

***EVALUATION OF GET COOKING!
ENHANCED PILOT
(APRIL 2004)***

RESEARCH REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background & Objectives

In 2003, Food Standard Agency Wales (FSAW) ran and evaluated a small, pilot 6-week 'Get Cooking' course in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The response to the course was very positive from all those taking part in the pilot and as a consequence FSAW has modified the recipes in readiness to run and evaluate an enhanced pilot, this time in four different urban/rural areas of Wales.

The aim of Get Cooking was to teach young people some basic cooking skills in order that they feel a sense of achievement and enjoy the experience. At end of the course it was hoped that participants would feel more motivated about cooking for themselves and friends, and understand some basic principles concerning healthy eating and food hygiene.

FSAW wished to evaluate the success of the enhanced pilot and as such commissioned Beaufort Research to investigate the following:

- Young people's reactions to each of the sessions, covering understanding of the information provided on cooking and healthy eating, enjoyment of session and ability to cook each dish
- Young people's views on the programme on completion of the 6 weeks
- Intention to cook more often at home, and type of meals
- Improvement in confidence to cook
- Improvements in knowledge regarding healthy eating
- Future assistance required e.g. cooking sessions, cooking equipment, ingredients etc.
- Suggested improvements to the sessions
- Trainers' views on the sessions

1.2 Course content

The course was a series of 6 sessions over the course of 5-6 weeks. Participants prepared, cooked and ate a meal at each of the sessions. The menus were as follows for each session:

- Session 1 – Pizza or Calzone, Salad and Brownies
- Session 2 – Shepherd’s Pie or Tuna Pasta Bake, Stir Fry Vegetables and Fruit Salad
- Session 3 – Roast Chicken, Potatoes, Vegetables and Gravy and Fruit Crumble
- Session 4 – Omelette, Savoury Rice, Salad and Pancakes
- Session 5 – Lasagne, Salad, Garlic Bread and Knickerbocker Glory
- Session 6 – Trainer / Participant choice

In addition to the above, members of the groups were encouraged to undertake food shopping for the ingredients for each week.

1.3 Target group

The target group for the enhanced pilot was young people, but within this broad universe, the participants at each of the four pilot areas differed considerably. The four groups were as follows:

- I. Milford Haven – this group took place at a Youth Centre at 10am with young people aged between 13 and 16.
- II. Rhyl – this group was with homeless young people and took place in the homeless centre starting at 5/6pm
- III. Llanelli – this group took place at a drop in centre for ‘disadvantaged’ young people aged 13-16 and again was at 10am
- IV. Welshpool – consisted of young mums and took place in a primary school. Session started at 1pm and finished at 3.30pm. This group differed from the other in that:
 - a) each participant cooked a meal rather than producing a meal as a group
 - b) participants took their food home to eat with their family rather than eating it together at the end of the session

The trainers for each course were mostly volunteers from the local Women’s Institute (WI). One trainer was a professional chef. The trainers were invariably

assisted by helpers at each session, either more volunteers from the WI or in some instances youth workers.

1.4 Attendance

Although a register of attendance did not fall into the scope of this research, interviews with trainers and the number of questionnaires received per session would suggest that attendance across the session did vary somewhat. This was more the case at Llanelli and Rhyl. This needs to be borne in mind when interpreting the results between sessions – i.e. it is not a consistent set of participants rating each session.

Based on the questionnaires received the following attendance is estimated:

	Total	Gender		Age			
		Male	Female	13-16	17-24	25+	Not answered
Session 1	25	11	14	8	7	8	2
Session 2	24	9	15	12	6	5	1
Session 3	17	6	11	7	6	3	1
Session 4	21	6	15	12	5	3	1
Session 5	15	6	9	9	4	2	-
Session 6	15	6	9	9	3	2	1

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A variety of research tools were used in order to answer the above objectives. These are described below:

1) Pre and Post questionnaire among Participants:

At the beginning of the first session a short questionnaire (two page) was given to participants to fill in concerning their frequency of cooking, their cooking ability / confidence, their enjoyment of cooking and their attitudes towards various aspects of cooking. At the end of the sixth and final session a similar questionnaire was given to participants and again their views on the same measures were recorded. Comparison of these surveys was intended to measure the overall impact of the course.

2) Session evaluation questionnaire among Participants:

At the end of each session participants filled in a one page questionnaire to measure how much they enjoyed the session and whether they were likely to cook this menu at home. *(NB, not possible at session 6 due to need undertake post stage questionnaire and focus groups, and only limited participant concentration)*

3) Session evaluation questionnaire among Trainers:

At the end of each session trainers also filled in a one page questionnaire to give their opinions on how well the session went and how motivated and enthusiastic they thought participants were.

4) Depth interview among Trainers:

At the penultimate or at the final session a qualitative depth interview was conducted with a trainer at each of the four groups. The interview last around 30-45 minutes and was centred around an agreed list of topics concerning their opinion of the course on a number of levels - how well the sessions worked, the venue, the impact on participants and any improvements that could be made.

5) Group discussion among Participants:

At the penultimate or at the final session a focus group was held with each group of participants to get their reaction to the course in more detail.

This report is organised on a thematic basis incorporating findings from each element of the research where appropriate.

All survey questionnaires and topic guides used for the depth interviews and focus groups can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- Motivations for attending the course were to learn new skills and recipes but also to have fun. Most of those who attended had very basic or non-existent cooking skills.
- Overall reaction to the Get Cooking course was very positive among both participants and trainers and exceeded expectations. The success of the trainer in providing the 'fun' atmosphere that participants required rather than a more classroom style education has been key to the all round positive feedback.
- Careful recruitment of trainers (and their helpers) is therefore vital to the future success of the project.
- Each of the sessions was individually well received, with the vast majority of participants in each case claiming to have enjoyed the session and the food they had prepared.
- The recipes at each session appear to be pitched at the appropriate level. Participants claim not to have struggled with them and trainers also believe them to be suitable for the target group. Only minor tweaking of some of the recipes was suggested.
- In particular, participants enjoyed making the puddings (especially the sweet ones).
- The venues used for the course received mixed views. Most trainers mentioned that more cooking space and oven space would have been preferable. Whilst it was manageable if attendance remained at around 4-6, increasing the number of participants beyond this level at the type of venues used would make the course very difficult to run.
- The course materials provided (trainer pack, recipes sheets) were on the whole well received. However, earlier distribution and more pictures on the recipes sheets were suggested as improvements that could be made.
- There were mixed views on the effectiveness of communication of messages on healthy eating and food hygiene. On the whole trainers believed that the food hygiene message had sunk in and this was evidenced by changes in behaviour (e.g. regular washing of hands).
- On healthy eating, trainers believed they needed to approach this with caution, being careful to communicate messages implicitly or else risk

alienation of the group. Whilst, some participants have taken it on board, others appear to have chosen to ignore it.

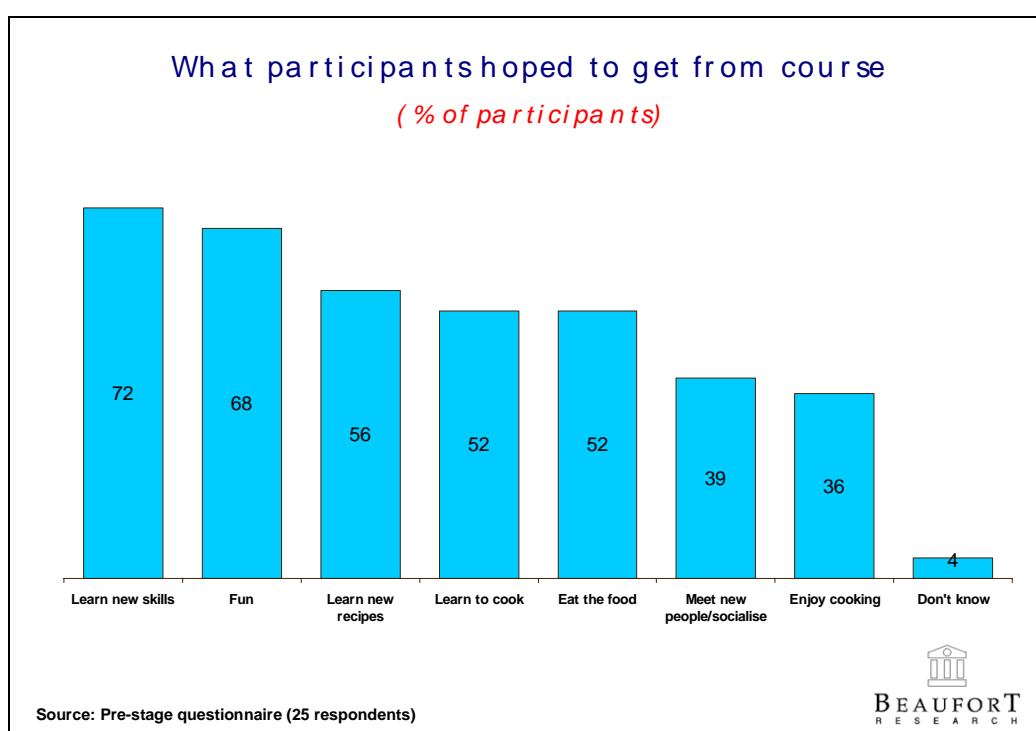
- The course has made a positive impact on levels of cooking ability, confidence and enjoyment of participants. Some trainers and participants believed that this could be further enhanced by each participant preparing their own meal and therefore gaining more all-round knowledge. Practical difficulties in achieving this were acknowledged.
- The greatest impact of the course has been among the group of young mums. Here barriers such as the expense, difficulty and time needed to prepare a meal from scratch have been removed by the course. They are also able to put their new knowledge into effect immediately given their control of the shopping budget / cooking responsibilities.
- For other groups, barriers such as cost and lack of equipment / facilities remain. In addition, a barrier that remains for the teenage groups is that they do not control the shopping budget nor do they have primary responsibility for cooking and therefore cannot necessarily put into practice what they have learnt.
- Those who conducted a shopping trip to buy some of the ingredients for the recipes noted the surprising amount of food that it was possible to buy for their budget. Making this a more formal element of the course could help overcome the cost barrier for all groups.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 Reasons for Participation

As part of the pre-course evaluation questionnaire participants were asked what they hoped to get from attending the course. The overall results based on the 25 participants who attended the first session across the four centres are shown below.

Figure 1



Clearly, learning in general was a major motivation for attending the course be that new skills (72%), new recipes (56%) or simply how to cook (52%). However, this had to be achieved in an appropriate atmosphere. Namely, it had to be ‘fun’ as 69% were looking for this from the course.

Motivations for initial participation were discussed further in the group discussion that took place at the end of the course. Here some differences were noted between the groups. As the chart above shows learning new skills and new recipes was a general motivation but this was particularly pertinent for the group of young mums in Welshpool:

“I was hoping to get more cooking experience. I don’t usually cook at home a lot” (Female Participant, Welshpool)

“I wanted different recipes—different to what I would cook at home. I’ve found some different ones here, not just roast dinners” (Female Participant, Welshpool)

For the group of homeless young people in Rhyl the course represented an opportunity to add another ‘string to their bow’ and this was seen as motivating factor:

“I can already cook but I wanted something else for my portfolio, I’ve got that to show people – another piece of paper” (Male Participant, Rhyl)

“To get a certificate, get a job, - for the experience” (Female Participant, Rhyl)

Female participants in particular emphasised the social aspects of the course:

“To meet different people really as well...chill out time”
(Female Participant, Welshpool)

“... you get to meet new people and do new stuff” (Female Participant, Rhyl)

“To learn something together” (Female Participant, Milford Haven)

4.2 Previous Cooking Experience

The majority of those attending the course had very basic or non-existent cooking skills. The main types of food that were claimed to be cooked were convenience or quick food such as beans on toast, sausage and chips, pizzas and cheese toasties. Cooking experience emanated from school cookery lessons or helping a family member.

“In school we did stew different cakes, how to make biscuits, scones, curries”
(Male Participant, Rhyl)

“I’ve done some (cooking) at school but I wasn’t very good at it”
(Female Participant, Milford Haven)

There were exceptions however and some participating had a good existing knowledge base before attending the sessions (obvious from observing the sessions as well as from trainer / participants’ comments). For these participants the sessions were more about increasing their confidence and developing their skills than about learning the basics.

“I can do quite a lot (of recipes) but there’s still stuff I needed to know like knifework” (Male Participant, Rhyl)

Across the groups as a whole, barriers to more cooking prior to the course were identified as:

1. Lack of basic knowledge
2. Perception that it is difficult / time consuming
3. Perception that it is expensive to cook from scratch
4. Too busy / can't be bothered to cook
5. Too easy to get convenience foods / someone else cooks for you.
6. The need for ingredients / equipment

4.3 Overall Reaction to the Course

4.3.1 Participants view

Findings from the group discussions suggest that the overall reaction to the course was generally positive. Many participants spoke about the fact that the course had exceeded their expectations. Key to their enjoyment appeared to be the manner in which the course was conducted - a relaxed informal atmosphere, which was seen more as fun rather than a classroom style education. This was clear from observation of the sessions as well as participants' comments.

"It's an effort to come here. I wouldn't come here if I can help it. I've really got into it" (Male Participant, Rhyl)

"I've quite enjoyed it and only missed one!" (Female Participant, Rhyl)

"I didn't sign up for it them Pam told me it was fun and to come along" (Female Participant, Welshpool)

"It's been good fun as well though – we've all got together. All had a laugh" (Female Participant, Welshpool)

It appears that the trainers (and their helpers) have been key in fostering this atmosphere and many participants had positive comments about them in particular.

"I thought she was fab. I was a bit iffy on the first one but I'm like that with people anyway if I don't know them but the next time I was having a ball, she was just fab. Having a laugh and if you did something wrong she would tell you off but have a laugh at the same time – making you feel comfortable really so that was good" (Male Participant, Rhyl)

“She’s great, she’s a laugh as well” (Female Participant, Rhyl)

“As for the ladies they are superb, they are lovely” (Female Participant, Welshpool)

Importantly, the overall experience appears to have resulted in positive word of mouth for the course.

“I would definitely recommend it to friends but we want to go again as a youth club and have chef of the year” (Female Participant, Milford Haven)

4.3.2 Trainers view

The depth interviews with the trainers revealed that overall they had enjoyed taking part in the Get Cooking project and had taken great satisfaction from teaching the participants. In particular they enjoyed encouraging participants to try new food, seeing their confidence increase and developing a relationship with them that had resulted in improved behaviour and attitude.

“I’ve liked it all. The first one I was a bit dubious. I’ve never had anything to do with children that age but I thoroughly enjoyed all of it” (Trainer, Rhyl)

“They came here all brash and they seem to have stabilised. Their language has improved” (Trainer, Llanelli)

Overall, they thought the participants had enjoyed it even if they did not always show it explicitly. However, this was not achieved without a great deal of hard work, patience and encouragement as trainers had faced many challenges along the way.

Although a great source of satisfaction when achieved, overcoming participants’ reluctance to try new foods was a challenge faced across all four groups:

“Our greatest achievement was to get them to eat stir fry.” (Trainer, Llanelli)

“They weren’t keen on the fruit salad. They didn’t want to do that but we brought the stuff and they had a little bowl full each and it was alright in the end” (Trainer, Welshpool)

Trainers also spoke of the persuasion needed to undertake certain tasks. In particular they said that some participants had an aversion to the washing and cleaning up aspect of the cooking sessions. Observation of the sessions showed that at some sessions it was the trainers who undertook this task rather than the participants.

Trainers claimed that most tasks were undertaken under direction and guidance and that as the sessions progressed there was more evidence of working on their own initiative. Again observation of the sessions appeared to reveal that some participants favoured some tasks over others and perhaps this may impact on their ability to prepare a recipe in its entirety. This was much less of an issue in the young mum’s group where each participant prepared an individual meal.

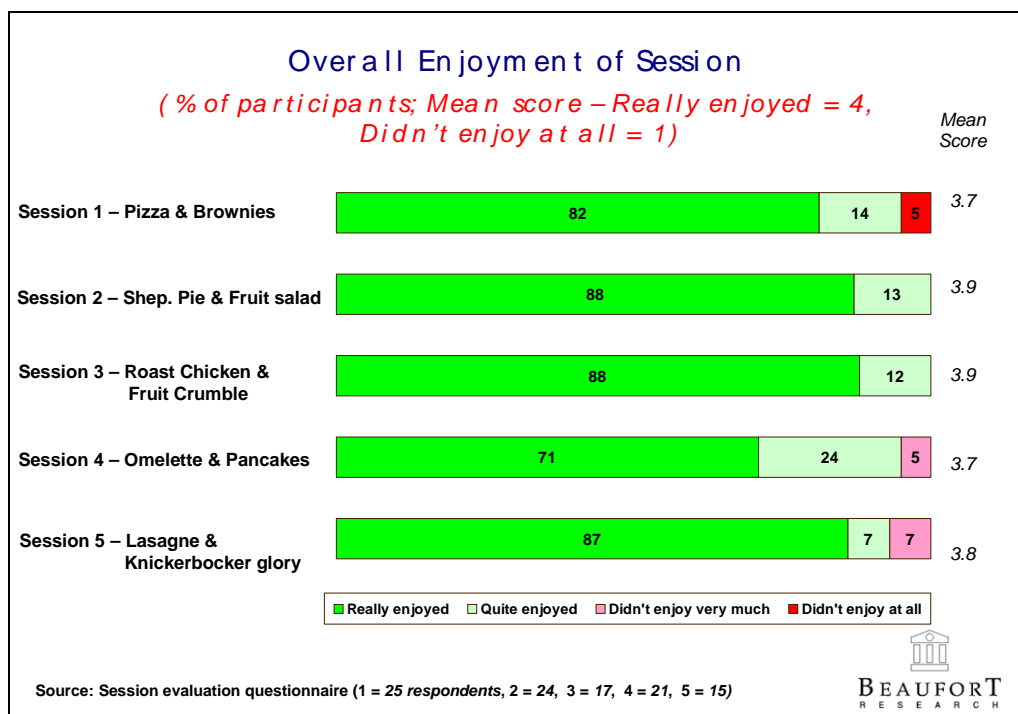
Maintaining discipline and focus on the task in hand were cited as the other major problems trainers faced, as may be expected given the ‘difficult’ nature of some of the groups targeted by Get Cooking. Again, this was not a problem in the young mum’s group.

4.4 Individual Sessions

At the end of each session, participants rated the session on number of factors. As discussed above, attendance across all six sessions varied to a greater or lesser degree in each centre. This must be borne in mind when interpreting these results.

Figure 2 below shows participants’ rating of their overall enjoyment of each session on a 4 point scale from ‘really enjoyed it’ (4) to ‘didn’t enjoy at all’ (1)

Figure 2

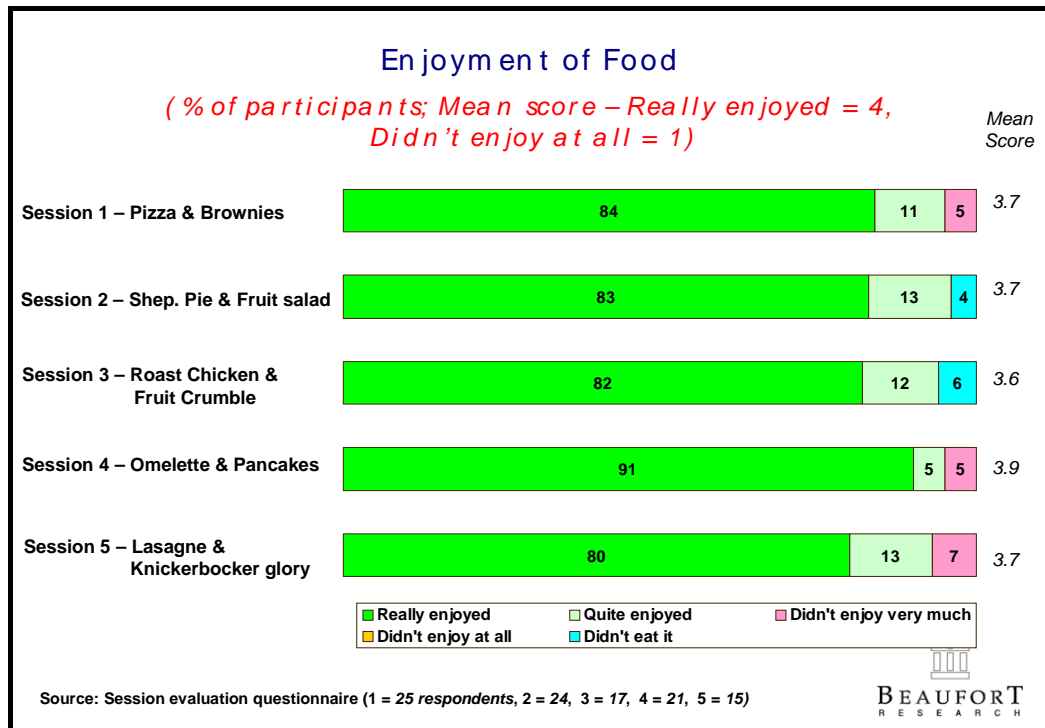


The findings here appear to support the overall views expressed by participants in the group discussions. All sessions achieve high enjoyment ratings. Very few participants show any signs of a negative experience and the vast majority

claim to have *'really enjoyed'* each session. The sessions with the highest ratings are Session 2 – Shepherd Pie & Fruit Salad, Session 3 – Chicken & Fruit Crumble and Session 5 – Lasagne & Knickerbocker Glory, with approximately 9 in 10 participants saying they *'really enjoyed it'*.

There were also equally high ratings in terms of enjoyment of the food that had been prepared as Figure 3 below shows.

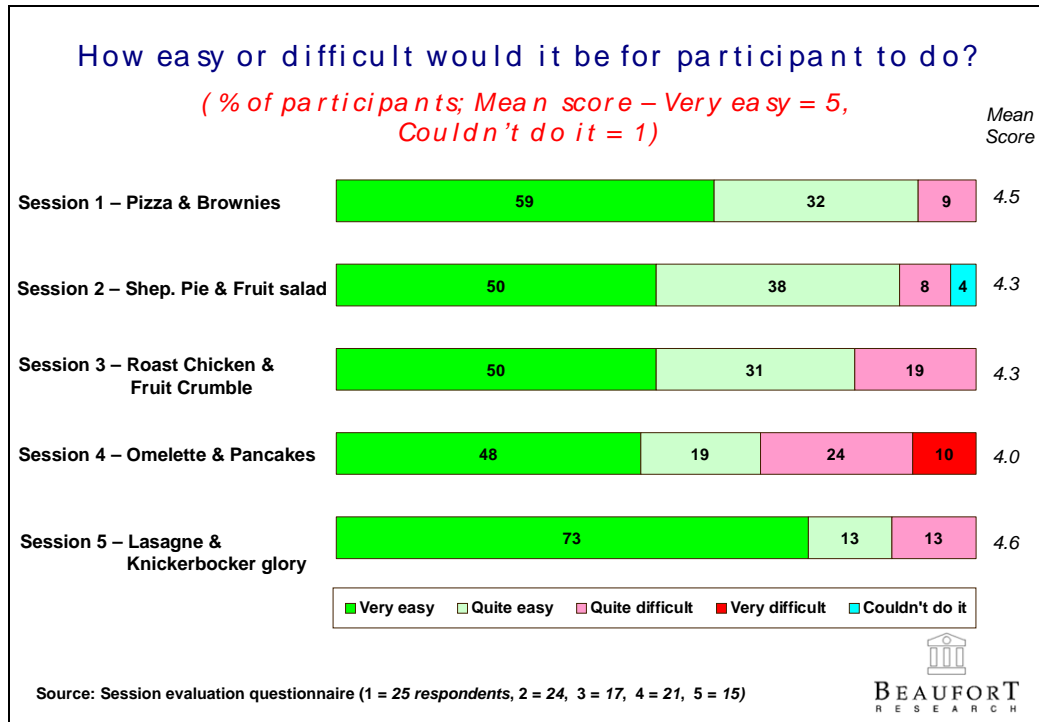
Figure 3



Nearly all participants claimed to have *'really enjoyed'* or *'quite enjoyed'* the food at each session. However, earlier findings suggest that in some cases this was after considerable persuasion to try some of the food.

There was near consensus that participants would want to cook the food prepared at each session for themselves and a friend, but some differentiation in how difficult it would be for themselves to cook the recipes prepared at each session. Figure 4 overleaf shows the results for this:

Figure 4



For all recipes, participants were more likely to say it would be easy for them to cook rather than difficult. This reflects the suitability of the recipes but also perhaps a level of bravado from the teenage element of our sample. Relatively speaking, Session 5 – (Lasagne & Knickerbocker Glory) was regarded as the easiest to cook, 73% ‘very easy’, and Session 4 (Omelette & Pancakes) as the most difficult, 48% ‘very easy’, and around a third thinking it would be ‘very’ or ‘quite’ difficult.

The group discussions with participants and depth interviews with trainers tended to support the quantitative findings. Shepherd’s Pie, Lasagne and Roast Chicken were mentioned as the most enjoyable main courses.

Participants claimed not to have struggled with any of the recipes and encouragingly, this view was broadly endorsed by the trainers who on the whole thought the recipes were suitable for the target group.

“On the whole they were pretty straightforward” (Trainer, Llanelli)

“They were very good recipes actually. Plain, simple stuff – not fancy for them...cheap and cheerful meals and I think everybody enjoyed them” (Trainer, Rhyl)

Although, a couple of the more experienced participants expressed the view that they would like to try more expansive recipes, this was not shared by the groups as a whole. Given the difficulty experienced in persuading some

participants to try food from the existing recipes, trainers were of the view that attempting anything more adventurous would be a mistake.

Only minor comments were given on how the recipes could be improved. A couple of trainers mentioned that it would be a good idea to put the omelette and pancakes in different sessions as both were egg based (off putting for participants who didn't like eggs) and both required a lot of space on the hob.

Discussion with both trainers and participants revealed that the most enjoyable element of the sessions for many of the participants was preparation, cooking and eating of the puddings, in particular the knickerbocker glories, apple crumble and the chocolate brownies:

“I think they enjoyed the sweet ones most – they’ve all got a sweet tooth. We made knickerbockers glories and they thoroughly enjoyed that. We made Easter eggs and they enjoyed that” (Trainer, Rhyl)

“Apple crumble was brilliant, they came back and asked for more which was nice to see” (Trainer, Milford Haven)

Overall, the first session was seen as the most difficult one by trainers and participants alike. This was largely due to the fact that no one really knew what to expect and that the relationship between participants and trainers had not yet developed. The first session was also the best attended and this also contributed towards difficulties given the limited space:

“Everyone was a bit everywhere....there were so many of us there (Male Participant, Rhyl)”

A couple of trainers also questioned whether pizza was the best recipe to start with, believing some of the other recipes were easier. In one of these groups at least, this may have been related to the fact that participants made their own dough for the pizza.

“I wonder whether doing pizza would be better towards the end because its time consuming and if it had gone wrong you wouldn't have got confidence up. Perhaps omelette or shepherd pie would have been better – a full proof thing” (Trainer, Llanelli).

4.5 Venues, Facilities & Course materials provided

Each of groups took place in different environments (see section 1.3). Other than the school canteen (used for the young mum's group) the venues were not principally used for cooking rather a kitchen in a building being used for other purpose (i.e. homeless centre, drop in centre, youth club).

Although an audit of facilities available was not conducted as part of the research, it was evident from observation that at times, things became a little cramped. The issue of venues and facilities was discussed as part of the depth interview with trainers and as may be expected their views were mixed.

Most made some comment relating to the fact that it would have been preferable to have more space – both oven space and preparation space. The average session was attended by 4-6 people and trainers were of the view that this was the maximum practical numbers that could be accommodated. In addition, most trainers also expressed the view that extending the number much beyond this would have made control of the group more difficult.

“The kitchen isn’t all that convenient. I couldn’t have coped with many more (than 6). Especially with the three of us in there as well” (Trainer, Welshpool)

“The kitchen could be improved upon. If you’re going to go for 6-8 people you’re going to have to have bigger cookers. You saw how tight it was to give everybody a job at the same time. You need a hotel kitchen really or a school kitchen” (Trainer, Rhyl).

Despite their difficulties, trainers did appreciate that selection of venues was a trade-off between providing appropriate cooking facilities and making the venue appealing / convenient for the relevant target group. In general, they believed that if attendance remained at 4-6 participants then problems could be overcome, but more than this number would cause them to struggle.

One trainer turned the lack of optimum facilities into a positive, in that it was a learning point as participants were unlikely to have all the correct equipment and space at home.

“In a way it’s better than somewhere that is 100% because they wouldn’t be 100% at home so they can see how you don’t have to use that, you can use something else” (Trainer, Welshpool)

However, one trainer did mention that running the course at their selected venue may have had an impact on other activities at this venue:

“I’m conscious that in this venue we’re stopping the youngsters coming in and it’s a facility for them. Some knock on the door because they’re used to coming in the morning” (Trainer, Llanelli).

In terms of equipment they had at their disposal, some trainers commented that the cooking utensils, such as frying pans, could be improved by being of a better quality. It was also apparent that trainers brought much of the required cooking equipment themselves. Whilst it was agreed that it would be easier if it

was already supplied, none strongly resented supplementing equipment with their own materials.

Trainers in the main were very happy with the trainer pack that had been provided for them

“I think it was very good. It’s just trying to remember to put all the points across” (Trainer, Llanelli).

“I thought that was good, excellent. Everyone gave me what I needed” (Trainer, Rhyl)

However, they did suggest that it would have been good to receive the pack a little earlier so those undertaking the first session would have more time to digest it. In addition, some minor omissions were noted from the list of equipment.

“In the equipment list you had x,y and z but then in the recipe you needed a sieve which is fine for us because we know what we’re doing and we brought our own but if the recipes are going to the children afterwards it may sometimes cause a problem” (Trainer, Llanelli).

In terms of the recipe sheets, trainers believed that they could be more eye-catching and appealing by showing pictures of how different dishes should look to encourage participants to try the recipes themselves.

“Looking at the pack there’s nothing to entice them – no pictures – so that they would know what it’s meant to look like” (Trainer, Llanelli)

Participants appreciated the recipe sheets and thought that being able to take these away with them would encourage them to cook more. However, they also raised the issue of making them more colourful and adding pictures.

“We’ve had the recipes written out so its pretty simple to follow too – it does help and they’ve laminated them for us” (Female Participant, Welshpool)

“We’ve got the recipe booklets that we got given and that tells us what we need to put in it” (Female Participant, Milford Haven)

“They’re ok but would be better if there was a picture on the side showing what it should look like so you can turn round and say I’ve made that” (Female Participant, Rhyl)

4.6 Healthy Eating & Food Hygiene

Although not to be taught on a formal basis, throughout the course trainers were expected to communicate messages on healthy eating and food hygiene.

Overall, trainers were unsure to exactly how successful they had been in communicating the healthy eating message. Most commented that they had to be very careful when approaching this subject and that any communication had to be implicit rather explicit 'classroom' style.

"We've had little chats whilst doing the cooking. I haven't stood over them and said do this, this and this.. if it's too much they wouldn't listen to you"
(Trainer, Rhyl)

"It's difficult to say with the healthy eating messages – they have had fruit and veg thrown at them in various guises" (Trainer, Llanelli)

Most participants claimed to already know about healthy eating before they attended the sessions, that it was something you heard a lot about generally. They did feel that they had been informed about healthy eating as part of the course. When probed on this, most participants tended to give examples of food they considered healthy such as fruit and vegetables.

Despite the efforts to educate them some do not appear convinced and the trainers doubts about pushing this message too much appear justified:

"People go on and on at us about healthy eating and say it'll make us lose weight but how can we because it's too expensive. You can get a bag of chips and twenty sausages and that lasts me a week and they are really cheap"
(Female Participant, Rhyl)

"She has done healthy eating with us. We do salads every time but we get fed up because they go on about it the whole time" (Female Participant, Rhyl)

"I know a lot about health eating but I don't eat healthy!"
(Female Participant, Welshpool)

There was also some comments that not all recipes that in the sessions could be regarded as healthy eating.

"Pancakes wasn't really healthy or the fruit crumble"
(Female Participant, Welshpool).

In spite of all this there were pockets of success:

“I only started eating carrots today because I didn’t like the smell of them before and then they told me to try them and I did and it was nice” (Female Participant, Milford Haven)

“Last week we were discussing what they were going to cook this week and one said ‘burgers and chips’ and all the rest turned around and said ‘we’re doing healthy eating – that’s not healthy” (Trainer, Milford Haven)

In terms of messages on food hygiene, trainers were confident that this had been more successful as they were able to observe changes in behaviour. In particular, automatic washing of hands before beginning to cook was noted as something that changed following the first session.

“There seems to be an awful lot of ‘have you washed your hands’ before they start. They all go straight to their pinnies and are aware of turning the board over if they’ve been cutting meat and then vegetables” (Trainer, Milford Haven).

Comments noted from participants appear to reinforce this:

“Yes they tell us to wash our hands before...when I’m at home cooking I sometimes forget to wash my hands so its made me think wash my hands before I start cooking” (Female Participant, Welshpool)

“Learnt things like how to wash your hands before you have food and that because of germs” (Male Participant, Llanelli)

“My first session I was a bit untidy and she kept saying clean up after yourself and don’t mix this with that. If you’ve cut meat on that don’t cut that on it – so basic stuff but not too much.” (Male Participant, Rhyl)

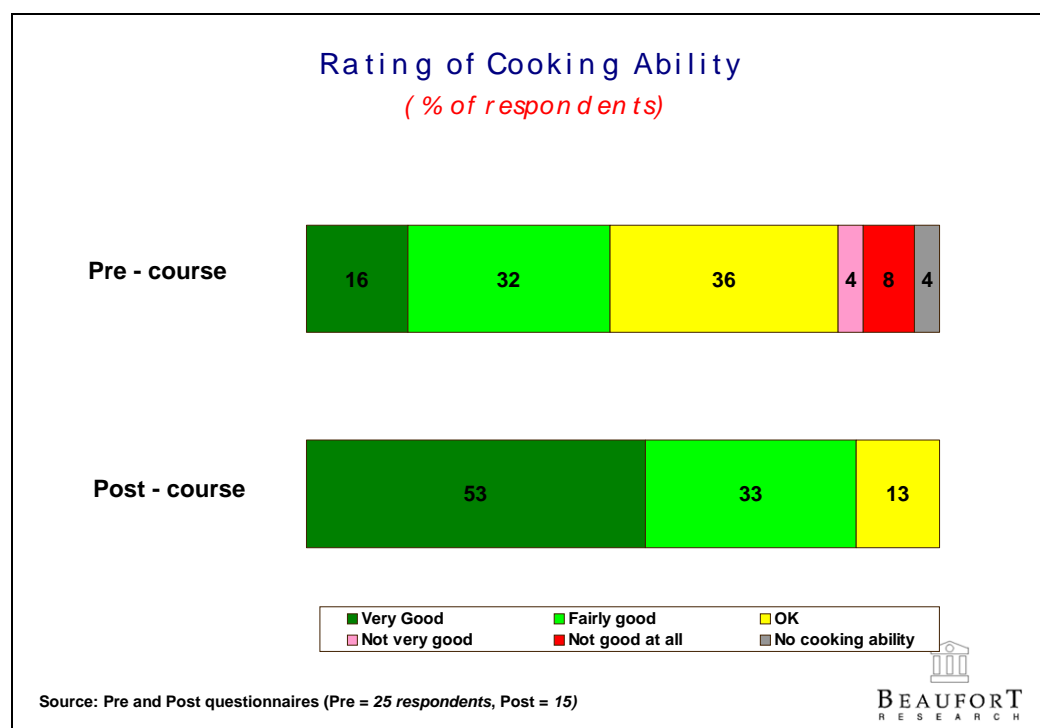
4.7 Overall Impact of the Course

Comparison of the findings from the pre-course questionnaire with the post course questionnaire gives some indication of the impact of the course on participants. However, it must be noted that level of attendance did vary and therefore comparison is not with complete ‘like for like’ groups. At the first session (where the pre-stage questionnaire was completed) there were 25 attendees across the 4 groups, at the final session (where the post-stage questionnaire was completed) there were 15 attendees.

4.7.1 Impact on Ability, Confidence & Enjoyment

The ratings for participants' own cooking ability are shown at the pre and post course stages in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5



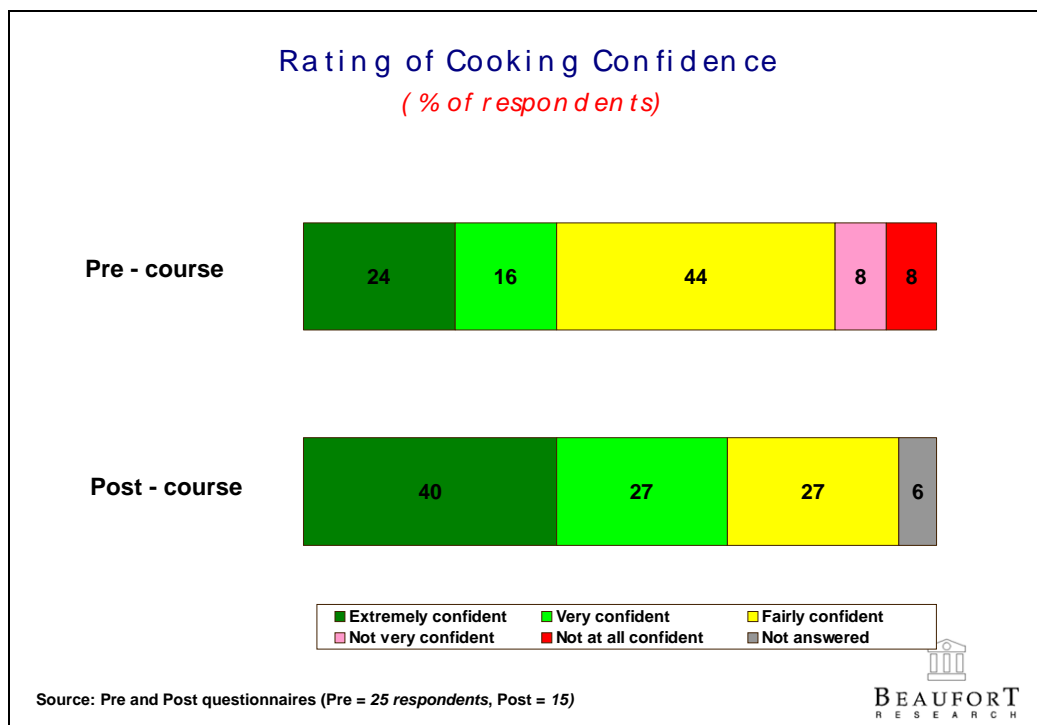
Notable improvements were seen in perceived ability levels following completion of the course. All participants believed their cooking ability was at least 'OK' whereas prior to the course 16% had negative opinions of their cooking ability (not very good, not good at all, no ability). Furthermore, strength of positive opinion has increased – 53% believed themselves to be 'very good' compared with only 16% who thought this prior to the course.

Although, to a certain extent differences in attendees between the two groups may account for this, qualitative findings would suggest that this does not fully account for the difference. Within the group discussions (conducted with participants who were present at the end of the course and therefore had filled in the post stage questionnaires), there were many comments on how the course had increased their ability to cook. These tended to relate to the ability to cook different recipes from their 'norm', knowing which combinations of food go together, how to cut things and how not to burn things!

"I'll do a lot more now I've been on this course because if you'd said make an apple crumble I'd think what?! But I know it's really easy so I can just get on with it now" (Female Participant, Welshpool)

Changes in ratings of their cooking confidence also showed similar pattern to cooking ability.

Figure 6

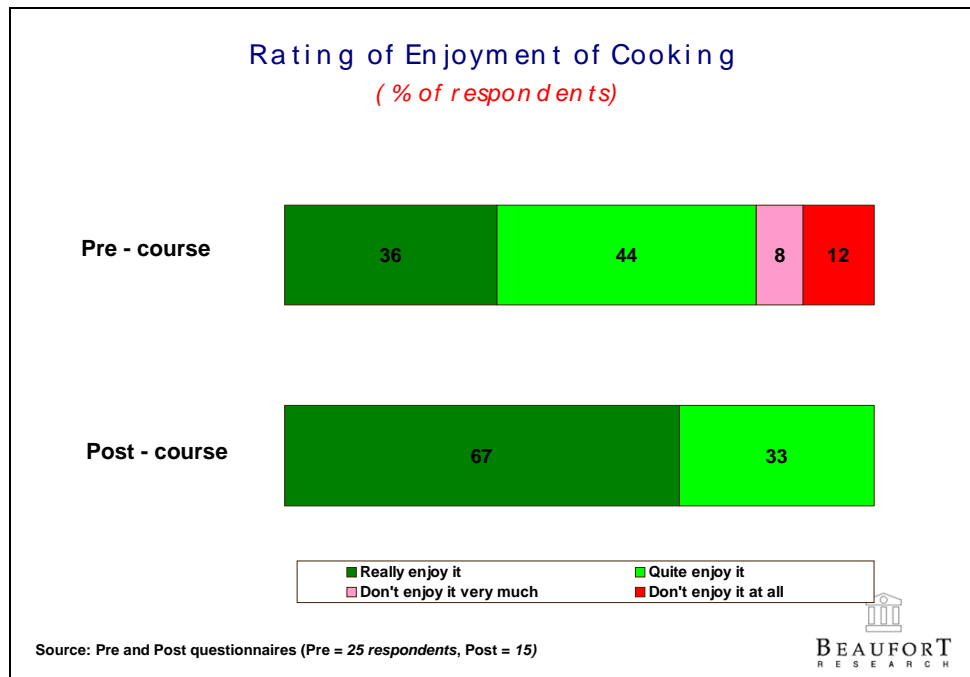


Again, at the post stage no participants felt unconfident in their cooking compared with 16% at the beginning of the course. Those feeling ‘extremely confident’ or ‘very confident’ has increased from 40% to 67%. Qualitative findings seem to support that genuine change in confidence has occurred for some participants:

“I’ve always been put off by the preparation but it only takes 5 / 10 minutes to prepare – it’s so easy. It’s not what I thought”
(Female Participant, Welshpool)

Ratings for their enjoyment of cooking (Figure 7) also appeared to have changed for the better. All participants at the post stage claiming to enjoy cooking (most ‘really enjoy it’) whereas at the pre stage a fifth claimed not to enjoy it and the balance of positive feeling between ‘really enjoy’ and ‘quite enjoy’ was more evenly spread.

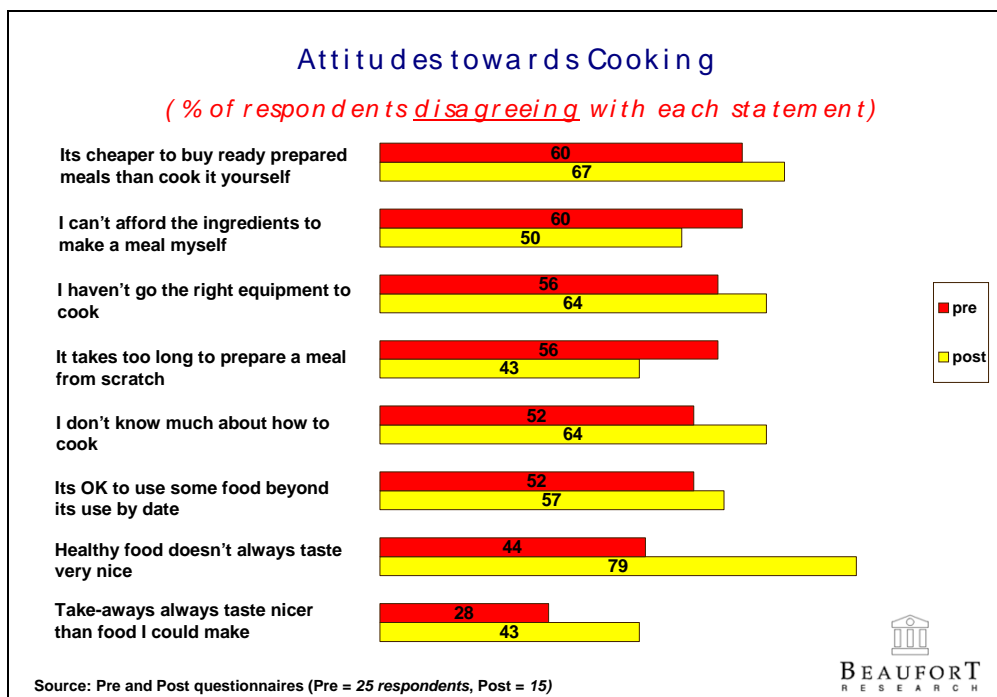
Figure 7



4.7.2 Impact on Attitudes

In addition to the above measures participants' views were sought on a number of attitudes towards cooking, again prior to and on completion of the course. The statements were all potential barriers to or misconceptions about cooking and therefore it was hoped that level of disagreement with each one would increase after completion of the course. Results are shown in Figure 8

Figure 8



Encouragingly, most of the statements had higher levels of disagreement following completion of the course. In particular, participants were much more likely to disagree with *'healthy food doesn't always taste very nice'* (79% vs 44% pre), *'take-aways always taste nicer than food I could make'* (43% vs 28% pre) and *'I don't know much about how to cook'* (64% vs 52% pre).

However, other barriers such as cost of ingredients and time to prepare a meal have not seen such positive change overall. Certainly for the former, this may be related to the fact that not all centres undertook shopping for ingredients for the recipes. Where this did happen there were comments on how much you could buy for your money:

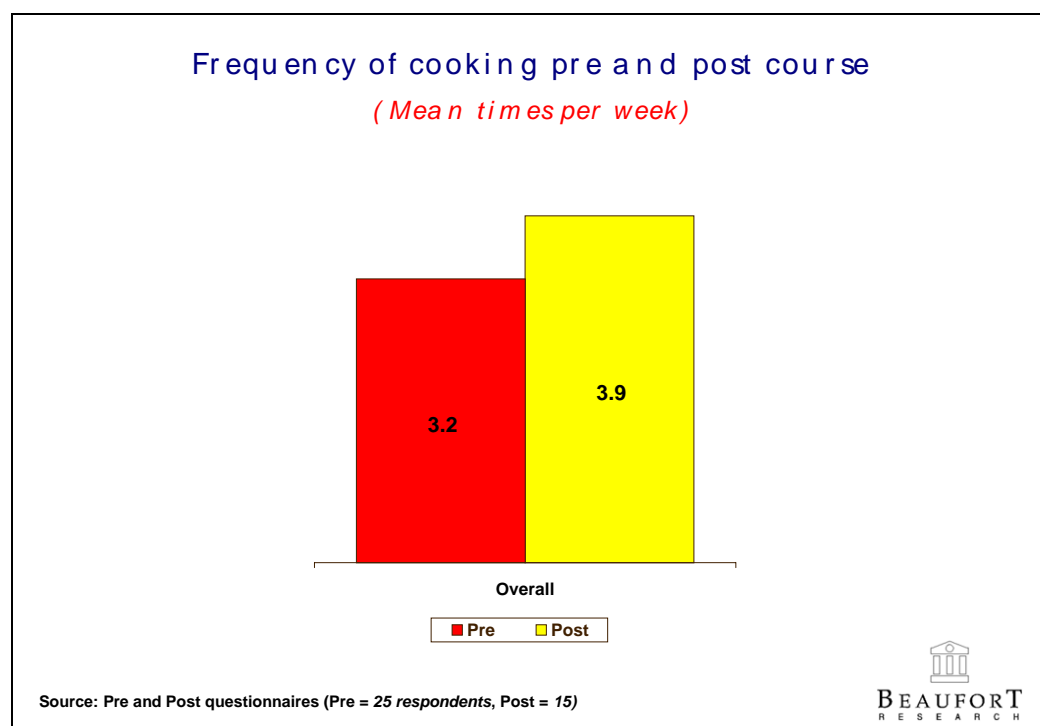
"It was really cheap I found considering the amount of food we had" (Female Participant, Milford Haven)

Making the shopping trip a more formal element of the course may help to bring about more of a positive overall shift on this issue.

4.7.3 Impact on Future Behaviour

Clearly, the aim of influencing attitudes, confidence, ability and enjoyment in cooking is to ultimately change behaviour. This is obviously difficult to assess immediately after the completion of the course. However, claimed propensity to cook by participants does show a difference pre and post course (3.9 times per week versus 3.2 prior to the course):

Figure 9



Perhaps underlying this is also that for some participants the type of meals prepared may change in addition to the frequency.

“I’d do something quick like beans on toast but now I’d think it is quick and easy to do (one of the session recipes)” (Female Participant, Welshpool)

Some participants at each centre said they had already tried or were keen to try some of the recipes at home. However, propensity to cook in the future was most keenly expressed by the young mums group. For them, previous barriers to cooking such as difficulty, time and expense had been removed by the course and now they see cooking as a positive experience:

“It is nice to cook from scratch. There’s a sense of achievement at the end of it. You’ve got all those ingredients and you’ve put it together. When we did the cottage pie I thought wow I’ve made that”
(Female Participant, Welshpool)

“I’d never done shepherd’s pie and did it the other day and it came out really nice” (Female Participant, Welshpool)

Whilst cooking ability and confidence may have improved, for other groups, certain barriers still existed such as having to buy food for themselves, both in terms of cost and effort:

“The ingredients would stop me because you can’t always find what you want in the cupboard and you’ve got to go and shop which takes time” (Female Participant, Milford Haven).

“If they left ingredients I would make it again. It would give us a head start to make things again” (Female Participant, Rhyl)

Lack of equipment / facilities was also cited by some in the homeless centre as something that would stop them cooking.

“We haven’t got enough to cook what we need to cook in here because someone else is using it so we can’t cook our dinner until they’ve finished and we have to wait for them to wash it up” (Female Participant, Rhyl).

A couple thought they might struggle with preparing a whole recipe themselves because at the session they had only undertaken one aspect of it.

“I did one bit and didn’t see what the other person did so I wouldn’t know how to make the whole meal because I only did a bit of it” (Female Participant, Rhyl)

This theme was also picked up on by trainers who also thought that ideally, most benefit would be achieved if all participants could cook the whole meal themselves:

“Depending on the venue and space it would be good if all the young people could be making the sauce and pastry – then everyone would know how to make it” (Trainer, Milford Haven)

The fact that this had been the case with the young mum’s group appears to have contributed towards the success at this centre. However, in the other three centres, practical limitations would have made this arrangement impossible and here we return to the trade off between selecting a venue to attract participants versus providing appropriate cooking facilities.

The greater impact of the course among the young mum’s is also reflected in the fact that they are able to put into practice their new knowledge with immediate effect. They are already responsible for feeding themselves / family, whereas some of the other groups (teenagers) this is not the case as one of the trainers pointed out:

“They’re quite keen to cook but they’re school children and it’s not their budget that buys the food at home” (Trainer, Milford Haven)

For these participants, the course perhaps is more a vehicle to gaining knowledge / skills which will hopefully be remembered and implemented in a few years time.

Appendix 1: Questionnaires

Appendix 2: Topic guides