

# **Community Food and Health (Scotland)**

## **Evaluation of The Food Train in terms of its Economic Value**

### **FINAL REPORT**

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- The Food Train Trustees, volunteers and staff;
- External partners from Annandale Transport Initiative, The Handyvan Service, Help the Aged / Age Concern Scotland, The Seniors Forum, The WRVS;
- Representatives from the retail and garage sectors;
- Academic partners from The University of Glasgow and The Caroline Walker Trust;
- And last but not least, the customers of The Food Train.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 This report is based on an evaluation of The Food Train in terms of its economic value, and was commissioned by Community Food & Health (Scotland).
- 2 The Food Train is a grocery shopping, befriending and household support service for older people in Dumfries & Galloway. Its mission is to support older people to live independently at home. Its preventative services aim to address the difficulty older people face getting their weekly grocery shopping, doing jobs around the house and the growing isolation that comes with failing health. This support is provided through The Food Train shopping delivery service and the EXTRA service for odd jobs around the house. The Food Train also aims to provide a wide range of supported volunteering opportunities for people of all age and ability.
- 3 The research question being addressed by this study was:  
“What is the economic value of The Food Train in delivering a volunteer-led service to support older people in remaining independently in the comfort of their own homes within their own communities?”
- 4 The approach adopted involved developing a ‘logic framework’ for The Food Train, which was then used to assess the following:
  - The direct costs of inputs such as staffing, overheads, fixed assets such as vans and running costs such as fuel and volunteer expenses.
  - The costs avoided for example by ‘employing’ volunteers to deliver both the shopping and the EXTRA service.
  - Potential cost savings as a result of supporting customers to cope on their own without higher cost packages of care in the community.
  - Outcomes in terms of ‘quality of life’ benefits for customers, such as increased sense of wellbeing, independence, safety, reduced isolation, and support with small household tasks/repairs.
  - Outcomes for volunteers, for public and voluntary sector stakeholders, and for retail and garage partners.
- 5 The study involved an analysis of monitoring and financial data; a postal questionnaire completed by 258 customers; 1:1 interviews with customers; interviews with volunteers (Stranraer, Sanquhar, Annan), voluntary sector providers (Help the Aged / Age Concern, The Seniors Forum, WRVS, Annandale Transport Initiative, and The Handyvan Service), a rural local authority social work manager, a number of retail managers, a garage owner, and experts on research both for health economics and older people in England and the causes of malnutrition.
- 6 The study explored the social impact as well as the economic value of The Food Train. This enabled an understanding of the value of the services to customers, and the ways in which these services helped to sustain in the long term low cost packages of care with their consequent savings to the public sector.
- 7 The direct cost of delivering The Food Train’s services in 08/09 were just over £211K split as follows:-
  - Staff costs were £81.9K (which includes management and administration)
  - Central running costs of the company were £77.9K
  - Costs related specifically to delivery of the shopping & EXTRA services e.g. volunteers and petrol were £51.5K
  - In addition The Food Train has total tangible assets (such as vehicles) of £62K.
- 8 This enabled in 08/09 15,000 grocery deliveries (an 8% increase on the previous year) with a total grocery spend of over £434K (an increase spend of 21% on the previous year); and completion of 1,000 EXTRA home support visits, generating £31K in service charges to customers<sup>1</sup> (6.9% of total spend). The service also levered in through grants and donations additional resources of over £193K. The above figures give

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding membership fees

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an apparent annual net cost per grocery delivery and EXTRA visit of approximately £14<sup>2</sup>. However other providers have presented figures excluding various headquarters core costs such as management, administration, and premises. Although the detail of these exclusions is not fully stated a more reliable comparative cost per delivery for The Food Train which does not include management and administration overheads is estimated at £5.77 per fortnight. In addition to this The Food Train charge to customers for the Shopping Service is £2.00 which compares well with charges by other providers of more than £3.00. The financial value of time invested by the volunteer workforce was estimated to be in the region of £277K.

- 9 The importance of cost savings is very significant in the current economic climate in particular considering concerns for funding care in the community. Unhealthy old age is lasting longer and also the use of support services over longer periods. There is therefore an emphasis on reducing intensive support e.g. within residential accommodation by extending time in the community. By identifying sub-groups of customers the case was presented that The Food Train was making a significant contribution to delaying the need for intensive support. Estimates of the size of each group were made on the basis of indicators of need extracted from the customer postal questionnaire. These sub-groups were: customers living alone with no other support; customers living alone receiving Care Call support service; other customers living alone, receiving help with household tasks or meals preparation; couples with one or other member with health problems; and finally other couples who required no other support than that of the Shopping or EXTRA services.
- 10 The level of service take-up is crucial to maintaining cost outputs as savings. The following aspects of service design appear to be critical to maintaining customer acceptability and therefore sustained use of services - the use of volunteers; and customers as 'members' of The Food Train.
- 11 Customers benefit financially from not having to take a taxi to the shops, or where there is a home delivery service, the higher costs of such a service, and the inconvenience of having to go in person to select goods and to pay for them. Customers of the EXTRA service also benefit from the low cost but high quality services offered, especially for those not meeting the criteria for the Handyvan service (savings less than £20K).
- 12 The Food Train customer spend in 2008/09 was £434,302. This is equivalent to approximately £730 per customer per annum. There was consensus among retail partners that it made straight commercial sense to partner with The Food Train, and that there was commercial advantage over competitors who did not participate. While garages have benefited from sale of diesel to the value of approximately £11K, the garage involved in servicing the ten vans used for delivery of shopping has demonstrated his commitment to supporting the service by not charging for labour costs involved in servicing the vans, or the costs of sourcing and adapting new vehicles.
- 13 The perceived benefits of the Shopping Service were: promoting independence (76%), health (50%), reducing isolation (35%), promoting wellbeing (27%) and promoting safety (21%).
- 14 Short term benefits included:
  - Customers can self-refer and can choose and get delivered fresh and other foodstuffs & household goods at reasonable price
  - Customers receive support with small household jobs
  - Customers have regular social contact with volunteers
  - Volunteers are given opportunities for personal development; Agencies making volunteer referrals can access volunteering opportunities
  - Carers, family and neighbours benefit by sharing of shopping, small household jobs, and regular visits
  - Social and health care agencies, family and friends can make referrals
- 15 Medium term benefits included:

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<sup>2</sup> Based on 15,000 deliveries to a customer base/ membership of The Food Train of 596 – there are currently 514 distinct household addresses, but approximately 16% of customers are couples.

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- Retail outlets can retain customers and attract new customers
  - Customers are supported in living independently through retaining choice and enjoying a healthier diet, and are less likely to be admitted to hospital because they are malnourished
  - Customers are supported in living independently and are less likely to be admitted to hospital because they fall attempting odd jobs in the house
  - The Food Train is unobtrusively providing support and in cases of additional problems advice given on referral agencies.
  - Volunteers are supported in alternatives to employment and in accessing employment
  - Increase in income to local supermarkets and local shops/garages
- 16 Longer term impacts
- Older people are supported in remaining in the comfort of their own home within their own community
- 17 Other benefits are that:
- Customers are enabled to do a little light shopping themselves (if they are able) or to meet up with their friends
  - The Food Train contributes to social capital, through social contacts provided by volunteers and also by freeing up time of family and friends for visits and outings.
  - It impacts on active citizenship.
  - It also contributes to the Performance Indicators of Dumfries & Galloway's Local Outcomes
    - Improving employment and business opportunities (1.1)
    - Maximising household income (1.4)
    - Caring for vulnerable people (2.2)
    - Reducing inequalities in health (2.4)
    - Leading healthier lifestyles (2.5)
    - Improving community safety (3.1)
    - Supporting communities (3.2)
    - Encouraging people to be responsible citizens (4.4).
- 18 In conclusion, The Food Train provides a well targeted, effective and flexible service that is highly acceptable to customers, with low cost inputs primarily as a result of its volunteer workforce. It generates high value outcomes for customers and fulfils a critical role in supporting them in their desire to retain their independence and to remain in the comfort of their own homes and within their own communities. Its economic value in delaying the onset of higher-cost packages of care is highly significant, and is in line with current UK and Scottish Government policies on meeting the challenge of an ageing population which is living longer though unhealthier lives.

## SECTION 1. BACKGROUND TO STUDY

*“Active ageing is the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age” (World Health Organisation, 2002)<sup>3</sup>*

- 1.1 The Food Train is a grocery shopping, befriending and household support service for older people in Dumfries & Galloway. Its mission is to support older people to live independently at home. Its preventative services aim to address the difficulty older people face getting their weekly grocery shopping, doing jobs around the house and the growing isolation that comes with failing health. This support is provided through The Food Train shopping delivery service and the EXTRA service for odd jobs around the house. The Food Train also aims to provide a wide range of supported volunteering opportunities for people of all age and ability.

It started in Dumfries in 1995. From 2002, following four years Scottish Government funding through the Better Neighbourhood Services Fund (BNSF), it expanded its volunteer service to six bases across Dumfries and Galloway. From 3,500 deliveries of general groceries and household goods a year in 2002 to 60 customers by 11 volunteers, in 2008/09 15,000 deliveries were made to 596 customers by 200 volunteers, and the EXTRA ‘small jobs’ service was launched. Annual membership for customers of The Food Train is £1, each grocery delivery is £2 and EXTRA jobs range from £1 to £2. The Food Train has now received Scottish Government funding including a Third Sector Enterprise Grant to roll out The Food Train nationally through developing pilot projects in two local authority areas in Scotland.

- 1.2 Not surprisingly there has been considerable interest in The Food Train and in its experience as a social enterprise which targets, in rural South West Scotland, a vulnerable and diverse customer base which is growing and ageing<sup>4</sup>. In 2005 the external evaluation of the Dumfries and Galloway BNSF Vulnerable Older People’s Pathfinder<sup>5</sup> reported that the main benefits to Food Train customers (in order of importance) were:-
- independence;
  - confidence in delivery of fresh and frozen food;
  - stopping them worrying about having to get shopping (particularly bulky items);
  - increased security and contact with others through the volunteers;
  - not having to rely on others;
  - and reliability of the service.

- 1.3 This report is based on an evaluation of The Food Train in terms of its economic value, and was commissioned by Community Food & Health (Scotland). Both The Scottish Government and NHS Health Scotland are interested in “what the public pound is achieving”<sup>6</sup>. Social Return on Investment (SROI) is being promoted by the Scottish Government as a useful tool in measuring this and increasing our understanding of what is changing.<sup>7</sup> While NHS Health Scotland, through the work of the national Community-led: Supporting and Developing Healthy Communities Task Group, is taking forward the agenda on economic evidence of community-led health improvement impact.<sup>8</sup> This report therefore has

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted by *All our Futures, Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population* [2], page 6, Scottish Executive, (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Focus of *Older People for Older People*, Northern Periphery Programme (NPP), led by UHI Millennium Institute in conjunction with Glasgow University’s Crichton Campus for Research in Health and Social Issues - action research programme into ways of maintaining older people, healthily and happily, living in their homes and communities; and

<sup>5</sup> Newall E., Gilloran A., O’May F. and Donaldson C (2005) *The Royal Bank of Scotland Centre for the Older Person’s Agenda*, Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Burns, Chair NHS Health Scotland, keynote speaker at *Healthier Lives, Wealthier Communities?* Conference, 30<sup>th</sup> Sep. 2009

<sup>7</sup> It describes the values of changes to stakeholders by using financial proxies to represent values not usually captured in an economic market – social, community and environmental benefits. It produces a ratio of investment to social return and details the story of change for particular projects or activities.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Taylor (Aug 2008) *Preliminary Case Studies of Economic Evidence of Health Improvement Work in Community-led Projects and Organisations*. <http://www.healthscotland.com/documents/3698.aspx>

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attempted to contribute further evidence on the economic value and social impact of the voluntary sector's targeting of health improvement services to vulnerable sections of the community.

## SECTION 2. SUMMARY OF APPROACH

### The overarching aims of the project

- 2.1 The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the economic value of The Food Train, by considering the following:
1. cost inputs and outputs;
  2. outcomes in terms of added value for service users such as quality of life;
  3. outcomes in terms of added value for volunteers, some of whom themselves receive support services;
  4. outcomes in terms of added value for public sector stakeholders (such as social work, health, and voluntary sector care partners), and for retail outlets, garages, and other local traders.

### The scope of the project

- 2.2 The research question being addressed was:  
“What is the economic value of The Food Train in delivering a volunteer-led service to support older people in remaining independently in the comfort of their own homes within their own communities?”

Initial scoping suggested the importance of distinguishing where possible between the Shopping Service and the EXTRA Service, in terms of the following:

- direct costs of inputs:- fixed costs including staffing (annual salaries and associated costs of five members of staff); overheads (e.g. office costs, publicity, garage fees, insurance); reusables (e.g. equipment such as vans and office equipment); and variable costs including fuel and volunteer expenses.
- both direct and wider costs of outputs:- including costs avoided by recruitment and training of volunteers; and early warning responses - preventing loss of independence and deterioration of lifestyle, including nutritional health for example, thereby reducing demand for domiciliary, in-patient services, or residential services.
- comparative costs of providing distinct elements of the service:- such as ordering/delivery of groceries, befriending, household support, early warning referral systems.
- ‘quality of life’<sup>9</sup> benefits for customers:- such as increased sense of wellbeing, independence, safety, reduced isolation, and support with small household tasks/repairs.
- direct benefits for volunteers:- including reduction in support needs of specific client groups.
- direct benefits for the retail and garage sectors, and other local traders.

### Applying a logic model

- 2.3 A tool that has been found helpful in ensuring a systematic approach to setting out inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact is logic modelling. “A logic model tells the story of your project or programme in a diagram and a few simple words. It shows a causal connection between the need you have identified, what you do and how this makes a difference for individuals and communities”.<sup>10</sup> A logic model for The Food Train was developed in simplified format (see Appendix 1). This process was used to scope the inputs, outputs, and outcomes to be explored.
- 2.4 This model makes a number of assumptions, some of which were tested as part of the evaluation, such as:
- that older people choose to live in their own homes in the community as long as they can access shopping and are supported in other ways
  - that a shopping service delivered by volunteers, with the additional option of support with small household jobs, are services of choice for customers and are distinctive from services delivered by other providers in the public or private sectors
  - that customers can afford to pay for delivery of food items and for the extra service
  - that The Food Train can provide for customers a choice of retail outlets
  - that volunteers provide a reliable and quality service that is valued by customers

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<sup>9</sup> Bowling, A., Zahava, G., Banister, D., and Sutton, S. (2002) Adding Quality to Quantity: Older People’s Views on their Quality of Life and its Enhancement. Research Findings: 7; Growing Older Programme, ESRC.

<sup>10</sup> Evaluation Support Scotland. Evaluation Support Guide, 1.2 Developing a Logic Model.

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- that the vehicles are fit for purpose both for use by volunteers and for transporting goods including perishables
  - and that the services are well publicised and older people self-refer, or their carer and/or statutory and voluntary sector agencies make referrals.
- 2.5 External factors that influence The Food Train include the following:
- the availability of suitable volunteers – including competition from other charities
  - the level of support from the retail sector to work in partnership with The Food Train; and the selling off and transfer of retail outlets, with the knock-on effect in terms of choice of brand products
  - support from other statutory, private or voluntary sector providers in terms of making referrals to The Food Train (both customers and volunteers) and taking client referrals e.g. the Handyvan service
  - recognition by funders (both public sector and charitable trusts) of ‘the value’ of The Food Train in meeting service targets for vulnerable older people living in the community, and their willingness to enter into, for example, mainstream core funding, service level agreement (SLA), or project grants to allow development of the service.

### Assessing economic value

- 2.6 There are a range of different ways in which economic evidence is used to make assessments of the value of projects, programmes, and the implications of policy decisions. This depends to a large extent on the questions being asked.<sup>11</sup> **Cost effectiveness analysis** answers the question – given that it has been decided to do this course of action, what is the best way of doing so? It compares total costs and total outcomes of one or more course of action. **Cost-benefit analysis** takes this one step further by calculating a common denominator (usually money) to allow comparisons of outcomes. A variation on this approach is **cost-utility analysis** which brings into the equation subjective levels of well-being (for example quality adjusted life years gained). Another approach using **cost consequence analysis** is more interested in asking questions about the longer term cost consequences of particular types of initiatives - for example within the health sector the longer term impact of a new treatment on lifetime specific healthcare service use, costs, and health outcomes such as life expectancy and quality of life for an individual or group of individuals.
- 2.7 The approach explored in this particular study is closer to costs consequence analysis. It was decided to look at the consequences over time of not having The Food Train services. Given data obtainable on costs of benefits what could be said about the financial implications of this service for other types of support services? We did this by exploring how The Food Train is perceived by customers, the aspects of the service delivery model which they value, and which they believe make their independent lifestyles sustainable. By examining some scenarios based on interviews with customers we explored in this study how both the shopping and EXTRA services help to sustain in the long term lower cost packages of care<sup>12</sup> within the community with consequent savings to the public sector.

### Learning from other research studies

- 2.8 To inform this analysis the evaluation drew on a number of external research studies and policy reports on services for older people in the community, particularly those focusing on nutrition and prevention of malnourishment, and the resulting impact on delayed take-up of higher-level packages of care. The reports reviewed are included in Appendix 5 along with a bibliography.

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<sup>11</sup> The methodological distinctions have been based on a number of sources including: Peter Taylor (Aug 2008) *Preliminary Case Studies of Economic Evidence of Health Improvement Work in Community-led Projects and Organisations*; *Effective Interventions Unit, Designing an economic evaluation*; *The Journal of Orthodontics. Types of economic evaluation*; and Wikipedia.

<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of this study, low-cost packages of care are services provided to vulnerable clients living in the community such as meals on wheels, someone employed to help with bathing, or providing transport to attend a day centre. High-cost includes services like a personal help who provides a 24 hour service, or sheltered housing, residential or nursing care.

## SECTION 3. FINDINGS

- 3.1 These findings are based on the following data sources:
- Administrative/monitoring data held by The Food Train centrally
  - 2009 customer satisfaction survey by The Food Train (215 returns)
  - Postal survey of customers tailored to measure outcomes of The Food Train for both customers and their family/neighbours/carers (258 returns)
  - Face to face interviews with customers (6)
  - Interviews with five retail managers – supermarkets and local stores
  - Interviews with stakeholders (Help the Aged/AgeConcern; Seniors Forum) and other service providers (WRVS, Annandale Transport Initiative, The Handvan Service)
  - Interviews with volunteers (Stranraer, Sanquhar, Annan)
  - Observation of shopping volunteers and of one delivery to customers (Annan)
  - And interviews with researchers in this field

### COSTS

- 3.2 For the purposes of this study the cost of delivering The Food Train has two elements - the direct and variable costs of delivering the service itself (the inputs), and the cost consequences of the inputs which may result in reductions or increases in expenditure arising from the desired outcomes of services (the outputs).

### INPUTS

The inputs for delivering The Food Train's services (more familiarly known as expenditure) for 08/09 were just over £211K split as follows<sup>13</sup>:-

- Staff costs were £81.9K (which includes management and administration)
- Central running costs of the company were £77.9K
- Costs related specifically to delivery of the shopping & EXTRA services e.g. volunteers and petrol were £51.5K

In addition The Food Train have total tangible assets (such as vehicles) of £62K.

- 3.3 This enabled in 08/09 15,000 grocery deliveries (an 8% increase on the previous year) with a total grocery spend of over £434K (an increase spend of 21% on the previous year); and completion of 1,000 EXTRA home support visits, generating £31K in service charges to customers<sup>14</sup> (6.9% of total spend). The service also levered in additional resources (through grants and donations etc.) of over £193K. The above figures give an apparent annual net cost per grocery delivery and EXTRA visit of approximately £14<sup>15</sup>. The financial value of time invested by the volunteer workforce was estimated to be in the region of £227K (see page 14).

It should be noted that other providers have presented figures excluding various headquarters core costs such as management, administration, and premises. Although the detail of these exclusions is not fully stated a more reliable comparative cost per delivery for The Food Train which does not include management and administration overheads is estimated at £5.77, per fortnight.

### OUTPUTS

- 3.4 The outputs, being the cost consequences of The Food Train services, are either reductions or increases in expenditure that arise from the outcomes of The Food Train. These would include savings in expenditure on health and social service provision to older people. These savings occur as a direct result of achieving the intended outcomes of The Food Train (which is to support older people in remaining in the comfort of their own homes within their own communities), where the delivery of shopping by an acceptable provider (The Food Train) forms a key and disproportionately significant element in maintaining low-cost

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<sup>13</sup> These costs are only for one year (08/09), have been adjusted up to nearest £000, and therefore are only approximate indications of relative value.

<sup>14</sup> Excluding membership fees.

<sup>15</sup> Based on 15,000 deliveries to a customer base/ membership of The Food Train of 596 – there are currently 514 distinct household addresses, but approximately 16% of customers are couples.

health and social care packages<sup>16</sup>. This assertion is strongly supported by the interview material collected during the study and appears to amount to a 'unique selling point' that defines qualitatively the concept of The Food Train. These savings will be explored further in the next sections.

### Possible scenarios

- 3.5 It cannot be assumed that the customer base for The Food Train is uniform. The customer survey undertaken as part of this study identified a number of different sub-categories of customers who require different levels of additional support to live independently at home. In order to make estimates of direct savings in expenditure one approach would be to project the proportions of customers within each sub-group who are likely in the immediate, medium, to longer term to move from lower to higher dependency on external support services. In considering this aspect of the study the limitations of the current approach are recognised - namely not having a control group, plus the lack of the information required on health and circumstances of each customer (which constantly change for the better or worse) - and mean that it has not been possible to reliably quantify the numbers of customers in different 'at risk' groups. However by looking at some indicators of need, combined with qualitative data provided by customers themselves, it has been possible to develop some scenarios which illustrate the critical importance of The Food Train in delaying customers moving from lower to higher dependency.

#### *Customers living alone with no other support*

- 3.6 Approximately four fifths of Food Train customers live alone, of whom one quarter receive no other support service than The Food Train, or support from family or friends. This amounts to approximately 100 customers living alone with no other support one half of whom are aged over 80. This customer base would appear currently self-sufficient. However, in response to questions about benefits of the Shopping Service, over half agreed with the statement that "the shopping service has helped to improve my ability to cope with my health problems", and three quarters agreed with the statement that "the shopping service has helped me feel more independent". One gentleman who has used The Food Train service for 13 years, but with no other support, died recently aged 98 years. 9% of all the customers of The Food Train are aged 90 plus, and within this group there are possibly as many as 10 other customers aged 90 plus who live alone and whose only support is that offered by The Food Train volunteers. It can therefore be assumed that this group are very vulnerable, and any changes such as a result of ill-health or accidents could lead to requiring intensive and costly health or social care interventions.

#### *Customers living alone receiving Care Call support service*

- 3.7 Of those who live alone, a further half receive Care Call services<sup>17</sup>, of which almost one half also receive home care services<sup>18</sup>, and a further sixth regular visits from health visitors or district nurses, meals on wheels, or other voluntary sector domiciliary support services. This amounts to approximately 220 customers who are already dependent on other services. The critical contribution The Food Train makes is providing a complimentary element in a tailored package of support in the community, including social contacts through visits by volunteers and someone to check that they are OK. This minimises the level of support required by other contributors to care packages, and therefore reduction in the overall costs met by other partners.

#### *Customers living alone*

- 3.8 The final group of customers living alone, though not requiring Care Call services, receive help with household tasks (e.g. home care or private cleaners), with meals preparation (e.g. meals on wheels or lunch clubs), or support from other voluntary sector care providers. This amounts to approximately a further 80 customers living alone, for whom The Food Train provides an important element of support for independent living, and a reduction in dependence on other more costly support services.

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<sup>16</sup> The term 'care package' will be used to refer to services such as health and social care delivered by the public sector or other support providers to customers (otherwise referred to as clients or patients) living in the community, and which supports them in continuing to live in their own homes.

<sup>17</sup> Care Call is a support service operated by Dumfries and Galloway Council provided for the elderly, vulnerable and/or disabled across the region. It is a 24 hour 365 day response service which works via a special alarm unit connected to the telephone.

<sup>18</sup> Across Scotland the profile of clients receiving home care was estimated to be 80% aged 65 or over and 63% living alone. *Home care services, Scotland, 2009, The Scottish Government.*

### ***Couples with one or other member with health problems***

- 3.9 One fifth of the households served by The Food Train consist of couples, three fifths of whom require a range of care packages and support services including live-in carers, intensive health service input, the Care Call service, and/or support from voluntary sector care providers. The sustainability of such support packages is also dependent on the carer role that one or other partner plays. For this group, numbering approximately 68 couples, The Food Train appears to provide a key element in relieving the burden of caring, by facilitating one or more aspects of daily life, namely the shopping, and small repairs that may otherwise possibly result in accidents for one or other partner. The Food Train, combined with a tailored package of support in the community, enables partners to continue to live together in the community, and as result reduces additional expenditure by other support services.

### ***Other couples***

- 3.10 The final group of customers numbering approximately 37 couples are, of all the groups, least dependent on external support. For them The Food Train is the only support service they receive, and is invaluable in contributing to their maintaining their independent lifestyles. Slightly less than a half of these couples are over 80 years of age. However if the health circumstances of either partner were to change as they age these couples might be expected to progressively require more intensive levels of support such as those required by other groups of customers.
- 3.11 The implications of the above analysis of The Food Train's customer base is that it is important to distinguish between different types of customers and their relative risk of requiring input from other support providers. On a self evident basis, the vulnerability of a customer to any turning point events, such as deteriorating health, accidents in the home, or discharge from hospital, is reduced if they have an acceptable means (to themselves) of ensuring their health and welfare by maintaining their domestic routines such as shopping and small repairs around the house, and as importantly social contacts and sense of wellbeing through regular visits from volunteers.

### **Assessing 'deadweight'**

- 3.12 The study looked at 'deadweight' i.e. the amount of the outcomes that would have happened anyway, even if The Food Train had not existed. The study looked at other support services that target a similar customer base to The Food Train:-
- 1) **Home Care.** This service is delivered by Dumfries & Galloway Council and other contracted providers for people who have a range of 'eligible needs' and who require assistance with personal care such as washing and dressing or other practical daily tasks such as help with domestic chores like cooking and cleaning, as well as non personal care chargeable service such as assistance with fire-lighting<sup>19</sup>. Within the Scottish Government's 'Free Personal Care' framework a shopping service is not seen as a key element, and is usually only provided if paid for separately. A means tested charge (in the region of £16 per hour<sup>20</sup>) for shopping support is offered by Dumfries & Galloway Council to customers who can afford it.<sup>21</sup>
  - 2) **The Meals on Wheels** service is delivered by volunteers from The Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS). There is a charge element of approximately £2 per meal paid for by 'eligible' clients. Meals are currently prepared on Council premises such as school kitchens but there are plans to pilot in two areas the use of alternative local suppliers for food preparation.
  - 3) **The Handyvan Service** is a partnership project between Annan and Eskdale Council for Voluntary Service (AECVS) and Help the Aged England<sup>22</sup>. It was set up to make older people feel safer and

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<sup>19</sup> Across Scotland existing home care clients receive an average of 9.5 hours per week. *Home care services, Scotland, 2009, The Scottish Government.*

<sup>20</sup> We do not have an up to date figure for this service. However comparison with another rural local authority suggests that this is approximately the level of charge for shopping services.

<sup>21</sup> Dr Lisa Wilson of the Caroline Walker Trust reported that there is a similar lack of recognition in England of the importance of shopping services being included in the package of care for vulnerable older people living in the community.

<sup>22</sup> Now comes under the new amalgamated organisation Age Concern/Help The Aged.

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more secure in their own homes. Clients must be over 60 years and with savings of less than £20K. This free service fits door locks, door chains, spy holes, window locks, smoke alarms and low energy light bulbs. Small repair jobs are also carried out where safety or security is an issue.

- 4) **Community Transport and Escort Services.** These schemes depend in the main on volunteer drivers with capital and running costs met through a mixture of contracts, grants, fundraising and donations. Although used also by the general public (e.g. hired out for special events and trips) this form of transport is primarily targeted at members of the community who do not have full mobility but are not housebound, and for whom public transport services are not suitable to their needs. Some of these providers (including WRVS) cater for older people wishing to attend lunch clubs, or on occasion to visit the shops, or for personal business such as banking and posting parcels (WRVS good neighbour scheme).

It was found that none of these services are directly equivalent to The Food Train. They provide alternatives for some customers that compliment what The Food Train has to offer, for example some customers will receive both The Food Train Shopping Service and Meals on Wheels, or the EXTRA service and The Handyvan service. However they do not meet the specific outcomes of The Food Train, and therefore there is no element of 'deadweight' to be taken into account.

- 3.13 Evidence from other areas supports the conclusion that The Food Train is filling a gap in existing services. There is a shopping service delivered by a different rural local authority, using employed shopper/drivers, and with a smaller customer base to that of The Food Train. The costs quoted for delivering this service, which take into account the recharge cost to the client of £3.15, do not include full costs such as management overheads, clerical time processing invoices, or office costs of staff. The design of this service also does not meet the specific outcomes of The Food Train as reported by customers which is the social contact and input of volunteers to enhancing their quality of life.

Two other models of shopping services explored were based on a study commissioned by Age Concern England (see Appendix 6)<sup>23</sup> on the role of community food projects in preventing malnutrition in later life. One is an **Escorted Shopping Service** in Norwich, which provides transport and volunteer escorts to older people who wish to do supermarket shopping. This is equivalent to the WRVS good neighbour scheme which provides escorts to customers who want to do their own shopping. The second is **Net neighbours** - an internet shopping service in York City. This is essentially an extension of a supermarket shopping delivery service with volunteers assisting with the ordering and payment side. Although providing volunteer input and support to housebound customers in their dealings with the supermarket this service does not provide the face to face contact that The Food Train volunteers provide.

### The importance of cost savings

- 3.14 In order to assess the costs involved over time if The Food Train did not exist, the following possible outcomes were explored:
- There would be an additional demand for The Meals on Wheels service – however as noted above not all customers are eligible for this service.
  - Additional home care hours are required - Dumfries and Galloway is currently attempting to outsource most of this service because of the higher costs involved in delivering this service in-house<sup>24</sup>.
  - There are additional hospital admissions as a result of poor diet and malnourishment – for example poor nutrition is a risk factor for diabetics, wound healing from leg ulcers would be longer.
  - There are additional hospital admissions as a result of falls – for example older people attempting to do shopping and carrying heavy bags when not physically able, or attempting to do jobs around the house and falling
  - Patients stay longer in hospital after surgery because they are unable to buy and carry home their own food shopping.

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<sup>23</sup> by Dr Lisa Wilson, Caroline Walker Trust, June 2009

<sup>24</sup> Dumfries & Galloway Council Resources Committee, Ad hoc Sub Committee Home Care, March 2008.

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In order to quantify cost consequences the concept of ‘delayed take up’ was found useful - what might be the expected reduction in expenditure for health and social care services from the significant contribution of The Food Train to delaying its 596 customers requiring additional support in the community or moving sooner into other forms of accommodation?

Savings in health and social care services are very significant in the current economic climate in particular, considering current concerns for funding care in the community. Unhealthy old age is lasting longer and therefore also the use of support services over longer periods. There is at the same time an emphasis on reducing intensive support (e.g. within residential accommodation) by extending time in the community and tightening up on eligibility criteria. The report ‘Better Outcomes for Older People’ talks about ‘the journey of care’<sup>25</sup>

***"We need to be obsessed with the health and well-being of the 86.6% of older people who don't use care services, but we are obsessed with the 13.4% who do".***<sup>26</sup>

- 3.15 Evidence from England<sup>27</sup> indicates that the current funding arrangement for social care of older people is felt to be unsustainable. In Scotland while ‘hotel’ or accommodation costs are either self-funded or means tested, as in England,<sup>28</sup> there is free personal care and a contribution towards nursing care within residential care services routed through local authorities.<sup>29</sup> However this is putting a financial strain on local authorities (stretched by budget decreases in overall budgets), and on clients and their families who depend on personal resources.

Delaying transition of older people from little or no support (other than The Food Train) to medium or higher-level care packages, or admission to residential or nursing care, is therefore now Scottish Government policy<sup>30</sup>. Dumfries and Galloway, like other local authorities in Scotland, is looking at how to provide additional home care hours and yet reduce expenditure. As noted in the scenarios above The Food Train can contribute to reducing in some cases home care hours required, in others day care, and for others moves into sheltered accommodation, by offering a low-cost option.

- 3.16 The study found that it was not possible to identify financial data on full costs of these medium to higher-level care support packages. The table below is based on a study from England on a range of health and social care services.<sup>31</sup> It provides some baseline information on a range of weekly costs of some of these other support services and accommodation arrangements.

<b>INDICATIVE UNIT COST PER WEEK PER CLIENT LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY</b>	<b>(£)</b>
Home Care (1hour per week, means tested) <sup>32</sup>	16.00
Approximate charge per hour for the shopping element <sup>33</sup> (means tested)	16.00
Day Care (per session)	35.00
Health Care Support: Community nurse (weekly)	26.00

<sup>25</sup> Better Outcomes for Older People. Framework for Joint Services Executive Summary (2005) Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1244/0011892.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Quote from "Integrated services for older people", Audit Commission, 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Unit Costs of Health and Social Care (2008), compiled by Lesley Curtis.

<sup>28</sup> If assets are above £22,500 expected to meet full accommodation costs with sliding scale below that

<sup>29</sup> Currently £153 for personal care, £69 for nursing care, £222 in total.

<sup>30</sup> The number of over 65 year olds receiving intensive home care services (>10 hours/week) was estimated to be 18.1 per 1000 population in 2009 which is an increase on 16.2 per 1000 in 2004 and 9.3 per 1000 in 1999 *Home care services, Scotland, 2009, The Scottish Government.*

<sup>31</sup> Unit Costs of Health and Social Care (2008), compiled by Lesley Curtis.

<sup>32</sup> This is based on current costs in Dumfries & Galloway. The full cost to the Council of employing homecare workers in-house is £16 per hour. The services of the independent providers which deliver 60% of care hours for older people are purchased by the Council at £12.68 per hour, a difference equivalent to 26%. Dumfries & Galloway Council Resources Committee, Ad hoc Sub Committee Home Care, March 2008.

<sup>33</sup> It is not known what the up to date figure is. £16 per hour is the charge by a Local Authority in England quoted by Dr. Wilson of Caroline Walker Trust.

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OT (fortnightly)	23.00
GP (11.4 minutes)	7.20
<b>INDICATIVE COSTS PER WEEK PER CLIENT IN SUPPORTED FORMS OF ACCOMMODATION</b>	
Sheltered Housing (covers capital and revenue costs)	125.00
Private Residential Care (fees per permanent resident)	46.00
Private nursing homes (fees per permanent resident)	680.00

In comparison with the weekly costs of these services the net cost of delivery of The Food Train services (both the shopping and EXTRA services) to its current customer base averages out at approximately £5.77 per fortnight (excluding core costs such as management, administration and office costs).<sup>34</sup>

- 3.17 Finally, The Food Train reduces health costs through its specific focus on regular delivery of foodstuffs. It is known that nutritional intake has a significant impact on the health of older people and their ability to cope (see examples of research findings Appendix 4):
- Malnutrition affects 10% of the population over the age of 65;
  - There has been a significant increase in winter deaths especially among the over 75 year olds<sup>35</sup>(affordability of heat and food are known contributory factors).

Research into Meals and Wheels services in London<sup>36</sup> suggests that a key contribution of The Food Train to addressing the risk of malnutrition is that it provides a service which ensures that people have more than one meal a day, and that they keep up their calorie intake with for example eggs, as well as fruit, hot drinks etc.

In summary therefore the Food Train makes a significant contribution to retarding the need for more costly care packages by health and social care providers.

### Economies of scale because of the level of take-up

- 3.18 The survey of customers indicates that one of the main attractions of the service is having volunteers who provide social contact. This has increased year on year take-up of the service and as a result reduction in unit costs of both the shopping and the new EXTRA service. As noted previously customers received 15,000 deliveries in the year 2008/09 which averaged out at approximately 28 deliveries per customer per year, or just over one delivery per fortnight.

### Savings from the design of services

- 3.19 The level of service take-up is crucial to maintaining savings. The following aspects of the service structure are key to maintaining customer acceptability and therefore its sustained use.

#### 3.20 *The use of volunteers*

The use of volunteers is a long standing model which The Food Train developed, based on a survey undertaken by volunteers from the former Elderly Forum (now Seniors Forum). The service design has been carefully tailored to fit with feedback from customers on the design of the service. This involves volunteers (200 in total) undertaking the following tasks: - collecting shopping orders, making up orders, delivering orders safely (taking particular care of fresh and frozen food products) and other heavy household goods, if required unpacking orders, dealing with payments; checking on other support requirements such as house safety requests in which case referrals are made to the Handyvan service, advice given on other services, and assistance with small jobs.

<sup>34</sup> Not all customers receive a weekly service. Over a 50 week year this averages out at approximately 0.58 deliveries per week. The net cost takes into account the contribution by customers themselves in the form of service charges.

<sup>35</sup> GRO (2009) <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/publications-and-data/increased-winter-mortality/increased-winter-mortality-in-scotland-2008-09.html>

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Dr. Lisa Wilson, Caroline Walker Trust.

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Volunteers are highly committed to giving of their time, some on a weekly basis and most fortnightly or monthly. It is estimated that in total the unpaid time invested is<sup>37</sup>:

- company and branch directors (450 hours),
- office administration (1,700 hours),
- making up orders and delivering shopping (22,900 hours by 144 volunteers),
- delivering EXTRA service (2,450 hours by 29 volunteers).

As noted above the equivalent shopping service for social work in-house home care workers is £16 per hour. Assuming an average hourly rate for volunteers of £10.10<sup>38</sup>, the financial value of time invested by the volunteer workforce can be valued at £277K.

### 3.21 *The customer as member*

The outcomes of The Food Train and the acceptability of its services, as evidenced by customer feedback, primarily arise from how users of the service perceive themselves - as customers and members, not clients or patients. In real terms they have a stake in The Food Train as members eligible to vote on, for example, its future direction at this year's AGM. The high levels of continued use of The Food Train (15% for more than five years) is an indication of the value placed by members on a service which is unique in that it is provided by volunteer 'partners' and not by social or health care providers. A significant number of customers commented on their continued use of the service, and their willingness to pay for the service, even when their circumstances changed (for example as a result of an improvement in health), because of the importance of ensuring this option was there if their health deteriorated again.

### Savings to customers themselves

3.22 Access to shops is made more challenging by lack of accessibility to suitable transport. Approximately 5% of the population of Dumfries and Galloway live in remote town, 28% in accessible rural and 21% in remote rural i.e. almost 50% live in sparsely populated settlements with populations of less than 3,000<sup>39</sup>, most of which are served at the best by infrequent bus services. 60% of The Food Train's customers live in these rural areas or in remote villages.<sup>40</sup> The following are a range of additional costs involved if there was no shopping service, and customers had to do their own shopping (that is if they could manage this physically) :-

- Payment to supermarket for deliveries. Out of the 19 retail outlets working in partnership with The Food Train only one publicises a home delivery service (free for over £25 groceries spend, £3 for local delivery, and optional £5 for further afield)<sup>41</sup>, and a second offers this service but only within the village itself. This however still requires customers to come in person to select their shopping.
- Taxi fares to and from the shops – quoted by some customers as being in the region of £15 per visit to the shops.

The cheaper option might be to ask a neighbour, family friend or carer to do the shopping for them. However over half the customers said this wasn't an option for them.

3.23 For customers requiring help with household repairs the lowest charge for private tradesmen varied from £10 an hour (quoted by one customer) to £25 with varying levels of call out charges. One customer was helped by The Food Train to find a cheaper local tradesman from the local authority approved register of suppliers, and thus saved a much higher call out charge. There is also the Handyvan Service which is free service to clients, but only to customers with savings of less than £20K.

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<sup>37</sup> Based on an audit of volunteers' timesheets one week in September.

<sup>38</sup> This estimate of equivalent hourly wages is calculated on the basis of average weekly wage rates for equivalent jobs such as delivery drivers and home carers, and associated costs excluding management costs. This approach to calculating equivalent employee costs has been used extensively by the author in reports for the Scottish Government on behalf of The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.

<sup>39</sup> The Scottish Executive Urban Rural Classification 2005-2006.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/Methodology/UrbanRuralClassification>

<sup>40</sup> Analysis of customer postcodes by Scottish Government's 05/06 rurality index.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.somerfield.co.uk/services/homedelivery>

### Additional income for retail & garage sectors

- 3.24 The Food Train customer spend in 2008/09 was £434,302. This is equivalent to approximately £730 per customer per annum. Based on informal interviews with a number of retail partners there was consensus that it made straight commercial sense to partner with The Food Train. There was for example awareness of commercial advantage over competitors not partnering with The Food Train; an independent grocer reports a significant turnover with the small number of Food Train customers ordering from him; while a frozen food chain commented on the drop in income since customers had stopped shopping regularly from them. It was however not possible to measure the additional income to the retail sector from partnership with The Food Train.
- 3.25 The garages have benefited from income from sale of diesel (approximately £11K in 2008/09). However the garage involved in servicing the 10 vans used for delivery of shopping has chosen to charge only for parts and break-down costs, but not the labour costs of servicing the vans, or the quite significant costs of sourcing and adapting new vehicles e.g. installation of electrics for freezer boxes.

### OUTCOMES

- 3.26 Comments made by customers regarding perceived benefits of the services were analysed. When customers were asked to choose from a five-fold list which outcomes were most true for them the following was the apparent order of importance:

<b>Independence</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>Health</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Isolation</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Wellbeing</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Safety</b>	<b>21%</b>

However analysis of qualitative data from those who provided comments suggests that wellbeing was most important, followed by independence and health, affordability, package of care, reduced isolation and finally safety. These outcomes, in conjunction with those set out in the logic model (see Appendix 1) i.e. short, medium, and longer term outcomes (impact) are explored below.

### Short term benefits

- 3.27 *Customers can self-refer and can choose and get delivered fresh and other foodstuffs & household goods at reasonable prices*

Retaining choice and maintaining normality of routines is critical to older people. Health research has found that loss of capability is the main barrier to well-being in later life; and worsening satisfaction with life is associated with decreasing ability to perform everyday tasks due to declining health.<sup>42</sup> Not surprisingly 92% of customers said that the most important benefit of the shopping service was getting the foodstuffs that they chose delivered to them. Two thirds of the comments received about improvements in the lives of customers referred to regular food supplies or reasonably priced goods.

*“You get it all in bulk. You get your shopping there and then. It’s very handy. When you’ve got two sticks you can’t carry anything and can’t take things off the shelf. They put things away for you if you’re not fit. But I need the exercise so I do that myself.”* [Lady, 70-79, lives alone, receives Care Call]

*“Shoppers (volunteers) also take advantage of the reduced cost of items.”* [Lady, aged 80-89, lives alone, receives Care Call & home care support]

For six customers the quality of the food was particularly important:

*“Knowing that fresh food will arrive at one stage during the week”; “Knowing that if I think about my order I can have regular meals including the 5 a day”; “Receiving alternatives has encouraged me to try items I might never have tried otherwise”; “Regular ordering of my food has helped me re-establish control of my life - and nutrition!”*

<sup>42</sup> The Scottish Executive (2007) *All Our Futures. The Evidence Base*. Chp 4, pp 80, 86.

3.28 *Customers receive support with small household jobs*

One third of customers receive the EXTRA service. Three fifths said the main benefits of this service was supporting their desire for an independent lifestyle while a further third said that helping them with awkward tasks was really useful. The following was a very common comment: ***“I don't have them a lot, but I know the service is there if I need it”***. Another common comment was: ***“They do the jobs tradesmen would not come for as ‘too small’ and as my friends are all older too I cannot ask them to go up steps or on their knees!”*** [Lady, aged 70-79, receives Care Call]

3.29 *Customers have regular social contact with volunteers*

Over one quarter of customers specifically made the connection between having the social contact with volunteers and improvements in their life. For some customers the visits from the volunteers who delivered their foodstuffs were even more important than the deliveries themselves.

***“The ladies and gents are so polite and kind, I do look forward to seeing them. I look forward to the happy visit even for such a short duration... It's the company, having a banter. I joke with the volunteers and they with me.”*** [Lady, aged 80-89, lives alone, employs a cleaner]

Research evidence supports the importance of smiling<sup>43</sup>. As noted above several customers commented specifically about the happiness that volunteers injected them with, even if the visits were short.

From observing a morning's delivery in Annan it was evident that volunteers also bring with them local knowledge and connections with family and friends of the customers which adds to the 'social' element of visits.

3.30 *Volunteers are given opportunities for personal development; Agencies making volunteer referrals can access volunteering opportunities.*

Referral agencies were not covered in this study. However the 'Audit of Activity since 2002 to 2009' by the Chief Executive of The Food Train reports that between six and eight agencies refer volunteers. Informal interviews with Food Train branch directors, staff and volunteers identified a number of other routes that volunteers get recruited – through family members (including young people helping with making up orders, or husbands recruited as drivers); through friends (for example a friend who is a plumber and is handy for the odd job as well as doing the deliveries); and in response to posters, press articles and presentations at local voluntary sector meetings such as the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes (SWRI).

Two examples of the benefits for volunteers themselves came from anecdotal comments:

- A volunteer, referred by a voluntary sector social care agency to The Food Train, said that what he gets out of volunteering is that, instead of his disability being seen as an obstacle, what he brings to his volunteer work - namely his commitment, knowledge and experience - is really valued. He is therefore a stalwart and active member involved every week in making up rotas, dealing with phone calls and emails, and generally ensuring that the services from his branch work like clockwork. He says he also empathises with the needs of another volunteer with significant support needs as “he knows where he's coming from”.
- A recently recruited volunteer, who has worked with older people all her life, found on retirement that she missed this type of contact and therefore had jumped at the opportunity of becoming a shopping volunteer.

3.31 *Carers, family and neighbours benefit by sharing of shopping, small household jobs, and regular visits*

No interviews were held with carers, family or neighbours. The survey of customers did however identify a number of customers who were also carers and who benefited from the support given to them in their caring role for their partners - in particular the value of the EXTRA service in helping them with odd jobs.

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<sup>43</sup> The detrimental influence of negative stereotypes. Centre for Confidence and Well Being: <http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/projects.php?p=cGkPTk5>

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***“My husband once did all that was needed in the house but he is now not well, having anaemia and it would be quite dangerous for him to go up a ladder to change a light bulb for instance. [Couple, aged 80-89, no other support]***

For customers caring for partners but not having family or not wanting to ask neighbours there are immediate benefits.

***“My wife had a stroke 6 years ago. Her left leg gives way without warning and she falls at least twice a week. The Food train reduces my anxiety about the time I need to be away doing the shopping. [Couple, aged 80-89, receives Care Call service]***

The main evidence from this study is that customers would prefer not to impose themselves on their family and neighbours. Just under one third of customers said that if The Food Train did not exist their family and neighbours might assist with shopping (see Appendix 3, Table 3). However they were reluctant to rely on carers, family or neighbours because it reduced their sense of independence and ability to cope on their own.

***“I have no family locally. It’s too much of an imposition on neighbours. Previous to joining The Food Train I employed a carer to do my shopping each Friday at a cost of approximately £15 each week. I would have to do the same again (if there was no Food Train)” [Lady, aged 80-89, lives alone, receives Care Call]***

***“There is no shop I could pay to deliver, and no family or carers, and I would never ask my neighbours. I would have to use taxi each way - return cost £14”. [Gentleman, aged 80-89, lives alone, no other support]***

### 3.32 Social and health care agencies, family and friends can make referrals

There is no data on the proportion of customers that self-refer or whether agencies, family or friends make referrals. However over three quarters of customers are known to health, social work or housing services and receive ongoing support in the community.<sup>44</sup> Customers also talked about being referred to The Food Train when coming out of hospital and four specifically mentioned receiving the service while recuperating from surgery.

***“I used The Food Train for 13 weeks only when I came out of hospital having had a hip replacement and was not allowed to drive. I am now able to get around but I was very satisfied and glad to have the service of The Food Train.” [Lady, 60-69, lives alone, no other support]***

***“I was told about The Food Train when I was in hospital, and I couldn’t wait to get the service.” [lady, 80-89, lives alone, pays for cleaner]***

***“I was confined to bed for six weeks with leg ulcers and then again I got an infection and skin wouldn’t grow back for a year. I had a District Nurse coming in so having The Food Train was great. The service was recommended by a neighbour in the same block.” [Lady, aged 80-89, lives alone, receives Care Call]***

## Medium term benefits

### 3.33 Retail outlets can retain customers and attract new customers

A number of retailers were interviewed informally about their relationships with The Food Train – four partner retail outlets and one that had decided not to continue.<sup>45</sup> Those in partnership with The Food Train emphasised their responsibilities to the community and to their customer base, and saw The Food Train as contributing to this. One retailer who is not a partner regretted the fact that their shop no longer do home deliveries as they are very aware of the number of very rural customers. However for a number of reasons they have reservations about The Food Train meeting this gap:- health and safety regarding safe delivery of fresh and frozen produce; and legal responsibilities regarding the sale of alcohol. The key factor however appeared to be that the customer base was too small to warrant the ‘inconvenience’ to them in terms of storage space for boxes in the fridge area.

<sup>44</sup> 2009 Food Train Customer Service - 75% said they received other home care or support services. 79% received specifically support from social work, health care, WRVS, or other voluntary sector social care providers.

<sup>45</sup> Morrisons, Farmfoods, Willie Lochs (Stranraer), Tesco, and Coop.

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- 3.34 The father in law of the owner of the garage that services all the vehicles was one of the founder members of The Food Train. Therefore he sees supporting The Food Train as part of his contribution to his local community.

***“It’s not a money-making proposition. With The Food train I see where the money is going and how the money goes further because the service is provided by volunteers. I see its value as the little bits in between in support of the old folk, monitoring how they are and seeing what help is needed.”***

He does however admit that there is a benefit in having the name of his garage included as a supporter on the signage of a van.

- 3.35 ***Customers are supported in living independently through retaining choice and enjoying a diet, and are less likely to be admitted to hospital because they are malnourished***

As noted above a number of customers specifically commented on the importance of healthy nutritional food. The fact that the food was fresh was important and that they could order as often as they wanted or less often depending on their choice.

***“My fridge and freezer always seem to have plenty in them. If I could I would do my own messages. I’m like a squirrel I get a small amount and carry them up the street. But I have to be careful not to carry anything too heavy.”*** [Lady, aged 80-89, lives alone, no other support]

Experience from research into approaches to reducing malnutrition among older people suggest that The Food Train volunteers are providing a valuable service in addressing risk factors associated with malnutrition<sup>46</sup> by supporting customers in ordering foodstuffs.

- 3.36 ***Customers are supported in living independently and are less likely to be admitted to hospital because they fall attempting odd jobs in the house***

Both shopping and EXTRA customers commented on their worries about falling both within the house and outside.

***“The last time I dislocated my hip I lost all my confidence. I was terrified to go out in case I fell. You’re rushed down to Dumfries and then you have to wear a big brace right down to the knee for six weeks.”*** [Lady, aged 70-79, lives alone, receives Care Call]

Changing light bulbs is something that all the EXTRA customers seem to appreciate. The service however prevents accidents in other ways, including reducing the fear factor.

***“I don’t have to worry about taking down curtains or tripping over rugs or can’t hear the door bell or phone as they have done all my little jobs for me, even repaired my Hoover.”*** [Lady, lives alone, aged 80-89, receives Care & Repair service]

- 3.37 ***The Food Train is unobtrusively providing support and in cases of additional problems advice given on referral agencies***

The Volunteer Information Handbook states that one expectation of volunteers is that they “notify their branch of problems or concerns about customers”. The observation of volunteer meetings supported the role that volunteers play in unobtrusively picking up problems and making referrals or signposting customers to other support services.

The following comments summarise what appears to be a core process outcome for customers, namely that it’s an unobtrusive service that supports independent living.

***“It’s good to be independent but eh you have to face the fact that you need some help some time. No need being too proud of it. You need to get on with it and do as much as you can.”*** [Lady, aged 80-89, lives alone, receives Care Call].

***“I have lots of friends and neighbours but it rarely occurs to any of them to help. They just drink my tea and tell me their troubles. With the Food Train I don’t have to ask for help. They are just kind willing and very helpful.”*** [Lady, aged 70-79, pays for cleaner]

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<sup>46</sup> [http://www.bapen.org.uk/pdfs/malnut\\_in\\_the\\_community.pdf](http://www.bapen.org.uk/pdfs/malnut_in_the_community.pdf)

### 3.38 *Volunteers are supported in alternatives to employment and in accessing employment*

This was not a key focus of the study. However from anecdotal comments by volunteers the following are examples of the support they have been given:

- one volunteer who had lost confidence after having a child, was supported after doing office volunteer work to go after a job and was immediately recruited;
- another had been unemployed long term and was supported with references and taken on by a company on a temporary basis – while not successful in getting a permanent job this volunteer has now the confidence to go after other jobs.

### 3.39 *Increase in income to local supermarkets and local shops/garages*

This is outwith the scope of this study. However based on the payments to retail outlets (£434K) and to local garages for diesel (£11K) it can be assumed that this income is positively contributing to the local economy. From analysis of spend by retail outlet it is possible that a number of the smaller retail outlets are increasing their turnover as a result of the partnership with The Food Train, and therefore the increase in income may be relatively higher for the lower end of the retail sector.

A number of customers reported that they did not return goods that had been incorrectly included by shops in their orders because they did not want to bother the volunteers. Also, as noted above, some customers reported that they had started purchasing new food products. This may explain the comments received in the annual customer survey by The Food Train on the importance of knowing what the current offers are in the shops.

### **Longer term impacts**

### 3.40 *Older people are supported in remaining in the comfort of their own home within their own community.*

This is the aim of The Food Train and is borne out by the proportion of customers (three quarters) who agreed with the statement that “The shopping service has helped me feel more independent” and the half who agreed that “the shopping service has helped to improve my ability to cope with my health problems”.

One customer summarised how her life had improved since receiving the shopping service as follows:

***“Our village shop closed in June this year. The possibility of having to move house has been removed - knowing that the service will not let me down as I would be unable to carry the bulk of shopping back from the town”*** [Lady, aged 70-79, lives alone, no other support]

Critical to maintaining independence appears to be making choices – whether to have The Food Train or the EXTRA service or not.

### 3.41 However having shopping delivered, though ideal for most customers, is not the total picture. Most of the customers, if they can, also like to get out to do a little shopping themselves or to meet up with their friends.

***“I am an assistant pastor visitor for church and the pastor comes to take me to housebound folk who want to take communion. I am also a member of the trefoil guild and one of the members drives me there once a month.”*** [Lady, aged 80-89, no other support]

***“I like when my family take me in the car to the shops, or better still up the hill to sit on the seat at the viewpoint.”*** [Lady, aged 80-89, support from family member]

For one severely disabled volunteer extending the shopping service to a befriending service was what she really wanted.

***“I said at Easter I will try and see if I can find a way to get to the shops myself. This generation had a fair spirit of independence. But now I’ll have to get The Food Train because it’s winter and because of the dark nights...There’s this thing about four walls. There’s far too many old folk shut behind four walls at an age they could get out. I tried my hardest to see if there was no possibility of The Food Train taking us to the shops. It would have been perfect for an awful lot of people. It would have given them a life. It’s not a life sitting in a chair and everybody carrying and fetching for you, if you’ve got any spirit at all. We are body, mind and soul.”*** [Lady aged 80-89, lives alone, home care support]

## Evaluation of The Food Train in terms of its economic value

Where this is requested The Food Train supports customers to access services such as the community transport initiatives.

- 3.42 Finally, it could be said therefore that The Food Train contributes to **social capital**, through social contacts provided by volunteers. This need would also be met by the proposed befriending service for those without support networks. The Food Train also impacts on **active citizenship**. As noted above The Food Train is constituted as a social enterprise and its constitution identifies its customers as members. Every customer is invited in writing to the AGM, and transport is arranged accordingly. For example in 2008 they were asked to endorse a 100% increase in charges for shopping delivery (which was approved unanimously), and at the 2009 AGM customers voted on whether The Food train should be reconstituted as a national organisation. Therefore The Food Train contributes in a practical way to active citizenship – a key goal of the Scottish Government as set out in ‘*All Our Futures*’ and of the UK Government<sup>47</sup>.

### Contribution to Dumfries & Galloway’s Local Outcomes

- 3.43 Finally it could be argued that The Food Train contributes directly to the following Performance Indicators of Dumfries and Galloway Local Outcomes<sup>48</sup> :-
- Improving employment and business opportunities (1.1) by support for volunteers seeking employment; by support for local retail and garage sectors.
  - Maximising household income (1.4) by reducing expenditure on taxis to do weekly shopping.
  - Caring for vulnerable people (2.2) by providing support in the home through delivery of shopping and provision of small household repairs.
  - Reducing inequalities in health (2.4) by providing an affordable service to those with health needs.
  - Leading healthier lifestyles (2.5) by supporting access to foodstuffs of choice.
  - Improving community safety (3.1) by providing a safety check and making referrals to the Handyvan service.
  - Supporting communities (3.2) by promoting resident satisfaction with neighbourhood support through volunteers; by signing up to Dumfries & Galloway Compact.
  - Encouraging people to be responsible citizens (4.4) by promoting active involvement in decision-making within a social enterprise, and provision of volunteering opportunities.
- 3.44 **To conclude**, the main finding of this study is that The Food Train provides a well targeted and effective service with low cost inputs, primarily as a result of its volunteer workforce, which is well received by customers, and generates a broad spectrum of positive outcomes for customers, volunteers, and potentially high value outcomes for partners and other stakeholders, including Dumfries & Galloway Council, the Health Board and its community planning partners.

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<sup>47</sup> *Opportunity Age: Meeting the Challenges of ageing in the 21st century* (2005), Department for Work and Pensions. *PSA Delivery Agreement 17: Tackle poverty and promote greater independence and wellbeing in later life* (2007) HM Government.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Together is Better’, Dumfries and Galloway Single Outcome Agreement (2009-2011)

## SECTION 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Challenges of the study – availability of data

- 4.1 In attempting to evaluate The Food Train in terms of its economic value there have been a number of challenges around timescales, costs of research methods, and availability of data. This meant that approaches to economic evaluation that might have provided a more rigorous analysis were not an option.

While the monitoring and financial data held by The Food Train was extremely rigorous and transparent, data held by other agencies that might allow some comparison of unit costs was not available for a number of reasons, including competitive tendering considerations, or were in a format that did not include full costs, and in some cases did not exist at all. Of specific significance was the difficulty in accessing unit cost data from public sector agencies, or where such data did exist it was provided in an incomplete form. There were also limitations in the type of data available across different public service providers. While data on comparative health and welfare costs was available for England this did not appear to exist in Scotland.

### Main Conclusions

- 4.2 The Food Train provides a low-cost effective and flexible service that is highly acceptable to customers, and fulfils a critical role in supporting them in their desire to retain their independence and to remain in the comfort of their own homes and within their own communities. Its economic value in delaying the onset of higher-cost care packages is highly significant, and is in line with current Government policy on meeting the challenge of an ageing population which is living longer though healthier lives.

### Recommendations

- 4.3 In the course of this study comments by customers and by other stakeholders interviewed have suggested a number of recommendations for consideration by the Board of The Food Train.
- a) The marketing of the EXTRA service. The customer survey identified a number of customers who were either unaware of the existence of this service, or were confused by what it involved. It may be that more regular promotion of, and information on, the service by volunteers is required.
  - b) Related to this is the matter of health and safety. Safety checks are carried out by the EXTRA volunteers. It may be that this should be extended to all customers of The Food Train. This might also encourage a further take-up of EXTRA services.
  - c) Capitalising on retail promotions. Retail outlets tend to advertise their own promotional offers by mail drops. Although The Food Train have identified issues such as ensuring customers have equal access to offers and inconsistency in the way offers are promoted across the retail outlets where this does not happen The Food Train may choose to further explore with the retail sector other ways of informing customers of current offers.
  - d) Making referrals to dieticians. Volunteers may opt to receive training in simple techniques for identifying risk factors associated with malnutrition, as this may help them in making referrals where they feel there are grounds for concern.
  - e) Supporting choice options. There may also be scope for encouraging health food producers and other food manufacturers to donate samples of their products as part of the Christmas hampers which The Food Train delivers to customers each year, and which in turn might encourage customers to consider a different range of food items in their orders.
  - f) Extending the reach of the service. The Food Train newsletter carries promotional information for partners on services as well as advice on topics of interest to customers. There may be scope for sharing newsletter mailings with other voluntary sector agencies who target similar client groups, such as the

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Seniors Forum, especially if this were to extend coverage of information on the service to a wider cross-section of older people living in the community.

### **Lessons for working at a Scottish level**

- 4.4 The study has explored various ways in which to develop evidence of the economic value of The Food Train. In the roll out of the model the value of collecting detailed monitoring and financial data has been demonstrated. As important is the need for funding partners to also look at the data that they collect so as to allow meaningful comparisons with unit costs of different services provided by both public sector and other voluntary sector providers.
- 4.5 Secondly the study has highlighted (under the section on challenges) ways in which the evidence and analysis might be improved in further studies. It is therefore important that further scoping work is undertaken, involving academic partners, so that a more wide-ranging review is explored which can further evidence the economic value and social impact of community-led health improvement initiatives focusing on food and nutrition.

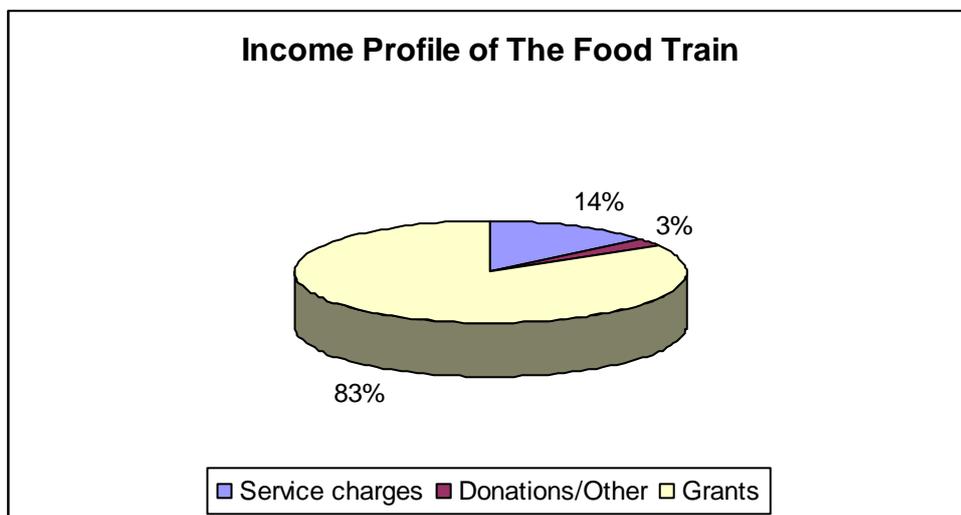
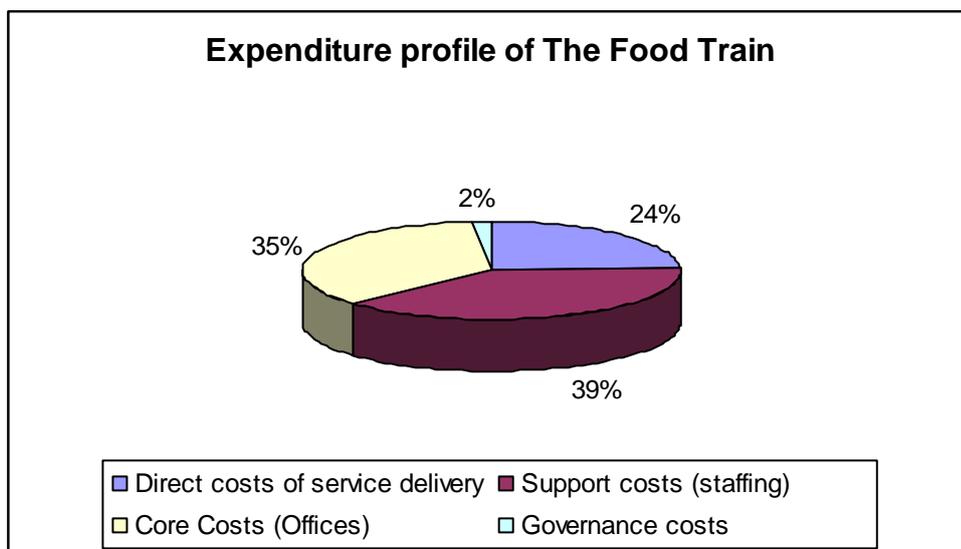
Evaluation of The Food Train in terms of its economic value

APPENDIX ONE

Situation/Need	Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes		
		Activities	Participants	Short term	Medium term	Longer term
Older people for health and other reasons are no longer able to do their own food shopping or small jobs around the house	Staff/Volunteers Board of Directors Training Travel	Home delivery shopping & Extra small repairs and household jobs service to older people	Older people living in their own homes	Customers can self-refer and can choose and get delivered fresh and other foodstuffs & household goods at reasonable prices	Customers are supported in living independently through retaining choice and enjoying a healthier diet; Customers are less likely to be admitted to hospital because they are malnourished	Older people are supported in remaining in the comfort of their own home within their own community
	Vans Offices/ Administrative systems	Varied volunteer opportunities with training provided	Volunteers	Customers receive support with small household jobs	Customers are supported in living independently and are less likely to be admitted to hospital because they fall attempting odd jobs in the house	
	Income from customers	Retail outlets have foodstuffs delivered to older customers	Retail partners	Customers have regular social contact with volunteers;	The Food Train is unobtrusively providing support, and in cases of additional problems advice given on referral agencies	
	Retail sector Garages	Handyvan service receives referrals	Handyvan service and other services receiving referrals	Volunteers are given opportunities for personal development; Agencies making volunteer referrals can access volunteering opportunities	Volunteers are supported in alternatives to employment and in accessing employment	
	Referral agencies – volunteers and customers	Health and social care services make referrals		Carers, family and neighbours benefit by sharing of shopping, small household jobs, and regular visits.	Increase in income to local supermarkets and local shops/garages	
	Donations and grants			Social and health care agencies, family and friends can make referrals		
				Retail outlets, garages and small traders can retain customers and attract new customers		

APPENDIX TWO

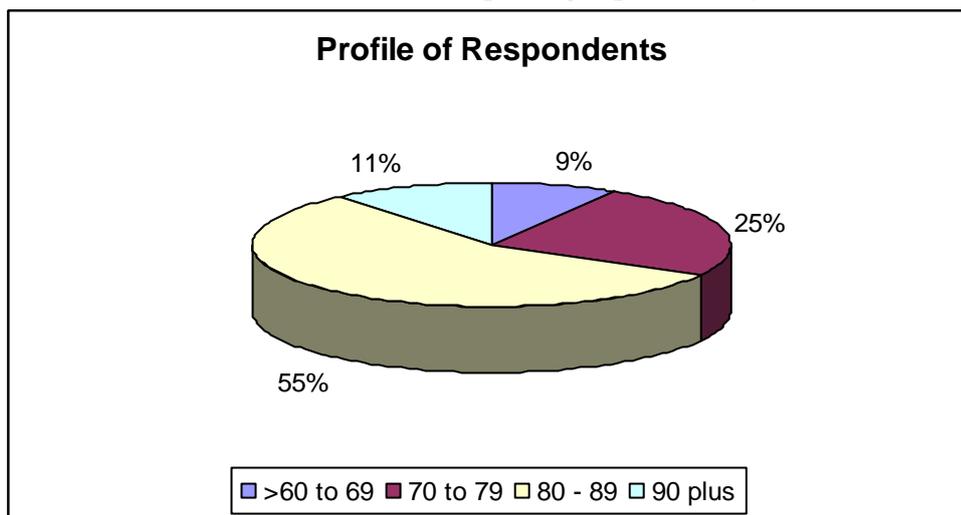
Extracts from 08/09 Company Accounts



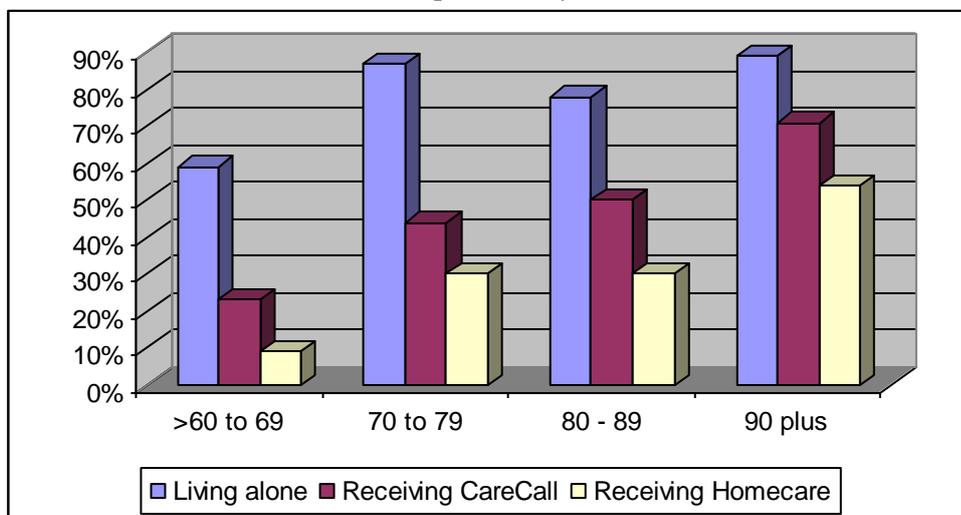
**APPENDIX THREE**

**Postal survey – profile and characteristics of respondents (customers)**

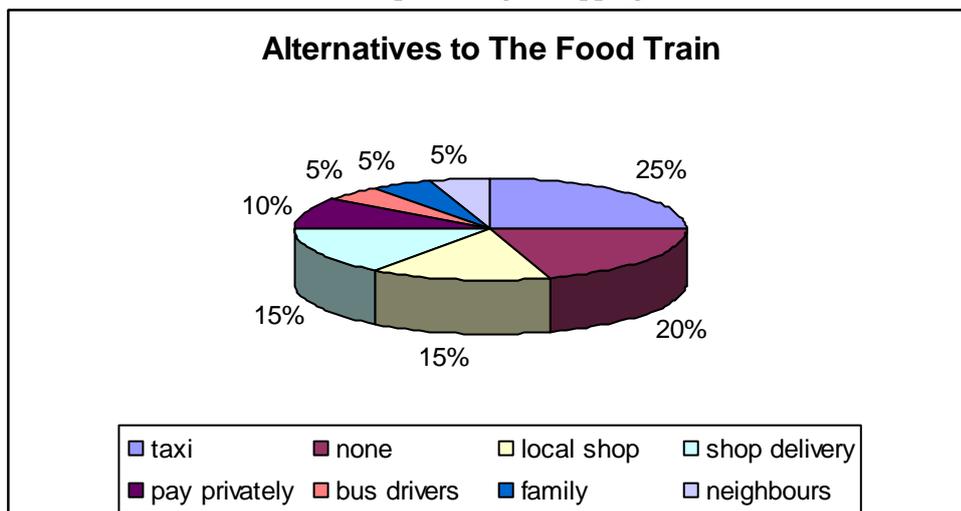
**Table 1: Customers responding to postal survey**



**Table 2: Respondents by care needs**



**Table 3: Alternative options to get shopping if no Food Train**



## APPENDIX FOUR

### Customer Postal Questionnaire



### Surveying the value of The Food Train to Customers

If you could spare a few minutes to fill in this short questionnaire we would be delighted. It will help us learn from Dumfries and Galloway customers about the services provided and the value of The Food Train.

We have just completed our 2009 customer survey. As follow-up to this we would like to ask you some further questions about the specific benefits and how you value The Food Train Shopping Service and also, if you use it, the Extra Service.

Please note confidentiality will be respected. We will ask only a few personal questions in Section One. Most of the questions are just tick boxes but there is also space for comments if you want to make any.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the stamped addressed envelope provided. If you wish any further information please contact The Food Train staff or myself.

Thank you very much for helping us assess the value of The Food Train services to customers.

Marion Lacey, Rock Solid Social Research

**Section 1. About You**

Please tick the appropriate boxes

1. **How old are you?**

Under 60  60-69  70-79  80-89  90 and over

2. **Are you?**

Male  Female

3. **Do you live alone?**

Yes  No

4. **Do you receive any other home care or support services in addition to the Food Train services?**

Yes  No

5. **If you receive other home care or support services which of the following services do you receive?** (please tick all that apply to you)

Care Call  Home Care  Household Help  Meals on wheels   
Handyvan service  Regular visits from the Health Visitor or District Nurse

**If you receive any other support services, what services do you receive and from whom?**  
(please complete the box below)

6. **Which Food Train services do you use?**

Shopping Service  Extra Service

**Section 2. About The Shopping Service**

7. **Which is the most important benefit for you of the shopping service?**

Please tick only one.

- Having the shopping delivered to the house
- The social contact I get from the volunteers who deliver shopping
- Having someone to check that I'm all right

8. **What other benefits do you get from the shopping service?**

Please complete in the box below.

9. **Which statements are true for you?** Please tick all that apply to you.

- The shopping service has helped to improve my ability to cope with my health problems
- The shopping service has contributed to me feeling good about myself and positive about life
- The shopping service has helped me feel more independent
- The shopping service has helped me feel safer living at home
- The shopping service has reduced any feeling of isolation

10. **What do you think about the charges made for delivery of your shopping?** Please tick only one.

- Poor value for money
- Just right, good value for money
- Excellent value for money

11. **If there was no shopping service how would you do your food shopping?** Please tick all that apply to you.

- I would find a shop that I could pay to deliver to the house
- I would ask my family or carers to do my shopping
- I would ask my neighbours to do my shopping
- I don't have any other source of help

12. **Have there been any other improvements in your life since receiving the shopping service?** Please complete the box below.

### Section 3. About the Extra Service

If you are signed up to the Extra Service can you please complete the set of questions on this page.

13. **Which is the most important benefit for you of the Extra service?** Please tick only one.

- Little jobs done when I need them
- Social contact with volunteers who do the jobs
- Information on other Services
- Information on local traders for bigger jobs

14. **What other benefits do you get from the Extra service?** Please complete the box below.

15. **Which statements are true for you?** Please tick all that apply to you.

- The Extra service has helped to improve my ability to cope with my health problems
- The Extra service has contributed to me feeling good about myself and positive about life
- The Extra service has helped me feel more independent
- The Extra service has helped me feel safer living at home
- The Extra service has reduced any feeling of isolation

16. **What do you think about the charges made for the Extra service?** Please tick only one.

- Poor value for money
- Just right, good value for money
- Excellent value for money

17. **If there was no Extra service how would you go about doing these small jobs?** Please tick the appropriate boxes

- I would try to do the job myself
- I would ask my family or carers for help
- I would ask my neighbours for help
- I don't have any other source of help

**Evaluation of The Food Train in terms of its economic value**

18. **Have there been any other improvements in your life since receiving the Extra service?**  
Please complete the box below.

**Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.**

**Please mail the completed questionnaire back to the Dumfries office, using the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.**

## APPENDIX FIVE

### Research Evidence underpinning the concept of 'delayed take-up' (see 3.14)

#### **Better Outcomes for Older People: Joint services and the journey of care<sup>49</sup>**

*"We need to be obsessed with the health and well-being of the 86.6% of older people who don't use care services, but we are obsessed with the 13.4% who do".<sup>50</sup>*

The Framework sets out a range of joint services as if travelling along a journey of care. It urges local partnerships to develop more joint services that will meet the increasing needs of older people, as they become more frail or because they have additional needs:

- Joint services for health promotion, prevention and early intervention (such as income maximisation) which can assist older people to lead healthy and active lives in their own homes.
- Joint services for older people with complex or more intensive needs. These services should be able to respond to rapid and fluctuating increases in personal and health needs, such as increasing levels of frailty and/or changing behavioural patterns. These services should pro-actively prevent older people being inappropriately admitted to care homes or hospital, and should actively support them on returning home. Many more of these enhanced care services are needed.

- Malnutrition is a significant, and neglected, public health problem. It affects over 10% of the population over the age of 65 (equivalent to 1,680 in Dumfries and Galloway).<sup>51</sup>
- National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) of people aged 65 years and over in 1998. In this survey 3% of men and 6% of women living at home were underweight, while comparable figures for those in residential care were 16% and 15% respectively.<sup>52</sup>
- "Access to food, food shopping and regular meals must be included as a key part of the essence of care for older people; the development of the personalisation agenda must allow for older people to access services which provide them with food shopping and enough food to ensure they can eat when hungry and food is always available; just supplying a hot/frozen meal once a day is not enough; food and nutrition do not exist in isolation from other influences on health and well being and access to food and nutritional health needs to be fully integrated into care packages and risk assessments made on vulnerable older people."<sup>53</sup>
- The 1992 COMA report on *The Nutrition of Elderly People 2* emphasised the need for monitoring the energy (calorie intake) of older people. Those older people who are relatively inactive require fewer calories because they use less energy. However, although the energy requirements of such people may be lower, their requirements for other nutrients will not have changed and may well have increased. Their diet therefore should be one of quality rather than quantity. In residential care accommodation, at least £18 per resident per week (2004 prices) should be spent on food ingredients to ensure that food of sufficient nutritional content can be made available.<sup>54</sup>
- The biggest challenge for vulnerable older people aged over 80 years is getting sufficient calories not heart disease. Therefore a healthy diet is not as important as ensuring they can get more than one meal a day. The biggest gap in services is support with food shopping. The Food Train is even more valuable than services like Meals on Wheels because it enables older people to make choices and to get more than one meal a day. It can also support and signpost people to other services if issues around for example loss of appetite occur.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Better Outcomes for Older People. Framework for Joint Services Executive Summary (2005) Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1244/0011892.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Quote from "Integrated services for older people", Audit Commission, 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Malnutrition among Older People in the Community, BAPEN (2006)

<sup>52</sup> Finch S, Doyle W, Lowe C, Bates CJ et al. 1998. National Diet and Nutrition Survey: People Aged 65 Years and Over. Volume 1: Report of the Diet and Nutrition Survey. London: The Stationery Office.

<sup>53</sup> Preventing malnutrition in later life. The role of community food projects by Dr Lisa Wilson  
Caroline Walker Trust, June 2009

<sup>54</sup> Eating well for older people, report on an expert working group, The Caroline Walker Trust, 2004

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Dr. Lisa Wilson of The Caroline Walker Trust.

## Evaluation of The Food Train in terms of its economic value

The increase in winter deaths has risen significantly in Dumfries and Galloway in the last five years especially among the over 75s<sup>56</sup>:

- Increase of 30% among 75-84 year olds between 2007 and 2008, and 40% between 2008 and 2009<sup>57</sup>
- Increase of 20% for those 85 and older 85 between 2007 and 2008, and 40% between 2008 and 2009.

### Research evidence supporting the outcomes reported on by customers

#### **The detrimental influence of negative stereotypes. Centre for Confidence and Well Being <http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/projects.php?p=cGkPTk5>**

Many studies have been carried out which support the idea that stereotypes have a direct link to health and well-being. For example, Becca Levy and her colleagues at Yale University found that older people who hold negative stereotypes about themselves (e.g. viewing themselves as senile as opposed to wise) display a more negative response to stress, have lower self-efficacy and impaired cognitive function, and are more likely to have a negative view of other old people. Not only did Levy et al find that negative stereotypes affected performance and attitudes, but they also found that these beliefs contributed to serious illness and even death. Their research shows that people who held negative stereotypes of ageing refuse life-prolonging interventions and that their negative views directly affects their will to live, meaning in life, and ultimately their mortality.

The good news is that holding positive views of ageing has a beneficial impact on people. For example, Levy et al found that holding positive views about ageing increased life expectancy by about 7.6 years. This added more years to life than: low blood pressure, low cholesterol, not smoking and not taking regular exercise - these only add one or two years of life expectancy.

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<sup>56</sup> GRO (2009) <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/publications-and-data/increased-winter-mortality/increased-winter-mortality-in-scotland-2008-09.html>

<sup>57</sup> Figures for 08.09 are provisional

## APPENDIX SIX

### Case studies taken from 'Preventing malnutrition in later life. The role of community food projects' by Dr. Lisa Wilson (Caroline Walker Trust, June 2009)

#### **Net neighbours – Internet shopping service - Age Concern, York**

The Net Neighbours scheme has been running for about 5 years in York City and the surrounding area. It grew from a hospital support project which provided shopping services to older people being discharged from hospital. The scheme managers noticed that after the 6 week referral period, some older people were still unable to shop for themselves. Although some people buy in Wiltshire Farm or other hot food services, there is no council run community meals and people still needed food for other meals and household goods and were reliant on one meal a day without support to get this other food. As a result the Net Neighbours scheme was established and is supported by Age Concern York. Net Neighbours allows older people to take advantage of internet shopping, even without their own computer.

A staff member or volunteer phones the older person on a preset day and takes their 'shopping list' based on information provided on what can be bought online. The volunteer then places the order with the supermarket who delivers the shopping to the older person's home. Payment is made either through the project bank account (if staff) or by credit card (if volunteer). On receiving the shopping the older person calls the volunteer back with a total cost from the bill received and posts a cheque for this amount to Net Neighbours.

The project currently has over 70 members (membership is necessary to set up the account, but is free) with two part-time staff and approximately 15 volunteers. The telephone befriending aspect of the service has been a huge success and complements the shopping scheme. Regular telephone contact has been found to relieve isolation, ensure referrals to other services and identify abuse. The value of the project to all is demonstrated by staff and volunteers who have stayed in touch with the older people even when one of the parties have moved away.

Advice from the project co-ordinator: Start small. Contact a sheltered housing or local centre and take on about 6 people for about a month to make sure the scheme works. Although the scheme is simple it is vital to keep on top of it, two hours every day is better than ten hours once a week.

Challenges: The biggest challenge is staying on top of the system and making sure someone is available to check up on the older people or answer queries such as delivery drivers contacting them to say no-one is answering or confusion over ordering.

Future work: Net Neighbours would like to provide a home service for those with short term memory loss or with poor hearing or eyesight meaning they are unable to use the lists provided. It would also support people in the short term who may be ill.

Contact: Tel. 01904 726191

#### **Escorted Shopping Service – Age Concern Norwich**

Run by Age Concern Norwich, this service provides transport and volunteer escorts for older people who wish to visit a supermarket. The 8 seater mini bus takes older people from the local area to the Tesco Extra store on the outskirts of Norwich on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis depending on their requirements. Sixty five older people use the service each month. The Tesco has a cafe where older people meet after their shopping, to have a drink and a chat while they wait for the rest of the group. Other facilities at the store include access to household goods, clothes, electronics, a hairdresser, pharmacist and travel agent.

Advice from the project co-ordinator: To run this type of project it's vital to have a decent vehicle and funds to maintain it. A supply of volunteers is also essential and the role they play should not be underestimated.

Challenges: The biggest challenge is affording the purchase and upkeep of transport and ensuring that there are enough trained drivers as volunteers.

Contact: Tel. 01603 496333

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