

VOCAL Information Sheet: Eating Well on a Budget

Eating well is necessary for good physical and mental wellbeing. However, it is not always easy to achieve, even if the intention is there. Carers may be on a low income and put the needs of other household members first, rather than prioritizing themselves. Although raw ingredients are more nutritious than processed food, some carers may struggle to find the time to cook or not know how to cook fresh food. This information sheet gives useful resources to help carers living in Edinburgh eat more healthily.

Good food

It can be hard to afford healthy food such as meat and dairy products or vegetables and fruit, especially in cities. However, there are still ways you can eat healthily through buying wisely and getting creative. You could try the following:

- Join The Company Shop which offers free membership for those on low incomes and sells surplus food, drink and household items at highly discounted prices. Contact them on 0131 374 1699 or visit Dumbryden Road, Wester Hailes. Find out more on their [website](#).
- Ask your local supermarket for the days and times that they discount surplus products and visit then!
- Download Olio, a mobile app that shares surplus food from neighbours and shops such as Tesco. It can also be used for non-food items. Visit their [website](#) for more information. Another similar app is Too Good to Go. Visit their [website](#) for more information. Both are free to download on Android and Apple devices.
- Contact VOCAL or Edinburgh Community Food to get a referral to a food bank.
- Grow your own! You don't need much space; a window box can grow herbs or spices and even larger vegetables can be grown in a bag. You could also volunteer with a local community garden and eat what you grow. Some community gardens are mentioned in this Edinburgh Live [article](#).
- Edinburgh Garden Partners can put you in touch with someone with a garden that you can use to grow food. You would do the gardening and share your produce with the owner. Visit their [website](#).
- You can put your name on the Council's [waiting list](#) for an allotment.

Eating well

This section includes ideas on where to find information on the type of food needed to eat well, tips on preparing food and reducing waste, and where to source free or low-cost ready cooked nutritious meals.

- Edinburgh Community Food has various resources, including food boxes and prepared meals that can be delivered to your home or bought locally. They also offer training and qualifications, menu ideas and food stalls in local hospitals. Contact them on 0131 467 7326 or visit their [website](#).

- The Eat Well Guide, produced by Food Standards Scotland, outlines what type of food people should eat, and how these contribute to overall health. Find it on the Food Standards' [website](#).
- Eat Well Age Well provides information to tackle malnutrition in older people living at home and advice and tips on how to eat well. You can find out more on their [website](#) or call them on 0131 447 8151.
- Edible Edinburgh has lots of good ideas for how to eat more sustainably and reduce waste food. Find out more on their [website](#).
- A list of community pantries in Edinburgh that offer free cooked meals, produce to buy and a chance to socialise can be found on Cyrenians' [website](#).
- Soulfood Edinburgh provides free cooked meals at churches in Edinburgh for those in poverty or who are homeless. To find out where and when visit their [website](#).
- Community cafes also provide low cost meals and there are many in Edinburgh. You can find your local community café on the Edinburgh Community Food [website](#).

Cooking skills

If you feel your cooking skills could improve or you wish to move into catering as a career, you could consider the following ideas:

- Cyrenians runs Food Preparation and Budgeting Skills courses at their Community Cook School in Leith. The free course takes place over six weeks, with people attending for a three-hour session once a week. The course is run four days a week and you can choose the day you wish to attend. Visit their [website](#) or call 0131 475 2354.
- Edinburgh Community Food run a range of informal cooking classes, including sessions for those with children under 5 and an online cook club. View their calendar of events here: [Training and Classes Calendar | Edinburgh Community Food Ltd](#)
- Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) accredited courses can help you move into a professional role. Courses are run by various agencies including Cyrenians (contact details above) and Edinburgh Community Food (0131 467 7326 or visit their [website](#))
- Community Cafes are held across Edinburgh and can help you learn more about cooking and running a café. A list of Edinburgh community cafes can be found on the Edinburgh Community Food [website](#). Why not contact your local café to find out how you can get involved?
- The Good Food Apprenticeship is run by Edinburgh Food Social for young people and others. It offers practical cookery skills, farm visits, chef masterclasses and work placements. Call them on 07950 671772 or email: hello@edinburghfoodsocal.org.

Feeding children

Encouraging children to eat healthily can be challenging at times, especially if they are fussy about what they eat. Here are a few ideas you could think about:

- Get in touch with your health visitor or doctor. They can give you support to encourage your child to eat well and maintain a healthy weight.
- If you struggle to find good food your children will eat, you could attend a workshop for parents run by Dad's Rock. More information is available on their [website](#) or by calling 07807498709.
- Best Start Foods is a prepaid card for pregnant women or those with young children (under 3 years) on certain benefits that can be used in shops or online to buy healthy foods like milk or fruit. A Best Start Grant can also be applied for at the same time. To find out more visit the Government's [website](#)
- There are lots of websites that give ideas to help children eat healthily. Nuffield Health has a great section on their [website](#) about this topic.