

# Maymessy CIC an empowering cookery school.

Social impact report 2017-2019.



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**Maymessy**  
Where good grub grows

# What we do, Where we are.

Maymessy is the only empowering cookery school in Oxfordshire to support disadvantaged groups gain greater life skills and improve their wellbeing. Maymessy has supported 8 charities 2017-2019. And over 300 disadvantaged young people.

It's not cordon bleu, it's about realistic cookery and sharing what you have cooked. Learning these skills at Maymessy can be hugely empowering. Some of our clients have never shared a meal before so at Maymessy the communal aspects of enjoying food together are just as important as preparing it. Maymessy has a large impact on the lives of young people by providing opportunities to;

- 🍴 **develop skills in collaboration and communication**
- 🍴 **build self-esteem**
- 🍴 **enjoy the outdoor shared garden**
- 🍴 **be active.**

## Where we are

Maymessy is located in 11 acres of countryside at West Challow near Wantage, Oxfordshire, overlooking the beautiful Vale of the White Horse. Set up as a social enterprise, it was launched in 2017 by Anna Richards, a qualified teacher and life coach practitioner with nutritional accreditation from Leiths, the renowned London cookery school.

Maymessy has turned a disused cow shed into a beautiful barn which houses the cookery school. It is fitted out with state-of-the-art equipment including ovens and hobs from Miele: six cooking stations can be used by up to 12 children at a time.

There is also a vegetable garden and recently-planted orchard. Clients help with digging, sowing seed and harvesting crops - they can experience the whole chain from planting to plate.


Our name: in his poem "The Starlight Night", Gerard Manley Hopkins uses the phrase "May-mess, like on orchard boughs" to illustrate the visual effect of starlight on fruit-tree blossom in the springtime. Maymessy blends the springiness of being outside in the orchard with the joy of making a mess in the kitchen!



# Creating an empowering cookery school.



Maymessy provides a strong community where young people can gain greater self esteem and develop positive decisions. Maymessy strengthens the local community because it supports young people who feel marginalised, but also their parents and siblings.

 There are an estimated 114,300 people living with a disability or impairment in Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire Uncovered.

FAAAZE is a local youth group supporting young people with additional needs. The group comes to Maymessy and enjoys cooking, time outside and some sport. Much of the time is to give the young people confidence, ability to choose activities they enjoy and discover new hobbies and friends.

The mother of one boy with autism said:

**“Thank you for giving him a brilliant afternoon. He does not talk much at all, but came home smiling and told me about the muffin he made.”**



## Case study - Yellow Submarine

Yellow Submarine is an Oxford-based charity supporting people with learning difficulties and autism. Maymessy has held four cookery camps during 2018 and 2019 for some 45 people with autism and additional needs.

For the participants from Yellow Submarine, Maymessy arranged cookery classes, yoga and time in the vegetable garden: this encouraged the young people to gain life skills and promoted friendships through making delicious recipes and through shared interests.

The young people acquired meaningful collaboration and communication skills as well as food skills.

**“The kids all had the best time!! It’s so rare to see them all so engrossed in something!”**

Lead worker at Yellow Submarine July 2019.



# Message from me.

“I have always wanted to set up an ethical business and as I turned 40 with twin girls in Primary School, it was the right time for us to move out of London and head to the Oxfordshire countryside.”



Maymessy has moved into its third year. We are proud to have held a festival in support of young carers to celebrate our first birthday. We have been on BBC Oxford Radio with Dilber and Lubna who are now firm new friends from the women's group at Refugee Resource. We have had the intelligent and progressive Forward Institute over for dinner and our supportive local MP Ed Vaizey visit. We are thrilled to have Katie Jones with Wellness in Schools train here.

The festival for **200** people and Refugee cultural picnic for 96 in June 2019 has definitely been a highlight.

A more flexible structure than a charity, the social enterprise structure allows the business to work with a variety of different charities and youth groups in the local area. One example of this is being able to support the charity Refugee Resource in 2019.

Since I have arrived in Oxfordshire, I have received incredible support from OXLEP (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) and OBS (Oxford Business Support) who helped me set up a social enterprise through complimentary courses, networking and mentor support. I also embarked on a crowdfunding campaign to purchase Miele ovens and hobs and an elaborate extraction system in the kitchen. Many locals and businesses have supported Maymessy and I am truly grateful for their kindness.”

None of this would be possible without renting barn space out for events. Profits get ploughed back into the social enterprise. These have included a prefects first camping trip by Wellington College in June 2019.

**“We chose to come to Maymessy because we really believe in their vision and values and it's great to be able to show the pupils how to set up a social enterprise, which really has meaningful impact in a community...”**

...This is one of the main ways we try to develop leadership at Wellington. There is so much space at Maymessy with a tennis court, lots of fields, covered outdoor areas and a huge fire pit. This was meant that we were able to do lots of interactive leadership activities whether it was raining or we were in sunshine and in the breaks the pupils could play football and variations of cricket, as well as reviving other childhood games together.

In the evening, we loved chatting together round the fire about dreams and values, as well as toasting marshmallows for smores and drinking hot chocolate.”

Mrs Granville Chapman, Deputy Head (Teaching Staff Performance and Development) at Wellington College.

We have also had scholars cookery trip from St Hugh's School; pop up dinner parties, special birthdays/ parties, corporate days away, business network events as well as retreats and yoga which will help make Maymessy financially sustainable.

“It's the most fabulous location and the most fantastic yoga session I have ever had.” A yoga client.

Maymessy would not function without the incredible chefs and volunteers I have worked with. Maia and Mariella are wonderful, talented chefs. Kathleen is a hardworking volunteer, In particular, thank you to Henry who has volunteered to write this report.

Thank you.



# Provide local schools and charities systems to deliver food education.

Our students often come with a fear of failure. We can overcome it by showing them how to follow a recipe. But we try not to be over-disciplined, and encourage them to use their own initiative to produce a delicious meal for sharing with others. They consequently feel proud of their achievements in the kitchen.

## Case study Mulberry Bush

We had 10 children who came for a cookery class in 2018;

'Children arrive at Mulberry Bush from environments of family breakdown, high anxiety and trauma.' The young people came with 1:1 staff ratio and we had an enjoyable morning cooking and eating together.

A teacher who brought them said "I rarely see them so on task."

**"We had a lovely fun and funny day making meringues with the children and their support staff."**

Maia chef at Maymessy.

We also provide local schools like Childrey Primary with nutritious cookery classes.

**"This was the best trip I have ever been on"**

Ella from Childrey Primary



# Cooking classes with inspiring chefs.

Maymessy has supported young carers from Faringdon as well as having groups over from the charity Be Free Young Carers. In May 2018, to celebrate its first birthday and raise money for Be Free, Maymessy held a family fun day for local residents. With over 200 children and parents, it was a sell-out event. Activities included a cake competition, helter skelter, rock choir, ice cream and candy.

## Case study Be Free Young Carers

Be Free YC is the only organisation in the county offering support to people aged between 8 and 24 who are helping to care for a family member. Maymessy cookery school provides nutritionists and chefs to show young carers how to look after their families and those who are ill.

It also provides expert knowledge and enhances decision-making skills. It enables young carers to have choices about which ingredients to use, and why certain foods are more healthy or beneficial to physical or mental illnesses. Workshop participants also learn about cooking with a limited budget and time.

Maymessy has found that these workshops increase young carers' self-sufficiency and self-esteem. Carly Forkner from Be Free YC described the workshops as "absolutely fabulous," and confirmed that the participants came away with new skills and increased confidence, as well as being proud of their achievements.

She said: "The young people who attended were aged between 8 and 17, yet the workshops were tailored wonderfully to meet the needs and skills of every single child." This made them feel "valued and important."

## Abingdon Foyer at Maymessy

Abingdon Foyer is part of Stonewater, a social housing provider. Its foyer in the centre of Abingdon, south of Oxford, provides supported accommodation to vulnerable people aged 16-30.

Maymessy organised a cookery class to enable them to prepare meals and look after themselves. We cooked a healthy breakfast with wholemeal pancakes and homemade granola. We would like to have them back for lunch and dinner cookery classes, but this is funding-dependent.


A Stonewater manager described the class as "cooking skills in a therapeutic environment". One of the trainees was equally enthusiastic:


**"We all had a great time at Maymessy. Anna was patient and kind, and we cooked food we had never cooked before which was fun and it tasted good."**



# Assist those from low-income families to cook healthy food on a budget.

Maymessy helps those living in poverty by cooking realistic recipes on a budget with seasonal vegetables.

 15 neighbourhoods in Oxfordshire are in the 20% most deprived in England

 One in four young people live in poverty in areas like Blackbird Leys, Oxfordshire uncovered.

## Case Study (YoCO)

Youth Challenge Oxfordshire (YoCO) is an Oxfordshire charity supporting young people (aged 14-21) to develop resilience and confidence so that they can overcome the problems that they face during teenage years. The young people may volunteer for a life-changing trip to the Nasio Trust charity in Western Kenya for 10 days to support 400 HIV orphans.

*“a truly wonderful experience, cooking and sharing together a curry lunch with naan bread, and banana cakes for pudding.”*

Maymessy has hosted three visits from the YoCO groups in Blackbird Leys (Oxford), Berinsfield and Faringdon to help them prepare for their trip to Africa.

YoCO's director, Christine Douglas commented: “On each occasion the teamwork and collaboration required from the group was very empowering for them before they make their journey to Kenya.” Many of the young people also said they only ate take-aways, and so Maymessy talks about choices. We make curries - like a take-away but healthier, cheaper and tastier.





# Supporting refugee families to promote social integration.

## Skill share events and collaboration with Refugee Resource and Wellington College.

Maymessy has been honoured to be part of this collaboration. I applied for a High Sheriff grant from Oxford Community Fund and have been so pleased to have been successful so we could bring together these two groups which otherwise would probably never have met.

Refugee Resource is an Oxford-based charity which provides practical support to those who have suffered trauma or loss due experiences in the countries of origin, or their journey here, or in the UK. Some are victims of trafficking or modern slavery. In 2018 Refugee Resource worked with over 350 people from 43 different countries, providing counselling, mentoring, advocacy and advice.



**“I like the company of the students. Before, I was scared of teenage boys especially on the bus but now I feel safer and happier.”** Woman refugee

The Berkshire-based independent school Wellington College sent a group of students and teachers to collaborate and share cookery skills with 30 women from Refugee Resource. Two skill-sharing workshops were held at Maymessy in January and February 2019.

Italian chef Mariella Bliss taught two groups how to make authentic Italian pizza, while 30 women from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and many other countries demonstrated how to make Eid cookies.

Fatou Ceesay from Refugee Resource described the visit to Maymessy as an exciting experience for the women.

**“It empowers them to showcase their skills and boosts their confidence.”**

Following these workshops, many of the women said they would like to return to Maymessy with their families to have a cultural picnic at the cookery school and fields by Maymessy which we had in June 2019 to celebrate Refugee Week.



# Improve the wellbeing of families.

An overall goal of Maymessy is to support larger communities, whole charities, schools and youth groups in the local area to have greater wellbeing, reduce loneliness by being wholly inclusive by sharing the beautiful space, fields, views and cookery school, making Maymessy an inclusive hub.

👤 **“Young or old, loneliness doesn’t discriminate.” Jo Cox**

👤 **50% of disabled people will be lonely on any given day. (Sense)**

👤 **43% of 17 – 25 year olds using Action for Children services experienced problems with loneliness. (Action for Children).**

In June 2019 (during Refugee Week), Maymessy hosted nearly 100 parents and children of refugee families from the charity Refugee Resource to a family fun day. The “cultural picnic” included sharing food from all over the world, Horatio the horse, music, henna painting and drumming. The tug of war was, of course, won by the women!

Wellington College students wanted to help and decided to raise funds to hire transport to take the families to Maymessy. The refugee women also raised funds through sales of their cookbook “Come to our Table”. Local businesses like Dalya drinks, Queens Arms, Ben and Jerry’s, Mariella Bliss were so generous.

Youth Challenge Oxfordshire hosted their annual party for Trustees and benefactors here at Maymessy in January 2019.

The young people from Faringdon learnt how to make canapés, organise a ‘posh’ drinks party, send out invites and waitress at the event where a number of local dignitaries attended like the Mayor of Faringdon and High Sheriff as well as the Rotary and Council. It was attended by over 50 people and you can watch the video on Maymessy website.

We have hosted Seesaw a bereavement charity and Refugee Resource annual work away day. We are thrilled to host Wantage breakfast club as well as Tourism SE events. We look forward to having the impressive ROBIN - networking group over in September 2019. We continue to look to work with more local charities and youth groups and would love you to get in touch. We have the space to hold annual fun away days as well as more focused cookery classes for 12.

## Volunteering and work experience at Maymessy

We are always on the look out for like-minded people to come and work here.

**“I volunteered to help because I wanted to help share my love of (and the importance of) good food with people who may have found it difficult on their own.” Holly N aged 19**



# The funding recipe:

Maymessy is set up as a community interest company, its income-generating activities are expressly designed to pay for its social purpose.

“I am honoured to be a director of Maymessy and take the responsibility seriously. I have already committed to seek out ways of working with Anna and the other directors to increase revenue and impact to further the good work that Maymessy does over the next financial year.” **Andrea Hartley** Director

For their generous donations and grants, Maymessy would like to thank:

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Tesco  
Waitrose

Big Lottery  
Doris Field Charitable Trust  
Schuh Trust  
Cala homes  
Oldhurst Trust  
The Pharsalia Charitable Trust.

We continue to look for like-minded people to bring our vision to fruition.

In order to grow, we are reaching out to local businesses, philanthropic individuals and charitable trusts to take Maymessy from a successful start up company to one that is able to scale up and support more disadvantaged groups.

[www.maymessy.com/funding](http://www.maymessy.com/funding)

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