



Increasing the uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers

Croydon Food Poverty Alliance

May 2020

Raising awareness

We have delivered a number of activities to raise awareness of the Healthy Start scheme in Croydon. This has included creating local designs, publicity and promotional material using a number of key messages such as

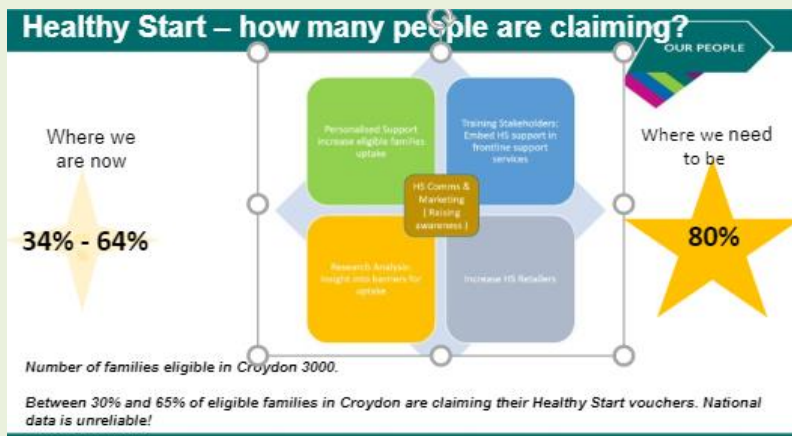
*Pregnant? Children under four? On welfare benefits?
Don't miss out on FREE HEALTHY START vouchers worth more than £900 per child!*

We also created a Healthy Start advert for the December 2019 edition of the Your Croydon magazine and delivered this to over 155,000 homes across the borough.

We reviewed the Healthy Start information held on our existing Best Start webpage and have set up a mailbox for Croydon parents and carers who need advice and support with claiming Healthy Start vouchers.

We recently communicated the application changes to the Healthy Start scheme using our social media accounts e.g. Best Start Facebook, twitter and Your Croydon to advise families that the forms no longer need to be countersigned by health professionals.

Healthy Start training has also been key to raising awareness and we have been able to offer training to a number of frontline professionals supporting vulnerable families who are at risk of food poverty to promote the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers.



Healthy Start training slide

This activity was assisted by financial support and other advice from Food Power.
www.foodpower.org.uk



Croydon' Healthy Start promotional poster

It's now easier to apply for free Healthy Start vouchers in #Croydon to purchase vitamins, fruit, vegetables and milk for your family. If you're pregnant or have young children find out how to apply and if you qualify <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthy-start-vouchers/how-to-apply/> #CroydonTogether #covid19

Croydon Council social media post



Challenges and learning

We carried out a number of surveys and informal conversations, which we analysed to gain better insight into the experiences of the Healthy Start users.

In response to our findings we we have taken a number of actions, such as including Healthy Start information in the new version of the South West London 'My Maternity Journal' booklet. We also explained the drive to increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers to our GP networks and offered the distribution of Healthy Start posters, leaflets and plasma designs for GP waiting areas.

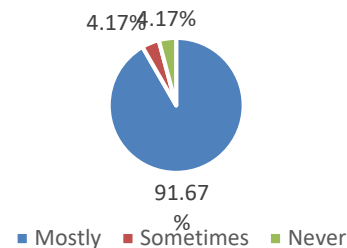
Research across local chain retailers also found that larger and some smaller supermarkets were more likely to be signed up to the scheme because registration fell under a national subscription, therefore requiring less administration work for store managers.

We also found that when encouraging local independent corner shops to sign up as a Healthy Start retailer, the need for an internet connection and a printer were often the barriers to why smaller shops had not registered to accept the vouchers. However, the new changes as part of the digitisation of Healthy Start will overcome these issues with the removal of the need for retailer registration.

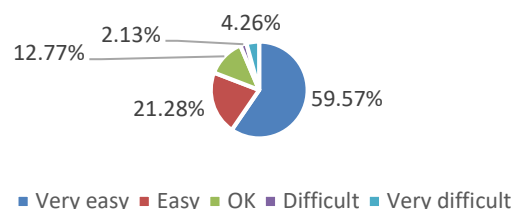
Next steps

We will plan a new, targeted Croydon campaign to help promote the new digitalisation of the Healthy Start Scheme this autumn. We will also review and amend the local Croydon Healthy Start leaflet and poster designs with new branding in accordance with the national Healthy Start guidelines when they become available. We will continue to offer training to health and welfare support professionals at a local level to support families to claim Healthy Start vouchers.

Which shops do you use -
Supermarket eg LIDL,
COOP Sainsbury, ALDI,
Tesco, Iceland



Are Healthy Start Vouchers easy to use?



“The personal support I have given many families this year to claim Healthy Start vouchers has shown me that not a lot of people have a full understanding of the voucher scheme, or that they are aware of the scheme but had just forgotten to return their forms! Once I explained how these vouchers could help to save money, more families were keen to follow the process to apply.”

Denise Willington, Croydon Council
Intervention Officer

Key achievements and impact

For households who have engaged in targeted personal support, a key part of the project, we estimate a combined income increase of £1,358 per week, which equates to £70,500 for the year. Our hope is that the national changes to Healthy Start will support the existing actions to increase uptake in Croydon and help to remove many of the barriers identified within the scheme. We will continue to work with Food Power and the NHS Healthy Start national team to promote Healthy Start so that many more low income families will benefit from their entitlement to this scheme.