

Evaluation of Food Matters Inside & Out Prison-based Programme

FINAL REPORT
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Acknowledgements

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Summary of Evaluation

Introduction

Food Matters is a national charity organisation, founded in 2003, with the aim of empowering people, strengthening policy and changing the food system with the rationale that a fairer food system improves the health of people, and the planet. Specifically, the vision of Food Matters Inside & Out programme is to change food systems so that people in prison can better access healthier food to support both their physical and mental health and wellbeing and which is integral to supporting successful resettlement on release from prison. Food Matter's Inside & Out programme fits well with the H.M. Prison and Probation Service and the Ministry of Justice's recognition that to reduce reoffending, partnership working and harnessing local innovation through the delivery of high-quality interventions and services, is crucial.

This is a final report of a prison-based evaluation focused on two elements of the wider innovative Food Matters Inside & Out programme: the Feel Good Food Club (FGFC) distance learning at HMP Styal and face-to-face/in-person learning with three cohorts at HMP Send on the Incentivised Substance Free Living (ISFL) wing, the Democratic Therapeutic Community (DTC) and the Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPE).

Research questions

Informed by a realist framework (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) that considers context-related factors to understand 'what works' for who and why, the evaluation explored the following research questions:

- How does participation in the programme (and associated elements) affect the wellbeing of women in prison?
- What are the key learnings from the experience of women participating in the programme from a variety of different cohorts within prison?
- What behaviour changes have staff and participants observed that may be a result of the programme?
- What works in relation to the programme and what might be done differently in the future?

Research methods

This was an exploratory mixed-methods evaluation comprising a purposive sample of key stakeholders involved in the two aspects of Food Matters Inside & Out that comprised:

- Semi-structured focus groups and interviews with participants (n=24), partner organisation staff (n=6) and Food Matters staff (n=4).

- Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale monitoring of participants (n=17).
- Thematic analysis of qualitative data and descriptive statistical analysis of quantitative data.

There were significant methodological limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic which, due to reduced numbers of participants and a change to the research methods, required a redesign of the original study to align with innovation in practice provided by Food Matters' swift response to the challenging circumstances.

Findings

The evaluation highlights examples of innovative practice and learning for wider roll out within the prison estate as set out in the report. Innovation for example, can be found in the distance learning course and the Her Wellbeing magazine with the latter being available on an in-prison digital platform. Developing the in-person and distance learning courses require a focus on sustainability to ensure that they are firmly embedded into prison mechanisms, clearly linked to prison menus with tailored content and materials that sustain engagement for participants with more challenging and complex needs including consideration to the length of sessions and, furthering/enhancing the use of technology for building capacity and also monitoring and participants self-evaluation. In addition, for the distance learning component, developing an interactive aspect that also incorporates some form of (in/formal) assessment for participants' to self-monitor their understanding of the course content would embed individual learning development into the course - expanding such digital content on the HMPPS intranet may also increase engagement and build capacity.

Main Recommendations

- **Testing out and scaling up:** discuss with senior HMPPS stakeholders the feasibility of testing out mechanisms for future delivery and sustainability in different prison environments and with different prison communities for wider scale roll-out.
- **Toolkit and Train the Trainers:** explore options to sustain the course/s into the delivery of ISFL and PIPE service delivery by offering a training the trainers course supplemented by a toolkit for onward internal training of staff to build capability and capacity across the prison estate.

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HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE SETTINGS UNIT (HSSU)

The Healthy and Sustainable Settings Unit (HSSU), established in 2001, were invited to evaluate the Food Matters Inside & Out prison-based project at HMP Send. The HSSU aims to support the holistic and integrated development of healthy settings – acknowledging that “health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love” (WHO, 1986) and that many health challenges are interrelated and can be best tackled through comprehensive, integrated programmes in the contexts and places where people live their lives. Bridging research, policy and practice, the unit has a global reputation and is concerned to facilitate ecological approaches to health and wellbeing within and across a diversity of organisational and geographical settings – and to increase understanding of ‘what works and why’ in different contexts. It has ~25 years’ experience of conducting research and evaluations in prison settings.

EVALUATION TEAM

Dr Michelle Baybutt is a Professor Health and Justice and Co-director of the Healthy and Sustainable Settings Unit (HSSU) at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). Michelle’s academic expertise links health promotion practice with research and knowledge exchange which forms a narrative around prisons as a setting for fostering health and wellbeing, notably the duality of prison health systems and implementation of sustainable public health interventions.

Dr Alan Farrier is a Research Fellow from the HSSU at UCLan. Alan is an experienced qualitative researcher who has worked on a variety of health and wellbeing research projects, predominantly with health and justice focus. He has worked with young offenders, prisoners, people with mental health issues and other socially excluded and marginalised groups. He is interested in a range of psychosocial research methods, including narrative-based interviewing, visual methods and group panel analysis.

Dr Valerio Benedetto is a Research Fellow in the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Unit at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and a member of the Applied Research Collaboration North West Coast (ARC NWC) in the Methodological Innovation, Development, Adaptation and Support (MIDAS) Theme. Valerio is an economist with expertise in quantitative analysis and his research focuses on health economics. His activities include the design and delivery of economic and statistical modelling and analyses for health research projects. He has experience of working on projects focusing on different disease areas and health settings.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DTC	Democratic Therapeutic Community
HMPPS	His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
HSSU	Healthy and Sustainable Settings Unit
ISFL	Incentivised Substance Free Living
NRC	National Research Committee
PIPE	Psychologically Informed Planned Environments
UCLan	University of Central Lancashire

COVID-19 STATEMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on both the Food Matters Inside & Out programme and the evaluation of said programme. Initially this was funded from early 2020 until late 2021, however was subject to a lengthy delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic and then was subject to the various 'waves' of reintroduction of the in-person activities on site and related uncertainty. The face-to-face courses in HMP Send did not begin until after Covid-related restrictions were fully removed (in January 2022). Data was collected throughout 2022, with the final deadline for the end of project report being moved to March 2023 due to the initial delays in start-up caused by the pandemic.

As a further result of the pandemic, and in tandem with Food Matters having to adapt and change aspects of their delivery, the research team had to change several elements of the original study design. Data collection methods (e.g. a survey, the use of food diaries by the participants) were removed due to limited access that Food Matters and the evaluation team were able to have with the participants. The overall number of participants decreased from an anticipated 90 pre-covid and an element involving nine of the participants becoming Peer Support Food Champions was also removed. Peer Support Food Champions' roles would have been to support peers in making healthier food choices through the information they learned on the face-to-face course, plus further specific peer-support training (e.g. helping others make menu and canteen choices, using their acquired knowledge but also where there were literacy issues) - behaviour change which the research team were originally to evaluate through quantitative measures. To mitigate this, the evaluation team added the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale into the study design that corresponded with Food Matters use of 'mood meters', while also speaking to the wider project vision that includes supporting the mental health of people in prison. This change enabled the (physical) collection of quantitative data by Food Matters staff in the face-to-face/in-person sessions. Due to the limits imposed on Food Matters by the COVID-19 pandemic and what was possible to do in HMP Send at the time, Food Matters shifted the main focus of the Inside & Out programme to a distance learning, paper-based version of the course (Feel Good Food Club) in response to challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whilst none of these challenges could have been anticipated in advance, both Food Matters and the University of Central Lancashire researchers adapted to the changing circumstances - holding regular online meetings to assess the situation and ultimately being flexible in respectively changing the delivery of the course and study design of the evaluation (which necessitated a resubmission to the ethics board at the University and HMPPS NRC for an amendment to work at a second site, HMP & YOI Styal).

The challenges of delivering and adapting a prison-based course that required responding at pace with innovation and undertaking its aligned evaluation in difficult conditions as a result should not be underestimated. We would hope that any reading of this report would be done with the understanding of this context.

AIMS OF EVALUATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

INTRODUCTION

This final report presents findings from an evaluation of the Food Matters *Inside & Out* programme at HMP Send and HMP Styal. Food Matters Inside & Out incorporates all activities Food Matters undertake within the criminal justice system – both within prisons and through the gate. Within prisons there are two strands: (1) The Feel Good Food Club (FGFC) distance learning and (2) FGFC face-to-face/in person learning. The programme has been shortlisted nominated for a Public Sector Catering Award 2023 in the Special Contribution Award category¹.

The report uses quantitative data from monitoring with participants at HMP Send and qualitative data from focus groups with participants and staff from the Incentivised Substance Free Living (ISFL) wing, the Democratic Therapeutic Community (DTC) and the Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPE) at HMP Send and participants from one focus group at HMP Styal. The ISFL is run by The Forward Trust, a national organisation which tackles drug addiction and crime with approximately 600 staff across the UK. The DTC offers a cohort of women a daily programme of group therapy and other activities, facilitating opportunities to learn skills and strategies for more positive ways for women to manage their life. PIPE units are a key part of the Offender Personality Disorder Strategy (NOMS/NHS, 2015) and are for women who have completed high intensity treatment.

Three courses were delivered by the Food Matters team in HMP Send: the first phase of Inside & Out took place between January-March 2022 and the second phase in September-November 2022. Simultaneously, Food Matters rolled out a paper-based distance learning version of the course (*Feel Good Food Club*) across the Women's Estate, for which to date 493 women have applied. UCLan were asked to evaluate women's experience of this course in one of these sites (HMP YOI Styal), to capture learning about the distance learning element, to replace other aspects of the study design which were no longer possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation team amended the study to incorporate HMP YOI Styal (in which Food Matters received 78 applicants for the distance learning programme), HMP YOI Styal was identified as a possible site for this aspect of data collection due to the research team having existing good relationships with the Governor, SMT and a range of other staff, thereby anticipating a swifter response for access and HMPPS NRC amendments/support than if approaching an alternative site where relationships didn't already exist. This element is focused on in a separate section of the report.

HMP SEND

HMP Send is a closed adult women's training prison in Woking, Surrey. It has an operational capacity of 282. Send houses a 20-bed addictive treatment unit, and 80-bed resettlement

¹ https://www.publicsectorcatering.co.uk/news/public-sector-catering-awards-2023-shortlist-part-4?utm_source=emailmarketing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=psc_daily_update_160323&utm_content=2023-03-16

unit and the only female prison therapeutic community with a capacity of 40. It also has a 40-bed PIPE community (20-bed Progression PIPE and a 20-bed Preparation PIPE). (HMIP, 2014).

HMP YOI STYAL

HMP YOI Styal is a prison and young offender institution (YOI) in Wilmslow, Cheshire, for women aged 18 and over. It has an operational capacity of 486. It features several distinct residential units including: a mother and baby unit (MBU); Incentivised substance-free living houses; a care & separation unit for segregated prisoners and a small open unit outside of the closed site (HMIP, 2021)

BACKGROUND

Many women in prison have poor mental health and histories of trauma and abuse. At Send 50% of prisoners are supported by the Mental Health Team. Food is a medium through which emotional distress is expressed. Women with poor mental health may have difficult relationships with food, which negatively impact on diet and nutrient intakes e.g. lack of appetite and undereating related to states of anxiety, or overeating and binge eating of sugary, fatty food used as self-soothing mechanisms in depressed states. Substance misuse can also affect appetite and eating patterns. These disordered eating patterns can develop into eating disorders. Conversely, diet can impact on mental health. A nutrient-poor diet can result in vitamin and mineral deficiencies, many of which have symptoms related to mood, behaviour or cognitive function. Studies demonstrated that people with anxiety and depression who improve their diets, show a reduction in their symptoms (Jacka, 2017; Francis et al., 2019). Meta-analysis has demonstrated significantly greater mental health benefits for women who improve their diets than for men (Firth et al., 2019). Improved nutritional status can also reduce antisocial behaviour in prisons (Gesch et al., 2002; Zaalberg, 2010).

Food is important for mental health, not only because of the aspect of providing nutrients for optimal brain chemistry, but also because of the psychosocial aspect of building relationships through sharing food. Social cooking and eating together has a positive effect on well-being. In the community, lunch clubs reduce isolation and provide opportunities for socializing and developing relationships (Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, 2015). In the prison environment, cooking together and sharing a meal has a positive influence on health and well-being and in developing a pro-social identity (Parsons, 2017).

Most women prisoners have a background of trauma. They are more likely to have experienced childhood household dysfunction than the general population (Kelman, 2022). Food Matters' staff have observed that prisons often lack adequate facilities for prisoners to cook for themselves. Food Matters have also observed, based on previous projects within prison settings, that healthcare in prisons is also stretched, so health priorities are often the clinical treatment of substance misuse and mental health, rather than broadly promoting healthy eating.

FOOD MATTERS

Food Matters is a charity organisation, founded in 2003 when a group of food campaigners recognised a need to help local people translate national and European food policy into meaningful strategies and actions relevant to local people's circumstances and communities. They are now a national charity that takes action at every level to empower people, strengthen policy and change the food system with the rationale that a fairer food system improves the health of people, and the planet.

Food Matters have an established history of working in prison, demonstrated by a number of approaches specific to this setting, including:

- FAB! Food and wellbeing - a prior food and wellbeing course which has been delivered face-to-face in prisons from 2008-2011.

- Feel Good Food Club (FGFC) - a paper-based distance learning course focusing on food-related in-cell activities (see image 1). It is now available to the entire women's estate with 500 women enrolled in the first year (2022).

- Her Wellbeing Magazine - a monthly health and wellbeing magazine for women in prison; distributed to all women's prisons with the potential to reach over 3308 women across the women's prison estate in England (MoJ, March 2023) (see image 2). Latterly this has been added in electronic form to the prison intranet, thereby improving accessibility in the prison environment.

They also work with disadvantaged people outside of the prison setting with Food Matters Through the Gate (people released from prison) and the Kitchen Kick Start project (young people in care and the insecurely housed). Their projects are characterised by two motives: pioneering innovative approaches that address the most challenging issues; and exploring initiatives focused on particularly marginalised and excluded communities.



Image 1: Front cover of the Feel Good Food Club folder, which was distributed to distance learning participants



Image 2: Front cover to an issue of Food Matters' magazine 'Her Wellbeing'

FOOD MATTERS INSIDE & OUT PROGRAMME

Food Matters Inside & Out is the latest prisons programme developed by the organisation. Their vision is to change food systems so that all prisoners can better access healthier food, to support their physical and mental health so aiding rehabilitation.

This programme aims to improve the food choices of offenders serving custodial or community sentences, through four distinct strands:

- Participatory Healthy Eating Courses and Cooking Workshops
- Peer Mentor 'Food Champions'
- Staff Training Sessions
- Consultancy to Catering and Food Procurement Services
- Distance learning (the Feel Good Food Club)
- Her Wellbeing Magazine

HEALTHY EATING COURSES AND COOKING WORKSHOPS IN PRISONS

Food Matters delivered a holistic food-based programme to aid informed balanced food choices and develop positive attitudes towards food for three cohorts of women in HMP Send between January and November 2022.

The in-person courses are designed to be participatory, inclusive and fun. They use motivational techniques to gently guide participants towards change and comprise discussion, problem-solving and reflective learning, and sessions involve tasting of healthy snack alternatives.

This evaluation focuses on the first strand of the *Inside & Out* Programme: Participatory Healthy Eating Courses and Cooking Workshops, to aid informed balanced food choices and develop positive attitudes towards food for three cohorts of women in HMP Send.

The Food Matters team delivered three participatory healthy eating courses with cooking workshops at HMP Send. There were two phases of the delivery. Phase 1 (January-March 2022) included a six-week course with ISFL and DTC women. Phase 2 (September-November 2022) included a 6-week course with PIPE women. Although the format of the three courses were broadly similar (courses with a selected cohort running over set number of weeks and culminating in cooking activities), the sessions were tailored to each group, adapted when impacted by COVID-related prison lockdowns and facilitated by different members of the Food Matters team. After Phase 1, the HSSU delivered an internal interim report to Food Matters, highlighting learning at that stage, which contributed to an evaluation cycle for the programme at HMP Send prior to the commencement of Phase 2. Phase 2 was tailored to capture and embed learning and reflection from what worked in the first course, while also taking into account differences between the groups. (e.g. including more opportunities for the women to prepare simple food). All cohorts ran in weekly sessions, the ISFL/DTC on the same dates and the PIPE cohort approximately six months later). The course content comprised:

Phase 1: ISFL / DTC (sessions ran from 19/01/22 - 09/03/22):

- Session 1 - Introductions, Eatwell Guide activity, discussion of canteen menus.
- Session 2 - Eatwell refresher activity, SMART goals discussion.
- Session 3 - Mindfulness meditation session, sugar consumption discussion.
- Session 4 - No session due to Food Matters staff being ill with COVID-19.

A worksheet was designed to hand out to the group by staff.

- Session 5 - Emotional eating discussion, food and mindfulness diaries.
- Session 6 - Cooking session. Recipes: veggie and beef bolognese alternatives with wholemeal spaghetti, and vegetable tagine with brown rice. Food tasting: smoked mackerel pate. The women sat down and ate together at the end of the session.
- Session 7 - Bonus session (ISFL only, at their request):
Cake celebration and food quiz.

Phase 2: PIPE (sessions ran from 22/09/22 - 03/11/22):

- Pre- course Session - Introductions, discussion based.
- Session 1 - Eatwell Guide activity, snack tasting (summer rolls).
- Session 2 - Discussion about canteen menus.
- Session 3 - Nutritional content and food labelling discussion, food preparation (chia pudding), food tasking (guacamole and tortilla chips).
- Session 4 - Mindful eating activity, gut health discussion, food tasting (pea dip).
- Session 5 - Cooking session. Recipes: bubble & squeak bites, tikka salmon wraps with salad and homemade naan and tahini & date cookies.
- Session 6 - Cooking session. Recipes: green Thai curry with rice, beetroot brownies with compote and yoghurt. The group sat down and ate together at the end of the session.

Aligned handouts from Food Matters' *Feel Good Food Club* (FGFC) were given out during each session, as well as other materials such as recipes or relevant articles from Her Wellbeing. Participants were invited to complete 'mood meters' in sessions (before and after) to gauge how the group were feeling (see image 3). Women who did not want to participate in the face-to face course were offered the alternative of the FGFC in-cell course, though the take up for this component was small at HMP Send.



Image 3: A 'Mood Meter' used during the sessions

RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The aim of the evaluation was to explore the effectiveness of the Food Matters *Inside & Out* programme, using a mixture of quantitative measures and qualitative data. It comprised the following questions:

- How does participation in the programme (and associated elements) affect the wellbeing of women in prison?
- What are the key learnings from the experience of women participating in the programme from a variety of different cohorts within prison?
- What behaviour changes have staff observed that may be a result of the programme?
- What works in relation to the programme and what might be done differently in the future?

Alongside these central research questions, we probed for other elements of the programme such as: participants self-reflection on behaviour changes related to food and wider experiences of food in the prison not directly related to participation in the Food Matters programme (e.g. growing).

RESEARCH IN PRISONS AND ETHICAL APPROVALS

Working in prisons required approvals from HMPPS National Research Committee (NRC) approval the University of Central Lancashire's (UCLan) University Ethics and Integrity Committee.

Women in prison are considered vulnerable participants for a variety of interlinked reasons and in the case of this research, this was exacerbated by working with cohorts of women with complex needs who were residing on units specialising in mental health and recovery from substance misuse to participate in specific related programmes.

This research was approved by the HMPPS NRC (Ref: 2021-031) and UCLan's Health Ethics and Integrity Committee (Ref: HEALTH0160).

METHODOLOGY

The exploratory mixed-method evaluation was informed by a 'realist' methodology framework (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) to consider 'what works', for whom, in which context and why. It is an approach that considers how context-related factors (i.e. resources, interpersonal issues) interact with mechanisms (i.e. cognitive and emotional responses) to influence certain outcomes (i.e. improved health and wellbeing).

It comprised qualitative data in the form of transcriptions of audio data gathered from interviews and quantitative data in the form of mental wellbeing self-perception monitoring throughout the courses.

Qualitative data was collected from focus groups with participants and staff. The initial intention was for there to be focus groups with the women participating prior to the project beginning and after the last session. Eight women took part in each initial focus group in both the ISFL and DTC cohorts (n=16). However, the women from the DTC declined to take part in the second focus group. In an attempt to balance out the qualitative data across the two cohorts, an extended focus group was conducted with four DTC staff members who were present at various times across the sessions. Two staff from The Forward Trust also took part in an interview post-project and a follow-up focus group was conducted with five women from ISFL. The ISFL group's makeup changed over the course of the programme: of the five women who participated in the second focus group, three were also present in the initial session.

The initial focus groups were conducted in January 2022. Due to Covid-19 restrictions at the time, these were socially distanced, and the researcher and staff wore masks, however the women participating did not, and one requested that the researcher removed their mask to make it easier to communicate. This was not the case in the second round of data collection, conducted in March 2022 as restrictions were eased by this point. For the third round (November 2022), after travelling to the proximity of the prison, the researcher tested positive for COVID-19 the day prior to an arranged focus group with the PIPE participants at HMP Send. The PIPE team demonstrated their adaptability when two members of the team conducted the focus group with PIPE participants on the researcher's behalf using the interview schedule and supplied them with notes from the session. We have synthesised the key themes from their discussion into the findings.

All three cohorts were asked the same key questions but were given latitude to discuss other issues relevant to the particular experiences of the group. Likewise, the staff from all three cohorts were asked a set of open-ended questions, which was different to the questions directed at the participants and focused on the experience of the project from their perspective. The discussion is presented thematically, combining responses from participants and staff involved with both cohorts.

Component of study	Participant group	Number of participants
Focus groups (baseline)	Participant	16 (8 ISFL + 8 DTC)
Focus groups (post-project)	Participant	5 (ISFL) + ^x (PIPE) + 3 (Distance Learning, HMP YOI Styal)
Focus groups (post-project)	Staff	6 (2 ISFL + 4 DTC)
Interviews	Food Matters Key Personnel	4

Table 1: Participants in the Food Matters Inside & Out Evaluation (HMP Send)

For the quantitative data, all three cohorts at HMP Send also completed Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) monitoring forms at the beginning and at two-weekly durations of the programme.

² The number of participants was not supplied

Alongside the in-person courses evaluated at HMP Send, an additional focus group was conducted with participants at HMP YOI Styal who had been taking part in distance learning activities via mailouts of the paper-based Feel Good Food Club (FGFC), which was sent by Food Matters on a monthly basis. Her Wellbeing magazine was also distributed on the serving trolleys via the Catering Manager and team. The findings from this focus group feature in a separate section after the main findings from HMP Send.

All qualitative data was subject to a thematic analysis was undertaken using Braun & Clark's six-step process (2021). Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics for WEMWBS scores at individual timepoints as well as for differences in WEMWBS scores across different timepoints (following WEMWBS scoring guidance).

FINDINGS

The themes, presented below, comprise three sections: firstly, 'Pre-participation' (setting out participants experiences and knowledge prior to participation in the Food Matters course); secondly, 'Participation' (experience of participation in the course); and finally, 'Post-participation' (reflections on the learning from the course). Quotes are presented verbatim. [...] denotes that a portion of the quote has been moved for brevity, and words in square brackets indicate a paraphrasing of the quote or a clarification. Body language is also denoted in square brackets where appropriate.

HMP SEND

PRE-PARTICIPATION:

Previous experience of food-related learning in prison

Some ISFL and DTC group members noted their previous experience of food-related courses. One-off activities such as making cup-cakes, flapjacks and carrot cake were also mentioned:

"I've done a few food courses in here and in other prisons [...] it's like a life skill thing with one of the kitchen guys [...] about two months [long], two courses. You meet every Tuesday and Wednesday and you cook in the kitchen." (DTC participant)

"You can also do like a little in food hygiene. Food safety and all that [...] it's like cooking and life skills." (DTC participant)

Others referred to learning in a more informal sense:

"I just got practical skills from like cooking [...] for my children and my family and stuff, not like training or anything." (DTC participant)

Prison food

On the whole, a lot of criticism was levelled towards prison food from participants in all three cohorts. There were some concerns about the quality of prison food and portion size, but in the main it was about the balance of the meals: too many carbohydrates, there could be healthier options, there are not enough variety of fresh fruit and vegetables or protein:

“It is a bit carb-heavy.” (PIPE participant)

“I'm always on the toilet! I'm sorry to say this but the food they give us in here is all carbs: potatoes, chips, rice.” (ISFL Participant)

“You can't eat healthy in prison.” (PIPE participant)

The size of the portions given was also commented on:

“The portion control is terrible.” (DTC Participant)

“When you get veg you have to ask for a larger portion because they give you a little portion, especially like when swede is on or something [...] you have to ask 'cause [...] you want more vegetables, but we just we can't get it basically.” (DTC participant)

“[There is] not wide variety of fruit [...] we get apples which are hanging. The green ones that are dead tangy and are better for [...] making an apple crumble or something.” (DTC participant)

It should be noted however that despite these criticisms, the food at HMP Send was compared favourably to food at other prisons. Some declared that there was a degree of choice on offer and some options were spoken about enthusiastically, particularly by the women on the ISFL:

“Chicken wings [...] they are bangin', they are the best chicken wings I've ever had! I've been in jail for 20 months and the chicken wings are sick!” (ISFL Participant)

The women on both the DTC and ISFL can buy eggs laid by the chickens in the gardens, however the ISFL group have no means to cook them.

Working in food-related areas of the prison

One member of the ISFL group worked in the prison kitchen. They described their role as follows:

“You make salads, cucumbers, I don't know [...] prepping [...] whatever's got to go out that day or the following day and so on.” (ISFL Participant)

Others had worked there in the past and found it challenging:

"It's hard work, hard graft especially for £12.50 [weekly]. Scandalous." (ISFL Participant)

It was not seen as a desirable job in the prison, and so participants tend to move on:

"It used to be that when you first came to [HMP] Send your first job was kitchens." (DTC Participant)

Three of the ISFL group worked in the prison gardens. A range of fruit and vegetables grown in the prison gardens is used in the kitchens as well as the Clinks restaurant. One of these participants said she was going to grow her own vegetables when released from prison:

"I'm gonna be doing my own cabbage, my own sprouts, everything" (ISFL Participant)

Food-based activities in prison and impact of the pandemic

Cooking opportunities were limited for the women in the ISFL wing. Restrictions to accessing the communal kitchen were introduced during the pandemic which meant the women were doing less cooking than they were two years ago, and these restrictions remained in place at the time of writing.

Participants spoke of more activities being on offer prior to the pandemic:

"We have breakfast and stuff [...] before COVID [...] every weekend, [...] make stir fries and just like pasta dishes and stuff [...] But since COVID we don't really have that opportunity anymore, [just a] small microwave and toaster." (DTC participant)

The pandemic has limited the opportunities for the ISFL group to work in the prison gardens. Different wings of the prison have been working on the gardens separately at staggered times, as only 10 people are allowed in a polytunnel due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, a lack of staffing presented a further challenge in that food had been grown was not always picked. The DTC has its own polytunnel, so this appears to have been less of an issue for them. However, at the time of the initial data collection (January 2022), participants were not engaged in a great deal of activity in the polytunnel. It was acknowledged that this was seasonal:

"A few of us work down there, but at the moment there's nothing to do down there." (DTC participant)

"Everything is dead down there." (DTC participant)

The DTC women have also had more opportunities to prepare and cook food, and this was viewed as a way of broadening knowledge and ultimately improving health of the participants:

"[...] you could eat shit but it's not really gonna help. Whereas if you know how to cook, you know what to put with what. You know what's the healthier option, how to cook it [...] There's different ways that it can be healthier." (DTC Participant)

Participants asked if it would be possible for them to cook more and suggestions were made for how this could be done in different ways:

“It would be nice to make soups [...] and all you need is that carrot, potato and that...in a blender...you just need stock.” (DTC Participant)

Her Wellbeing Magazine

The PIPE cohort seemed familiar with Her Wellbeing magazine. The ISFL group appeared less so, although there was some recognition of having received physical copies of it previously:

“Isn’t that the one we used to get under our doors and about different nutrition and all that?” (ISFL Participant).

Others in the same cohort expressed interest in the magazine (“Can we get that in the library, d’you know?”) and went to enquire about it after the session. Most of the women from the DTC said that they hadn’t seen it as far as they were aware. Food Matters addressed these issues at the beginning of the course by taking in copies of Her Wellbeing for women who said they hadn’t received it and made arrangements with the librarian to ensure that that it was available in the library (and informed the participants of this).

PARTICIPATION:

Motivations

Staff and participants were asked about the circumstances which led them to participating in the programme. ISFL staff recalled being informed by their manager that Food Matters were coming in to run a project and asked if they would assist in the co-ordination of the sessions. In advance of the sessions, Food Matters met with ISFL staff in advance of the first session and supplied staff from both cohorts with a folder and sample modules. They also emailed a course overview and overview of the first session and each subsequent session plan to staff from each of the cohorts prior to the start of the course. One ISFL staff member said they’d read some of this documentation before the course commenced. Several of the DTC staff also said they had looked at this in advance however one admitted that they didn’t know much about the course before it started.

Participants were alerted to the Food Matters courses by staff from each of the cohorts. For the PIPE, this took the form of a ‘landing meeting’. PIPE participants also referred to seeing posters for the course on the wing and reading about it in the Her Wellbeing magazine. Most participants across the three cohorts had some understanding of what the Food Matters course would entail, although sometimes this was more a result of what they were hoping it would be rather than being informed of the content in advance:

“No-one has told us anything. I thought it was food tasting.” (ISFL Participant)

PIPE participants were curious about the programme, with comments that they thought it sounded interesting and would be informative, that they were excited about learning new things about food and cooking. One PIPE participant voiced some scepticism initially (“here we go, pushing healthy eating”) but were still intrigued enough to see what the programme was about. There was some frustration shown towards the researcher that the preliminary evaluation week for ISFL and DTC didn’t involve cooking (there was no preliminary evaluation session for the PIPE participants). Some thought the course was about weight loss or control:

“So basically, it's to do with the mind and your head, innit? This is what this is about. Telling you up here [points at head], you’re not fucking hungry in here [points at stomach].” (ISFL Participant)

Some said that they already had practical experience of cooking (e.g. for their families), but others wanted to learn additional skills. The main reason the ISFL women gave for joining the course was to lose weight:

“I’m in the middle of trying to lose a bit of weight love, but it’s not happening. I keep going to the gym...I’ve only got six weeks left and I’m going to a different prison, so this can teach me a lot in six weeks. Maybe I could be skinny. Who knows?” (ISFL Participant)

“I’m getting heavy.” (ISFL Participant)

“I’ll be [able] to lose some few pounds. While I’m doing this. I know how to eat healthy in here ‘cause I eat the salads [...] down in the kitchen. So yeah, I’m just looking to lose a bit of weight. I’ll go to the gym [...] I just want to cut out the chocolate, really [...] I know I can. I’m very strong willed and very strong minded as well so I can...I only buy one bag of sweets. One bag of chocolate to last me a week so [...] that's quite good, I think. Personally yeah, but I need to get rid of it.” (ISFL Participant)

I want to look healthy.” (ISFL Participant)

Other reasons included to gain a greater understanding of food and how it affects mood:

“I want to better understanding of [...] food and how it works in the brain.” (DTC Participant)

“When it comes to nutrition, it proper interests me so I just want a better understanding of it” (DTC Participant)

The DTC and ISFL participants agreed that they tend to comfort eat:

“I want to like focus my mind. Like a lot of eating is [...] your feelings [...] I eat my feelings massively when I’m sad. I look for quick fixes. I think a lot of it is in your head.” (ISFL participant)

The DTC women were more vocal about wanting to know about nutrition. There was a desire from all cohorts to learn about healthier options and alternatives:

“I’m interested in learning what things are good to eat [...] especially on the outside.”
(ISFL participant)

When asked what they wanted from the project they were unequivocal that it was to cook and there was a palpable frustration that they were not able to do this more often at HMP Send, a situation which had been exacerbated by COVID-19 lockdown restrictions:

“We cooked last time and we had a wicked time, didn’t we? Doing it was [...] really nice.

We had breakfast and it was lovely. It was just different.” (ISFL Participant)

The main interest was understandably in what food the participants might get to eat on the course:

“We’re all interested as we got told there’s food at the end of it [*laughs*].” (ISFL Participant)

The desires for the course (primarily to eat and cook) may have led to some misunderstanding that this was primarily a cooking programme. Staff may also have focused on this in order to generate interest in the programme, knowing that this is what many of the women wanted or perhaps what they were most interested in themselves and that once they had engaged with it they would stay and learn more extensively.

EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPATION:

Positive feedback about the course

The ISFL women enjoyed the sessions, despite the makeup of the group changing as the course progressed. ISFL staff thought overall that the course worked really well. The physical cooking and eating sessions were the aspects the participants were most interested in, preparing and simply seeing the food. Kitchen cooking in particular was enjoyed by the participants (see image 4). They really enjoyed making cake (Food Matters demonstrated a healthy version of a yoghurt pot cake). In the DTC, three women had been particularly vocal to staff about how much they enjoyed the course and specifically regarding creating different recipes. The PIPE women were perhaps the most positive about the course overall. The Food Matters staff were described as “friendly” and one participant commented that it was “good that the prison allowed the course to be run”. PIPE participants were also positive about the information contained within the module booklets.



Image 4: Chopping fresh vegetables in preparation for cooking a vegan meal

Learning from the course

An ISFL participant highlighted that there was mutual learning experienced by the women (nutrition, recipes and cooking). ISFL staff said the participants had learned about some foods they have never even seen before such as halloumi, tofu and other vegan options (see image 5).



Image 5: Ingredients for veggie kebabs made in the sessions

In one of the sessions the participants took part in a food quiz, which the staff said the women did well in. One ISFL participant began reading a book on gut health as a result of her

participation in the course. The ISFL staff said that they had also learned some tips about cooking (e.g. how tasty vegetarian spaghetti can be (see image 6)).



Image 6: Cooking a meal using a recipe from a Food Matters Inside & Out handout given during the sessions

The ISFL group enjoyed the mindfulness session (a sensory experience using satsumas). One of the DTC group chose to sit outside the room because she was nervous and uncomfortable during silences, and felt she was disrupting the session for the others, however she returned and joined in afterwards. This session was useful for the DTC, as members have expressed an interest in doing mindfulness sessions more broadly as part of their wider programmes.

The Eatwell Guide³, which forms part of the first module of the FGFC was described as a useful resource for the women by DTC staff.

Changes in behaviour relating to food choice as a result in participation

Several women from the ISFL talked about making changes to their eating habits as a result of the programme, for example eating more fish or stopping adding sugar to their coffee. ISFL staff described how one woman had lost eight pounds in weight after changing her diet as a result of the course.

DTC staff described this more as provoking a discussion amongst the women (e.g. in recognising the high level of sugar in their diets), although none had explicitly said they had changed their behaviour as a result of participation in the sessions.

PIPE participants discussed reading labels on food packaging more attentively and being more aware of the nutritional value of some foods (e.g. how “sugar is hidden in a lot of foods”). One participant referred to trying new types of food as a result of the programme (e.g. salmon and squash) and finding that they liked it, therefore broadening their diet. One participant stated that they were determined to “eat better”. It was also acknowledged that

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/528193/Eatwell_guide_colour.pdf

options are limited inside prison and it might be something they put in practice more “on the outside”.

KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED FROM THE FOOD MATTERS FACE-TO-FACE COURSES

A number of issues arose from the thematic analysis of the data, which are important considerations for future face-to-face work in prisons:

Continuity and consistency

Some of the challenges that the programme faced came from the nature of the setting and were outside of Food Matters’ (and partner organisations within the prison) control e.g. participants being moved from the wing or being transferred to another prison. An outbreak of Covid amongst the women in the DTC group also delayed the start of sessions with that cohort. In one week on the ISFL cohort there had been an argument between two participants prior to the session and this continued during the session, which was disruptive. Another project started while the Food Matters course was still running which two group members joined, so Food Matters lost them from their group. Whilst numbers were steady in the ISFL sessions, the numbers dropped in the DTC cohort after there was a two-week gap in which the Food Matters staff were ill with COVID-19. The only high attendance week after this point was the cooking session.

For the DTC, this course was run as ‘optional’ ‘Amber’ sessions, so the incentive for attendance was low with staff noting that the ‘mandatory’ sessions they run have consistently high attendance. This grading was decided by DTC staff. There is therefore an argument that to maximise engagement and impact, the Food Matters courses could be embedded into the delivery of mandatory courses that support rehabilitation.

DTC staff suggested that the sessions perhaps needed more dynamism and creativity as the women in the group get easily distracted. The consensus was that, if they aren’t cooking, the sessions were a too lengthy for the women. It was suggested that they find it hard to engage with sessions over 90 minutes in length, however Food Matters stated that only the cooking sessions ran for longer than this duration. DTC staff also said some of the women began arriving late or leaving early (or not turning up at all) as they were attending other courses run by The Forward Trust which clashed with the Food Matters sessions, and that this affected the dynamic of the group. Ensuring better alignment of sessions (which is outside of the control of Food Matters) to ensure activities aren’t running at the same time wherever possible would perhaps increase participation and continuity.

The PIPE sessions involved women from the Progression PIPE and the Preparation PIPE. This was a suggested approach by a member of the PIPE team as at the time of the course there were less women in PIPE than usual and the thinking was that this might be less intense for the women. One participant commented that this would have been better if they’d done it separately. A minor point by PIPE participants was made about some of the other participants not being helpful in cleaning up after the cooking session.

Abilities and competencies

One of the main challenges in the prison setting is pitching the content of the courses to a diverse range of participants abilities, many of whom may experience challenges with literacy and numeracy, and attention/distraction. Although Food Matters received positive feedback from NOVUS⁴ regarding the content of their handouts, the ISFL staff commented on the course materials, particularly some inconsistencies relating to ability. For example, they didn't consider the handouts to always be age-appropriate. Conversely, at some points, they considered that the quizzes were too difficult for them (as did some of the ISFL participants). The DTC staff were in agreement that they thought the handouts were pitched at a level that was too basic for the group, although they did complete them as requested. The DTC women also in the main thought of themselves as already competent cooks and would have liked to have cooked something more challenging and talked about nutrition in more detail (what was there was well received, but one woman said she wanted more), whereas the ISFL women talked about learning they took from the sessions. In reality, there is never going to be a 'one size fits all' solution and this illustrates the difficulty in designing handouts and sessions that are for a variety of cohorts with mixed abilities and experience.

The ISFL group culminated with a food quiz, due to having an additional week as illness in the DTC group delayed the running of sessions for their cohort. This quiz was received well.

Course structure and content

The 'memories' session was received well by the women. One woman from the PIPE said that she was determined to "practice mindful eating". DTC staff suggested that it might have been better to do this earlier in the sessions and return to it later on. The women were interested in this reflective aspect. Based on an overriding consensus from both groups the main desire for the course was to provide increased opportunities for 'hands on' cooking sessions. This would potentially have a positive impact on the consistency of higher attendance levels. However, this was not the main focus of the course, which was about learning about food habits, food and wellbeing and making informed food choices in the prison setting.

All of these issues highlight the challenging environment that Food Matters were operating in.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FOOD IN PRISON

When asked what they would like to see changed about issues around food in prison, the ISFL women highlighted that they would like to see more nutrients in the food served, rather than having the need to take supplements:

"We don't have much protein in prison [...] and iron, loads of people have been on iron tablets." (DTC Participant).

Amongst various suggestions given by the women from the DTC and ISFL were increased opportunities to use the PIPE kitchen, and the addition of microwaves in the cells. Seemingly

⁴ A UK social enterprise which aims to improve lives and economic success through learning and skills. NOVUS provide accessible and inclusive prison education services.

prompted by taking part in the course some of the women have asked the catering manager about changing the menu by adding more healthy options:

[We are] advising the kitchen manager about what we would like, say, me and x both said about having brown pasta and rice." (ISFL Participant)

The women also want fewer carbohydrates and more vegetables in food portions.

Most of the recipes used/offered by Food Matters were based on ingredients generally available on the prison canteen. Although the women from both cohorts enjoyed trying new foods, a PIPE participant suggested that perhaps taking more into account of what's available from canteen at specific prisons (noting variations across the estate) when creating recipes would be useful. This was echoed by a DTC staff member who commented that they often won't be able to access certain foods, so it might be good to try to make meals out of what is available in the prison at the time, although this would obviously be a logistical challenge with pre-printed recipes. As a counterpoint to this perspective, some participants in ISFL talked about how much they liked getting food 'treats' during the Food Matters sessions including healthy snacks and a cake in the final session which was relatively low sugar content with extra added fruit, and they didn't appear as concerned about whether they could get these type of foods on the canteen menu, although all recipes were based on ingredients available in the canteen.



Image 7: A range of meals produced in one session.

MENTAL WELLBEING MONITORING

Food Matters were assisted by PIPE/ISFL/DTC staff to administer the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) (see Appendix 1) monitoring forms at fortnightly intervals with the groups (see image 8). The forms ask participants to consider 14 statements about

their own mental health (e.g. 'I've been feeling good about myself') and how they have been feeling over the past couple of weeks, and rate these on a Likert scale:

- 1) none of the time
- 2) rarely
- 3) some of the time
- 4) often
- 5) all of the time

By tracing individual participants' responses over the course of the project we can observe if there are any trends in changes in self-perception of mental wellbeing by the participants for its duration, with some variation in how this was done between groups: For the ISFL and DTC cohorts, the analysis was carried out only for those participants who completed the WEMWBS at Week 0 and at least one of the subsequent weeks: Week 2, 4 or 6 for ISFL participants and Week 4 or 6 for DTC participants. For the PIPE cohorts, the analysis was carried out only for those participants who completed the WEMWBS at Week 2 and at least one of the subsequent weeks (Week 4 or 6). See Figure 1 for a visual representation of WEMWBS changes across the duration of the courses.



Image 8: Participants completing WEMWBS monitoring forms during a session

HIGHLIGHTS FOR ISFL:

TOTAL WEMWBS SCORE

- Four ISFL participants completed the WEMWBS at both Week 0 and Week 2, and their mean Total WEMWBS Score increased by 4.75 points (from 43.25 to 48.00).
- Four ISFL participants completed the WEMWBS at both Week 0 and Week 4, and their mean Total WEMWBS Score decreased by 3.25 points (from 40.50 to 37.25).
- Three ISFL participants completed the WEMWBS at both Week 0 and Week 6, and their mean Total WEMWBS Score decreased by 2.67 points (from 43.33 to 40.67).

LEVEL OF WELLBEING (LINKED TO THE TOTAL WEMWBS SCORE)

- From Week 0 to Week 2, out of 4 ISFL participants, 1 changed their level of wellbeing from Low to Moderate. The remaining 3 participants did not see a change in their level of wellbeing.
- From Week 0 to Week 4, out of 4 ISFL participants, 1 changed their level of wellbeing from Low to Moderate, while 2 participants changed from Moderate to Low. The remaining participant did not see a change in their level of wellbeing.
- From Week 0 to Week 6, out of 3 ISFL participants, 1 changed their level of wellbeing from Low to Moderate, while 1 participant changed from Moderate to Low. The remaining participant did not see a change in their level of wellbeing.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR DTC:

TOTAL WEMWBS SCORE

- No data was collected at Week 2 from DTC participants. Therefore, no comparison was possible for Week 0 vs Week 2.
- Six DTC participants completed the WEMWBS at both Week 0 and Week 4, and their mean Total WEMWBS Score increased by 2.17 points (from 48.17 to 50.33).
- Seven DTC participants completed the WEMWBS at both Week 0 and Week 6, and their mean Total WEMWBS Score increased by 3.29 points (from 48.71 to 52.00).

LEVEL OF WELLBEING (LINKED TO THE TOTAL WEMWBS SCORE)

- From Week 0 to Week 4, out of 6 DTC participants, 1 changed their level of wellbeing from Low to Moderate, while another changed from High to Moderate. The remaining 4 participants did not see a change in their level of wellbeing.
- From Week 0 to Week 6, out of 7 DTC participants, 1 changed their level of wellbeing from Low to Moderate, 1 changed from Moderate to High, 1 participant from Moderate to Low, and another 1 from High to Moderate. The remaining 3 participants did not see a change in their level of wellbeing.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR PIPE:

TOTAL WEMWBS SCORE

- No data was collected at Week 0 from PIPE participants. Therefore, no comparison was possible for Week 0.
- Six PIPE participants completed the WEMWBS at both Week 2 and Week 4, and their mean Total WEMWBS Score increased by 2.96 points (from 41.71 to 44.67).

- Four PIPE participants completed the WEMWBS at both Week 2 and Week 6, and their mean Total WEMWBS Score increased by 5.12 points (from 43.06 to 48.17).

LEVEL OF WELLBEING (LINKED TO THE TOTAL WEMWBS SCORE)

- From Week 2 to Week 4, out of 6 PIPE participants, 1 changed their level of wellbeing from Low to Moderate, while another changed from Moderate to Low. The remaining 4 participants did not see a change in their level of wellbeing.
- From Week 2 to Week 6, out of 4 PIPE participants, 1 changed their level of wellbeing from Low to Moderate, while the remaining 3 participants did not see a change in their level of wellbeing.
- See Table 6 for the frequencies of each level of wellbeing related to individual timepoints.

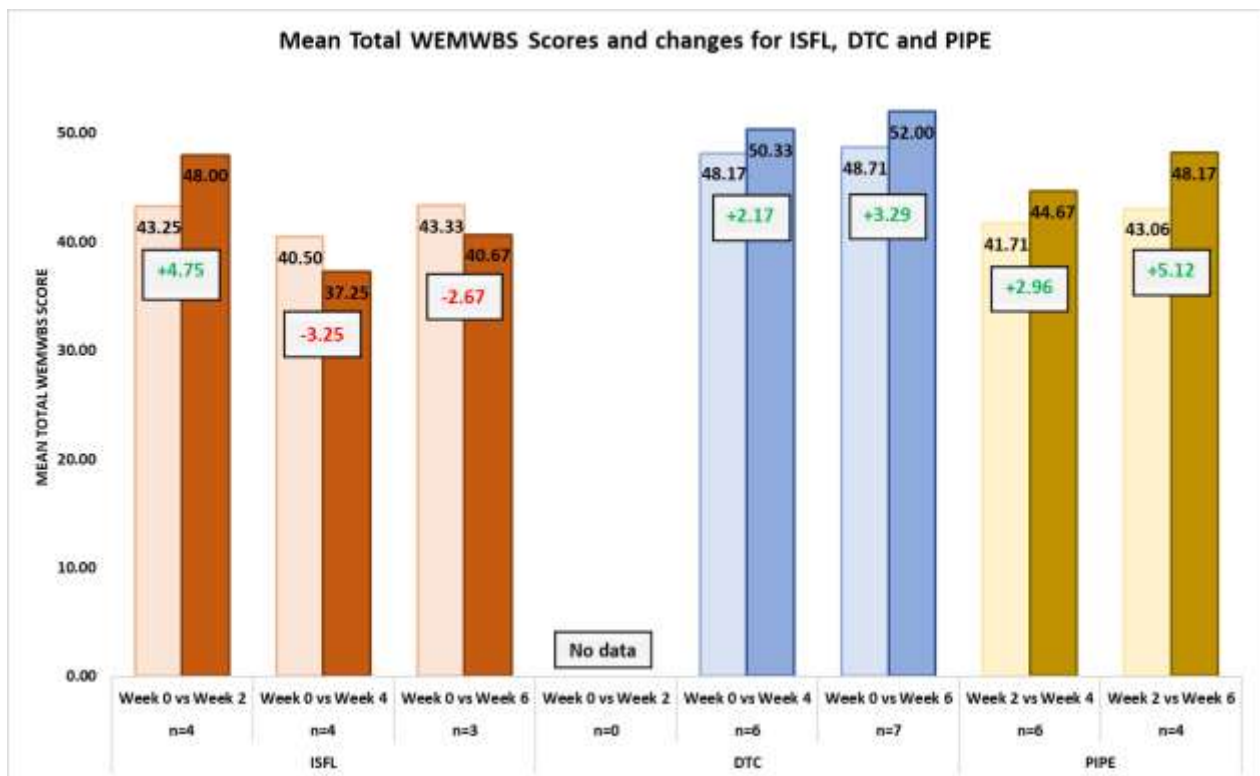


Figure 1. Mean Total WEMWBS Scores and changes between Week 0 and Weeks 2/4/6 for ISFL, DTC and PIPE.

Whilst these groups all featured low numbers for a quantitative analysis, the mean scores for the DTC and PIPE demonstrate an increase in scoring from low (≤ 43) to moderate (≥ 43 and ≤ 61) or remaining within moderate. The scoring decreased for ISFL, and the Week 4 and Week 6 scoring was low. The DTC had the best scoring after the course was completed, but this was still within the moderate range. No cohorts mean indicated a high WEMWBS score (≥ 61) at any stage.

In most instances, the WEMWBS mean total scores reflected an increase in scoring on self-perceived wellbeing from the beginning of the course to the stage of the course the process was repeated (weeks 2, 4 and 6), with the exception of the ISFL in weeks 4 and 6 and the DTC in week 2, for which there was no data. The greatest increase from the beginning to the end of the course was with the PIPE women, whereas the highest overall scoring at the end of the course was from the DTC women.

The WEMWBS is comprised of 14 separate questions regarding wellbeing. The WEMWBS data analysis enabled us to see which statements had improved on average in each cohort (figures in brackets reflect the extent to which the responses moved up the 5-point WEMWBS Likert scale). The statement for which scoring improved most from the beginning to the end of the course in the ISFL was 'I've been feeling loved' (+1.00), with 'I've been feeling close to other people' second (+0.67) and 'I've been feeling confident' and 'I've been feeling good about myself' joint third (+0.33). For the DTC cohort, the highest scoring mean change was also 'I've been feeling loved', with 'I've been feeling cheerful' second (+0.43) and 'I've been feeling confident' and 'I've been feeling good about myself' joint third. For the PIPE cohort, the largest change during the course⁵ was 'I've been feeling interested in other people' (+1.00), with 'I've been feeling optimistic about the future' second (+0.75) and 'I've been feeling close to other people', 'I've had energy to spare' and 'I've been feeling useful' all joint third (+0.50)

Of these 14 individual questions, half featured in the top three highest mean changes in each group. There was some correlation between the ISFL and the DTC, with three statements featuring in both of their three highest changes. The top three highest mean changes in the PIPE group were about different statements. A word of caution on the WEMWBS results is that the overall numbers of participants with useable data (i.e. comparable to baseline data) was low in each cohort, so what conclusions can be drawn from these results is limited.

FOOD MATTERS' STAFF REFLECTIONS ON THE HMP SEND PROGRAMME

As indicated earlier (see Food Matters), what Food Matters ultimately delivered in the prison, and what was evaluated changed markedly due to the impact and constraints arising from the pandemic. Food Matters had less time in the prison than intended and access to less prisoners and operated in an environment that was constantly in flux, responding and changing to full and partial prison lockdowns which did not always correspond to those in the wider community.

When reflecting on how the revised sessions went, Food Matters staff were invited to consider the motivators and challenges in the projects. The consumption of food was itself argued to be a great motivator, and they brought food, approved by security, in to try in each session. Food Matters staff also reflected on their position in relation to the participants and how being viewed in a positive sense may help with the women 'buying in' to the programme:

⁵ From week 2 to week 6 as opposed to week 0 to week 6 in the other two cohorts

"[...] effectively we're doing something nice [...] we do [...] food memories [which] can be quite profound for some people [...] We have a very different relationship to officers. We're not gatekeepers [...] we're civilians. So it's a very different experience [for the women]." (Director, Food Matters)

This 'outsider' status had undoubted benefits in terms of how they were perceived by the participants, but it also came with additional challenges when trying to operationalise the programme within a prison setting:

"When you're an outside agency, and [...] you [...] don't have an office in the prison, you're [...] last people to know what's going on. So, the fact that [...] it was only when we went in to run a course one day that we had a chat with the PIPE administrator who said, "Well, this is why this person can't come because there's been a change in regime in terms of prioritising activities". [...] We wouldn't know it, because we're not on the intranet...we're not internal staff [...] I do think it does have a profound impact on...commissioned services...external contracts mean you don't get as good a joined-up service as you possibly would if these [...] activities were [set up] within the prison system itself. [...] It might make complete sense for them to work more collaboratively with, say, ourselves or someone else, but they're not necessarily driven to do that. But if it was internal [...] my sense is that you might get a more collaborative process with the participants at the centre. And everything's driven by what's good for those participants." (Director, Food Matters)

Reflecting on how the programme ran with the three different cohorts, it was also observed that Food Matters Inside & Out might have more impact in some cohorts than others:

"My gut feeling is and from what I've seen is, the impact is greater with the groups that are in the position to make change [...] And I think the PIPE [...] was [...] probably where we have most impact." (Project Lead and Nutritionist, Food Matters Inside & Out)

Food Matters staff discussed what they had learned from working with three distinct cohorts within HMP Send:

"In PIPE, it felt like from day one almost, that there was clearly a huge amount of curiosity and interest in [...] all the kinds of subjects that we were going to look at [...] I suppose sometimes that could be quite disruptive [...] to our session plan, because there were a lot of questions that weren't necessarily fitting in with what we had planned. But I think that's...better than having no questions or curiosity...And ultimately, that led to, I think, a bit more of a useful course overall, because we were able [...] listen to the questions that they had, or the things they definitely did want to cover and incorporate that into the sessions as we went along." (Project Officer, Food Matters)

This experience of the PIPE group was echoed by another Project Officer:

"They were very engaged. And, you know, I think we did get very lucky with the group, but it was just the atmosphere at the end of the sessions [...] I feel like it was as

much an enjoyable experience for us as it was for them. Like we wanted them to continue as well. They're just a great group. And obviously it made our jobs a lot easier. Just great personalities." (Project Officer, Food Matters)

TRANSFERABILITY FROM OTHER FOOD MATTERS WORK TO THE WOMEN'S PRISON ESTATE

The face-to-face Food Matters Inside & Out sessions were not about instigating 'macro-level' change in the prison food system. It was hoped that the small group sessions in HMP Send, which was acknowledged by Food Matters as 'micro-level' work, would have the potential to make positive changes for the lives of the women involved, with respect to them understanding how they can make changes in their behaviours towards food within the prison setting:

"I think it's really important [...] that [...] what seemed like small changes to outside [...] eyes are potentially really profound - whether that's for one person, or whether for the system...Movement in prison is minute...so, for example, in all the courses, it's not just about doing work with the participants that you're working with at the time in terms of their own behaviour around food, but it's also about: how can you help them take back some control of a very controlled situation? [...] What is it they can do to help empower themselves? It's not just about [...] understanding how to make better food choices on the canteen or on the menu. But it's also "how can I, within this really constrained, controlled environment, make change, or at least feel empowered to move towards change? [...] You want to help them to make as much change as they possibly can and feel as empowered as they possibly can." (Director, Food Matters)

Having previously worked face-to-face in the male estate, Food Matters observed "notable" differences in the interests of the participants:

"Working with the men they were very much into in-cell cooking, kettle cooking and into keeping fit in the gym, working on muscle [...] those were clear things that came up again and again with them. Whereas with the women, I think it was more around weight [...] that's how their emotions related to [food]." (Project Lead and Nutritionist, Food Matters Inside & Out)

FOOD MATTERS DISTANCE LEARNING AT HMP YOI STYAL

In parallel to the face-to-face courses operating in HMP Send, Food Matters also co-ordinated a modular distance learning programme, the Feel Good Food Club, across the female estate. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic reducing access into prison as a safety measure, Food Matters were able to post the paper-based distance learning course to the whole of the women's estate. Here there is potential for 'macro-level' changes in prisons, particularly with regards to Food Matters developing digital work, which coupled with the physical distributions of Her Wellbeing and the FGCG has substantially increased the reach of the programme:

“Everyone [was] having to shift to a Plan B, because of COVID [...] I suppose the silver lining for us is that we've had a much bigger impact across the estate, rather than just working very intensively in one prison...All the [...] feedback we're getting from the outside: “You [...] reached that many women, that's amazing”. But also, being able to have conversations with prison staff around the estate is really good, too. (Director, Food Matters)

It is important to note that the evaluation team did not interview any key staff or participants from the wider estate and so from an evaluation perspective the wider impact beyond HMP Send and HMP YOI Styal is not known. However, the Food Matters Team have noted that they receive a lot of positive direct feedback from across the Women's Estate.

The evaluation team conducted a focus group with three women who had participated in the distance learning programme at HMP YOI Styal. Their feedback about the programme was largely positive, and focused on issues such as how informative the literature was:

“What I found really useful about it is like the information [...] in it was all based on restrictions in prison and what food we can get. So that really helped as well. Because obviously we can't get a lot of the stuff that people have access to outside, so we have to make do what we can get.” (HMP YOI Styal participant)

“It had recipes in it you know [...] what we could actually make with [...] what we get so that was really good because you we can't get old nice stuff... all the extra stuff, so it's basically making a basic meal [...] using things that you wouldn't have really thought of outside.” (HMP YOI Styal participant)

One participant suggested that she would have liked it to have been more detailed, but acknowledged the challenge in pitching such a programme at a particular level in a prison setting:

“I like the science-y bit behind it: Why should you be eating this? Why shouldn't you eat that? I mean, to be honest, it was quite basic information [...] Me personally, I would have liked it to have gone a little bit deeper. But then the main prison population probably don't actually know. Yeah. And I'm not being awful saying that. But a lot of them do need it to be [basic].” (HMP YOI Styal participant)

Suggestions were given to tie nutritional advice in directly with what was available from the canteen, to appeal to the women in prison who did not have access to any cooking equipment.

“Maybe add a bit for the catered houses ladies, stuff that they could do, if you get like an insight of what people can access food wise on the canteen, yeah. And then provide stuff that we can do in the microwave and give them another option to eat a bit better.” (HMP YOI Styal participant).

The women also discussed reading Food Matters' Her Wellbeing magazine using the prison intranet and researchers were shown how this could be accessed as a pdf using a tablet. Each

woman in HMP YOI Styal now has access to a tablet which made it easier to access the magazine. Food Matters intention was to produce something that was visually appealing and not like the usual written materials available in prisons. It was well received by the women:

“To me it's quite inviting. It's not [...] just like a basic leaflet is it? It's nice. It's colourful and inviting. So it's one of those that I might actually pick up.” (HMP YOI Styal participant)

Overall, the women attributed positive changes regarding food to participation in the programme:

“I have started eating a lot better than I used to...we've lost a bit of weight between us.” (HMP YOI Styal participant)

The literature supplied appears to have focused the women's attention on aspects of their eating behaviours that they had previously been able to avoid:

“I lost five stone partly from that [...] partly from a heath condition. So, I was picking up ideas from that and thinking [...] oh, well, wait a minute. I didn't actually realise that [...] but when you see it in sort of black and white you think [...]” (HMP YOI Styal participant)

REFLECTIONS ON THE EVALUATION

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic made this an extremely challenging evaluation for a number of reasons: firstly, the project itself was delayed by approximately 18 months due to prison protocols during the pandemic, during which time there was a change in Governor; secondly and again due to restrictions brought in by the pandemic, Food Matters had to adapt their delivery, redesigning their programme and aiming at recruiting smaller number of participants. This meant that the evaluation team had to maintain flexibility and undertake a study redesign to align with these changes and required many amendments to be submitted to the Research Ethics panel at UCLan. Unfortunately, it also meant that elements of the study design such as the food diaries (which were intended to show changes in food choice and eating behaviour in detail) had to be omitted. In the first round of qualitative data collection COVID-19 regulations such as mask-wearing and social distancing made communication in focus groups challenging.

Due to complex communication issues with the prison (e.g. lines of communication between the evaluation team, Food Matters, provider organisations and the prison), there was initially some confusion about the separate roles of the evaluation team and Food Matters. However, the researcher who conducted the interviews and focus groups found for the most part that participants and staff to be receptive and willing to talk about their experience. This is with the exception of the DTC participants who declined to return for a second focus group. COVID-19 also impacted on the evaluation when the researcher tested positive shortly before they were due to interview the PIPE participants, and PIPE staff very helpfully

facilitated a focus group discussion on the researchers' behalf. This meant that data was in the form of notetaking rather than verbatim quotes for this cohort.

WEMWBS monitoring was brought in to replace elements of the programme that had been dropped in order to ensure that there was still a mixed-methods approach to data which would be realistic and attainable in the context of the revised programme. In general, the participants completed the WEMWBS monitoring without comment. However, in the PIPE group one woman commented that "these are actually very personal questions for a food group" and Food Matters project officers said they found administering them to the group a "bit jarring" in the context of the sessions themselves, which were informal. Furthermore, the low number of completions makes it difficult to draw any conclusions from this element of the evaluation.

NEXT STEPS FOR FOOD MATTERS

Having experimented with different modes of programme delivery in a time of unprecedented challenges to the prison service has enabled an opportunity for Food Matters to reflect on the future of their prison programme delivery. There was some concern raised that the face-to-face sessions are not sustainable to run in the long term given the resources required for a relatively small number of participants, even if it does have benefits for those taking part. It was suggested that a lot of the benefits the prisoners received from the face-to-face sessions could possibly be achieved by running cookery classes (which presumably could be done internally), whereas the more impactful changes can be made on a larger scale using distance learning methods:

"It's really great for us to go in and do these cooking classes, and everyone loves that. But [...] what is the impact when we walk away? [...] unless it's impacting on medium [to] long term health behaviour change. We might as well *just* be running cookery classes [...] When we first went into [HMP] Send and we spoke to staff, that's what they wanted, something to fill in the time of the women to relieve the boredom [...] and do a bit of cooking, because they enjoy cooking [...] I think we have to be really aware of that in the work we're doing, that we're not just filling this gap in prisons of giving people some entertainment." (Project Lead and Nutritionist, Food Matters Inside & Out).

The introduction of Her Wellbeing to the prison intranet has led to the development of a digital version of the modular distance learning course, the Feel Good Food Club (FGFC):

"I particularly want to develop...ways where we can reach more women. Because with these face-to-face courses [...] it's been difficult to get a group of six together, and then by the end, there's only two of them. So it's [...] really expensive [whereas] in-cell learning...(which was brought about because of COVID) [...] actually gave us the opportunity to develop another direction. I'd really like to do more on that and to be able to [...] look at the outcomes from that and how we're affecting behaviour change with that. And also, now we're talking to people and starting to develop things [...] on the digital side [...] looking at how that in-cell learning can be transferred onto a

digital platform, which will give us much more opportunity for analysis. Because it'll be easy to put surveys on the internet. (Project Lead and Nutritionist, Food Matters Inside & Out)

There are several potential benefits to this exploration of the use of digital technology in prisons for future course delivery. Firstly, is that it can be more cost effective as it doesn't require Food Matters staff to physically attend prisons. Secondly, it may increase the sustainability of running the courses. For example, if staff were trained to use the materials in creative sessions with the women this could embed skills and capabilities within the prison systems to enable the courses to run regularly or continuously without additional costs. The use of interactive digital technology could also enhance ways in which future courses can be monitored and evaluated (and therefore reduce evaluation costs as well). And thirdly, providing educational opportunities via a digital offer/tablet could provide learning benefits for people in prison beyond the course itself and by normalising the use of technology on a par with the wider community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations arise from this small-scale evaluation being conducted through the lens of a realist framework of 'what works' for who, in what context. This enables an opportunity to explore considerations arising from the evaluation that may help the programme being scaled-up and /or rolled out to different types of prisons across the wider prison estate or different communities within it. This report has recognised the innovative work of Food Matters who are aiming for a more profound impact on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of people in prison. Combining the key findings from the different data sources there are a small number of recommendations arising from work to date which comprise:

FOOD MATTERS *INSIDE & OUT*

- **Embedding the course into prison mechanisms for prisoner development:** Exploring whether Food Matters Inside & Out can be added to core/compulsory modules in provider services (e.g. PIPEs, ISFLs, DTCs and Education) in new prison settings/communities where intervention protocols allow; embedding the monitoring of participants with regular course attendance to continue to gather feedback and impact.
- **Linking the course to the menu:** Food Matters could explore further opportunities for menu changes locally with the HMPS catering manager (at the prisons they work in) and nationally with HMPPS, to support joined-up delivery between growing food/food availability within the prison, course education, skills development and catering to influence quality of food and to better enable healthier options to be identified and chosen.
- **Increase variety of food options in partnership:** embedding more opportunities for people in prison to prepare and taste a wider variety of foods including those available within the prison menus and as part of courses delivered/facilitated by Food Matters and in partnership with HMPPS (locally and nationally).
- **Further tailoring of course content to ability:** undertaking consultations with wing / unit managers and course participants where possible in advance of delivery to ascertain appropriate levels and options for mixed abilities for course materials and tailor courses accordingly.
- **Duration of sessions:** if appropriate, consider delivery of non-practical sessions within shorter time periods (e.g. within an hour) which may maximise longer term engagement particularly for participants with more challenging and complex needs.
- **Self-evaluation:** long-term monitoring e.g. using digital means available to prisoners to see whether there are any lasting (self-perceived) behaviour changes for the Food Matters participants.

FEEL GOOD FOOD CLUB

- **Assessing participants understanding:** incorporating an assessment element to the course to monitor participants' understanding of the course content.
- **Enhancing digital options:** adding interactive elements to Food Matters content on the prisons intranet to increase engagement.

HER WELLBEING MAGAZINE

- **Partnership working for joined-up content:** Further linking content of Her Wellbeing to other parts of the prison (e.g. catering, education and healthcare) could provide a mechanism to engage new partners, source additional resource and provide joined-up provision of material for people in prison.
- **Ensure distribution chain within prison:** Related to the above point, continue to ensure that there is a point of contact in each prison who ensures distribution of physical copies of the magazine to the women, and that there is a line of communication in which they can be notified when new issues are being sent to the prisons.
- **Digital versions to incorporate other elements of Food Matters work:** incorporate the Feel Good Food Club (or elements of it) into the digital magazine so that there are interactive elements within Her Wellbeing magazine. These could be a gateway towards other Food Matters related activities for the women and enhance awareness of the Food Matters 'brand' for potential participants.

GENERAL

- **Testing out and scaling up:** discuss with senior HMPPS stakeholders the feasibility of testing out mechanisms for future delivery in different prison environments and with different prison communities for wider scale roll-out.
- **Toolkit and Train the Trainers:** explore options to sustain the course/s into the delivery of ISFL and PIPE service delivery by offering a training the trainers course supplemented by a toolkit for onward internal training of staff to build capability and capacity across the prison estate.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Undertaking an exploratory mixed-methods evaluation of this HMPPS funded prison-based healthy eating and nutrition programme yielded strengths in its ability to explore content and delivery in person with women in prison. It did however also have some limitations. Firstly, this was a small-scale evaluation with women only and principally in one site. Secondly, it was undertaken during the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns which imposed restrictions to service delivery that required constant attention to guidance and flexibility to respond accordingly, often within a short window of opportunity. And thirdly, while Food Matters were able to respond to the challenges of the changing pandemic situation with innovation, there was no opportunity to follow participants during and post-course to ascertain positive behaviour change over time (e.g. menu and canteen choices) which was an integral part of the original research plan.

DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH

A research summary has been delivered to HMPPS alongside this final report for Food Matters. The research team will be authoring peer-reviewed publication(s) based on this evaluation. An abstract has been accepted for a conference presentation at the Nordic Health Promotion Research Conference, Halmstad, Sweden (June 2023).

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APPENDIX 1:

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/using/howto/#:~:text=Scoring,score%20is%20from%202014-70>

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.

Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)
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APPENDIX 2:

Interview schedules

Semi-structured one-to-one interviews - approx. 30 minutes

Can you tell me about how you came to be involved with the project?

Do you remember what you thought about it when you first heard of it?

How did you feel about the project when it started?

Do you remember anything in particular from the sessions you took part in?

Is there anything you particularly liked or disliked about the project?

Have you changed anything about what you eat based on anything you learned within the groups? (e.g. eating more of certain kinds of foods).

Semi-structured focus groups: Key Prison Staff - approx. 30 minutes

Why did you decide to become involved in the project?

How do you feel the project worked overall?

What were the enablers for any successful outcomes?

What were the barriers to effectiveness?

Have you observed any changes in the women with regards to food-related behaviours? If so, what?