

Ready, Steady, Cook – Family Healthy Cooking Programme



Ready, Steady, Cook is a long-running family cooking and healthy eating programme, now in its **fifth consecutive year**, delivered weekly at the community centre. The programme targets families with children from **Nursery to Year 4**, with **ten children and their parents** invited to participate each week. (Year 5 and Year 6 pupils do not attend, as they already take on leadership and volunteering roles within the Good Food Café based at the same venue.)

Across an academic year, this equates to approximately:

- **30 weekly sessions**
- **300 child places and 300 parent places annually**
- **Over 1,500 child–parent participations** across five years

Inclusive design and confidence-building approach

Parents arrive first and are welcomed with tea or coffee, creating an informal, non-judgemental space for social connection and peer support. Children are then brought to the centre to join their parents, reinforcing the programme’s emphasis on **learning together as a family**.

Sessions are deliberately designed to remove barriers commonly associated with cooking confidence. For example, during a recent session focused on **healthy oat cookies**, weighing scales were not used. Instead, ingredients were measured using spoons (e.g. *8 spoons of oats, 4 spoons of flour*), enabling families to replicate the recipe easily at home without specialist equipment. Each parent–child pair worked collaboratively using their own bowl and utensils, producing **six cookies per family**. The cookies were baked on site, followed by shared tasting and group discussion.

This practical approach directly supports:

- healthy eating habits
- basic numeracy and procedural skills
- confidence and independence in food preparation
- positive parent–child interaction

Parents regularly request copies of recipes, and informal follow-up indicates that a **significant proportion recreate the recipes at home**, often adapting them by adding fruit, vegetables, or alternative ingredients to suit family preferences and dietary needs.

Over the five years, families have prepared a range of **low-cost, nutritious foods**, including:

- cheese wheels
- homemade sausage rolls
- pizza wheels with vegetable toppings
- soups and simple baked goods

All recipes are designed to be affordable, repeatable, and aligned with healthy eating guidance.

Impact on families

Consistent qualitative feedback demonstrates positive outcomes for both children and parents, including increased willingness to try new foods, improved parental confidence, and strengthened family relationships through shared activity.

Indicative parent feedback includes:

- *“Oh my God, I made them at home and all the other kids loved them as well, I can’t believe how easy that was.”*
- *“I can’t get my child to try new things, but he loved doing this. Thank you so much.”*
- *“It’s the first time I’ve cooked properly with my child, now he asks to help at home.”*

Soup and Song – Intergenerational Healthy Eating Programme

Running alongside Ready, Steady, Cook for the same five-year period is **Soup and Song**, a structured **six-week programme** aimed at older primary pupils and their families. Each programme cohort includes **8 Year 4 children and their parents**, equating to approximately **48 family places per year**.

The programme explicitly links **healthy food education** to the **Curriculum for Wales**, particularly the **four purposes**, with a focus on developing learners who are:

- healthy, confident individuals
- ethical, informed citizens
- effective communicators
- ambitious, capable learners

Each session begins with a short discussion with parents on:

- the importance of healthy, affordable food
- how food preparation supports learning and wellbeing
- practical strategies for teaching children to safely chop vegetables
- the value of conversation and relationship-building during shared tasks

Parents and children then prepare soup together from fresh ingredients. The soup is served to **older members of the local community**, followed by shared singing, creating meaningful **intergenerational connection** and tackling social isolation. Fresh bread is often baked to accompany the soup, and sessions frequently include a simple, healthy pudding.

The programme was initially supported through **Warmer Spaces funding**, enabling families to access a warm, welcoming environment while learning practical skills. During one funded phase, families who completed all six weeks were given **soup makers**, removing a further barrier to continuing healthy cooking at home.

Follow-up feedback indicated that:

- many families continued making soup at home
- ingredients were often sourced from **Big Bocs Bwyd**, reinforcing food affordability
- children showed increased confidence with vegetables and food preparation

Parents commented:

- *“We still make soup every week, it’s cheap, filling, and my child actually eats vegetables now.”*
- *“My child loved serving the older people. He still talks about it.”*
- *“Having the soup maker made all the difference, it became part of our routine.”*

Summary of Evidence

Across both programmes, delivery over five years has engaged **hundreds of families**, supporting:

- healthier eating habits
- increased parental confidence and skills
- stronger parent–child relationships
- intergenerational community connection
- alignment with national curriculum and wellbeing priorities

These programmes demonstrate how **low-cost, community-based food interventions**, when delivered consistently and relationally, can generate sustained impact for families experiencing food poverty.