

# CASE STUDY

## Northend Children's Wellbeing Centre (Bexley)

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. Workshops were run at Bexley Northend Children's Wellbeing Centre for a small group of parents over 4 consecutive weeks in June and July 2018.

### Highlights:

- Knowledge and attitudes around sustainable eating improved following the workshops.
- The group bonded well and enjoyed 'sharing lots of ideas' and taking part in interactive discussions.

### Background

Northend Children's Wellbeing Centre based in the heart of Bexley offers a wide range of services to local families.

The group participating in the Small Change Big Difference workshops consisted of seven parents, six of whom had good attendance at the workshops. The parents had received no prior training on the workshop topics and their main motivation for attending was to learn how to save money on food<sup>1</sup> and eat more healthily.

Working with the centre, all sessions were promoted through the centre's network, posters and leaflets. Parents were recruited from Children's Centres across Bexley, therefore most did not know each other prior to the workshops. The group represented a mix of ethnicities, and all participants had young children and were of similar age (20's to 30's).

### 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.

### 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, using left-overs, and recycling food waste<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Workshops were advertised as potentially leading to savings of up to £70 per month for participants. This figure is based on data from WRAP's Love Food Hate Waste campaign: <https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/article/it-all-adds>

<sup>2</sup> See accompanying [Fact Sheet](#) for comprehensive list of workshop activities and content.

Workshop content was tailored to ensure that it was relevant to the group composition. Since the participants were all parents, recipes were designed to suit the whole household. A sweet potato curry recipe for example, could be portioned off for children and spice added for adults later.

The workshops were also designed to be highly interactive and encouraged the sharing of ideas and tips. It was this enthusiasm to share tips which was used as an indicator of workshop success, as it could be reasonably assumed that workshops were useful if participants subsequently shared tips with others.

## 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 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> workshops) and additional evidence from other community workshop focus groups (where relevant).

In total seven participants completed the pre-intervention survey and five completed the post-intervention survey. The results focus on comparative changes in the responses from participants who completed both.

Overall results showed that participants were enthusiastic about the workshops. This appears to have contributed to more successful outcomes in the subject areas which predominantly motivated initial attendance: reducing food waste to save money and healthy eating (the sustainability aspect of healthy eating was not mentioned in initial motivations for attendance).

### *Food waste prevention*

Despite no prior training, participants demonstrated good pre-existing knowledge of food waste reduction; nevertheless, this improved following the workshops. The pre-intervention survey showed that participants already had excellent knowledge of food labels; 7/7 correctly defined the 'use by date' and 5/7 correctly defined the 'best before date'. This was higher than the pre-intervention survey results for all TRiFOCAL community groups where 51% and 61% gave correct answers for 'use by date' and 'best before date' respectively. Despite a high knowledge baseline, new learning from participation on the workshops was evident; in the post-intervention survey, participants gave specific food waste reduction tips – rather than using general statements – that they would share in future, such as 'separating bananas from other fruits'.

There were indications that positive attitudes towards preventing food waste were reinforced. The pre-intervention survey showed that at least half of the group were driven by the listed social, financial and environmental factors<sup>3</sup> to reduce food waste 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount'. The post-intervention survey showed that this attitude remained positive as all five participants said it was 'very likely' that they would share tips in future, 4/5 specifically mentioning food waste reduction.

There was not enough evidence to show changes in food waste prevention and reduction behaviours. The pre-intervention survey demonstrated existing positive food waste reducing behaviours, for example, 6/7 respondents reported using leftover food as part of another meal. However, only 3/7 participants made a shopping list before going to the supermarket. In later workshops, participants recognised shopping habits as their biggest reason for wasting food. Reasons given for poor shopping behaviours were that participants were trying to cater for all family members and would therefore buy a wide variety as well as pick up extra food. This type of behaviour does not fit comfortably with making lists and unsurprisingly responses remained unchanged in the post-intervention survey.

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<sup>3</sup> A full list of survey questions can be viewed at: <http://resources.trifocal.eu.com/resources/evaluation-case-studies-communities/>

## Healthy and sustainable eating

Knowledge and attitudes around sustainable eating improved. This theme was especially well understood within the group. For instance, in the pre-intervention survey, none of the participants understood that reducing how much meat we eat is good for the environment, whereas in the post-intervention survey all participants (5/5) recognised the environmental benefit. Additionally, in the pre-intervention survey participants were focused on how easy/difficult the food was to prepare (4/5 participants considered this 'sometimes', 'often' or 'always') rather than whether it was healthy or sustainable (1/5 participants considered environmental impact 'sometimes'). However, in the post-intervention survey one participant consider the environmental impact of the food they buy 'often' and three considered it 'sometimes'.



Figure 1- Workshop participants cooking together at the third session at Northend Children's Wellbeing Centre

## Facilitation

Learning on both food waste reduction and healthy sustainable eating is likely to have been helped by the collaborative nature of the group. The facilitators reported that the group bonded well, and the post-intervention survey also reported that participants enjoyed the group interactions such as 'sharing lots of ideas' and 'interactions and discussions'. It is possible that, as parents, they had similar shared experiences, and this helped facilitate engaging discussion.

## Challenges and considerations

### Food waste recycling

It is difficult to ascertain whether changes in knowledge, attitude and behaviours in relation to food waste recycling occurred as a result of the workshops. The topic of food waste recycling seemed to be of the least interest to participants. Neither the facilitators nor the participants mentioned anything about this topic in their feedback. Furthermore, there is evidence of bias in the pre- and post-intervention survey results for this topic with participants giving socially desirable answers and/or misunderstanding the question. As an example of social bias, one participant reported having a food waste collection and using their caddy in the pre-intervention survey yet reported not having a caddy in the post-intervention survey. Misunderstanding is also possible as one participant reported large increases in the frequency of using their general rubbish for food waste; the same respondent had reported in the pre-intervention survey that they 'rarely' or 'sometimes' used the general rubbish bin for disposing of food waste.

### Recruitment and attendance

The small size of the group limited the number of people that may have benefitted from the training and potential for information to be cascaded to wider audiences. It was anticipated that around twelve parents would attend, however only six attended regularly. While the facilitators did not think that the small group size negatively impacted the dynamic, it limited the number of people that benefitted from the training and potential for that information to be cascaded amongst their family and friends. The facilitators noted several reasons for the low attendance including clashes with holidays and other activities, as well as the fact the Community Centre is in an isolated residential area, therefore, the physical promotion of the workshops was not very visible.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The Bexley workshops mostly achieved their objectives in two areas: food waste prevention and healthy and sustainable eating. They were less successful in achieving the food waste recycling objective. This may be due in part to the motivations and existing knowledge of participants in the first two areas which were further developed through the delivery. While existing motivation can make delivery easier and result

in stronger outcomes, the lack of motivation towards certain project objectives cannot be ignored as a challenge. As such, it is recommended that future workshops of this type carefully consider the motivations of participants when tailoring activity to them. This was addressed in several ways in subsequent groups e.g. the number of workshops was reduced, and content was revised and streamlined to make sure that all three messages were equally engaging. The workshops delivered at Hornsey Lane Estate Community Centre is an example where these changes were implemented<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, due to the resource intensive nature of this type of delivery, it is recommended that future workshops consider the time of year, perhaps avoiding peak summer and school holidays. Furthermore, it is suggested that organisers explore utilising other channels of communication for recruitment (e.g. social media) and, advertise for only 12 spaces and/or provide incentives for attendance in order to increase group size and retention to maximise impact. The latter two were trialled and found to be effective in later community workshops.

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<sup>4</sup> See separate case study on Hornsey Lane Estate Community Centre for more information:  
<http://resources.trifocal.eu.com/resources/evaluation-case-studies-communities/>