

## CASE

## STUDY

### Liberty Primary School (Merton)

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 Liberty Primary School for a group of parents over four consecutive weeks in March 2018.

#### Highlights:

- There was some positive anecdotal evidence which highlighted changes in knowledge and attitude had occurred as a result of the workshops. For example, participants developed a recipe book incorporating aspects of healthy and sustainable eating and food waste prevention.
- Very small improvements in reported food waste behaviour were observed. This was most notable in participants' shopping habits though other aspects of food waste prevention remained largely unchanged.

#### Background

The group participating in the workshops consisted of parents from the school community. Approximately six parents attended regularly and most already knew each other. The parents had received no prior training on the workshop topics and their main motivations for attending were to learn how to save money on food<sup>1</sup>, make new recipes and prevent food waste.

The school was recruited as a contact at the school was very engaged in the campaign topics and wanted to set up food growing in the school. As all participants were parents, the facilitators adapted the sessions slightly so that the recipes were relevant to families with children and could be replicated at home. It should be noted that additional workshops were not delivered to pupils at the school but facilitators observed the potential for an integrated whole-school approach.

#### 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 members of the wider 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 leftovers, and recycling food waste<sup>2</sup>. 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

<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.

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 only three completed the post-intervention survey. Furthermore, it should be noted that certain participants left some questions unanswered. This resulted in low response rates which made it very difficult to determine the extent to which the workshops met their objectives.

### Healthy sustainable eating

Pre-existing knowledge of healthy sustainable eating was mixed and there was limited evidence to suggest improvements had been made following the workshops. In the pre-intervention survey, whilst all participants (5/5) knew that the statement 'Beans and pulses are high in protein and fibre' is true, only 2/5 respondents knew that the statement 'Fibre can be found in chicken and milk' was false. When analyzing those participants (two) who responded to the healthy and sustainable eating statements in both surveys one of the individuals increased their correct answers from 2/5 to 4/5.

There was not enough evidence to show an obvious overall change in attitude towards healthy sustainable eating. Out of the three participants that answered both the pre- and post-intervention surveys, no changes were seen in their consideration of calorie content or environmental impact when purchasing food (despite infrequent consideration of these factors). Changes in attitude for other statements varied. For example, one respondent 'sometimes' considered when buying food whether it was locally grown/ in season prior to the workshops and 'always' considered this after, whilst another changed their attitude from 'sometimes' to 'rarely'.

Similarly, there was not enough evidence from the survey to show an overall change in behaviour for healthy sustainable eating. For example, one participant listed a reduction in the number of days they ate five portions of fruit and vegetables over the previous two weeks, from five to three days (pre- to post-intervention survey) whilst another participant increased by one day for this question. However, anecdotal evidence suggested that the workshops may have had a positive impact on behaviour. The facilitators reported that participants were inspired by the healthy sustainable eating and food waste prevention parts of the workshops to develop a recipe book together which could be shared with other parents.

### Food waste prevention

Participant attitudes towards food waste were already very positive and remained so following the workshops. In the pre-intervention survey, 5/7 participants were motivated 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' by all listed reasons to prevent food waste<sup>3</sup>. The facilitators also reported that reducing food waste in order to save money was one of the group's main motivations for attending the workshops. In the post-intervention survey, two respondents remained motivated 'a great deal' across the board, however the third respondent increased their motivation to 'a great deal' for three of the stated reasons.

The participants that answered both surveys used some pre-planning and there was a very small amount of evidence of an improvement in this area. Prior to the workshops, all respondents (3/3) reported having a clear shopping list in their head, two out of three reported taking a list to the shop and one kept a running

<sup>3</sup> Environmental impact, people going hungry, saving money, managing the home efficiently and feelings of guilt.

list during the week. After the workshops, small improvements were seen for one participant who now keeps a running list during the week and takes a list to the shop rather than having a list in their head. Furthermore, the facilitators reported that the group spent a lot of time talking about shopping habits which suggests workshops were likely to have influenced the changes.

Participants had a mix of pre-existing food storage habits and survey results showed very small changes after the workshops, both positive and negative. Existing habits varied: nearly all participants (6/7) correctly stored bananas in a fruit bowl; only 1/7 participants correctly stored potatoes in the cupboard. For those that answered both surveys (3 participants), the positive changes included one additional participant storing potatoes correctly (in the cupboard) and one participant commenting that they were 'very likely' to share food storage tips. Negative changes included one less participant storing bread correctly (in the cupboard or freezer) and two less participants storing fresh bakery products correctly (in the cupboard or freezer).

### Food waste recycling

Participants who answered both surveys were recycling at least some food waste using their local collection prior to workshops and this improved very slightly following the workshops. However, inconsistent responses from participants regarding use of their residual bin reduced confidence in observed changes. All three participants had a food waste collection service. In the pre-intervention survey two out of three participants reported putting a minimal amount of food in the residual waste bin and this improved to all participants in the post-intervention survey. However, two participants who reported using their food waste caddies in both the pre- and post-intervention surveys also reported that they 'never' put food in the residual bin in the pre-intervention survey and then that they 'always' put food in the residual bin in the post-intervention survey.

### Challenges and considerations

Recruitment of participants proved challenging at Liberty Primary School. Only six participants regularly attended the workshops, when the aim was to recruit at least ten. In addition, those that attended were already very engaged with activities at the school, highlighting recruitment strategies, which involved attending a coffee morning with flyers to promote the sessions then leaving the sign-up process with the main contact at the school, had struggled to reach parents in the wider school community. Another key challenge presented to the facilitators was condensing the length of sessions from two hours to one and a half hours in order to fit in with the school's timetable. Facilitators also observed that 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 and understanding the survey questions. Furthermore, facilitators noted that the group sessions were dominated by a few of the participants and as such it is uncertain whether campaign messages were reaching all participants.

Low response rates made it hard to determine the extent to which workshops had met their objectives. Attendance levels at workshops also varied throughout the project, with only three parents attending the final workshop. Therefore, comparative changes in behaviour, knowledge and attitude could only be determined for a very small sample. Furthermore, two of these individuals already had high levels of knowledge as well as positive attitudes and behaviours around food waste. As such, results are unlikely to highlight any beneficial impacts associated with the workshops in these areas.

### Conclusions and recommendations

Due to challenges around recruitment and attendance it is hard to determine whether workshops at Liberty Primary School have met their objectives. The very small sample size (three participants that answered both surveys) meant that it was difficult to evidence any changes in knowledge, attitude and behaviour that had occurred. However, there was some positive anecdotal evidence supplied by facilitators highlighting behavioural changes that had occurred within the group. This was around the participants' development of a recipe book incorporating aspects of healthy and sustainable eating and food waste prevention.

There also appeared to be a very small improvement in knowledge and attitude around food waste prevention. This was most notable in shopping habits, however, other aspects of food waste prevention remained largely unchanged following the workshops. In addition, there was difficulty in determining any changes in attitudes around food waste recycling, although this was due largely to misinterpretation of recycling questions in the survey.

Due to recruitment challenges at Liberty Primary School, future workshop recommendations for parents are to more carefully consider advertising methods to ensure a wider audience is reached. One option would be to focus on the opportunity to learn new recipes, as this appeared to be one of the areas of interest for this group. This approach was adopted in later workshops with other groups, for example Hornsey Lane Estate Community Centre<sup>4</sup>, where cooking featured in all sessions and recipes were tailored to link more clearly to the key messages. Promotional materials for future recruitment were adapted to emphasise the cooking element of the 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/>