

SHOP HEALTHY

**Summary report on a pilot project with local
retailers to increase access to healthy food**

November 2018



Introduction

This report summarises a pilot project that took place over 18 months to explore ways to improve access to healthy food across the Golborne area of North Kensington in partnership with selected local businesses.

The pilot project formed part of a wider healthy lifestyle initiative called [Go Golborne](#) that took place between 2014-2018 to prevent childhood obesity by developing multiple activities across the area to promote healthy eating and physical activity.

The need for the pilot was identified by a study conducted by the local nutrition service in 2014. It recommended a number of actions that could be taken to improve access to healthy food amongst the Golborne and wider North Kensington community. In particular it recommended action to:

- Improve the pricing, stock and promotion of healthy food in local convenience stores and kiosks in local parks (thereby increasing availability of healthy options and 'nudging' customer towards buying them)
- Support market traders on Portobello and Golborne Road Market to register with the Healthy Start scheme and accept vouchers for fruit and vegetables (thereby enabling families on a low income to get more for their money as compared to cost of fresh fruit and vegetables in a supermarket)

The Go Golborne project team commissioned [Rice Marketing Ltd](#) to develop and deliver a pilot project to implement these actions. The specific aims and objectives of the project were informed by learning from the [Change4Life](#) and [Shop Healthy NYC](#) retail projects.

Overall aims of Shop Healthy:

- Increase access to healthy food and drink options amongst children and families in the Golborne area
- Improve promotion of healthy food and drink options relative to options high in sugar, fat and salt across the Golborne area
- Increase the visibility and consistency of healthy eating messages in key settings across the Golborne area
- Improve nutrition amongst children and families and reduce risks of obesity and associated health problems

Specific aims of Shop Healthy:

- Increase the range of healthy food options for sale within local convenience stores and park kiosks
- Improve the display and promotion of healthy food options within local convenience stores and park kiosks
- Encourage and support fruit and vegetable market traders to accept Healthy Start vouchers as means of payment
- Increase purchasing of healthy food options amongst the local community
- Increase engagement of local business owners in the Go Golborne project and wider health agenda

Objectives for service delivery:

- To develop a clear process and suite of tools/promotional materials to engage and support convenience stores through a change process
- To recruit three convenience stores and one park kiosk to pilot the Shop Healthy approach
- To support the businesses to develop action plans related to the stock and promotion of healthy products
- To support store owners to develop and implement the actions plans, including advice on the supply, pricing, placement and promotion of products
- To encourage fruit and vegetable market traders to register with Healthy Start and explore ways to support voucher exchange and reimbursement
- To evaluate the impact of investment of time and resources on outcomes for the business and wider community
- To make recommendations about the potential to roll out the Shop Healthy scheme across other stores in Golborne and the wider area.

Overview of activities and implementation: convenience stores and park kiosks

The Go Golborne project team identified the three convenience stores and a park kiosk that Rice Marketing (RM) invited to participate in the pilot project. All three stores are located in densely populated areas and serve the community targeted by the initiative. The park kiosk is located in the area's main playground, which is

frequented by local children and families, particularly after school and at weekends.

RRM started by planning a process for engaging with the businesses. This involved the development of:

- A comprehensive list of healthy products that the businesses should aim to stock across their key categories, aligned with the Change4Life retailer guidelines
- A Shop Healthy retailer guide that sets out the process for implementing the approach for business owners (framed around stocking of new products, changes to displays, and in-store promotion)
- Point of sale (POS) marketing materials linked to the Change4Life Be Food Smart campaign (which highlight healthier options throughout the stores) including window stickers, 'shelf wobblers' and 'ticket strips'
- Recipe cards to highlight healthy recipes that can be made with ingredients for sale in store

RRM worked with the business owners to plan and implement changes across the stores/kiosks over a period of 8 months. The initial approach was then reviewed and refined to inform the second phase of the pilot. The second phase focused on actively promoting a narrower range of products/key messages on a rotating basis. The reason for this change of approach was principally driven by concerns that the small and crowded lay out of the stores made it difficult to ensure the POS materials were consistently placed in front of 'healthy' products.

The refined approach involved:

- The introduction of three rotating in-store promotions linked to key Change4Life campaigns – Sugar Smart, 5ADAY, Snack Check
- Change4Life posters displayed on A-Boards outside stores and the park kiosk with linked POS on corresponding healthy products in store
- Proactive community engagement to raise awareness of the promotions at key events and festivals

Impact and outcomes: convenience stores and park kiosks

- Four businesses successfully engaged in the pilot and implemented changes – relationships of trust were built with Rice team and store owners. All the businesses valued the support and advice provided.

'I value the advice on what's new in my categories and I would like to see more of that'

- As a result of the pilot three of the four business owners feel they are more aware of healthy eating guidelines and the benefits of stocking healthier products for their business/health of the local community
- Over 77 new product lines have been introduced across the three stores to bridge gaps in ranges including wholemeal bread, rice cakes and healthier snacks, lower fat dairy products, tinned fruit in water rather than syrup etc
- Some new product lines are selling well – e.g. rice cakes and lower fat baked crisps are selling well across all three convenience stores

'...there is a noticeable change. We are now selling 3 boxes of 12 rice cakes a week because we've introduced more varieties, and 4 boxes of 24 packs of baked crisps per week. I am selling more water than before, roughly 3-4%'

- The owner of the park kiosk also noticed an upturn in sales of healthier products

'I am noticing small changes. Mums and children are definitely more aware of choosing healthier foods'

- The store that engaged with the pilot most enthusiastically appears to have gained the biggest increase in custom as a result of the promotions
- Numerous changes to product displays have been introduced across the stores and kiosk – i.e. healthier ranges have been 'blocked' on shelves with accompanying 'point of sale' promotional materials, healthier snacks placed in prominent position at till points, water relocated to eye level, space at till point given over to healthier snacks
- All business owners have proactively sourced new lines of healthier products since the initial launch of the Be Food Smart promotion – indicating a sustained commitment to sourcing and promoting healthier products
- One of the store owners highlighted that being involved in the pilot had helped him feel more embedded in the local community

'It's been good for business, I feel more connected to the community'

- The businesses were all offered a small grant of up to £300 to improve displays and merchandising. Two stores used the grant to purchase new wooden display stands to make fruit and vegetable displays more attractive. The

owner of the park kiosk used the grant to create a new display board that highlights healthier options more centrally.

Overview of activities and implementation: Healthy Start and markets

Prior to the Shop Healthy pilot, project work had already been undertaken by the Council's Street Trading team and Go Golborne team to introduce the Healthy Start scheme across Portobello and Golborne Road Market. This involved:

- Explaining the scheme to fruit and vegetable traders and supporting them to register with Healthy Start
- Creating a reimbursement system whereby traders can exchange Healthy Start vouchers for cash at the Street Trading Office
- Providing traders with laminated Healthy Start signs to display
- Producing a leaflet for parents to advertise the fact that Healthy Start vouchers can be exchanged on the market. This was disseminated widely via local Children's Centres and in a mail-out by the central Healthy Start team to all parents in the W10 postcode.
- A launch event involving local Councillors that was in turn featured in local newspapers to help promote the scheme

Despite these efforts, few vouchers were exchanged along the market. At the start of the Shop Healthy project RM were tasked with reviewing the scheme to help identify why it had not 'taken off' and what additional actions could be introduced to increase uptake. RM conducted focus groups with local parents and consulted market traders about the scheme. Feedback highlighted the following:

- Despite efforts to promote the scheme, many parents were not aware that the vouchers could be spent on the market
- Several traders had not been displaying their Healthy Start sign and were unconvinced about the value of the scheme to their business
- Parents often spend their vouchers in the supermarket when they do their weekly shop
- Parents said they would feel embarrassed to ask traders whether they accept vouchers and stressed the importance of clear signage to this effect
- Some parents questioned the quality and range of fruit and vegetables on sale at the market relative to the quality in supermarkets

As a result of this feedback the following actions were taken:

- Two of the more engaged traders were provided with a large banner to display that says 'Healthy Start vouchers accepted here'
- A revised and more detailed information leaflet about the scheme was produced for local parents

These efforts did not lead to a significant upsurge in vouchers being exchanged along the market. Further investigation and reflection led us to conclude that:

- Traders did not remember/lacked motivation to display their banners. Not displaying their banners in turn may have prevented parents from using their vouchers on the market.
- Overall it seems that traders did not see Healthy Start as enough of a business opportunity to warrant the effort involved in displaying banners/exchanging vouchers. This could in part be because there are not enough vouchers in circulation locally relative to other markets that serve deprived communities.

Impact and outcomes: Healthy Start and market

Efforts to engage market traders in the Healthy Start scheme has so far generated significant learning but few tangible outcomes. Whilst the scheme works well in some areas of London (Tower Hamlets for example) it has not worked so well in RBKC. This highlights the importance of gaining a detailed understanding about the needs and dynamics of a local community before introducing an intervention, even if it has been successful elsewhere.

Key learning from Shop Healthy pilot:

Convenience stores and park kiosks:

- The retailers involved in the project were hand-picked by the public health team as being strategically important to the Golborne community and not because of their propensity to engage with a public health campaign. The process of engaging businesses in the project and building relationships of trust took longer than anticipated, but is a crucial foundation for this type of work.
- All of the stores have a small turnover and none were used to receiving business support (i.e. visits from Symbol Groups). Whilst initially sceptical, the retailers grew to see the value of the free advice once trust had been established.
- It is important that this type of work is led or supported by someone with retail and business experience so that they can provide credible advice and support. Businesses need to see that their involvement will be good for sales (i.e. as well as good for the health of local children)

- The small size of the stores limits how many new product lines they are able to stock and scope for introducing new display stands and changing the lay-out significantly
- Stores can struggle to stock some of the healthier recommended products e.g. because they are not stocked in the cash and carry they use

'The main challenge is that the Cash & Carry has a very limited range of healthier snacks. I have changed my wholesaler to Nisa because they stock a better range of healthier products than Bestway'

- Promoting healthier options with POS materials can be tricky when products are tightly packed on shelves – there is a big margin for error as customers and staff may place products that do not meet the nutritional guidelines in front of the POS in error. This risks giving customers incorrect messages.
- Nutrition guidelines are complex and can be difficult for shopkeepers to understand and implement (i.e. ability to identify the sugar, salt and fat content of a wide range of different products). Rather than focusing on lots of product ranges it is easier to focus on a few key categories – this will make implementation easier and reduce the margin for errors in relation to POS placement.
- Efforts to promote healthy eating messages in the stores needs to be coupled with activities to promote the campaign across the community to drive demand for the healthy products.
- There is a scope to explore how schemes like Shop Healthy can align with the Healthier Catering Commitment Award scheme (HCC), especially for businesses that target children and families.
- It is important to be pragmatic and not make businesses feel guilty for selling food and drink that is high in fat, salt and sugar. Focus on diversifying the range and making healthier options more prominent rather than restricting unhealthy products.
- Using Change4Life branding in stores works well as it is a recognised and trusted brand. The Change4Life campaign messages are easy to align with key products and categories.

Healthy Start and markets

- Engaging market traders in the Healthy Start scheme is challenging as lots of factors are at play (e.g. one trader failed to engage due to an ongoing dispute over business rates). In order for the traders to fully commit to the

scheme it is important that they see it as a business opportunity and not something they are doing to support the Council.

- It is difficult to strike the right balance when working with local businesses – i.e. in relation to the market, the Council cannot be seen to promote one trader over another.

Conclusions and next steps

The Shop Healthy project has generated rich learning and some positive results. It has demonstrated that with the right approach a receptive business can increase sales of healthy products and feel more connected with their local community.

The project has also demonstrated that minimal outcomes will be achieved unless a business is receptive to the concept and willing to fully engage. This type of scheme is likely to produce the best outcomes if businesses self-nominate to participate, although this may reduce the likelihood of stores/traders serving deprived communities from proactively engaging.

This type of scheme is fairly resource intensive and may be difficult to introduce at scale using the same delivery model as in the pilot stage. The Bi-Borough Public Health Service is exploring options for replicating the activities, such as working in partnership with RM to train and support community volunteers and/or Council Officers to work with businesses to implement the Shop Healthy actions.



Council Officers and Members visit convenience stores and market stalls participating in the Shop Healthy scheme alongside local children

Further information

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