

CASE STUDY

Hornsey Lane Estate Community Centre (Islington)

As part of TRiFOCAL's community engagement using the 'Small Change, Big Difference' campaign, a series of three workshops focusing on food waste prevention, food waste recycling and healthy and sustainable eating were delivered by Groundwork London during March and April 2019 at the at Hornsey Lane Estate Community Centre in Islington.¹

Highlights:

- Following the workshops, surveyed participants showed more knowledge in aspects of healthy sustainable eating, most notably in recognising the environmental benefit of reducing meat consumption.
- Most participants stated that they wanted to share food waste prevention techniques after the workshops, including tips on food storage.

Background

Hornsey Lane Estate Community Centre provides several services for residents, including a full-time nursery, employment support and coffee mornings². In addition, it also provides specialist help and advice on several other topics (Benefits, Housing, Social Care etc.).

The TRiFOCAL workshops were run for a group of individuals of mixed ages, ethnicities and languages spoken. The average group size across the three workshops was 15 which represented the highest level of attendance across all the TRiFOCAL community workshops. This high attendance can likely be attributed to the reduction of the number of workshop sessions and the introduction of the food

vouchers for attendees who kept a food waste diary. The group had not taken part in any previous activities on food waste or healthy sustainable eating.

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 wider, to members of the community.

¹ From January 2018 based on participants' feedback the number of workshops was reduced to three and changes made to content to improve attendance rates.

² <http://hleca-org-uk.stackstaging.com/>

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 leftovers, and recycling food waste³.

Cooking featured in all the workshops and recipes were tailored to reflect each of the key messages to reinforce learning. The workshops were also 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.

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 14 participants completed both the pre- and post-intervention surveys and results focus on comparative changes in the responses from these participants. However, it should be noted that some participants left some questions unanswered which made it more difficult to determine the impact of the workshops. This also meant that comparisons often had to be made between a different number of total pre- and post-intervention responses.

Healthy and sustainable eating

Participants knowledge of healthy sustainable eating improved. The largest improvements between pre- and post-intervention surveys were in the number of participants who correctly identified the false statements 'Fresh vegetables are always healthier than frozen vegetables' (increasing from 5/11 to 9/13) and 'Fibre can be found in chicken and milk' (increasing from 7/12 to 13/13) and that 'Reducing how much meat we eat is good for the environment' is true (5/12 to 12/13). Notably, the increase in knowledge around the question on fibre content was in contrast with overall results for all TRiFOCAL community workshops which showed a small decrease.

Attitude improved in some areas of healthy sustainable eating. Positive changes in attitude, between the pre- and post-intervention survey were seen in the number of participants who considered the following when buying food: calorie content (1/14 to 5/13), whether the origin of the food was animal or plant based (3/13 to 8/14) and whether the food is grown/manufactured locally or in season (2/14 to 4/14).

Positive changes in knowledge and attitude do not seem to have translated into positive behaviour change. Evidence from the pre- and post-intervention surveys showed either no change or a negative change in the number of days that participants made healthy and sustainable choices in the two weeks prior to completing each survey. The average number of days that participants ate five or more portions of fruit and vegetables decreased from 8.8 days in the pre-intervention survey to 5.2 days in the post-intervention survey and the average number of days they ate pulses decreased from 4.6 days to 3.4 days. It is possible that as the healthy sustainable eating workshop was near the end of the workshop series, learning and enthusiasm could not yet significantly influence a change in behaviour.

³ See accompanying [Fact Sheet](#) for comprehensive list of workshop activities and content.

Food waste prevention

Knowledge of date labels was particularly low and showed little change after the workshops. The number of participants that understood the definition of 'use-by' and 'best before' dates in the pre-intervention survey was 3/11 and 5/11 respectively. In the post-intervention survey, correct understanding of 'use-by' remained at 3/11 whilst 'best before' increased slightly to 6/11. It was suggested that little change in knowledge may be a result of slight language barriers within the group which hindered the learning of more technical information. However, in attempts to combat this issue technical messages and facts were often displayed on a large board [Figure 1] so that participants could take photographs to improve knowledge retention.



Figure 1 - Technical messages and facts displayed on a board at Hornsey Lane Estate Community Centre

There was some evidence of improved shopping habits following the workshops. There was an increase in the number of participants who made a list to take to the shop (2/11 to 7/14). However, most shopping habits remained similar. In particular, little change was seen in the number of participants who made a running list throughout the week, had a clear list in their head or had an idea of the things they wanted to buy.

There was some evidence of positive behaviour change associated with the use of leftover food. The number of participants who used leftovers as another part of a meal increased from 5/14 in the pre-intervention survey to 12/14 in the post-intervention survey. However little change was seen in other habits including using leftovers as a meal in themselves (7/9 to 8/14) and in various storage or freezing options.

The post-intervention survey feedback indicated participants' intentions to share food waste prevention tips with others. All participants that provided responses (13/14 participants) stated that they would be 'somewhat likely' or 'very likely' to share tips from the workshop and 11/12 participants stated they would like to share tips on food waste prevention techniques. These included statements that indicate learning specifically around food storage, for example, how to store bananas.

Food waste recycling

Most participants reported having a food waste collection service (10/11 in the pre-intervention survey and 12/14 in the post-intervention survey).

There was mixed evidence of behaviour changes for food waste recycling. However, most of the evidence showed no change in behaviour. The number of participants that put plate scrapings after a meal and/or general leftovers in their general waste reduced from 4/14 in the pre-intervention survey to 1/13 in the post-intervention survey. The number of participants putting 'fruit and veg peelings' and 'bakery items, such as bread or cake that are past their best' in their general waste increased marginally between the pre- and post-intervention survey (1/14 to 2/14 and 0/14 to 1/14 respectively).

Challenges and considerations

There were several challenges in facilitating the workshops that may have influenced learning and subsequent motivation and behaviour change. These include inherent challenges that arise with a large group including difficulty maintaining focus (conversations often went off at tangents) and difficulty getting everyone involved in the cooking. Facilitators attempted to adapt this as the workshops went on by further breaking down the activities. In addition, due to the multitude of languages spoken in the group, many with English as a second language, there was a slight language barrier particularly with more technical information.

Conclusions and recommendations

The workshops met their objective of improving knowledge around healthy sustainable eating and there was some evidence of improved attitude. However, these do not seem to have translated into positive behaviour change and instead behaviour associated with healthy and sustainable eating appeared more negative following the workshops.

The workshops also showed some evidence that positive behaviour changes had been made in relation to food waste prevention. For example, following the workshops, more participants appeared to make a list to take with them when food shopping and more participants appeared to use leftovers as part of another meal. However, it should be noted that knowledge around food waste prevention was not shown to increase significantly following the workshops.

Evidence related to food waste recycling knowledge, attitude and behaviours was mixed. In some cases, marginal behavioural improvements were made in relation to the disposal of food waste whilst others appeared slightly more negative following the workshops. However, it was noted that food waste recycling behaviours were already very good at the start of the workshops and as such there was little potential for improvements to be made within this group.

Furthermore, all workshops were very well attended. This is expected to have been due to the enjoyment that the group received (highlighted in feedback) from the social aspects of cooking and eating together. It was also expected that the incentive of vouchers for attendance coupled with the use of food diaries helped with participant retention, the latter encouraging participants to return to discuss the diaries and ask questions. However, challenges did arise due to the large group size such as difficulties maintaining focus as conversations often went off at tangents. In attempts to combat this issue, one future recommendation would be to split participants into more manageable teams and use two different recipes so more people could get involved. This would also allow a greater variety of foods to be introduced and add a fun competitive element.