A model for community-based sustainable food growing: evaluation findings

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(with Prof. Mark Dooris and Dr. Adrian Morley)
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Outline:

• A sustainable food community ‘movement’: Incredible Edible
• The IE Model
• The IET evaluation
• Key findings
• Conclusions and next steps
Incredible Edible

• Focus on sustainable food as ‘universal language’ to approach environmental, social and economic issues (Clarke, 2010; Dobson, 2014)

• Community development

• Resilience-building

• Economic regeneration
Propaganda gardening

• Similar concept to ‘guerrilla gardening’

• Deliberately visible and concerned to provoke a response and ‘start a conversation’

• Proactive branding

• Use of wide-ranging traditional and social media have enhanced visibility
The Incredible Edible Model of Community Development

- Action not words
- Don’t wait for permission, funding, recognition
- Aim to keep all three ‘plates’ spinning
- Ethos of kindness
Ashden Trust and Nisa-funded Evaluation: Incredible Edible Todmorden

Selected Aims:

• To evaluate the potential of the Incredible Edible model as a community-led framework for improving social, economic and environmental wellbeing.
• To co-develop a ‘theory of change’ model to understand IET outcomes
• To explore the perceptions and perspectives of multiple stakeholders regarding the reach and influence of IE Todmorden in terms of awareness, understanding, engagement and participation.

Selected Activities:

• Data collection: One to one interviews, focus groups, community survey,, workshops.
• Outputs: Evaluation report (incorporating thematic analysis, theory of change model, Social Return on Investment study, evaluation toolkit development, etc.)
The Theory of Change Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IE Plates</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short term</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Developed a Shared Vision for the Future [S2]</td>
<td>Increased pride, respect and community spirit [M3]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changed Use of Public Space [S1]</td>
<td>Greater physical activity and use of ‘green space’ [M1]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Business</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>IET used as a ‘brand’ for business and tourism [S3]</td>
<td>IET ‘brand’ significant income generator for local businesses [M5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Buy local’ ethos promoted [S4]</td>
<td>‘Buy local’ ethos established among residents and local businesses [M7]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm and opportunities to learn about food growing, cooking and food production [S5]</td>
<td>Established learning and training opportunities for young people, wider community and marginalised groups [M9]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved physical and mental health and wellbeing in Todmorden [L1]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Established culture of co-operation, collaboration, kindness and caring [L2]</td>
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<td>Less social exclusion / inequalities [L3]</td>
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<td>Crime rate reduction [L4]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater community cohesion and connectivity [L5]</td>
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<td>Strong and sustainable local economy [L8]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased understanding about sustainability, resilience and relationships between people, the environment and the planet [L9]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased cross-generational awareness, understanding and skills linked to food [L10]</td>
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Findings: Enablers, Challenges and Wider Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Enablers</th>
<th>Local Challenges</th>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Individual personalities</td>
<td>➢ Countering resistance to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Culture of proactivity</td>
<td>➢ Securing inclusivity and reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ ‘Three spinning plates’ model</td>
<td>➢ Assuaging fears and misconceptions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: Enablers, Challenges and Wider Development

Conflict, Tensions and Creative Innovation

➢ Creativity out of conflict
➢ Effective partnership working
➢ Different agendas

Engagement of Different Demographics

➢ Engaging the whole community
➢ Recruiting and retaining volunteers
➢ Forging outward-facing links
Findings: Enablers, Challenges and Wider Development

Reproducibility of the Incredible Edible Todmorden Model

- Self-determination required
- Understanding the challenges
- Thinking big, starting small
- Not prescriptive
Conclusions and Next Steps

• IET has led to community empowerment through visible and inclusive engagement in public spaces (i.e. propaganda gardening)
• The ‘three spinning plates’ model is a simple and engaging framework which encourages a joined-up approach
• Food is a powerful vehicle for social change due to universal, essential appeal

• Large multi-site study to understand how IE has been understood and implemented globally
• Compare and contrast with other community-led sustainable food programmes
PROPAGATING SUCCESS
AN EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE INCREDIBLE EDIBLE TODMORDEN INITIATIVE
SUMMARY REPORT

www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/resources/research-and-evaluations
Thank You!

Any Questions?

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