

“Takeaways are not the enemy”: intervention deliverers’ experience with takeaways

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Background

A range of interventions that aimed to improve the provision of ‘healthy’ food within out-of-home food outlets have been delivered by different professional groups. An appreciation of the context in which an intervention is to be delivered is important to identify potential barriers and facilitators to the successful implementation of a given intervention.

Aims

This work aims to provide a contextual framework and an understanding of the intervention environment from the perspective of the intervention deliverer.

Method

We aimed to recruit a sample of professionals with knowledge of intervention delivery from across England. We conducted individual semi structured interviews, either face-to-face or over the telephone. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. A framework approach was used for analysis of the transcribed interviews.

Results

Recruitment

Thirteen potential intervention deliverers agreed to participate, all of whom had knowledge of local authority (LA) healthy eating awards. Eleven had first-hand experience of intervention delivery and all those who were employed by LAs had experience of working with takeaway food business operators (FBOs).

Nutrition and outlet targets for intervention

Takeaway outlets were highlighted as providing nutritionally poor meals. The key concerns were:

- Portion size/Total calories
- Fat
- Salt

Of less concern was sugar (in meals rather than drinks) and fruit and vegetable content.

Customer awareness of interventions

There was a preference for interventions that we classed as ‘covert’ as opposed to ‘overt’, i.e. interventions that were not obvious to the customer, such as the use of a reduced hole salt shaker to limit added salt, and lower fat sauce replacement.

Exemplar quotes from intervention deliverers’

Nutrition and outlet targets for intervention

“We focussed quite a lot of our work on ‘fast-food’, ‘takeaway’ sector mainly around fat and salt”

“ We found one meal that would give a woman 3 1/2 day’s supply of her saturated fat allowance”

Customer awareness of interventions

“If consumers do want to move towards healthier options [you want to know] that food businesses can actually provide that [option].

Barriers and facilitators to delivery of an intervention

“ A tax on fat A mandatory portion size” “ I would start with the supplier and get them to give better information about what’s in their product” “Their [takeaway operator] business is to sell as many pizzas as possible”

Barriers and facilitators to delivery of an intervention

Potential barriers and facilitators were identified at legislative and operational levels:

- Local Authority - Availability of resource for intervention delivery was a concern. Planning and legislative changes were suggested to reduce future proliferation of takeaways.
- Supplier (of ingredients) – Supply of different fats to chip shops was viewed as significant.
- Food outlet – Access, willingness of the operator to engage, and reluctance to promote healthy options were the main issues.
- Customer - Nutritional knowledge, and desire of the customer to purchase a healthy option was seen as key.

Evaluation conducted

Evaluation varied between interventions, but ranged from either none at all to modest.

Conclusion

Perspectives of intervention deliverers suggested that in developing an intervention it is important to consider: the nutritional target, customer awareness of the intervention, and barriers and facilitators at different operational levels; especially the willingness of business operators to participate, and the interest of the customer in purchasing a more healthy option.