

# **'We need to survive': Integrating Social Enterprises within Community Food Initiatives**

Tonner, Andrea, Wilson, Juliette, Gordon, Katy, Shaw, Eleanor

*University of Strathclyde*

In this paper we examine the impacts of social enterprise on individual and community health and well-being. We focus on community food initiatives and explore how longstanding non-profit models in the community food sector are integrating profit bearing social enterprise within their structures. We consider the impact of these changes on the social determinants of health and the influence of structure on health outcomes.

There is a well-established need to address health inequalities by looking at social factors that can impact health. Community-led initiatives have developed as a means to tackle the wider social determinants of health using community based action. Many such initiatives are reliant on uncertain funding for survival leading many to integrate profit generating social enterprise activities within their portfolios.

This study uses an interpretive qualitative approach working with two community food social enterprises. We find that social enterprises can impact all layers of the social determinants of health model but that there is greater impact on individual lifestyle factors and social and community networks. Impact on socio-economic, cultural and environmental inequalities is more constrained. We present evidence of a range of structural factors which enable and constrain impact at all levels.

This study builds understanding on the role of social enterprises as a key way for individuals and communities to work together to build their capabilities and resilience when facing health inequalities. Building upon previous work, it provides insight into the practices, limitations and challenges of those engaged in encouraging and supporting behavioural changes. The paper contributes to a deeper insight of the use, motivation and understanding of social enterprise as an operating model by community food initiatives. It provides evidence of the impact of such social enterprises on the social determinants of health.