

Rose Vouchers for fruit and veg.

Lambeth cluster mid-scheme evaluation: Emerging findings



Workshops findings and conclusions

Food Matters

July 2016

Rose Vouchers for fruit and veg. Lambeth cluster mid-scheme evaluation: Emerging findings

Findings from the mid-scheme evaluation workshops held at the following Lambeth Children's Centres:

- Clapham Manor 12.4.16
- Larkhall 18.4.16
- Maytree and Weir 21.4.16
- Stockwell and Jessop 22.4.16
- Kingswood Centre 10.5.16
- Treehouse and Jubilee 10.5.16

Background

The Rose Vouchers for Fruit and Veg. is an Alexandra Rose Charity project designed and delivered in partnership with Food Matters and aims to promote healthy eating and combat food poverty by giving families vouchers that can be redeemed for fresh fruit and vegetables at local markets.

In Lambeth the project supports families with the provision of Rose Vouchers that can be redeemed at the stalls of participating traders at Brixton Market and in West Norwood. Working in partnership with local children's centres the project works with families with young children who are living on low incomes. The children's centre staff identify the families who could benefit most from the scheme as well as providing support such as cooking classes to build their skills and confidence.

Rose Vouchers supports families to adopt healthier lifestyles in the crucial years before school starts. The project also provides valuable income for market traders while acknowledging the important role they play in public health by providing a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables at incredibly affordable prices.

The Rose Voucher for fruit and veg. scheme started in the Lambeth cluster in the spring of 2015. It focuses on parents of young families at 9 participating children's centres and fruit and veg. stalls in Brixton Market (Electric Ave. and Pope's Rd.) and in West Norwood (on the corner of Norwood Rd. and Chestnut Rd.).

Currently 121 families are receiving Rose Vouchers in the Lambeth cluster and of these 58 participated in the evaluation workshops.

Evaluation introduction

Purpose

Participatory workshops are held at the beginning of the Rose Voucher project prior to receiving any vouchers, mid-way through the scheme and at the end when vouchers are no longer being received. The purpose of the workshops is to monitor and assess the impact of the project on the participants by identifying any changes in their shopping and eating behaviour and their attitude to the project and its impact on the food they consume.

Families participating in the Lambeth cluster had been receiving Rose Vouchers for up to 10 months at the time of the mid-scheme evaluation (although some parents joined the scheme later and therefore had received vouchers for a shorter period at the time of the workshops).

Methodology

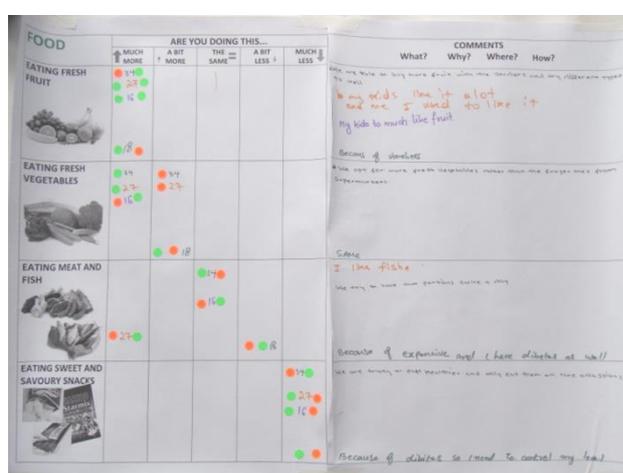
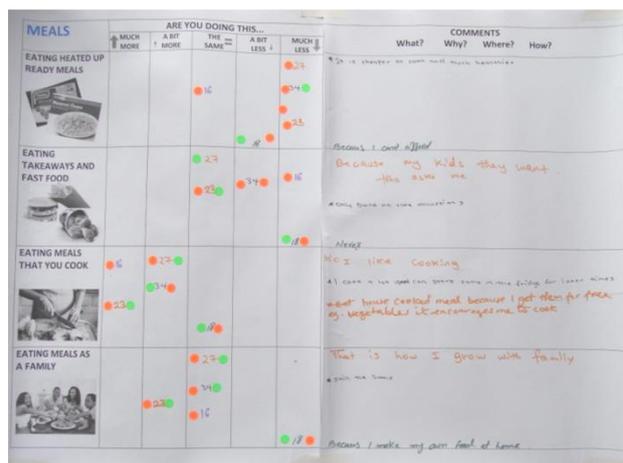
The workshops use an approach based on Participatory Appraisal focused on establishing a relaxed and informal atmosphere and allowing project participants to openly discuss their feelings about the project and its impact without fear of judgement and in a mutually supportive environment. To achieve this the workshops use active processes and visual tools drawn on flip-charts to encourage engagement, facilitate participation and document comments according to each participant's capacity.

Tools

The workshops last approximately 1 ½ hours each and follow the same structure using the same tools to allow direct comparison during analysis of the workshop outcomes. Whilst focusing on a participatory approach the workshops also collect quantitative information to provide, where possible, evidence of behaviour change to verify the anecdotal and more qualitative examples of project impact. For this reason the workshops combine group discussion tools, participatory verification tools, tabular food diaries and pie charts.

Where possible the workshops are co-facilitated by two Food Matters facilitators. This allows the opportunity for group activities to continue whilst individual perspectives are discussed and recorded – particularly when there are issues around literacy or language.

Examples of completed charts from two of the mid-scheme evaluation workshops



Emerging findings

The individual pie charts and diaries provide quantitative information that can help to identify specific changes in shopping and food consumption behaviour. This evidence of the project's impact can be supported by the qualitative information gathered during the participatory exercises and discussion with participants at the workshops. Emerging findings from both evaluation methods are presented here.

The findings from the participatory components of the workshops are summarised as theme statements and illustrated by comments written on the charts or on post-it notes by participants or as verbatim quotes recorded during the workshops.

A. Fruit and veg.

“The scheme has given me the opportunity to try different fruit and veg.”

There were a total of 67 comments regarding an increased quantity and variety of fruit and veg.

94% of families reported that their intake of fruit and vegetables had increased.

The Rose Vouchers support recipients to increase the quantity and variety of fruit and vegetables they have in their homes.

- This includes participants who ate little or no fruit before now enjoying eating fruit.

I'm now beginning to eat fruit - I didn't used to like it but now I try it and also like it

I'm not really a fruit person but now I buy fruit and blend it

- Participants also top up the vouchers with cash to increase the amount they can buy.
- Kids are able to try new things, help choose food at the market and learn about eating more healthy food.

My children are now asking for fruit and vegetables

- The households are able to regularly provide more fruit and having it available encourages children to eat it

Been able to increase the amount of fruit and veg in household

Children – the more they see, the more they want to eat it

Children didn't like eating fruit before but now it's around the house, they like it

Vouchers help to reduce risk when trying new fruit and vegetables 18 comments

- Buying food that potentially will not be eaten (because it is produce the family are not accustomed to) is perceived as a risk – money wasted.
- The vouchers help to overcome this feeling of risk

A lot of change is down to the vouchers, if it goes wrong it's not so much of a worry, RV are less risk

Trying new fruit - blueberries, raspberries. Opportunity to try something new - less risk

- Participants feel encouraged to try new things they haven't tried before.
- This includes participants of African origin trying western or European vegetables as well as participants from Asia and Europe trying African vegetables such as yam, cassava and plantains.

More willing to try something else. I tried yam for the first time - expensive but ok with voucher. Yam is filling, more than potato

Using vouchers means that imported vegetables are more affordable

- This is particularly important where certain produce is culturally significant – such as yam, cassava and plantain

Yam and cassava are expensive so I didn't buy – rice instead. Vouchers help me buy it

Vouchers are helping families eat cultural foods eg cassava and plantain which are usually more expensive to buy

Important to be able to use RV for yam, cassava, plantain

B. Financial support

“Amazing, can save some money”

There were 29 comments regarding the financial support provided by the vouchers

Changes behaviour around budgeting and planning the food shop

- For some participants who previously didn't shop in the market the vouchers have resulted in better planning of the food shop and how to make decisions around budgeting for food

Has helped with planning the foods - make a list. You want to buy, think about what fruit and veg. with vouchers and what else from other places.

The vouchers help me to plan what I need so I go to the market less.

Queries over the reduction in vouchers as children reach 1 year old

- A number of participants questioned the reasoning behind reducing the number of vouchers when a child reached 1 year old
- Whilst acknowledging the need to support the health of breast-feeding mothers it was still felt that as children grew and were weaned the need for easier access to more fruit and veg. increased

Very difficult if RV are reduced when child reaches 1 yr old. Better to continue with 6 vouchers per week.

Should reverse the reduction in vouchers at 1yr. Older children need more food, more vouchers then would help. Not earlier.

...children want more as they're growing. Once vouchers drop to 3, need to find extra £3 per week

Number of vouchers reduced when child is 1yr, seems to be wrong

Suggestions to extend the range of products and participating retail outlets

- A small number of participants suggested that the vouchers should be extended to include fresh meat
- Others suggested that by focussing on the market the vouchers required participants to make two different journeys to do their food shop and this had cost implications

Would like vouchers to use in Sainsbury's/supermarket as it's a lot to travel to supermarket and market too

Helps to cover costs

- The vouchers help to cover the costs of the food shop – for many this simply means that the fruit and vegetables they would have paid cash for are now paid for with vouchers and the cash saved is used for other things.

Biggest change - saving money. More choice of food and more money for clothing, shoes, nappies.

I started spending less money on fruit and veg so I could spend that money on meat and other things

- Whilst not necessarily leading to changes in behaviour regarding food this is still regarded as an important benefit of the scheme.

C. Health

“My son is going for a no. 2 every day – before he was not regular – he is now more happy”

There were a total of 43 comments regarding positive health impacts

96% of adults reported that both they and their children are feeling healthier and happier since receiving Rose Vouchers.

Energy

- Participants talked about feeling more energetic – both themselves and their children – and saw this as a positive impact of eating a healthier diet.
- Many saw this as a result of increased vitamin intake in their diet

Child said he has got more energy from eating fruit and veg and knows it's good for his health

I have noticed my family has more energy and sleep better

I personally feel less tired, my daughter is always on the go. (Feeling healthier)

Digestion

15 comments

- Increased fruit and vegetables in the diet was seen as the reason for improvements in digestion and regular bowel movements – both in children and during pregnancy – and dealing with Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Many participants commented on this impact of the increased consumption of fruit and veg.

During pregnancy, helps with going to the toilet

Previously my son was prescribed pills for constipation – this changed in the first 2 weeks of receiving Rose Vouchers

My baby's poo is different and he is smiling. Poo is heavier and more solid, changed over two weeks!

When daughter goes to the toilet, softer stools. Baby used to cry when trying to go to the toilet

My family's digestion has been helped - improved. Healthy overall. Youngest child used to be constipated

Diabetes

- Two women with diabetes identified that increased fruit and veg. intake resulted in an improvement in their ability to control their sugar levels

More fruit and veg has improved my sugar levels. More under control, health much better

Complexion 6 comments

- 4 participants also reported that their complexion had improved greatly since eating more fruit and veg. – less spots and clearer skin and that their child's skin was less yellow.

People ask what I put on their skin - it looks more healthy. More fresh fruit and more water

General health improvements 9 comments

- Others commented on improved general health and well-being

We all look healthy and happy - my son's psychologist said this - makes me happy

Looking cranky in the mirror, but with more fruits and veg. look better, healthier, better immune system, more vitamins, I feel this

I have noticed my family has more energy and sleep better

Weight loss

- Some participants attributed weight loss – in both themselves and their children – to changes in their diet since using vouchers

Daughter is slimmer as she eats less junk food - crisps and biscuits. Now she eats porridge, banana, apple

I lost weight (eating fresh fruit)

I am losing weight because of eating fruit, used to eat 4 slices of toast but now I have a banana in the morning

D. Behaviour change around food

"I'm not really a 'fruit person' but now I buy fruit and blend it"

There were a total of 77 comments regarding changes in behaviour around food and meals

68% of parents are cooking from scratch more.

Meals and cooking 51 comments

- Participants reported changes in the food they prepared for themselves and their families – trying new recipes – including looking on-line to explore ways to 'hide' vegetables in meals – and cooking from fresh ingredients (from scratch)

Cooking more from scratch and buying more fresh

- Attitudes to cooking have changed as participants experiment with different meals and become more thoughtful and aware of the meals they eat

I'm now more thoughtful about food. Moving away from chicken nuggets. Better skills and increased confidence to cook

I think about everything we are eating – especially the portion size and quantity

...now I feel like eating more fish. Doing more research about healthy eating eg mackerel - baked not fried. Having vouchers has encouraged my interest in healthy eating

- There is also a move towards being more conscious about meals with a move away from convenience foods and take-aways

79% of parents reported a decrease in take away and fast food

The voucher makes me think about how to use fresh fruit and veg.

Due to the scheme and the Children's Centre courses I am more aware of the importance of using healthier options

(I now say) 'Don't get a take-away – I'm cooking tonight'

- For one participant this includes a switch from jars of baby food to home made

Now making my own fresh baby food (from veg), not buying jars, healthier and fresher

Changes in consciousness and the balance of meals

- Participants described a change in the look and balance of the meals that are served. In particular the meals have less meat and carbohydrate (potato, rice, pasta) and more vegetables

68% of participants said they had become more thoughtful about the food they ate

My plate looks different now – more green

Balance has shifted, less meat on the plate

Kids now filling up on veg., then they eat meat so need less

My plate is much more colourful - looks like the eatwell plate. Proportions have changed. 'More veg - less rice'

- It has become very evident that receiving the vouchers encourages participants to think more about what they and their families eat and how they shop for food

Because we are trying to eat healthier, I think a lot about what I am buying by checking labels and all

Vouchers prompt me to buy fruit and veg.

To think which food will make us healthy (being more thoughtful about the shop)

- Participants also said that cooking sessions at the Children's Centre had been very useful in helping them to feel more confident about cooking.

I was in care and never learned to cook – now I have an interest and opportunity to gain skills and confidence

Courses at the Children's Centre have taught me to enjoy cooking and learning new recipes and techniques

Because of the cooking classes at children's centres, these can be made at home, so no need to buy snacks.

Family mealtimes

50% of participants are eating more meals as a family together

- Though not necessarily only an impact of Rose Vouchers one mother told how her family had become more focused on family mealtime together and this had been partly due to her decision to no longer have a television in the house. The family had recognised the importance of eating together and their relationships had strengthened as a result.

Sitting at the table eating quality food together and talking enjoying different foods as a family

Now I switch the TV off and eat with my children

- For another family the change in behaviour was also evident at breakfast time

Kids now eat more fruit esp at breakfast time. Never used to, now they do

Storing/keeping food

- The increase in fresh produce coming into the home results in changes in storage and using available food to avoid unnecessary waste. Two participants talked about freezing fresh produce – particularly as some market produce was seen as being over ripe and close to going off.

It's changed the way I shop – I'm not automatically running to the supermarket when I run out of something. I now make better use of the food I have in the house

- Another participant recognised that she was having to shop more regularly as the fresh produce wouldn't last long and others addressed this by juicing and blending ripe fruit

Started to make home-made juice - son loves it

Daughter doesn't like fruit and it will go off so I blend it everyday

Snacks and packed lunches

14 comments

Sweet and savoury snack consumption has decreased for 74% of families.

- Many participants reported that snacking behaviour had changed dramatically – a move away from sweet and savoury snacks towards fruit.

Now I find my children and I automatically reaching for the fruit bowl rather than the biscuit tin

Children eat more quantity, come home from school and ask for fruit, don't ask for other snacks if they can see the fruit. Used to eat more biscuits etc.

- Parents encouraged this change by eating more fruit themselves and modelling healthy behaviour.
- At 'Stop and Play' sessions fruit was provided as an end of session snack where children could see other children and adults snacking on fruit thus encouraging this behaviour.

Seeing other kids and me eating fruit encourages mine

- One mother specifically talked about how she had changed the 'lunch box' she took out with her for her child when out and about – buying less packets and sweets, instead just taking fruit.

Making more packed lunches at home to eat out, rather than buying lunch out

- Another mother explained that through cookery lessons at the children's centre she had learnt how to make healthy fruit based snacks which she could add to packed lunches.

E. Using the market

“Going to market for veg. means also buying meat from butchers, much better value”

There were a total of 34 comments regarding shopping at the market

63% of families said that using the vouchers had increased their use of the market and 33% said they used supermarkets less.

Market produce

- Participants said that they were using the market more than they used to and not only for fruit and veg. They were also shopping at the butchers.

I am buying both meat and veg at the market which works out a lot cheaper

- Market stallholders reported that some of the people using vouchers at their stalls were new users of the market
- They are also often shopping with their children and getting them more involved in deciding what to buy

Going to the market together and picking out the food together

- Opinions on the quality and value for money of fresh produce at the market varied. Many participants felt the market represented good value for money compared to supermarkets.
- Some participants expressed concerns over the quality and freshness of produce at different stalls.

What's the point of buying fruit close to its expiry – not good for you or your family

- Four stalls were recognised by most participants and there was an understanding that you paid more for fresher/better quality produce that you could pick yourself with ready chosen bowls of produce being cheaper but poorer quality

Market stall-holders attitude

- Participants at one workshop raised issues about the attitude of some stall-holders to the use of vouchers – one in particular only allowing voucher holders to have poorer quality produce.

She said: 'You give me the voucher and then choose 'nice' apples?'

- It was suggested that when paying with cash another stall-holder was friendly but not when vouchers were used.

Market signs

- Participants (as well as stall-holders) said that the stalls accepting vouchers should have larger, clearer signs

F. Children's Centres

"Collecting from the centre helps children to get involved in the centre's activities"

There were a total of 30 comments regarding use of the children's centre

Use of children's centres has increased by 76% amongst parents and by 81% for children.

Voucher collection and documentation

- The collection of Rose Vouchers from Children's Centres encouraged participants to engage and connect more with the centres and find out more about the sessions that were offered.

The voucher scheme encourages me to come with my kids much more than before

My daughter enjoys the playing and sing sessions and I enjoy just talking to the parents and just being in a relaxed environment

Voucher collection makes me go to the children's centre more, even when I don't want to

- This brought significant benefits to some participants

I can see my daughter coming out of her shell a bit more

Makes me come out because I'm an indoor person

The courses at the children's centre taught me to enjoy cooking and new recipes and techniques

- Parents could also see that good eating habits are modelled at the sessions encouraging their children to develop good eating behaviour

Centre session for children have helped them become more familiar with fruit as they are given in after sessions. This has meant they're more familiar with it at home and eat it more

When children see you eating fruit it encourages them to eat it eg stay and play

- Participants also felt that collection was flexible enough and that arrangements could be made to change collection times when necessary.
- One participant said they didn't enjoy the form-filling and paperwork that was required

Conclusions

By using a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation tools as well as facilitated workshops alongside self-completed diaries and pie charts the mid-scheme evaluation has identified clear impact themes. Anecdotal evidence has been corroborated with evidence from the diaries and impact matrices to provide a robust evaluation of the scheme's impact so far on the participating families.

These emerging findings will provide the basis for the final evaluation when the scheme in Lambeth comes to its conclusion. Between now and then any issues identified by participants will be addressed to ensure that the final months of the scheme benefit the participants as much as possible.