

UWTSD

Food and Drink

Food for Thought – Our Sustainable Approach

About the project

Summary

Through the development of a sustainable framework, which supports both education and learning, the University has undertaken a number of pieces of work towards strengthening sustainability in all university departments and faculties. The 'Food for Thought' project, led by our Catering Department, has resulted in a change in behaviour towards the use of food and drink resources in learning environments.

Project partners

UWTSD Catering and facilities Unit \ Staff\ Students\ Crèche Service users – parents and children

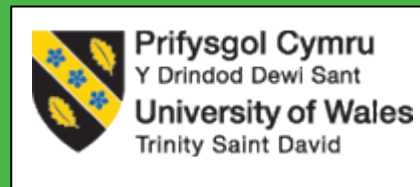
The results

The problem

As a University, we recognised that food was a valuable resource and that we needed to convey this message to students and in doing so help reduce waste and promote healthier eating habits. In order to do this, we needed to demonstrate the message practically by leading the way. We also understood that our students spend a substantial amount of their time on campus and that they were therefore a captive audience to help change the way that society thinks about food and drink resources. Our students come from all backgrounds and from all over the world – both physically and virtually, so as a University we felt that we needed to make a change to the way we operated as well as introducing initiatives to support this change. We were aware that whilst there was already a strong sustainability approach in primary education, the messages were often lost when students entered secondary education. So when they further reached tertiary education, we noticed it was more difficult to change the way they behaved towards leading a healthier and sustainable lifestyle.

The approach

Our approach was to introduce organisational and resource support at a strategic level to ensure the right policies and procedures for embedding are in place to support sustainability. This was all whilst providing



Profile

- HEI
- 11,400 students (includes full and part time students)
- 2,125 staff
- Urban and Rural campuses

Category supported by



both a food and drink service to students and staff, and giving opportunity for engagement and lifestyle change.

To do this we undertook two paths of approach. We started with a 'top down' strategic perspective by consulting staff and the students to introduce changes to frameworks that needed to be in place to help drive the University, but also, we looked to other means of engagement with a 'bottom up' approach to help support these strategic frameworks. We introduced a number of changes but the most significant one was looking at the cradle to grave approach around the onsite allotment and crèche. Engagement on different levels with young children, their parents, staff, students and their families by using the allotment has provided for a sound platform to build a better understanding as to the impacts of not leading a healthy but a sustainable lifestyle too. An environment of education, learning, fun and social community interaction has enabled everyone to play their part and take away something that will hopefully last them a lifetime. Whether that be learning to plant seeds, learning to cook healthy meals from home grown produce, sharing social bilingual language skills or understanding the greater impacts of climate change, the cradle to grave approach is a valuable one. But we understand that this is only the beginning of a much longer journey to take.

Our goals

Through the development of a sustainable framework, which supports both education and learning, the University wanted to undertake a number of pieces of work towards strengthening this approach. This approach needed a change in behaviour within the University towards food and drink resources.

In order to do this we identified a number of key goals:

- Produce sustainable 'home grown' menus on each campus
- Support the 'cradle to grave' approach by engaging school children and young users of the onsite crèche to play a role within growing foods on the allotment which is based at the Carmarthen Campus.
- Highlight the benefits of 'Grow your Own' to a wider audience
- Reduce food waste by promoting composting i.e. kitchen waste
- Promote Fairtrade, ethical and local purchasing to students, staff and suppliers.
- Reduce waste by promoting the use of coffee thermal mugs rather than single-use disposable cups.
- Reduce travelled miles by bulk buying products

Obstacles and solutions

Behavioural change has been a real factor that has affected the need to embed sustainability into the way we use food resources at the University. It has been noted that whilst in Wales we have a strong Eco school following in the primary education sector, it appeared that both secondary and tertiary education were not as strong in these areas. At the University we wanted to break this mould and make a difference that would last individual learners a lifetime. Hence the 'cradle to grave' approach with regards to our own engagement with students, staff and the onsite crèche around to the allotment so that it could be truly embedded.

In order to support and give direction to this approach, at a much higher organisational level the University needed to set its own sustainability standards within its frameworks and thus there was the need to develop the Sustainable Food Policy, the Fairtrade Policy and embed sustainability into other existing strategies e.g. Procurement.

Performance and results

The journey that we have undertaken has achieved our goals. To date we have achieved the following:

- During a recent external organisational inspection of the Meithrinfa Y Gamfa Wen Day Nursery based at the University campus in Carmarthen, ESTYN recognised the difference of the early intervention and the benefits of 'a range of appropriate policies and daily routines promote children's health and wellbeing effectively.' They highlighted the fact that the UWTSD provided 'effective opportunities to raise children's awareness of the importance of healthy eating and physical exercise' and that 'being part of the Design to Smile and the Healthy and Sustainable Pre-school scheme, for example, helps practitioners to promote children's knowledge of good practice in caring for their health'. (<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/provider/6699159/>).
- To assist with home grown menus and to help promote the use of both Fairtrade and local suppliers to the University we have achieved;
 - Our local suppliers have increased by 46%,
 - Our organic milk consumption increased 5 fold,
 - Our use of Red Tractor and Welsh meat increased from 0 to 196 orders,
- A reduction of both food waste and landfill waste has also occurred
 - We prevented 1548 kg coffee ground waste going to landfill by recycling coffee grounds,
 - We encouraged 51 people to join our re-useable coffee mug scheme in the first month (infancy stage),
 - We have encouraged our coffee customers to reuse 22200 cardboard coffee mug sleeves
 - We have achieved a 71.75% reduction in the cost of purchasing condiments demonstrating the reduction in consumption and a move to promoting a healthier lifestyle. It also demonstrates a reduction in the individual sachets that would have been used in the past and a move to preventing waste to landfill.
 - 251.5kg of unused food to food banks, 2232 tonnes prevented from going landfill through material recycling

The future

Lessons learned

- The need to make making healthy eating and growing foods fun by using what has been grown in a fun way for example: recipes to use courgettes in muffins
- The need to understand that Fairtrade and ethical purchasing can also include LOAF (Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly, Fairly traded.)
- To raise awareness and reduce the number of miles a product travels to its final destination. Reduce this and we can help reduce the CO2 emissions.
- The need to monitor progress and continually improve results.
- To promote further cohesive approaches involving different University areas like the crèche, sports facilities, catering etc. in order to make it easier for individuals to live a healthy sustainable lifestyle

Sharing your project

The project's successes have been shared internally through all-staff emails and through display materials at each of the food and drink stations on all campuses. Information is also shared through the sustainability plans that are presented to the Sustainability committee on an annual basis. Monitoring of the actions in the sustainability actions these takes place on a quarterly basis

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

'I would be delighted if the University were to win a Green Gown Award. Such a prestigious accolade would acknowledge our commitment to sustainability as one of our core values and most importantly it would celebrate the excellent work and inspiring work of colleagues and students across the University's campuses.'

Professor Medwin Hughes, DL Vice-Chancellor University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Further information

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