was a realist evaluation which sought to understand what works (or doesn't work) for different people from different backgrounds in different circumstances, roles and contexts regarding food in community group support.		Ethnographic observation, and interviews with staff, volunteers, attendees and carers, took place at six UK community groups, including: Two Meeting Centres serving mainly White British populations in semi-rural market towns: one offering a hot meal, one requesting members bring a packed lunch An inner-city support group for people of mainly Black Caribbean heritage, offering culturally appropriate hot meals A small multi-faith support group serving an urban South Asian community where members often bring and share food A large health and wellbeing group based in a Sikh Temple (Gurdwara) supported by cooked food from the Gurdwara's langar hall Dementia Cafes offering hot drinks and snacks in a small UK city	63 context-mechanism-outcome statements were developed in the following categories: <i>Providing food; Providing refreshments; Asking people to bring a meal; Bringing food to share; Managing dietary and support needs; Creating supportive routines and a supportive environment; Involving people in food practices; Using food with other activities.</i> Benefits, risks, facilitators and challenges were also identified. Key findings included: • Starting a session with refreshments/snacks is key to setting a welcoming and relaxed tone and facilitates socialising – a feature across cultures • Refreshment breaks and meals can help structure sessions and play a key role in helping orient people • People may eat more when served meals in social settings due to social and environmental cues	• Shared meals can spark conversation, reminiscence, 'health by stealth' discussions and peer support, creating group cohesion and reducing loneliness and isolation • Culturally appropriate hot food can be key to engaging people and combating marginalisation - but requires sufficient staff resource and budget • While food can connect people, if not carefully managed it can also create separation by drawing attention health needs, the distinction between 'carer' and 'cared for' or behaviour that does not fit with cultural/societal norms • Bringing and sharing food can be linked to people's sense of pride, purpose, identity and self-worth. Allowing for this can support wellbeing, not allowing it risks a negative impact • But there are significant risks to un-monitored food sharing, so it needs to be done with oversight and within limits	Funded by NIHR National Institute for Health and Care Research Food Glorious Food is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), Research Programme for Social Care. NIHR number: 205163 IRAS: 339634 Ethical approval: Wales REC7 24/WA/0270 ISRCTN study registry no: SRCTN11887022 CONTACT Learning from the <i>Food Glorious Food</i> project is now available at: foodgloriousfood.on.worc.ac.uk For more information email Thomas Morton: t.morton@worc.ac.uk ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION AAIC>26