

CASE STUDY

The BridgeLink Community Centre, on the Ivybridge Estate (Hounslow)

As part of TRiFOCAL's community engagement using the 'Small Change, Big Difference' campaign, a series of four workshops focusing on food waste prevention, food waste recycling and healthy and sustainable eating were delivered by Groundwork London. During October and November 2018, workshops were run over 4 consecutive weeks at the BridgeLink Community Centre in Hounslow.

Highlights:

- Improvements in knowledge, attitude and behaviour were seen around healthy and sustainable eating, which may have been linked to the motivation for attending the workshops.
- There was evidence that participants were more inspired to reduce their food waste after the workshops, but only for specific motivations e.g. 'feelings of guilt when I throw food away that could have been eaten'.
- After the workshops, participants were using the general rubbish bin less frequently for food disposal, likely due to an overall reduction in food waste.

Background

The BridgeLink Community Centre is based in a large multi ethnic estate in one of the 10% most deprived areas of England. The Centre provides education courses, a youth club, the 'Ours Futures' personal development programme, advice sessions on welfare, benefits, debt, careers advice, etc.

Workshop participants were a small group of mixed ability individuals, some with learning difficulties. Within the group, two participants had good pre-existing knowledge of food waste recycling and were motivated to learn about healthy and sustainable eating and food waste prevention, whilst the others had no previous training on the topics.

Objectives

The three key messages of the workshops were:

1. **Preventing avoidable food waste**
2. **Recycling food waste**
3. **Eating healthy and sustainable foods**

The specific objectives of the workshops were for participants to: increase their knowledge of the key messages, adopt positive attitudes and behaviours around the key messages; and, spread their learnings to wider members of the community. The workshops worked well with what the Centre currently offers to its members.

Activities

The workshops were designed to take participants on a food journey from shopping to disposal, encompassing shopping habits, food storage and dates, cooking healthy and sustainable food [Figure 1], using left-overs, and recycling food waste¹. They were designed to be highly interactive and encouraged the sharing of ideas and tips. This enthusiasm to share tips was used as an indicator of workshop success, as it could be reasonably assumed workshops were useful if participants subsequently shared tips with others.



Figure 1 - A healthy and sustainable meal cooked by workshop participants

Results

The objectives of the workshops were assessed using a combination of verbal feedback from group facilitators, participant feedback provided in pre- and post-intervention surveys (completed during the 1st and 4th workshops) and additional evidence from other community workshop focus groups (where relevant).

In total eight participants completed the pre- and post-intervention surveys, however, only six completed both. The results focus on comparative changes in the responses from participants who completed both surveys.

Healthy and sustainable eating

Prior knowledge of healthy and sustainable eating was mixed and improved following the workshops. The largest improvements were seen in the number of participants who understood that frozen vegetables are just as healthy as fresh vegetables (increasing from 4/6 in the pre-intervention survey to 6/6 in the post-intervention survey) and those who recognised that reducing meat consumption is good for the environment (increasing from 3/6 in the pre-intervention survey to 5/6 in the post-intervention survey). However, participants appeared confused by the question on fibre content as correct answers decreased from 3/6 in the pre-intervention survey to 1/6 in the post-intervention survey.

After the workshops, a small but positive shift in attitude can be seen. When asked whether they would share tips from the workshops, three of the five respondents stated they were 'somewhat' or 'very' likely to share tips on healthy and sustainable eating, including for example 'freezing bananas to use for smoothies'. Furthermore, respondents 'always' or 'often' considered the calorie content of food, and whether it was local or in season (2/6 increasing from 0/6 in the pre-intervention survey).

Overall, participants reported small positive behaviour changes after the workshops. A positive behaviour change was seen in four of the five healthy and sustainable eating categories (eating more fruit and veg, having a meat-free day, eating more pulses, consuming less high sugar foods/drinks) and one remained the same (eating processed meat). The largest improvements in behaviour were an increase in the average number of days in a 14-day period that participants had 'meat free-days' (from one to three days) and a reduction in the average number of days that participants ate or drank something high in sugar (from four to two days).

¹ See accompanying [Fact Sheet](#) for comprehensive list of workshop activities and content.

Food waste prevention

Participants had good knowledge of food date labels prior to the workshop with little change observed in the post-intervention survey. 4/6 participants understood what the 'use-by date' meant (both surveys) and 4/6 participants (increasing from 3/6 in the pre-intervention survey) understood the meaning of 'best before'.

There was evidence that participants were more inspired to reduce their food waste after the workshops, but only for specific motivations. The number of participants marking 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' against the following food waste prevention drivers increased: 'the possibility of saving money' (increasing 1/5 to 4/5); 'feelings of guilt when I throw food away that could have been eaten' (2/5 to 5/5); and 'people going hungry in the UK and around the world' (3/5 to 5/5).

Participants' behaviour in relation to their shopping habits appeared to exhibit a slight negative change. After the workshops, participants used fewer of the listed planning methods², with 2/6 participants in the post-intervention survey stating that they used none of the methods as opposed to 0/6 in the pre-intervention survey. It should be noted however that only three of the six individuals who completed the post-intervention survey attended the workshop focusing on shopping habits and therefore it would be unrealistic to expect any change in knowledge, behaviour and attitude in this area for these individuals.

Food waste recycling

The survey results suggest a change in the use of food waste collection services. However, it is unclear whether the change is positive or negative. In the pre-intervention survey, two out of the three participants that reported having a food waste collection service stated that they used their caddy and put only a minimal amount of food in general waste. In the post-intervention survey, one of these participants reported using the caddy for certain food types and another reported using the caddy irregularly or for a small amount. Whilst this may be interpreted as a negative behaviour change, it is possible that by using food waste reduction techniques the participants therefore had less need to use their food caddies.

There was a considerable reduction in the frequency that participants put food waste in their general waste bin after the workshops. A clear reduction was seen in the number of participants that 'always or 'often' used their general waste for fruit and vegetable peelings (5/6 in the pre-intervention survey to 1/6 in the post-intervention survey), used tea bags (6/6 to 2/6), bakery items (6/6 to 4/6), mouldy/gone-off food (6/6 to 4/6) or unopened food (5/6 to 3/6). For other categories, behaviour remained similar. Furthermore, since only two participants in the post-intervention survey reported having a food waste collection service, it seems likely that the reduction in use of the general bin for food waste is due to a reduction in overall food waste levels.

Challenges and considerations

When considering facilitation, one challenge relates to the layout of the Community Centre which had a very small kitchen, separated from the main room by an internal window. This meant participants could see demonstrations, but a physical barrier meant they were less engaged, and the lack of space meant only some could get involved in the cooking.

In addition, there were also challenges with workshop timing. Some elements such as filling in the survey, took more time as those with learning difficulties needed extra support. However, support workers helped with facilitation, and those without learning difficulties also enjoyed assisting others.

Finally, there was a significant challenge in determining workshop impact due to fluctuating attendance levels across the four workshops. Although six individuals attended both the 1st and 4th workshop (completing both pre- and post-intervention surveys), only three of them attended the 2nd workshop and

² A full list of planning methods can be seen on the surveys at: <http://resources.trifocal.eu.com/resources/evaluation-case-studies-communities/>

two of them attended the 3rd workshop. Therefore, results showing significant improvements or reductions in knowledge, behaviour and attitudes related to food waste prevention (workshop two) and healthy and sustainable eating (workshop three) may not have been significantly influenced by the workshops themselves. In fact, it may be that correct answers were influenced by a final review of all topics which occurred in the 4th workshop preceding the post-intervention survey.

Conclusions and recommendations

The workshops met their objectives in the area of healthy and sustainable eating and food waste prevention, and partially met them in food waste recycling; however, due to fluctuating attendance levels across the workshops caution should be taken in attributing observed improvements to the workshops themselves.

Nevertheless, participants showed good increases in knowledge of healthy and sustainable eating as well as small positive shifts in attitude and behaviour. The largest behaviour changes seen were an increase in the number of meat-free days participants said they had, and a decrease in consumption of food/drink high in sugar. The progress made on this topic may in part be linked to participant motivations to sign up to the workshops, with two participants expressing an interest in increasing their knowledge of healthy eating. In addition, evidence in the qualitative feedback showed this topic to be the most successful part of the workshop, as participants were keen to share their learnings on recipes, smoothie making and substitutes for meat.

Participants already had good knowledge of food date labelling and there was evidence that the workshops increased their motivation to reduce food waste, which was focused around financial incentives, others going hungry and feelings of guilt for throwing away food. Much of the evidence for behaviour change in relation to shopping, food storage and the use of leftovers was mixed or slightly negative. However, there were large reductions in the number of participants using their general waste for food items. Whilst this is usually an indication of food waste recycling, only two participants reported having a food waste collection service/bin in the post-intervention survey (a slight reduction from the pre-intervention survey). Therefore, it could be deduced that the behaviour change did not occur for disposal but rather for the prevention of food waste in the first place. This suggests the group presented limited potential for behaviour change in food waste recycling and greater effects may have occurred if participants had the ability to recycle food in their homes.

Future workshops should consider the practical implications of the work space available ways of getting participants further involved in the cooking. In addition, extra time should be planned in when working with those with learning difficulties. This learning influenced subsequent workshops delivered as part of TRiFOCAL; the booking and timing of sessions was reviewed against the needs of the groups recruited.