

NHS Forth Valley Community Food Development Workers worked in partnership with the SPS Horticultural Officer and Life Skill Officers at HMPYOI Polmont to develop and deliver a growing and cooking education programme to a group of women in prison.

The programme offered the group of women the opportunity to sign up to a gardening and cooking programme, that not only taught them some basic knowledge and skills around gardening and cooking, but they were also presented with 3 separate accredited awards, which increased their employability on release.

5 women from Blair House in HMPYOI Polmont were chosen for this project. The programme of activities were delivered over 10 weeks and the women had to complete 7 core gardening activities including Composting, Cultivation, Plant Care, Potting On, Propagation, Seed Sowing and Harvesting, as well as various cooking activities.

On completion of the programme participants were awarded

- Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society - The Caley Grow and Learn Award
- Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) - Food Hygiene and Practical Cooking Skills Awards. (Find out more about these awards on Page 3)

## Health and Well-being Benefits

The ethos of this project is one that sits well within the holistic learning approach that has been created and delivered within HMPYOI Polmont. The gardening project also encourages the people in prison to taste the produce they have grown, as they have the opportunity to cook a variety of vegetable dishes in the life-skills classes. As well as developing horticulture and cooking skills, participants set personal goals, that help them develop important and transferrable life skills. The programme has a particular focus on self-development, building confidence, self-esteem and improving mental health, wellbeing and resilience.

This gardening and cooking programme encouraged the woman to work together in partnership and helped reduce any feelings of loneliness or isolation. Gardening activities gives people in prison the opportunity to reconnect with nature in a green space and not only improves their physical fitness but can also improve mental health and well-being, reduce stress and anxiety and can contribute to positive health behaviour, positive interpersonal relationships as well as increasing employability opportunities.

The word 'grow' is written in a green, lowercase, sans-serif font. A small green sprout with two leaves is positioned above the 'o'.The word 'cook' is written in a blue, stylized, cursive font that appears to be made of wood or a similar textured material.The word 'Learn' is written in a green, uppercase, sans-serif font. A small green book with a red spine is positioned above the 'L'.

# Grow, Cook and Learn Project at HMPYOI Polmont

Feedback from participants:-



"I love getting out in the fresh air, I feel my mental health has improved this starting this programme"

"I have loved this course and loved cooking with what we have grown"

"I will grow some vegetables when I get home"

"I am going to grow my own and use it for making soup – so tasty and easy to cook"



"I have loved the cooking course and it's great we get a qualification for when we are out"

"I have loved all three courses, especially the cooking course – I'm definitely going to make some of these recipes when I get home"

# More about the Awards

## REHIS Accredited Practical Cooking Skills

The aim of the course is to provide participants with basic cooking skills that increases confidence, skills and knowledge around cooking food from scratch.



## REHIS Accredited Elementary Food Hygiene



THE ROYAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND

The Elementary Food Hygiene certificate is a practical course designed to give individuals a basic knowledge and understanding of the causes of food poisoning, measures for prevention and the legal aspects of food hygiene in Scotland.

## Royal Horticultural Society Grow and Learn Award

The Grow and Learn Award is a person-centred award, recognizing individual progress and achievements in horticultural. The award is inclusive, individual progress and offers life skills-based education for all.



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## Further Information

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Visit **Community Nutrition** Website

[www.nhsforthvalley.com/nutrition](http://www.nhsforthvalley.com/nutrition)

## SPS Staff

**Ally Cantley**, Horticultural Officer (Gardening)

**Gregor Young**, Life Skills Officer (Cooking)

