

Cooking for a Better Start

Delivered by **HENRY**
From **April 2018 – March 2024**



50

SIX-WEEK PROGRAMMES

were delivered in 14 community venues



Cooking for a Better Start offers practical cooking sessions to parents/carers of children aged 0-3 years. Sessions are aimed at building knowledge and skills around cooking low-cost, healthy meals from scratch, and healthy eating.

How it was delivered

Led by experienced practitioners, small groups of parents/carers attended six sessions in local community settings, with an option to complete an online version of the course. In a later phase of the project, children were also encouraged to attend.

Sessions focused on the topics below, with a recipe cooked from scratch each week, with further ingredients and recipes provided for families to take home. Attendees also received a cooking-related gift at the end of each session and a certificate when they completed the course.

- Week 1** What is healthy eating? **Week 2** What's in our food? **Week 3** Food safety
- Week 4** Healthy swaps **Week 5** Shopping and budgeting **Week 6** Portions and portion sizes



287

families attended one or more sessions



44

children enjoyed cooking with their parents/carers



Why this project was developed

Child obesity rates within the Better Start Bradford area exceed the average across Bradford and nationally, presenting a risk of high levels of adult obesity and associated health implications.

A lack of cooking skills or confidence in cooking may act as a barrier to consuming a healthy diet by encouraging a dependence on pre-prepared foods such as ready-meals and takeaways. Frequent consumption of these foods has been associated with poorer dietary quality and obesity.

It was also anticipated that Cooking for a Better Start would act as a gateway into other projects for previously unengaged families, i.e. those who had not accessed local family provision before.

The project set out to:

- Increase parents'/carers' confidence in preparing home-cooked healthy meals
- Increase knowledge of appropriate portion sizes for children
- Reduce children's consumption of high fat, high sugar foods
- Contribute to the efforts to reduce child obesity
- Increase engagement of parents/carers in early years, family-based activities

Impact and findings*

- The project was successfully delivered with a high completion rate, which shows it was valued by the families.
- Pre and post questionnaire data suggests that parents/carers feel more confident in food preparation and observe changes in their family diet and eating behaviours.
- The project has demonstrated that delivery to parents/carers along with children is practical and a viable model to take forward.
- A combination of parent-only and parent-and-child-together sessions provided a choice for families and new ways of interacting together.
- Signposting families to food providers and other linked services has been invaluable during a financially challenging time
- Training 10 community facilitators gives the project a starting point for legacy within Bradford.

*This section includes information from both the evaluation report/s and project



10

community facilitators were trained and can now continue delivering the programme

