

5 A DAY • Fruit on Desks
• Growing Fruit and
Vegetables • Food
Co-operatives • Mobile
Fruit & Vegetable Vans

Fruit on Desks



NORTH WEST FOOD & HEALTH
TASK FORCE



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Connecting **Farming** and **Food** in England's Northwest

What is a Fruit on Desk Scheme?

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Selling fruit on a reception desk of a workplace, leisure centre, health centre or dentist surgery or within offices is a way of drawing attention to important health messages and improving access to fruit as snacks. To achieve the 5 A DAY targets most people need to eat fruit and/or vegetables in between meals¹

The fruit on front desk scheme is a simple, sustainable way of improving local people's health by achieving the access, availability and affordability targets of the 5 A DAY programme.



How does it work?

• Find a wholesaler

The project requires the support of one or more reliable wholesalers or retailers of fruit who is willing to deliver to the proposed sites. This could be a community fruit and vegetable co-op, a community mobile fruit and vegetable van or a local fruit and vegetable retailer or wholesaler.

• Get managers interested

The project co-ordinator needs to engage the support of senior managers within the organisation by demonstrating the health benefits to staff and clients and the simplicity of running such a scheme.

• Involve the Reception/Administration staff

Reception staff or administration staff need to be involved in discussions about how the scheme should work as they will have principle responsibility for ordering and managing the scheme in their area. Discussions with staff are needed to inform them of the scheme and identify where they feel the fruit would be most visible and accessible. Identify someone who can be the local co-ordinator for the scheme who will take responsibility for ordering the fruit and dealing with the money.

How often is the fruit delivered?

• Preparing for selling fruit

Notify staff and visitors that the scheme is starting. You may want to find out from staff and visitors what fruits they would prefer.

Clearly display signs about the scheme and the cost of the fruit. You should aim to keep the fruit costs to 15p/item

You will need some basic equipment:

- a large basket to display the fruit
- a box to collect cash.
- A resource dispenser for promotional 5 A DAY literature
- a cashbox for safe storage of money until the wholesaler can be paid.
- Display signs

How often is fruit delivered?

This will depend on your supplier but should be 1-2 times/week depending on sales. The local co-ordinator will need to identify a cool storage space for the fruit that can not initially be displayed.

The basket of fruit should be topped up at least once/day and more frequently if sales are high.

The local co-ordinator liaises with the fruit supplier to order fruit on a regular standing order.

The local co-ordinator will need to know how much notice a supplier needs of changes in orders.

You may need to decide how much fruit each individual can buy initially. Limiting sales in the early days until you get your ordering right will allow everybody the opportunity to buy.



How is the fruit paid for?

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The project concept is simple. A small set up fund is needed. The first week of fruit is provided from this fund. This initial set up cost is given to the organisation so that there is always money to order the fruit in advance and no risk to the organisation at the start.

The initial set up cost is required to cover equipment costs and this first order of fruit. The first order provides 3 pieces of fruit for each member of staff and/or anticipated number of visitors. Providing this first order gives the co-ordinator time to identify how sales are going over a week and determine a pattern for ordering in the future. These costs are approximately £26/office of 40 employees.

Staff and visitors pay the cost price for the fruit.(15p) This money is then used to continue to buy fruit after the initial set up period. Experience from projects in the NW show average sales for an office of 40 people are approximately £10/week. You may choose to arrange for a fixed price for fruit with the supplier (e.g. x pieces of fruit at 15p). This simplifies the invoicing systems and amount of work for staff.

The local co-ordinators is accountable for paying invoices and keeping track of takings. Setting up a simple "money in money out" record will help you keep account of the amount of fruit sold and the wastage levels. Delivery notes should be kept in order to trace any fruit supply.

Arrangements for payments are made directly with the supplier. To reduce the amount of cash held at the point of sale the supplier can be paid directly with cash or an accounting system can be agreed with the organisation so that money is paid into the organisation and the supplier can directly invoice that organisation for payment.

What do I need to know about fruit handling and quality issues?

Fruit is a perishable product that needs to be kept correctly. All fruit will deteriorate if kept too warm; bananas will be affected by frost.

Ideally keep the majority of the fruit in a cool place and top up supplies on sale on a regular basis. People should always be advised to wash fruit they have bought if it has an edible skin.

The advice from the Food Standards agency is:

'It's a good idea to wash fruit and vegetables before you eat them to ensure that they are clean, and that bacteria that might be on the outside are removed.'

The quality of the fruit delivered should be checked at each delivery. It is important to maintain the quality of the fruit from your supplier. Change the supplier if quality can not be maintained .

How much time will it involve?

How much time will it involve for the local co-ordinator?

The amount of time involved was seen as the main barrier to running a scheme when the projects started in the North West. In practice this has not been an issue.

It only takes a few minutes/week to administer the scheme provided a good partnership is built with the fruit supplier and the supplier is prepared to deliver fruit and be paid on delivery. The sales of fruit need to be monitored against the money collected to ensure staff and visitors are paying for the fruit.



Who uses the Fruit on Desk Scheme?

The schemes have proved popular with staff and visitors. The schemes also are popular with older people visiting health centres as they can buy small numbers of items at a time rather than large quantities from supermarkets. Staff attempting to lose weight welcome the scheme as it reduces the temptation of other snack food.

However the scheme relies on the enthusiasm of the staff involved to make it work well. The local co-ordinator needs to understand and support the aims of the scheme and has a positive marketing role in encouraging staff and visitors to buy the fruit by ensuring the fruit basket always looks well stocked with good quality fruit and the fruit is well advertised.

Regular supplies of promotional 5 A DAY literature should be displayed with the fruit to reinforce the key messages. It is important that the price of the fruit is kept at the cost price and that the organisation does not see the scheme as a way of making a profit.

Acknowledgements

Comments from users of the scheme include:

"This is the only place to buy fresh, cheap fruit in the area"

"All ages are buying fruit from our scheme"

"Teachers using the centre to buy fruit for her class"

"There are no bad points to this scheme, its going better than anyone could have imagined"

References :

1: PAL Ashfield-Watt, AA Welch et al Is 'five a day' an effective way of increasing fruit and vegetable intake? Public Health Nutrition 2004 7 (2) 257-261

2: <http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/asksam/healthydiet/fruitandveg/#A218470>

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In North Liverpool, where the 5 A DAY Community initiative helped set up 12 Fruit on Desk Schemes, 50,920 pieces of fruit were sold over the 2 year life of the project. All the schemes continue to run.



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