



Developing a participatory model of holiday lunches in Cambridge

Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance: Final report, May 2019

What are the barriers to accessing holiday lunches?

As part of our Maximising Family income project we interviewed parents at holiday lunches for our Food Poverty Report, which gathered baseline data for the city as well as carrying out primary research in the form of interviews, workshops and questionnaires.

Interviewees reported that there is a sense of shame, stigma and discrimination associated with being in food poverty and that people were reluctant to seek help, which may help explain why uptake of holiday lunches was low in some areas of the city. As parent at a holiday lunch said,

"I guess it's more about making it less about the food, and more about something to do with your kids in the holidays."

Parent attending a holiday lunch

"No one seems to ask for the help. It's quite weird, it's like you literally have to take their hand and drag them to it. It's like the holiday lunches groups that you go to and you mention about them and they'll be like 'Oh, okay' and they're like 'It's free, why is it free? No way okay, we don't need free whatever' and 'oh no, we're fine' but then the next sentence they're sort of talking about that they're in debt. I think there's a weird, almost a stigma behind it. It's like handouts."

Findings from these interviews has led to us partnering with Cambridge City Council to work on developing a more participatory model for holiday lunch delivery. By rebranding holiday lunches as "Fun, Food and Action" and by introducing prep sessions to allow families to participate in the lunches and offering time credits, we hope to remove the stigma of a 'handout' and foster relationships, participation and action in the local community.

Our challenges and learning

From other cookery activities we have delivered, we know that trust and relationships are key to participation in any activity. It is yet too early to see whether the amount of sessions and time we have is adequate to really deliver the proposed outcomes. Participation cannot be enforced!

Our next steps

Over the next 12 months we will be delivering 16 holiday lunches with a prep or cookery session for parents and children to help cook, in order to increase the sense of participation and ownership as well as improve skills. We are working with local organisations such as Cambridge United, Abbey People, ChYpPS, Kettle's Yard, Everyone Health, and other community groups to develop a programme of activities alongside the lunch, including fitness, craft and advice sessions. We are also developing an accompanying volunteering programme and will issue time credits to neighbourhood volunteers with the Spice scheme.

At each session we will be asking participants about what kind of activities they want and how they would like to be involved (informal discussion, participatory methods of consultation such as an "offers/wants" board or a "washing line" for ideas, and short questionnaires). We will also consult with participants to see what skills and knowledge they are able to bring to the lunches.



"I really appreciate getting out of the house as it can get really lonely with just me and my children."

Parent attending a holiday lunch

Our key achievements and impact

- We've run two pilot schemes during the holidays, attracting 70 parents and children
- We conducted a survey with holiday lunch users about what activities they would like to see and whether they would be willing to help cook
- Based on learning from the pilots and survey, over the next year we will deliver 16 holiday lunches that involve children and parents in the cooking