

PROGRAMME IMPACT REPORT

Healthy Cooking Classes

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Report Type: Final evaluation and impact report

Investment Body: Bolton’s Fund - Household support Fund Round 7. Morrissons Foundation – invested in our new community kitchen

Town/City: Bolton

Programme Duration: July 2025 – April 202

Why was the Investment needed?

Halliwell ward in Bolton is one of the most deprived areas in England, with some neighbourhoods ranked within the top 1% most deprived nationally according to (IMD, 2024). This reflects significant challenges across income, employment, and living conditions, which are closely linked to food insecurity and poor diet. Many households face ongoing cost-of-living pressures, limiting their ability to afford fresh, healthy ingredients and increasing reliance on cheaper, less nutritious foods. Local data also shows that Halliwell has a relatively high proportion of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds, many of whom may experience additional barriers such as language, cultural dietary norms, and limited access to tailored health information.

A healthy cooking class targeted at BAME women was therefore necessary to address these overlapping inequalities. Women are often the primary food providers in households, so equipping them with skills to prepare affordable, nutritious meals can improve the health of entire families. Providing slow cookers to participants was essential in equipping them with a practical tool to support the cost-effective preparation of nutritious meals. Culturally appropriate sessions can adapt traditional dishes to be healthier while remaining accessible and acceptable, making behaviour change more sustainable. In a community facing high deprivation and financial strain, such interventions support better diet, reduce long-term health risks, and strengthen social connections, contributing to improved overall wellbeing

Expected Outcomes

- Increased knowledge of how to prepare affordable, culturally appropriate healthy meals using everyday ingredients
- Improved confidence in cooking nutritious dishes at home
- Greater awareness of healthy eating and portion control
- Increased ability to adapt traditional meals to healthier versions
- Enhanced social connection and reduced isolation among participants

Output - Data Dashboard

 sessions delivered **42**

 number of recipes learnt **14**

 total participants **93**

 % of targets met **96%**

 pulse surveys **4**

 healthy cooking champions trained **22**

 free slow cookers provided **44**

 guardian groups held **6**

 course satisfaction **92%**

Impact

The healthy cooking classes had a positive impact by increasing participants' confidence and skills in preparing affordable, nutritious meals, leading to healthier food choices at home. Many women reported a better understanding of portion sizes and how to adapt traditional dishes in a healthier way without losing cultural relevance. The sessions also supported behaviour change by showing practical, low-cost alternatives during a time of financial pressure. In addition, the group setting helped build social connections, reducing isolation and creating a supportive environment where participants could share experiences and learn from one another.

Outcomes

The programme achieved strong outcomes by equipping participants with practical skills and knowledge to prepare affordable, nutritious meals, leading to improved confidence and healthier eating habits at home. Participants demonstrated increased ability to adapt traditional recipes in a healthier way while maintaining cultural relevance, supporting sustainable behaviour change. High levels of engagement and completion indicated the programme met a clear community need, while the provision of resources such as recipes and cooking equipment further reinforced learning. Additionally, the sessions fostered social connections and peer support, contributing to improved wellbeing alongside positive dietary changes.

What worked well?

Strong engagement and participation from attendees.

Recipes were culturally relevant and well received.

Distribution of slow cookers.

What we learnt?

Limited time to cover all planned content.

Varied skill levels made pacing challenging.

More resources for purchasing slow cookers would have been beneficial.

How has the investment positively impacted community cohesion

The classes positively impacted community cohesion by bringing together women from diverse ethnic backgrounds in a shared, supportive environment where they could connect through food and cultural exchange. By cooking and learning alongside one another, participants were able to share traditions, experiences, and perspectives, helping to break down cultural barriers and build mutual understanding. This created a sense of belonging and trust within the group, encouraging ongoing interaction beyond the sessions. As relationships developed, the classes helped strengthen local networks and foster a more inclusive and connected community.

Legacy

We trained a number of volunteers to become healthy cooking champions who would continue the programme post-investment. This has worked well. Participants were surveyed six-weeks post programme and 76% stated that they had utilised at least 3 of the recipes learnt in the sessions.

Case Study

Shagufta, a single mother of three teenagers, had long struggled to balance her families nutritional needs with the rising cost of food. Living on a tight budget, she often relied on quick, inexpensive meals that weren't always the healthiest. When she enrolled on our culturally appropriate healthy cooking classes, she found it immediately relatable, recipes reflected familiar flavours, cooking methods respected her traditions, and discussions addressed real challenges she faced at home. As part of the programme, she received a free slow cooker, along with guidance on how to prepare affordable, nutritious meals such as lentil dals, vegetable curries, and slow-cooked stews. The class also introduced her to portion planning and reducing food waste, helping her feel more confident and in control of her household meals.

The impact on Shagufta and her family has been significant. With the slow cooker, she can prepare meals in advance, reducing her reliance on takeaway food and saving both time and money. Her children, initially skeptical, have grown to enjoy the home-cooked dishes and have even started helping with meal prep, strengthening family bonds.

Nutritionally, the family now eats more balanced meals, with increased vegetables and fewer processed foods, leading to noticeable improvements in energy levels and overall wellbeing. Financially, Aisha reports spending less on groceries by buying ingredients in bulk and making meals stretch further. Beyond the practical benefits, the experience has boosted her confidence and sense of empowerment, giving her skills she can sustain long-term while fostering healthier habits for her children's future.

'I enjoyed sharing recipies and preparing the food with other women in the healthy cooking class'

Shagufta, 51, Participant, Healthy Cooking Classes