

healthy
high streets



Finding ideas from the high street to make healthy eating easier for children and families

**A challenge on and around three
London high streets in Haringey,
Lambeth and Southwark**

FINAL PROJECT REPORT, OCTOBER 2018

Funded by:



Delivered with:

*“Both adult and children’s health
are significantly influenced
by the environments that they
move through every day.”*

Bite Size: Breaking down the challenge of inner-city
childhood obesity, Guy’s and St Thomas’ Charity



Thank you to all those who took part in Healthy High Streets for their openness to the challenge and their enthusiasm and commitment to their communities and neighbourhoods.

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Introduction

The Healthy High Streets programme aim was to find and test solutions to improve the high street food environment. It did this by inviting ideas from people who trade on and use three high streets in London through a hyper-local challenge prize.

The programme was initiated by Healthy London Partnership, Public Health England and Guy's and St Thomas' Charity, and developed in partnership with Battersea Power Station Foundation, Haringey, Southwark and Lambeth Councils, Hyde Foundation, and Innovation Unit.

Healthy High Streets was a short, experimental programme through which the partners wanted to learn about:

1. shifting behaviour and encouraging healthier eating on the high street;
2. how to engage businesses in that challenge;
3. the methodology of using a challenge prize to incentivise engagement, action and partnerships around a public health aim.

This report shares information about the structure of the programme and how it was delivered; insights into people's views and habits in relation to food choices on the high street; and insights into working with businesses on improving the food environment on the high street. It describes the ideas that have been supported through the programme and looks at implications of the insights for others trying to work at a high street level to create a healthier food environment.

Almost a quarter of children who start primary school (4-5 yrs) in London are obese; this increases to over a third when they leave primary school (10-11 yrs)

NHS Digital National Child Measurement Programme England, 2016/17 School Year

This report is for anyone interested in the Healthy High Streets programme. We hope that it will be particularly useful for those responsible for engaging businesses and local people around the challenge of creating healthier food environments. Some of our insights will also be of interest to those developing local solutions to broader health challenges.

If you are interested in engaging businesses on public health challenges you will be particularly interested in sections 3, 4, 6 and 7.

If you are interested in the food choices people make on the high street you will be particularly interested in sections 3, 4, 5 and 7.

If you are interested in using a hyper local challenge or other ways to find local solutions you will be particularly interested in sections 2, 3, and 7.

Section 7 provides hints and tips for:

- People trying to tackle childhood obesity, especially on and with the high street
- Councils and others working with small food businesses
- People interested in finding and supporting hyper-local action

1. Why healthy high streets?

In the first stage of Healthy London Partnership's Great Weight Debate in 2016¹ Londoners highlighted concerns about the food environment, including the abundance of fast food outlets and the difficulties and costs of finding healthy food.

Whilst of course, the causes of childhood obesity are acknowledged as being multi-faceted, the ready availability of calorie-dense food, within a more complex set of factors, is recognised as a significant issue². Foods from fast food outlets and restaurants tend to be more energy-dense than the equivalent foods prepared at home, and take-aways are of particular concern³. Public Health England and others have highlighted that outlets selling fast food have clustered in areas of deprivation, and that the density of fast food and other unhealthy outlets is linked to high levels of child obesity⁴. Whilst central London has seen a growth in healthier fast food outlets and restaurants, this trend has not yet spread to greater London and in particular not to poorer areas.

It is not obvious what the best solutions are for improving the high street food environment, to make healthy options more accessible and more attractive. The chances are that a single solution won't work – a mix of incentives and regulation will most likely be needed (including those that make unhealthy options less abundant), and solutions for improving the high street environment will need to sit alongside other actions that relate to the different parts of people's lives (home, work, school, social spaces and activities, the wider outdoor environment). As the Guy's and St Thomas' Charity *Bite Size* report⁵ states, we may need many 'bite size', coordinated actions, to create environments where healthy choices are easier.

As the *Bite Size* report describes, life circumstances and environments make it difficult to make healthy choices, and this is exacerbated when time and money are limited. Changes need to be realistic for families and retailers. NICE guidance⁶ also suggests that it's important to identify networks of local people with the potential to co-produce action, as well as to encourage local businesses and social enterprises to recognise health and wellbeing responsibility.

¹ <https://www.healthylondon.org/much-cheap-unhealthy-food-drink-many-fast-food-shops-make-hard-children-healthy-say-londoners/>

² Tackling the UK's Childhood Obesity Epidemic, Royal Society for Public Health (November 2015)

³ Tackling obesity: future choices - obesogenic environments - evidence review, Government Office for Science (October 2007)

⁴ Obesogenic environments: current evidence of the built and food environments, Townshend and Lake, Perspectives in Public Health Vol 137 No 1 (January 2017)

⁵ *Bite Size*: Breaking down the challenge of inner-city childhood obesity, Guy's and St Thomas' Charity in partnership with The Behavioural Insights Team <https://www.gsttcharity.org.uk/what-we-do/bitesize>

⁶ Obesity: working with local communities, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence <https://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/obesity-working-with-local-communities#glossary-community-engagement>

2. What was healthy high streets?

Healthy High Streets has been a partnership programme with a shared aim to tackle childhood obesity. Alongside a wider set of actions and programmes the partners were interested in experimenting with using a hyper-local challenge prize as a tool to try to engage those who live and work on and around London high streets, in particular businesses. Innovation Unit were selected to deliver the programme, to bring expertise in challenge prizes and methods for incentivising and supporting unusual partners to collaborate to solve problems and develop solutions.

Healthy High Streets was designed as a rapid, small scale programme to learn quickly about the potential of local, and particularly food business based solutions to childhood obesity, and to inform future work by the programme partners and others.

Specifically, the partners wanted to:

- increase engagement with local businesses and local champions;
- learn about local business motivations and potential to be part of solutions;
- learn more about local perceptions of the challenge of childhood obesity;
- find and learn about new practical solutions through a hyper-local innovation challenge

Healthy High Streets involved a wide range of valuable inputs beyond the partnership, including from the Behavioural Insights Team, Shift Design, Hatch Enterprise, Save the Children and the KellyDeli Foundation, as well of course as from all the local businesses, residents and organisations who contributed their opinions, spaces and ideas.

What is a challenge prize?

A challenge prize uses a clearly defined goal and asks people to submit solutions to meeting that goal. They can be useful in focussing attention on a big and complex problem, for which solutions have been hard to find, and can encourage new ideas and collaborations to help solve the problem. In recent years funders and commissioners thinking about influencing public outcomes have been interested in challenge prizes as a way to unlock enthusiasm and wide-scale commitment to making change around a defined focus.

The prize is often, but not always, financial (instead of, or as well as money, prizes might include public recognition, advice or access to facilities for example). In some cases they aim to accelerate tangible progress towards the goal, and in these cases the prize would be given to the new solution/s that prove to be most successful or that reach a specific target first.

Other challenge prizes aim to explore and uncover hidden potential and find out what range of solutions might be possible, and in these cases the prize is more likely to be given to the most promising idea/s. Crucially, challenge prizes do not prescribe how the goal is to be met, so are useful for finding new solvers and new solutions.

The high streets

The three London Boroughs selected were in areas with high rates of childhood obesity, multiple deprivation and a high density of unhealthy food outlets. In looking for specific high streets to work with we also considered the opportunities and assets in and around high street areas in the Boroughs.



Haringey - West Green Road and High Road

West Green Road and High Road in Tottenham contain a lot of takeaways, cafes and convenience stores - around 85 in total. Just over 30% are occupied by takeaway stores offering unhealthy food - well above the English average.

There are however also many convenience stores/independent supermarkets offering fresh vegetables and other raw produce.

The borough is committed to the Healthier Catering Commitment⁷, a scheme that helps food businesses offer healthier choices to their customers, and through this have already actively engaged with many local food businesses about whether they could offer healthier options. Several residents we spoke to feel that there is also nowhere safe for young people to hang out after school, with food outlets potentially acting as social spaces for young people to hang out, meet friends and socialise.



Southwark - Walworth Road and East St. Market

Walworth Road has a lot of shops and is also a busy main road. Local people say that it feels like it is used as a way to get to somewhere else, rather than a destination in itself.

However, the wider area is going through considerable regeneration. East Street market, just off the middle of the Walworth Road isn't a thoroughfare and is often busy. Residents say that East Street market used to be a destination, but now it's just locals that use it. Locals use the market for buying cheap produce, particularly, and positively, for fruit and veg. It is busy at lunchtime but quieter in the evening.

There are a couple of prepared food stalls on the market, but most of the takeaways and restaurants are on Walworth Road. Several shops attract a specific audience, whether because of culture, food allergies etc. Residents comment that there is nowhere for young people to hang out after school, so they hang out on the street with friends, but there is an engaged community with residents who are passionate about their neighbourhood.



Lambeth - Clapham Road and around Stockwell tube station

The area has around 16 food businesses, but these are fairly spread out. The restaurants sell food from a range of cultures - Ethiopian, Brazilian, and particularly Portuguese. There are two chicken shops, which are the main places children visit if they are not eating in the local youth clubs or at home. They do also visit the local shops that sell pastries near the counter, and corner shops for crisps and snacks.

The area doesn't have a strong identity and people don't seem to feel particularly connected to the high street - "It's a no man's land". People we spoke to want to see the area regenerated with social space; nice outdoor areas - partly because they also feel the area is unsafe for children and young people.

However, there is a strong sense of community in the area and some very active youth groups where young people in the area go to be with friends and socialise.

1 7 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/food/our-projects-food-london/healthier-catering-commitment>

The challenge

The challenge called for ideas to make healthier food choices easier for children and young people on the high street.

The person, team or teams in each of the three locations that had the best idea or ideas would be given up to £2,000 to try their idea out for nine weeks. They were also offered expert support to help develop and test the ideas to find out how successful they could be, as well as promotion for their ideas.

The criteria were all focussed on potential for impact – we were looking for the idea or ideas that had the most potential to:

make a difference

helping children and families make more healthy and less unhealthy food choices

be possible

we encouraged ambitious and creative ideas; we also wanted to know that they could be realistically set up and tested quickly

be long lasting

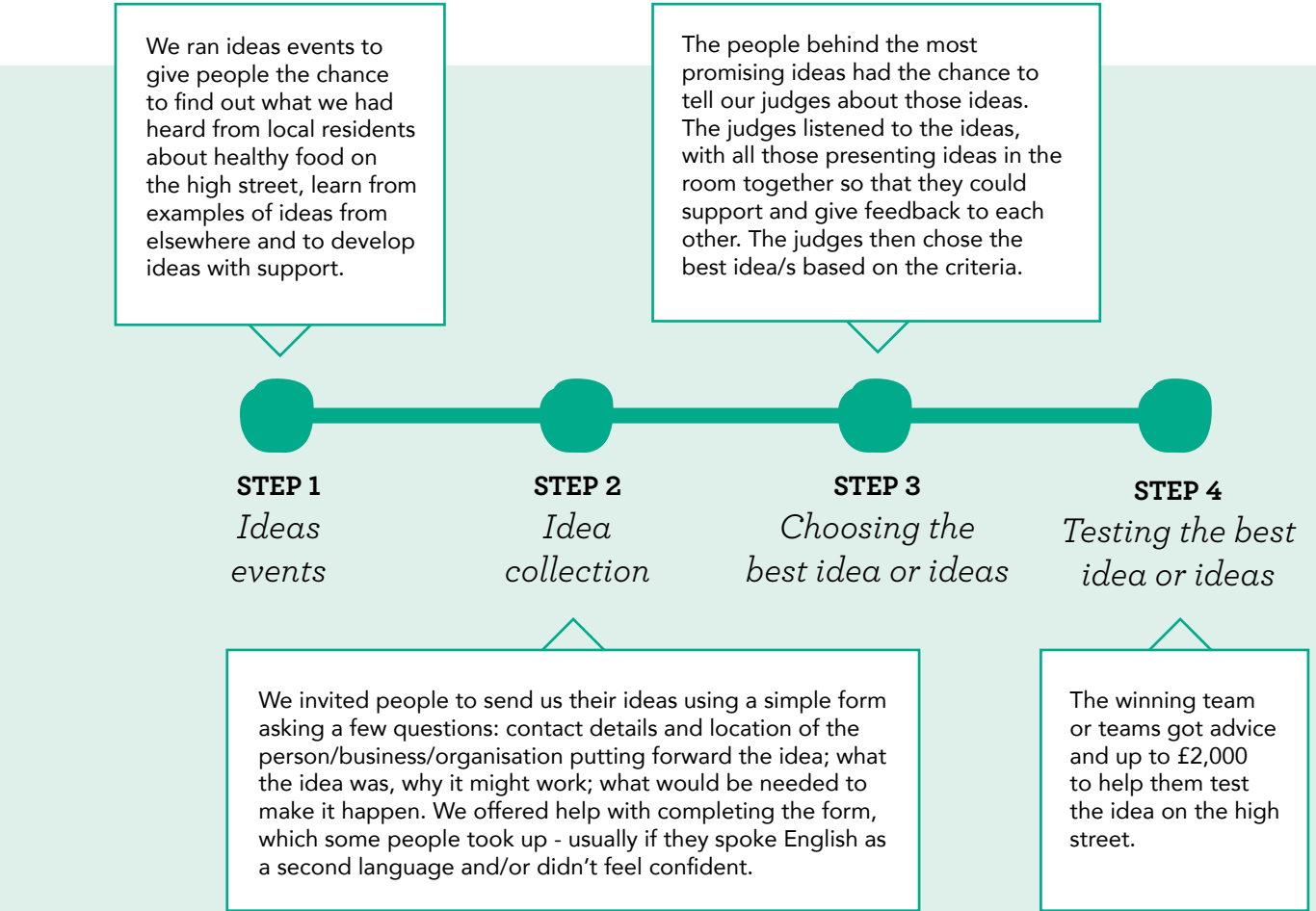
ideas needed to have a good chance of making a difference into the future

spread

we encouraged ideas which were fairly simple to understand and easy to get up and running. This way we hoped they could be adopted by other businesses, high streets or communities

In defining ‘healthy’ for the purpose of the challenge we said that

“by healthier we mean choosing food that is more nutritious and lower in calories, saturated fat, sugar and/or salt. Ideas might also involve making healthier choices related to physical activity, alongside food choices.”



For more detail on the ideas that were selected and how we’ve supported them see section 4.

Who could take part in the challenge?

We promoted the challenge largely in and around the high streets. However, people could be based anywhere in the UK as long as they partnered with, or considered how they would work with, local people and/or businesses to give their ideas a better chance of working in that area. Individuals could also take part, though again we recommended that they work with businesses to help give their idea a better chance of working.

In promoting the challenge we focussed mainly on small, independent prepared food retailers (takeaways, cafes and fast food restaurants), though did speak to some independent grocers and supermarkets (in Haringey and Southwark). The decision to not focus on chains and larger retailers was made due to the scale of the challenge process (budget and the hyper-local focus) and because of work being done by others with this group. As well as promoting the challenge prize to businesses we opened the process up more widely to social entrepreneurs, community organisations and residents.

3. Engaging businesses and the community

We used a range of approaches to engage local businesses, groups and residents, with the dual aim of:

- a** *gathering insights about local experiences of both running businesses and making food choices on the high street;*
- b** *spreading the word about the challenge and the opportunity to send in ideas*



Finding local connectors

In Haringey we worked closely with the Senior Environmental Health Practitioner, and the Town Centre Growth Manager, from Haringey Council. Through them we were introduced to the Tottenham Traders, and crucially to locally businesses directly. The Senior Environmental Health Practitioner walked along the street with us and personally introduced us to businesses she had got to know through her hygiene inspections and her Public Health role as Healthier Catering Commitment project coordinator.

In Southwark we spoke with community connectors we already knew as a starting point and asked them to help us spread the word and introduce us to people who might have ideas.

In Lambeth we were introduced to community connectors by Hyde Foundation. Through these connections we got to meet some of the local businesses and community groups.

Local knowledge and connections were essential for building trust and relationships, this also made it possible to develop the programme of work within the timescales of the project.

Cold calling

Where we didn't have introductions to businesses we approached them 'cold'. This was definitely best done face-to-face and often meant visiting a few times in order to speak with the right person, as often the manager or owner wasn't in and staff wouldn't necessarily know when they would be in.



Street presence

We also set up temporary street stalls to spread the word and gather insights on what people think of the high street and the choices they currently make and would like to make.

To help us gather insights and to make these visible to others and build a collective picture we created a map of each area for people to add their comments to.

In Haringey we arranged a stall on a nearby weekend food market, timed for the Halloween weekend when a higher than usual number of visitors were anticipated. In Southwark we arranged a stall on East Street market and spoke with passing families as well as with some of the traders on the market. In Lambeth we arranged a stand outside Stockwell tube station and spoke with passers by.





Food week in Haringey and Southwark

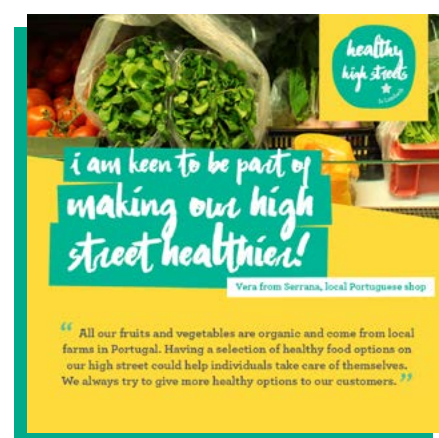
This involved a number of small food outlets providing a special offer on a healthier menu item for a week to help launch the challenge – it was useful in that it gave the businesses an easy, concrete way to engage. However, take up of the offers was low. From talking with businesses at the time and through our experience of testing ideas later in the programme, one likely reason for there being low take up may have been because we didn't have long to promote the offers. It takes time for people to notice and follow up on new offers.

Social media campaign in Lambeth

We used social media in the other areas too but ran this as more of a campaign in Lambeth (having learnt that we didn't have enough promotion time for food week offers). Businesses were pushed for time but interested in the issue. We wanted to use their interest to encourage others to take part. The social media campaign involved posting photos of four businesses, as well as other organisations, with quotes about their interest in creating a healthier high street, to try to inspire other businesses.

We also made contact with local networks in each area and promoted the challenge through them, sending information for notice boards and newsletters, and via social media.

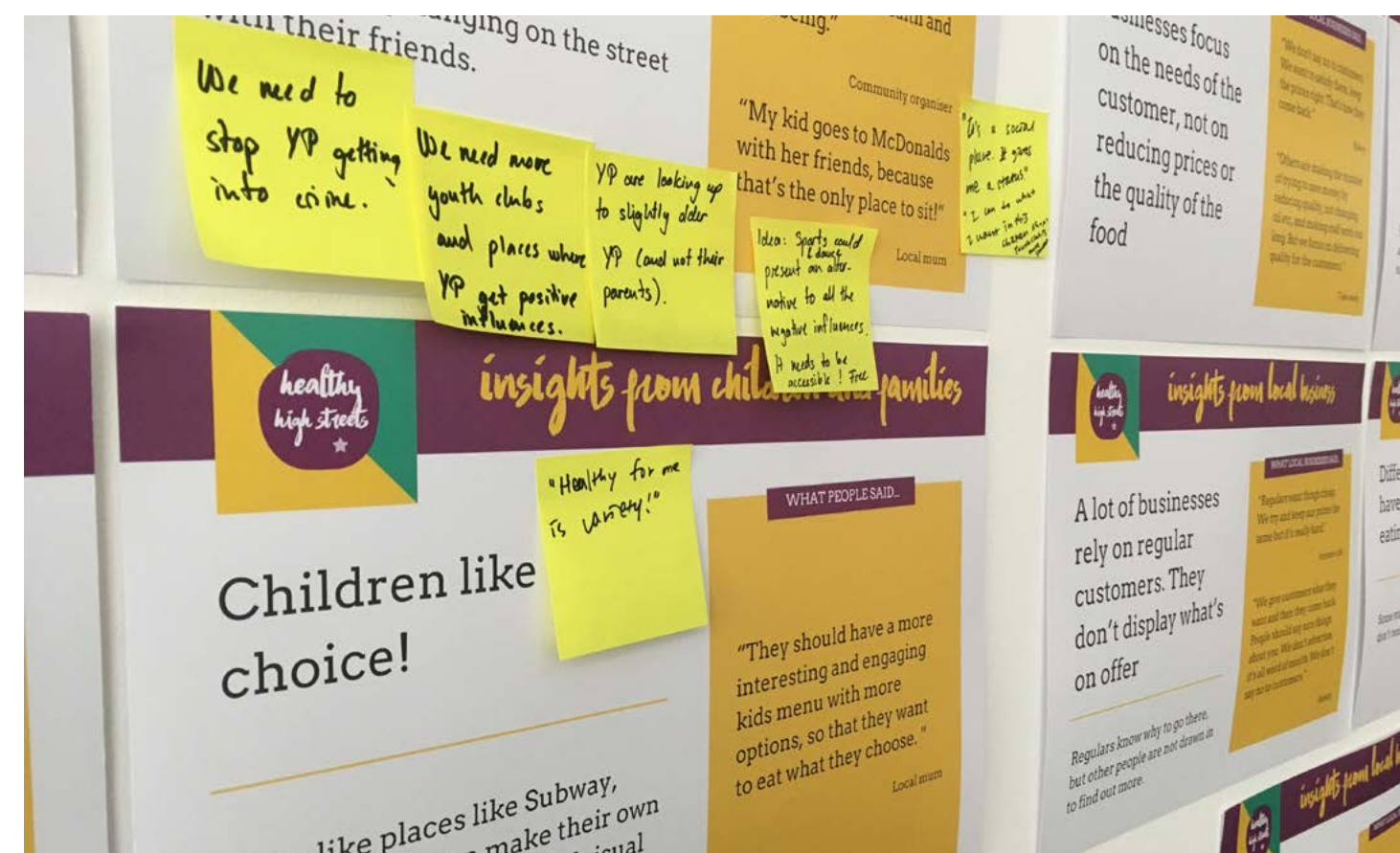
The engagement and promotion we did face-to-face and through local networks was the most effective, particularly where we communicated with people multiple times.



Supporting people to put forward ideas

Ideas events

We held an event in each location, at a venue on or very close to the high street, to help inspire and support people to put forward ideas. These were promoted in advance through social media, local press where possible, local networks, emails and word of mouth. At the events we made available the insights we had from talking with people in the area; examples of initiatives from elsewhere; and simple insights from the Behavioural Insights Team on making healthy choices. Members of the Healthy High Street team were on hand to help people develop ideas or to provide feedback on ideas. The majority of people who came were residents, social entrepreneurs or from community groups; businesses found it hard to give up the time to come - four attended in Haringey and none in the other locations.



Hands on support for generating and submitting ideas

Businesses in particular needed a lot of encouragement and practical support to help them submit ideas – help with recognising they might have an idea; language support; help with filling in the form. This support was offered one-to-one at times that suited the businesses, and a small number of businesses took up this offer.

How did people respond to the challenge?

Having a clearly defined goal and a brand gave us a clear reason and way in to talking with businesses, and others. It worked well to engage lots of different people in the community in talking about the same issue from different angles, giving us useful insight into the potential for change on the high streets.

The conversations around the goal, because of the launch of the challenge, also created ripples – raising awareness of the issue and encouraging people to think about what they could do and talk with each other about their hopes and ideas.

Businesses were enthusiastic about the notion of a healthier high street. However, they often struggled to turn their enthusiasm for the goal into engagement with the process of the challenge – few could make it to ideas events and few submitted ideas because they were too pressed for time. Businesses also weren’t used to engaging with the kind of programme process we set out. Many businesses are used to coming up with ideas for improving sales or running their businesses, but not for meeting other aims that have the potential to be related to but aren’t core to their business, through a process run by someone outside of their business. The prize money wasn’t an effective incentive for businesses in this instance. For some businesses, the ideas of improving things for the community and influencing health outcomes for children were compelling reasons to participate.

“For me it’s about strengthening our communities. I want to be part of this initiative to support the community!”

Restaurant owner

Those who showed an interest, and particularly those high street businesses who went as far as putting forward ideas, were often motivated by a sense of community responsibility. This was especially true if they a) have built strong relationships with their customers; b) have been established for a longer time in that location. This is also something that SHIFT have found through their work - the extent to which an outlet is run by people with local links affects their business choices and can increase their motivation to make health improvements.

“I would like to offer only healthy options, but I am not sure the market is ready for this.”

Fried Chicken Shop Owner

Many businesses, including those motivated by doing good for the community, needed to be able to see that the aims of creating a healthier high street could be consistent with and helpful to business outcomes.

Engagement worked differently in different locations – the engagement with businesses and conversion of engagement to action was most effective in Haringey, where we had introductions to businesses from someone who had already built a relationship with those businesses. Here we found some businesses with promising ideas, and one of those (Tasters) has resulted in promising results from testing and a case study that could potentially act as inspiration for other similar businesses. The engagement with businesses was most difficult in Lambeth where the density of businesses is much lower. However, the idea we supported in Lambeth has taught us that supporting young customers to engage with businesses might be an effective way of encouraging action. In Southwark we attracted a couple of early stage food businesses and social entrepreneurs working with food.



# food businesses (est) ⁹	89	67	16
# businesses engaged	50	40	16
# businesses contributing to challenge launch*	10	8	13
# people attending ideas event	c.35	c.24	4
# businesses attending ideas event	4	0	0
# ideas submitted	9	8	9
# ideas led by or partnering businesses	5 existing 3 new**	4 existing*** 3 new	2 partnering 1 new

* By advertising ‘food week’ offers; displaying info on the challenge; taking part in the social media campaign

** one of these businesses was existing but not local so counted as new to the area

*** one of these was a local food business run from home, and two were healthy food consultancy businesses (one local and one not)

9. Food environment assessment tool (Feat) 2018, UKCRC Centre for Diet and Activity Research (CEDAR), University of Cambridge, <http://www.feat-tool.org.uk>

4. The ideas: testing possibilities in the three high street areas



Tasters chicken shop, West Green Road, Haringey

Tasters looks like an average London high street chicken shop, but its proprietor is on a quest to quietly shift the eating habits of his clientele, especially children and young people. Shahid Majeed, owner and manager of Tasters, has been developing and testing a new, healthier menu for children and learning how to nudge the after-school crowd into giving it a try.

Shahid's winning idea was further developed and then tested over a 4 week period of trading. The first week saw the launch of the new menu for children to rival an existing menu with its fried chicken favourites. The existing menu includes chicken nuggets, chicken strips, burgers and fries. The new, healthier menu features grilled chicken,

salad and chunky chips (which are generally lower in calories than French fries) in controlled portion sizes and is pitched at the same price point (£1.30 to £2.50) as the existing fried chicken menu for children. Shahid knows that this is absolutely crucial to making a healthier option genuinely accessible. Visually the new (grilled) menu is displayed in a similar style to the existing (fried) menu, so it doesn't look drastically different to customers and staff.

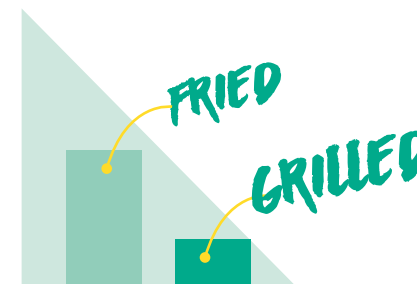
Through the other weeks in the trial, staff at Tasters experimented with different nudging techniques, including offering special discounts during the after-school rush and recommending that customers consider the healthier menu for children at point of sale.

Sales of the healthier children's menu have been strong. In the third week of the trial (when the 'after school special' was tested), sales of the healthier menu even surpassed the fried food menu (189 items versus 102).

% customers choosing the healthier option:



WEEK 1:
New menu
35% choosing healthier



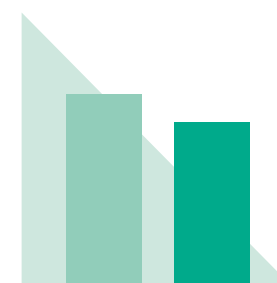
WEEK 2:
New menu
47% choosing healthier



WEEK 3:
Promotion and nudging
65% choosing healthier



WEEK 4*:
Promotion and nudging
46% choosing healthier



50% kids menu sales overall were from the new healthy menu

c.30% less Kcals and >40% less sat fat across the total grilled menu compared to the total fried menu

Next steps

Shahid believes the early sales figures are extremely promising and he expects to see an even greater uptake of the healthier options over time. He said,

"The regular, loyal customers know what they want. It will take time to shift behaviour, but what will happen in the future? Sales of the grilled chicken will continue to grow."

According to Shahid, crucial factors for success are an affordable price-point and selling something that looks and tastes good:

"The main reason people will switch is because the alternative tastes good. The most important thing is you need to know how to cook healthier and tasty food."

*Week four included a bank holiday and therefore less school sales



Oasis Play and Leila's Corner Cafe, Lambeth

Oasis Play is a local youth charity in Stockwell. From March to May 2018, David Owge and Rio Garcia from Oasis Play, worked with 8 young volunteers aged between 11-18, to run a campaign to make healthier food choices easier for children and young people on Clapham Road and around Stockwell tube station.

Oasis Play's idea was focused on youth led customer engagement with businesses. It involved developing a tasty, healthy, and attractive menu for children and young people at a local cafe; engaging other food businesses on the high street to offer healthier food menus; and promoting the healthier menus amongst other local children, young people and parents. Oasis believed that in order to understand how to develop a healthier menu for children and young people, they needed to involve young people as customers to understand their preferences and behaviours.

David from Oasis Play approached Leila's Corner Cafe, a local food cafe on Clapham Road, to introduce a healthier children and young people's menu at their shop. This would, they hoped, offer an alternative to some of the unhealthy options available to young people on the high street. The cafe had few children and young people as their customers, and the owner was keen for more children and young people to come to their shop to buy healthier meals. Leila's Cafe and Oasis developed the menu in consultation with young people, with the final food menu featuring four different food

options - a chicken goujon wrap, tuna wrap, falafel wrap and beef pasta, each at £3.50.

Through tasting sessions and consultation with young people there was a very positive reaction to the type of food on offer in terms of taste. The price point was also discussed with young people, and according to our young volunteers, most young people had a £2-2.50 budget from their parents. Leila's cafe wanted to offer healthy food at an affordable price, but weren't able to offer the healthy menu options for less than £3.50. The owner said,

"Some small businesses that offer healthier food at an affordable price, might have less staff, lower rent. There is no other option for us."

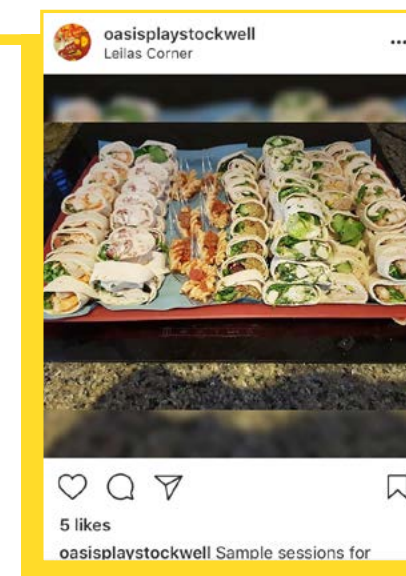
The final menu was made available over a 4 week period of trading, and the Oasis team promoted the menu in various ways - through word of mouth, Instagram and Snapchat, food tasting sessions, high street shops, schools and resident associations. Despite the overall promotional effort, the initial sales of the healthier children and young people's menu was very low, and children and young people said they and their peers didn't attend because of the high price. One of the young volunteers said,

"I like the wraps, it's fresher and tastier than fried chicken and chips. But 3.50 is too much for us. £3 is even a push for young people."

Although the young people were interested in healthier options and liked the taste of



Poster co-designed by young volunteers



the food on the menu, for most children and young people in the area their priority when it comes to food is about having something that fills them up at a price they can afford.

A few parents did buy healthier wraps on the way to pick up their children from schools after the week of the 'food tasting sessions'. Staff at Leila's thought the parents seemed to already know what they wanted to buy before they walked into the shop, suggesting that they had become aware of the offer and heard that the food was good through the food tasting sessions.

Although take up of the menu at Leila's was low, there was another benefit to the work that had been done on developing the menu with young people. It seems that through engaging young people in developing healthy menu options, young people developed a better understanding of and appreciation for healthy food. The young volunteers said,

"The project made me more open minded to healthier food and options."

"I didn't know a smoothie can be unhealthy!"

As part of the project, the young volunteers also engaged with other food businesses on Clapham Road to encourage them to start to offer healthier options to young people. Towards the end of the project they had positive conversations with the owner of a popular take-away chicken shop on the high street, who became interested in offering a grilled chicken kebab option. This same take-away outlet had been less responsive to the efforts of the Healthy High Street team to engage them in the programme, suggesting that that messages around healthy food options are much more powerful if they come from customers.

Next steps

Leila's cafe will continue to offer the new children and young people's menu at the price of £3.50 for a while. They agree the price is too high for children and young people, but they want to continue to make the slightly cheaper, healthy options available in the next few months. The owner said,

"The poster looks really nice. I would have never made this kind of poster for myself because we don't have a budget for that. I already have the poster anyway, so I will continue to offer the new menu."

Oasis believes people should focus on a holistic approach to healthy eating and that should include supporting young people to learn about growing food, healthy eating and healthy choices. According to Rio,

"One of the kids laughed at those wraps when we did the food sampling event. I convinced her to try it first, and she liked it. It's always important to promote healthy options and letting the kids know about it."

The trial also shows there is potential value in young customers being involved in engaging with food businesses to think about healthier menu options, to show and build demand for healthier options.

Southwark social food entrepreneurs

In Southwark the judges, with additional support from Guy's and St Thomas' Charity, decided that the plans for support should be flexed. This was because while all the ideas presented had potential, they were all at an early stage of development. Rather than try to rapidly get one of these early stage ideas ready to test, it was decided that the five local entrepreneurs who had put the ideas forward should be supported as a group to further develop their ideas.

Eat fit, Drink fit, Be fit

Social entrepreneur Jude Jubey is developing a programme for 13-18 year olds that aims to help them to develop stronger awareness of healthy behaviours. Eat Fit, Drink Fit and Be Fit will be tested in partnership with the Youth Offending Service in Southwark. Jude has mobilised a passionate team of people from the local area who are great at relating to young people, are looking to give back to the community and who are willing to help develop and deliver the work. The concept for the course and the design for the work is being shaped by deep engagement with young people about their lives and what they need to help them eat more healthily.

East Street Cooking Club

Amparo Rendon of the Latin American Cultural Group has worked for over 14 years with local youth groups and organising local events. She wants to bring isolated parents together around cooking and healthy recipes, using multicultural recipes as a way to connect and build relationships in the community, as well as providing a good experience for people at local events. She is exploring how to bring these aims together through the 'East Street Cooking Club'.

Yipao Street Food

Yipao is a young Colombian street food business offering healthier street food - freshly prepared corn breads and fruit salads - prepared by chef Carlos Ramirez and using ingredients from East Street market. They are also running workshops and taking part in events to help introduce young people to healthy tastes and to inspire young people to be interested in preparing healthy food.

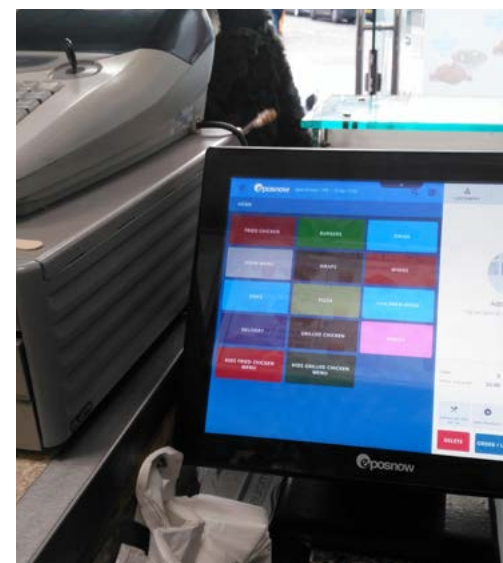
Nika's Kitchen

Annika Clinkett is developing a series of healthy eating, creative after school workshops for primary aged children and their parents/carers.

The workshops will teach the children and their parents/carers how to make a variety of simple, healthier alternative meals, snacks and desserts with an aim to use seasonal ingredients, which are available from local shops and stalls in and around the East Street market. These fruits, vegetables and herbs will be used to make easy, affordable, nutritious and delicious, plant based meals. The younger primary group sessions will have very simple, fun, hands on and quick meals, snacks and desserts such as 'Mr/Mrs Veg Pizza.' The upper primary group sessions will include more challenging dishes, such as take away alternatives like 'Vegetable Un-fried Rice' and 'No-ham burgers'.

Rudy's Kitchen

Rudy's Kitchen will extend a warm welcome to neighbours and provide access to great-tasting, healthy and affordable food that can be enjoyed in a sociable setting as well as easily recreated at home. Run by Rudy Bangura, an experienced cook and local resident, Rudy's Kitchen will be staffed by a volunteer workforce who meet weekly to shop and cook together, and then bring nourishing, healthy, affordable meals and good cheer to neighbours.



How have the ideas been supported and tested?

In Haringey and Lambeth we provided one to one support and advice. In Haringey this meant having regular conversations with Shahid, the owner of Tasters; in Lambeth this meant working closely with David from Oasis Play and also meeting with his team, the young volunteers and the manager and staff at Leila's Cafe. This support and advice included helping to clarify the ideas; helping to gather feedback from potential customers; planning and setting up trialling activity; and evaluating the ideas (through collecting sales data and interviewing customers and staff).

We also provided a small amount of cash to help make the testing happen. In Haringey this paid for a new EPOS (electronic point of sale) till, to help track more accurate data on sales and understand the take up of the new menu. Budget was also spent on the design and printing of the new menus. In Lambeth the budget was used to pay for food tasting sessions with young people and the design and printing of new menus.

In Southwark, for the five entrepreneurs who had presented their early stage ideas to the judges, we created a flexible six month incubator programme, with a mix of 1:1 and group support. At the time of writing this is just over mid-way through. Support is focussed on clarifying the idea, understanding and being clear about the target audience, prototyping the idea, and preparing to deliver it. So far the group have valued the opportunity to strengthen their ideas through planning how their customers or participants will experience their product or programme (using personas and service blueprinting), and they have especially valued meeting each other. Several of them have started to collaborate with and support each other independently, for example by co-delivering events and workshops, or by informally coaching each other when pitching to other potential supporters.

5. What did we learn about how people make food choices on the high street?

These insights are from the engagement work we did and from the ideas we helped to test.

It's not all about food

Where and what to eat is often a social choice. Young people need places to be where they can meet their friends, feel safe and feel welcome. These places can be few and far between, especially in the context of reductions in resources available for facilities for young people. People often use fast food outlets because they are places to be - a social hub. In terms of food choices young people may simply choose the options their friends take. Both the location and food choices involve a complex mixture of peer and lifestyle factors. For some teenagers for example their motivation to eat healthily is based on their own appearance.

"I always go to the same chicken shop. It's where my mum drops me off for school. I go there with my friends."

Boy, 14 years old

"I don't eat those chips, I'm trying to lose weight so I go to the gym and play football everyday. I'm also trying to eat healthy."

Boy, 15 years old



Price point is critical

The areas we worked in have significant levels of poverty and affordability of food is a challenge. Most young people have a definitive cut off point of £2, and sometimes less. High street retailers know this and design their menus accordingly. "£2 is my tops" was what one customer told us in Haringey, and this was echoed in lots of other conversations with young people and parents. Young people chose to go to places close to home or school, where their friends go and where they can get a decent amount for their £2. Young people and adults talked about getting value for their money, and that was most often associated with quantity. Particularly after school children are hungry and cheap takeaways are an easy way to fill up. Price definitely influences food choices on the high street. Even when people are interested in eating healthily, there can be a tension between people's desire to be healthier and their need for quantity – they want to be fit and healthy but need to get filled up. There is also often a perception from customers that healthy food is more expensive. Businesses also commented on the challenge of offering healthy food cheaply, with healthier food costing more to produce as it often involves more fresh food, which can require more preparation time, different storage requirements, and/or have a shorter shelf life (so more waste).

"If the new kids menu was slightly cheaper, more people would buy it. I want to find a way to make that price barrier to go away."

Shahid, Tasters

"We're cooking everything fresh on the day, but this means we have a lot of food waste... It's a big problem for us."

Cafe owner

There is a demand for tasty food and some demand for healthy food

The demand for more variety and/or healthy options comes from children more often than they get credit for. Children like being able to make choices. Taste also really matters. One of the reasons people love fried chicken and several other unhealthy food choices is for the taste. Our conversations echoed conclusions by SHIFT and others, that fried chicken shops are popular due to food being cheap, quick, filling and tasty. Some people do have a perception that healthy food won't be tasty, but many people we spoke with were open to other options that look tasty too, as long as they're affordable. At Tasters customers chose the grilled chicken based on it looking tasty and came back because they thought it was. In Lambeth the young people were pleasantly surprised when they had the chance to sample healthier food options for the new menu.

"The main reason people will switch is because the alternative tastes good."

Shahid, Tasters

"One of the kids laughed when we did the food sampling. I convinced her to try it first, and she liked it."

Rio, Oasis Play

People are confused about what is ‘healthy’

Several people we spoke with had different ideas about what ‘healthy’ is, or said that people they know have the wrong idea about what healthy is, and told us that they think more education is needed. Some of the ideas we received were based on this demand, such as the Eat Fit, Drink Fit, Be Fit programme in Southwark which was created by Jude Jubey because young people were telling him they wanted to understand how to be healthier.

Businesses want to do the right thing for their customers, but doing that can be complicated

All small businesses care about their customers and what they want from a sales point of view, and successful businesses credit their success on their focus on their customers. Often they care about their customers because they feel a connection to them as regulars. This can mean that they feel they can make friendly suggestions to those customers about trying new things, or it can make them wary of making changes in case they lose those regular customers (who often know exactly what they want without looking at the menu or ordering off the menu). Some business owners care about their customers’ well-being because they feel they should be a responsible member of the community as a local business owner. A few businesses however feel that schools and parents should be responsible for children’s health. Several businesses we spoke with were concerned that healthy will be too expensive for their customers, because they don’t believe they can offer healthier food cheaply. Some business owners we spoke to assumed that customers aren’t interested in healthy food, on the basis that they like the unhealthy offers, which is slightly different to what we heard from residents.

People do like the unhealthy offers but people don’t choose ‘unhealthy’ they choose cheap, filling and tasty, and several people we spoke to said they wished more healthy options fulfilling these criteria were available.

“Healthier food costs more. I would like to offer this. But, I would have to raise the price and my customers wouldn’t be happy about this.”
Fried Chicken Shop Owner

“We give customers what they want and then they come back. People should say nice things about you. We don’t advertise, it’s all word of mouth. We don’t say no to customers.”
Bakery

There is a complex relationship between home/work/school/street choices, and people aren’t consistent with their choices across the different areas of their lives

Some people we spoke with said that they eat healthy meals at home but eating out is a treat so they’re more likely to allow themselves and their kids to make less healthy choices when they eat out compared to at home. We heard that some young people skip lunch so they can spend their £2 lunch money on chicken and chips after school. We also heard a story of a young person looking after younger siblings because of parents’ working hours, and relying on takeaways or convenience food because of a lack of cooking skills.

“I eat fish, vegetables and fruits at home. I ask my mum for these because they are healthy foods, but when I’m out I like to eat chicken and chips, I just like eating it!”
Girl, 7 years old

“I’m hungry and tired. The children didn’t want food so I didn’t get them anything. If the children were eating they could have whatever they wanted.”
Parent

“When we eat out, it’s a treat for us and kids. It’s a special occasion, we let our kids eat whatever they want. But we cook healthy meals at home.”
Mum



6. what did we learn about engaging with businesses to make healthier eating easier?

Getting some insight into how to engage with businesses on making our high street environments healthier was an important goal of Healthy High Streets. We weren't trying to build a full understanding of this - there are many possible (incentive and punitive based) ways of engaging with businesses on the issue - but we were experimenting with one particular way, and also engaging with businesses as we got ready to launch the challenge. The challenge prize aimed to tap into their moral purpose and give them an opportunity and incentive to experiment with a new idea. Through this we gained some insights that might also be useful to consider when working with businesses on the issue in other ways.

Small food businesses are under pressure to survive

Many small food businesses are struggling to stay afloat. They cannot participate in influencing health outcomes if it threatens profits. Small food business owners do care and want to act, but they lead busy lives running sometimes fragile businesses. We need to consider what's going on in their whole lives and help them to make a profit. We need to find ways to support small businesses to be able to create healthier offers that meet their customer needs and make a profit at the same time.

It is also worth taking time to listen to how a specific business operates, what their specific challenges are and what the owners know about their customers. This might lead to practical insights that mean that small changes to advice for businesses could lead to greater take up.

Small food business owners have particular dynamics and ways of working

If the owners and managers of small food businesses are going to be successfully supported to make changes in high street food offers, those supporting them will need to understand and respect that small high street food businesses have their own ways of working. They don't work 9-5 and don't tend to use email. They operate in fast-paced environments governed by the rhythms of customers, which aren't always predictable. Their business management and development happens in-between prep and serving times. Often the businesses we spoke to could only engage with us mid-afternoon or sometimes at weekends. During the week we found that Monday – Wednesday was generally better than later in the week. The changes business owners make won't be 'projects' to them and won't be managed as those used to managing projects would expect. So those advising, encouraging and supporting businesses may have to adapt, and have permission to adapt, their own working practices.

There are a few pioneering businesses out there

On the whole, the businesses we spoke to needed lots of prompting and hands on help to come up with or realise they had an idea to influence healthy eating choices, and to put ideas forward. Many businesses were interested in supporting healthier eating and happy to say so publicly (by taking part in the Lambeth social media campaign). Around 20% were happy to try something practical quickly (offering food week offers). Very few had the time and/or confidence to come to an ideas event or put forward an idea.

We did find a small number of pioneering businesses who are trying something new to increase healthy and decrease unhealthy eating. They have good ideas and understand market trends and customer behaviour. There may well be more of these businesses operating in other locations in London. It is worth trying to find these, supporting them over time, networking them so they can learn from and support each other, and promoting them to act as inspiration for others by demonstrating what can be done.

Relationships matter

Personal introductions helped hugely – being introduced by someone familiar, local and trusted helped. This was particularly true in Haringey where the Senior Environmental Health Practitioner, had already built good relationships with many local businesses over time through her inspections and Healthier Catering Commitment work.

When we didn't have personal introductions and were approaching businesses 'cold' we had more success when we returned to a business several times and where we managed to reach the owner or manager. When we got to know the owner or manager we had to build a relationship with them so they trusted us, we could understand their motivations and keep them interested, we could use language that worked for them, and we could understand what might work for them and what support they needed.

Many other businesses are interested in doing something but need an easy ask with clear guidance

Aside from the pioneering few, many businesses are interested in doing something but don't have the capacity or capability to develop new ideas that aim for public health outcomes. They may welcome and respond to clearly defined small commitments that are easy to implement and will lead to increased profit, with some advice on how to put these in place, support with overcoming their barriers (such as price, equipment, space, knowledge of what healthy is and how to prepare healthy options), as well as ongoing moral support. Understanding the wider range of levers and rewards that might be on offer to a small business to improve the range of healthy choices could also support others to adopt or adapt some of the innovation we saw in the pioneering business.

"[To influence other businesses, I would] Help them to educate themselves - raise awareness about what healthy options might be. I would also tell them that providing healthy choices - like grilled chicken - increases revenue."

Shahid, Tasters

"Not everyone can prepare healthy food - you need a grill for example, and not everywhere has the kit."

Shahid, Tasters

Hints and tips for people trying to tackle childhood obesity, especially on and with the high street

The high street is one part of the complex picture of people's lives and choices

It does seem that there is potential to engage with those working on and using the high street to enable them to make changes to food offers and lead community projects that will improve the high street food environment and the choices that people make.

It is important that these efforts are part of a wider, multi-faceted approach to tackling childhood obesity taking into account that there are a wide range of factors, settings and relationships affecting the food choices available to people and the purchasing decisions that they make. It is difficult to isolate the decisions people make on the high street as these will also be affected by their social relationships, their experience at school, their working patterns and their home situation.

There may therefore be potential to find more examples of local action and solutions through running a hyper local programme with a similar goal to the Healthy High Streets challenge, but that explores and allows for ideas that overlap the different and related aspects of people's complex lives (work, school, home, friends and families homes, leisure, high street).

There are some pioneering small food businesses out there and it's worth working with them

Some small food businesses, like Tasters, can see the emerging business advantage to providing healthier options, and/or have a feeling that they have some responsibility to the community they are based in.

There is unexplored potential to work closely with these businesses to develop healthier eating options and influence public health outcomes. It may be worth finding more of these pioneers and offering them support to be able to make a success of and understand the impact of their actions and new food offers, from a sales as well as health point of view.

We saw that businesses are up for working with a partner who is sensitive to their barriers and constraints, on projects which help them to develop a new healthy offer. Equally, other businesses adopting new offers may also need nutritional advice and menu ideas, equipment, promotional advice and/or new skills, so support with these, as well as moral support and reassurance that their efforts can be profitable, could be offered to businesses to be 'early adopters' of the changes. The actions of these businesses could then be used to inspire others, and they could perhaps be introduced so they can support and learn from each other.

Change takes time

Businesses making changes to food options, and customers deciding to purchase those new food options takes time. For businesses, there are practical changes to be made, which take time to put in place - creating new menus, updating equipment and building staff knowledge of the new menus.

For customers, it takes time to become aware of new options. For example we found that regular customers often don't look at menus as they know what they want to order, so may not spot new offers. If people aren't used to trying different kinds of foods they can be hesitant, though we did see that sometimes prompts from a staff member or another customer can encourage them.

Businesses will need evidence that there is interest in new options, for example by seeing other businesses making changes successfully, and reassurance that the shift towards the new choices is happening, albeit gradually, for example by receiving help to track sales data.

Meet people where they're at

Tasters in Haringey is popular with young people and the menu was created to have a similar look to the existing menu, with as close a price point as possible to what the young people were already paying.

The Southwark entrepreneurs are working with locations, recipes and times that don't require huge shifts in people's daily routines and preferences; for example, guided healthier shopping trips to the market after school drop off; sharing traditional family cultural recipes in a friendly cooking club; offering affordable, healthier meals in a community centre on an estate.

In all the Healthy High Street locations building on existing trusted relationships has created opportunities for change.

Young people themselves may be able to play an important role in developing and spreading solutions

The work of Oasis Play in Lambeth suggests that young people could play an important role in helping businesses to understand their preferences and behaviours, and that the messages about wanting healthier options can be more powerful if they are seen as customer demand.

The initial interest in Jude Jubey's 'Eat fit, Drink fit, Be fit' programme in Southwark also suggests that there could be potential in working with young people to design other types of solutions, such as education/awareness programmes.

Involving young people in engaging businesses and/or designing solutions can help make sure that changes make sense in relation to the lives and choices of young people, show businesses that there is customer demand for changes, and improve young people's awareness of what healthy is.

Hints and tips for Councils and others working with small food businesses

Invest in building relationships with businesses

One of the most important insights from our work for Councils and others working directly with small food businesses is the value gained by investing in building relationships and trust over time.

There is an opportunity to do this through the Healthier Catering Commitment. The Healthier Catering Commitment is being delivered successfully in Haringey thanks to the person responsible for this having been able to take the time to get to know the businesses, find different ways to explain the reasons changes are needed, and build ongoing relationships with the businesses.

This has partly been possible due to the voluntary Healthier Catering Commitment being delivered by the Senior Environmental Health Practitioner. It seems this dual role has made it easier to get a foot in the door and start a conversation about a healthier food environment. Most businesses want to comply with food safety and the time spent engaging and educating to improve Food Hygiene Ratings has been able to lead to conversations about joining the Healthier Catering Commitment scheme.

In Healthy High Streets we were able to build on the relationships developed through this dual role to have more ambitious conversations with some of the businesses.

Flex your ways of working to meet and support businesses effectively

In order to be able to build relationships with businesses it is important to recognise the way businesses work - their means of communication, their working hours – and to flex office based, email based, formal project management type ways of working in order to build relationships and work with businesses at times and in ways that they can engage. This may require Councils to be more flexible with their own staff working hours.

Expectations on the evaluation of changes will also need to be realistic. Small food retailers are not stable or controlled environments and staff and customer behaviours might be unexpected (for example customers may order things that aren't on the menu). It is also important to listen to the day-to-day pressures businesses are under, including financial pressures, show that you understand and sympathise with these and suggest changes that are manageable within these pressures.

Share successes to inspire others

Tell the story of Tasters as an example of what can be done, being aware that there may be some equipment (eg. a grill; new menus) and/or support (eg. understanding what is healthier; new food preparation skills) that businesses might need in order to introduce healthier options.

As you build relationships with businesses look for the positive stories locally to you and share those.

Make use of local strengths, assets and existing relationships

Each area will have different assets to build on. In Haringey we were able to build on the relationships the Council had with businesses. Lambeth has a very active youth sector and strong, established youth organisations, who are well connected with both young people and others in the community.

The reputation and relationship with the youth organisation influenced the owner of Leila's Corner Cafe, who said, "it's always nice to do something for community. It was both about community and healthy eating. I decided to take part because of Oasis."

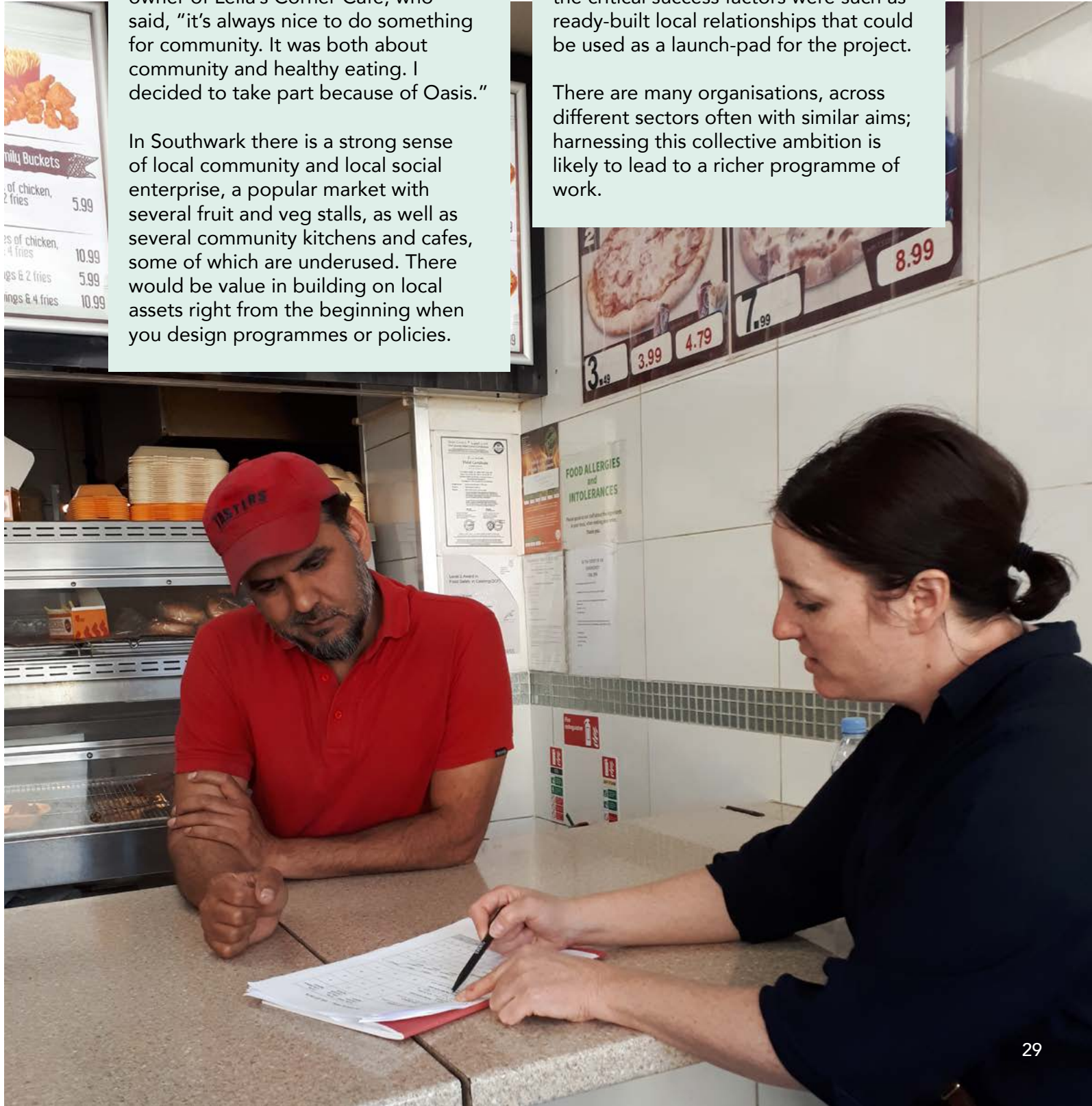
In Southwark there is a strong sense of local community and local social enterprise, a popular market with several fruit and veg stalls, as well as several community kitchens and cafes, some of which are underused. There would be value in building on local assets right from the beginning when you design programmes or policies.

Build partnerships with others to share learnings and amplify impact

The range of partners involved in Healthy High Streets brought a variety of complimentary skills, experience and resources to the project; ultimately enhancing the success and value of the work.

Testing a similar methodology in 3 separate locations allowed for comparisons and deeper learning. It helped to understand what some of the critical success factors were such as ready-built local relationships that could be used as a launch-pad for the project.

There are many organisations, across different sectors often with similar aims; harnessing this collective ambition is likely to lead to a richer programme of work.



Hints and tips for people interested in finding and supporting hyper-local action

Have a clearly defined goal for your challenge and consider creating a brand

Having a clearly defined goal - "making it easier for young people and families to make more healthy and less unhealthy food choices on the high street" - gave us a clear reason and way in to talking with businesses, and others.

It was also useful for engaging lots of different people in the community in talking about the same issue from different angles, which gave us broader insight into the potential for change on the high streets.

These conversations around the goal, which we had because of the launch of the challenge, also helped to raise awareness of the issue and encouraged people to think about what they could do and to talk with each other about their hopes and ideas. Having a brand also helped because people recognised us and saw that we were legitimate.

Take time to understand the motivations and likely barriers for your potential entrants before you design the challenge

It takes time to build relationships. We were building relationships with businesses whilst launching the challenge, so didn't learn before designing the challenge that the prize money wasn't an effective incentive for businesses (if they were interested it was because they care about their community, and in a few cases could see a commercial advantage to shifting to healthier food).

We also didn't fully appreciate the time pressures businesses were under. In many cases businesses found it difficult to turn their enthusiasm for the aim of the challenge into engagement with the process of the challenge (few could make it to ideas events and fewer still were able to submit ideas).

The same challenge design will work differently in different locations

Our challenge worked differently in different locations. The engagement with businesses and conversion of engagement to action was most effective in Haringey, where we had introductions to businesses from someone at the Council who had already built a relationship with those businesses; the engagement with businesses was most difficult in Lambeth where the density of businesses was much lower.

However, the strong youth sector in Lambeth meant that, through the idea we supported, we learnt that supporting young customers to engage with businesses might be an effective way of encouraging action. In Southwark we attracted mainly social enterprise based ideas, so rather than working with businesses we ended up working with some early stage socially focussed food businesses and social entrepreneurs.

A challenge prize might work to engage businesses if there are a significant number of businesses in the area, there are good local connections with the businesses that can be used for introductions, and there is enough time and budget to provide lots of regular communication and support to those businesses to enter the challenge. In other areas a challenge prize might work effectively to engage other types of organisation (eg. community, social enterprise) and individuals.

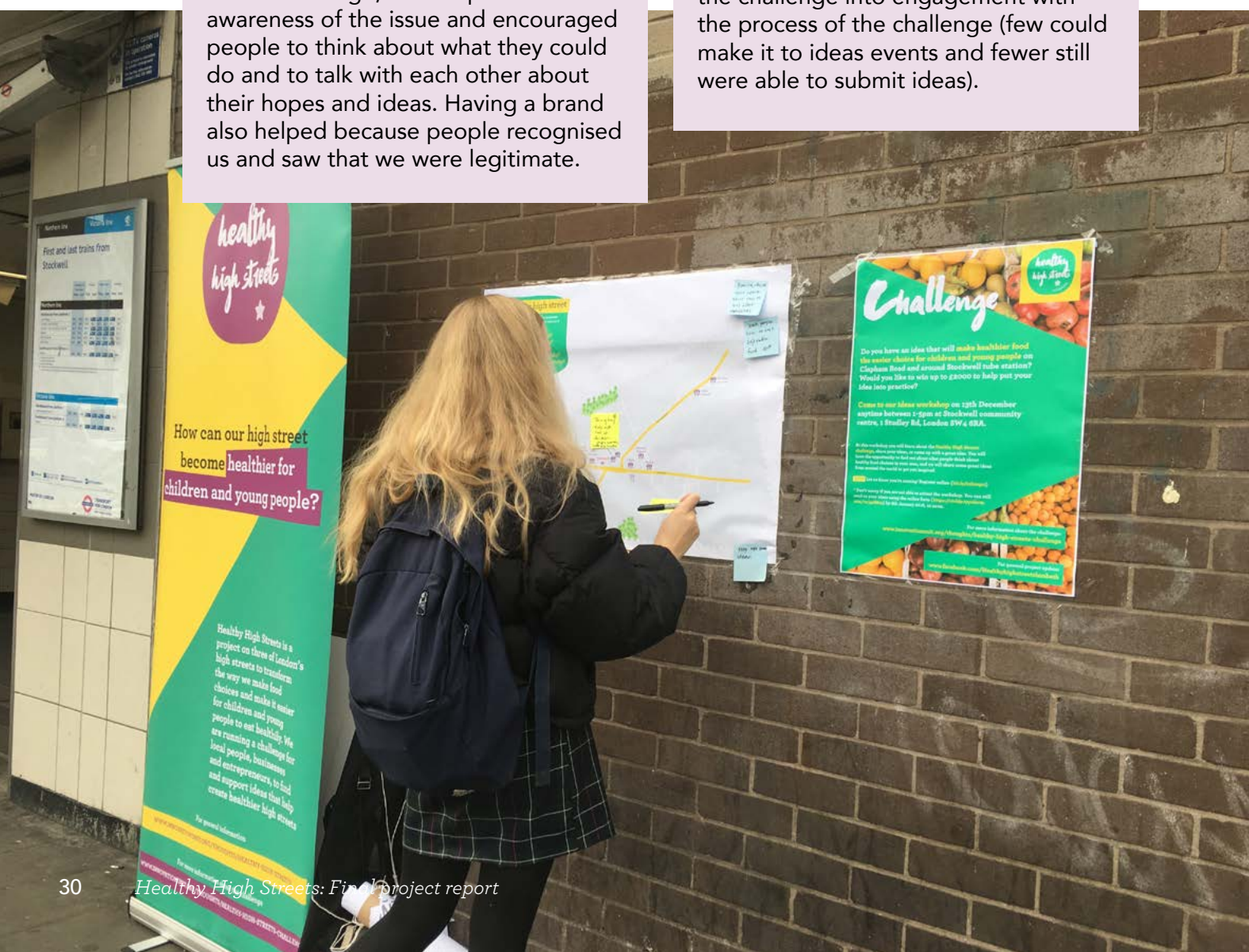
Plan for flexibility to enable best use of local assets

In Southwark we ended up flexing the support plan based on the ideas at the decision making stage, by deciding to support five ideas in a mini-incubator process.

This flexibility could be planned for earlier in the process so that the support that is most needed could be advertised to those best placed to take it up. So it might be possible to use a two step process, with step one using a clear 'challenge' goal to engage people in a specific area, to learn about how people really live in that area, how they make choices, and what the local assets and opportunities are; then step two designing support based on the opportunities and what is needed to realise them.

For example local insight might suggest that the best thing could be to co-create a systemic/multi-faceted place based solution with local people; or to broker relationships between local people and give them physical space to meet in to work on ideas together (food related ideas might also benefit from a kitchen space they can use to test their ideas in); or perhaps there will be specific ideas that could be supported and trialled more intensely; or enough social enterprise ideas to warrant setting up an incubator approach.

The challenges with planning this flexibility will be budgeting for it and managing people's expectations, but the chances of generating impact might be worth it. Flexibility in Healthy High Streets was helped by the involvement of agile philanthropic funding and an open, collaborative partnership. If you have good awareness of local assets and your target audience you may be able to design a programme from the outset to explicitly build on this.



Consider using different challenge prize structures - a staged approach over a longer period of time, or using a prize to incentivise scaling of effective actions

The kind of rapid, single decision stage challenge prize we ran was effective in highlighting an issue and engaging people with it, and for starting to learn about some of the possible solutions and local interest in taking action.

To take solutions further, if time and budget allow, it can be useful to consider a staged challenge prize, over a longer period of time. In this case a selected number of businesses/organisations/individuals are supported to further develop and strengthen their ideas, before the most promising of those more clearly defined ideas is then supported to test the idea in practice.

Alternatively, a challenge prize could potentially be used as an incentive for rewarding the changes people put in place inspired by others.

Create opportunities for the people behind the ideas to meet each other

At the Healthy High Streets judging days those behind the ideas presented their ideas in front of each other, and had the opportunity to offer each other supportive feedback. This resulted in a shared sense of passion for the issue in relation to the local area, and some new connections.

In Southwark, bringing the entrepreneurs we are supporting together as a group, has resulted in them offering each other practical and moral support and collaborating on new activity, as well as building a sense of shared endeavour locally.

Establish a collaborative team with diverse knowledge and skills to support the work

It is valuable to set up a diverse team that can meet regularly, work collaboratively, and between them has knowledge of the problem, the local area, and of innovation, as well as the ability to support local ideas.

Support for ideas might need to include support on clarifying the idea, managing the process and checking in on progress, design and/or promotion expertise, and subject expert knowledge (in this case about healthy food).

The ability to be 'on the ground' working closely with local people is also important. As well as having a partner with specific expertise in supporting ideas also consider opportunities for other partners to meet with the people behind the ideas as this could result in some useful two-way learning opportunities.

concluding comments

During Healthy High Streets we saw an openness to, and sometimes an explicit demand from, the public for healthier food options on the high street. People don't choose unhealthy, they choose tasty, filling and affordable (on the high streets we worked in, for many people, that means no more than £2 for a meal). Purchasing patterns might not suggest a demand for healthy food, but that doesn't mean people are not interested in it, and to say that we need to change people's choices doesn't make sense if affordable healthy options aren't available. There is potential for people to make healthier choices if healthier options meet the 'tasty, filling and affordable' criteria.

We also saw an interest from several existing small food businesses in offering healthier options and being part of a broader effort to create healthier environments in our local communities. A small number of these businesses are taking, for them, bold steps in adapting their menus; others are keen to do something but need to be helped with advice and encouragement to make changes. It is worth doing more through and alongside existing efforts such as the Healthier Catering Commitment, to support these businesses to make changes in ways that work for them.

Alongside the interest from businesses, we found community and resident groups and individual entrepreneurial residents with ideas to help others in their community make healthier choices. These ideas often crossed the boundaries between the high street, home, school and other community settings (youth clubs; community centres), and these ideas have the potential to support residents in ways that are realistic in relation to their lives.

Healthy High Streets was a short, experimental programme. It showed that working with small food businesses to help tackle childhood obesity is hard because of the financial and time pressures that small business owners and managers are under. However, we saw that relatively small changes to menus could persuade people to make healthier choices; we found that there are people in the communities around London high streets with relevant ideas for helping others make healthier choices; and we saw that young people are keen to be involved and can influence retailers.

Our experience and insights suggest that there is potential to do more to make healthier choices easier on the high street by listening to and building relationships with those who live and work in and around the high street, then by supporting those who have the ideas and motivation to lead local changes.

The Healthy High Street partners hope that the insights from the programme, as well as informing their own work, will also be able to be built upon by other Councils, funders, policy makers and others working to collectively reduce childhood obesity.



Innovation Unit is a social enterprise based in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. We work internationally, applying disciplined approaches to develop new solutions and create impact at scale.

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