

Understanding the barriers and enablers to Eating Well and Moving More in Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan

M·E·L Research

April 2022

Background and aims of the research

Cardiff and Vale Local Public Health team are facilitating delivery of the Move More, Eat Well partnership plan which provides a regional response across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan as to encourage people to be more active and have a healthier diet.

Launched in July 2020, the plan focuses action across 10 priority areas. These include; educational settings, healthy environments, healthy travel, healthy workplaces, healthy advertising and marketing, refill region, informed workforce and population, healthy and sustainable food procurement, healthy communities as well as healthy weight services.

Preventing obesity is a complex challenge as there are many contributing factors. To enable people to make healthy choices, collaborative action is required at both an individual and community level, within settings as well as through the creation of healthy and sustainable food and physical activity environments.

The aims of this research were to **engage with**, and seek the views of the **adult population across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan** to understand the **challenges** and **enablers relating** to eating well, maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active.



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Methodology



M·E·L Research were commissioned by **Cardiff and Vale UHB** to conduct **qualitative research among people living in Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan**



To qualify to take part in the study, participants must have lived in the area, be low income levels (earn less than £30,000 and be an 'unhealthy' weight (BMI overweight / obese) and looking to lose weight. In addition all were parents of either primary school or secondary school children



In total 16 people participated in an online community. During a week in March 2022, participants were set questions and tasks over the course of the week that asked them about **meal planning, eating healthy** and keeping active. They were encouraged to upload photo's and videos to bring there experiences to life. Many of the photo's have been included in this report

A community with a diverse set of hobbies and interests

- 16 Participants, all looking to lose weight:
 - 8 living in Cardiff
 - 8 Vale of Glamorgan
 - Mix of ethnicity
 - All lower income
- Lots of diverse interests from the community including:
 - Walking, Swimming, Horse Riding and Dog Walking
 - Visiting seaside, days out with family, eating fish and chips on the beach
 - Playing football and other sports with family members
 - Games night with the children



Executive Summary

- A window into people's lives reveal the everyday challenges and difficulties people are facing in Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan. Many are adjusting to life beyond the pandemic and Covid has had a profound impact in a myriad of ways:
 - Recent separation, divorce, bereavement
 - Increased weight gain
 - Lower levels of activity (gym memberships cancelled, classes stopped)
- As a result many of the people we spoke to are feeling low, depressed and lacking self esteem
- While many can put boundaries in place for their children, its clear they struggle to adopt these for themselves.
- **Food** is undoubtedly being used as a tool for comfort. There is significant amounts of daytime and night-time **snacking, big portions, big side extras** and **convenience foods being consumed** throughout the week.

Executive Summary

- What helps people to stay on track are:
 - **Weekly meal planning** – although few do it regularly and those who don't admit 'this is one of their biggest downfalls'
 - **Children** – but mostly through keeping active, taking the kids out, doing sports and activities together as a family
- However, there were many more barriers to 'eating well and moving more' than enablers, described as:
 - **Time** – busy lives, hard to put yourself first
 - **New family dynamics** – especially for those recently separated and divorced
 - **Home** – more working from home = more temptation and less activity
 - **Money** – cost of living set to have a significant impact – rising food prices, fuel, gas, costs of gym memberships, activity classes
 - **Weather** – hard to motivate, especially during the winter months

Research Findings

How do people approach
mealtime and healthy eating?

Like everyone, busy lives, lots of day to day juggling

- Many families are feeling the **pressure** of busy lives
 - Lots of juggling after school clubs
 - Work commitments and busy schedules
- Many are also adjusting to **new ways of living**
 - Recent marriage break ups / separation / divorce
 - Bereavement / loss
 - New jobs / new responsibilities

“I mostly feel there is not enough days in the week. My son attends 2 different rugby teams so it's training and matches as well as 3 different youth clubs to drop him too. My one daughter always stays on at school for extra lessons and has a pretty hectic social life for a 15 year old. With me working I don't have much of a social life however when I do get to go out I really value my free time and enjoy it.” Female. 46. Rural.

“I feel pretty shit, I feel like I'm just surviving. Following the breakdown of my marriage after 16 years last year. Covid and the weather don't help. I feel better days are to come and I need to prioritise some time to myself to enjoy with friends. I go to work but that's a stress in itself so a little down time is what's needed.... but I feel so guilty when I do. I don't know why! Female. 43. Urban.



A real sense that **personal needs** are **low down** on the list of priorities

Family mealtimes, more an aspiration than a day to day reality

- Mealtimes still represent **important family moments** - but busy schedules often get in the way
- Therefore the **day to day** reality of mealtimes is different
 - TV dinners
 - Mealtime in 'shifts'
 - Teenagers retreating upstairs
- But a genuine desire for **mealtimes** to be more **social** to come together as a family

"Since covid happened I noticed we don't sit down together much for meal times and the kids usually retreat to their rooms (typical teenagers) I'd like for us to go back to having a least one meal a day together at the dining table." Female, 35, Urban

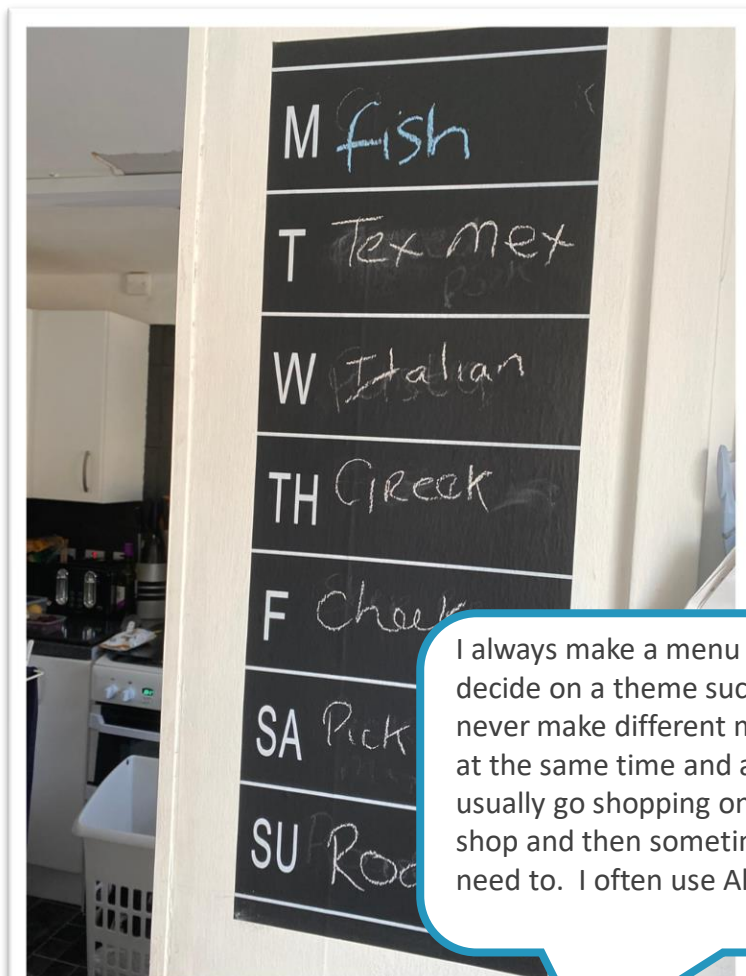
"The perfect meal time is all the family together but this usually only happens once a week due to after school commitments it's usually me and my daughter eating together on a Monday as my son eats early to go to scouts." Male, 65, Urban



Mealtimes can sometimes feel rushed and dis-jointed where not all the family is present and eating. For example where the priority is getting the children fed at a decent time; and where one or both the parents are busy sorting out important things for the family. The perfect mealtime is when we are all present and enjoying the food we are eating, laughing and talking but not being wild(kids not sitting and being present). Just appreciating the time we are having with each other." Male, 50, Urban

Meal planning helping some to stay on track, but few doing it consistently

Some weekly meal-planning taking place, but lots of buying 'on the go' or not thinking about the week ahead



I always make a menu for the week. I usually decide on a theme such as Greek Italian etc. I never make different meals the whole family eat at the same time and always the same food. I usually go shopping once a week for my main shop and then sometimes during the week if I need to. I often use Aldi" Female, 51, rural

Our meal times are breakfast, around 7am, lunch at 12, tea at 5.30. I am responsible for cooking all meals, sometimes my daughter might help. I am organised and always have a weekly meal planner. We tend to have the same kind of meals every month. On a Sunday we always have a cooked dinner or a casserole with potatoes and veg. We eat a varied diet which is good. Our typical kind of meals are Bolognese, chili, shepherd's pie veg, cold meats and salad, curry, carbonara. We do eat a lot of pasta. Our portions are way too big mind !!!!! We do occasionally have s takeaway but this is only once or twice a month. Mainly as it is too expensive.....also being organised is very beneficial with my autistic son. It makes things easier." Female, 40, Suburban

07:31 56%
Bolognese
Lasagne
Shepherd's pie

Kung po chix / Cantonese chix
Sweet sour chicken / black bean
Spanish chicken
Fahita chix
Currys... rojan josh / korma / tikka

Chicken mayo cheese bbq sauce
Sweet potatoes / jacket potatoes
Herby potato/ roasted new potato
Cheese leek mash
Carbonara
Cheese tom sweetcorn broccoli pasta
Cheese cauliflower pea pasta bake
Cheese broccoli mushroom pasta
Veg medley, breadcrumb, white sauce
Meatballs pasta
Tuna pasta
Pasta salad
Pepper sauce pasta

Kievs
Veggie fingers
Fish / Fish fingers / fish cakes
Sausages/ chips/ yorkie
Casseroles saus/ chix/

Fajitas
Enchiladas

Good intentions to eat healthy are often directed more at children than themselves

- Many love and enjoy cooking – quite a few are ‘big foodies’
 - **Sunday roast** a firm favourite (taps into need to bring family back together)
 - Happy cooking / providing for the family
- Some good intentions to eat healthy are established
 - Good balance of meat, veg, carbs etc.
- But good intentions are often **directed** more at the **children** than themselves
 - Limiting sugary snacks for children
 - Making sure always eat fruit / veg

“I think a good meal is one with protein, Carbs and Veg. So I love roast dinner as it has a bit of everything and the kids enjoy it. The picture is a bigger portion than we usually have (Mums roast) but its kind of the meals i like, some meat, veg and chips, potatoes or mash on the side” Female, 35, Rural

“I don't snack much during the day. I don sometimes at night. Crisps, biscuits, chocolate, sweets, whatever is at home. The kids don snack much. They are only given one thing a day.” Male, 56, Urban

“We try an keep the kids snacking to a minimum. And they have to ask us first before they can go and choose something to snack on. Chocolate is rationed the most and they are not always allowed to have that so readily. We also get them to eat fruit like an apple or banana with their snack to balance it out if they want to eat a lot of snacky food.” Male, 50, Urban.

“I have my children at the weekend and always either cook a Sunday dinner or we go out to eat one. I choose nutritious food including fresh fruit and vegetables and make a great effort to provide this to the children when they're with me.” Male, 41, Urban



Personal needs have been deprioritised – all about putting the family first

- Constant juggling of life is leaving people feeling that there is little time **‘for them’**
- Nearly all are feeling **‘low’** about themselves – how they **look** and how **they feel**
- All having a significant impact on their **mental health**
 - Low self esteem / self confidence
 - Depressed / anxious / worried

“ I feel like life is a relentless struggle and I feel anxious a lot of the time. I live in the moment and hope for the best.” Male, 41, Urban



“I don’t feel very good about myself – I struggle with my mental health and depression leading me to eat a lot of the time and had made me put a lot of weight on! This makes me feel unattractive and not good about myself - I do love that I have an outgoing personality so that helps me...I haven’t always felt not good about myself it started 6 years ago when my ex cheated on me leading me to have a break down.”
Female, 46, Rural.

Many people experiencing poor mental health

As a result all wishing they could loose weight, but lack confidence / motivation to make changes

- All of the community wished they could lose weight and get more active. But described a feeling of being '**stuck in a rut**' or '**gone too far**'
 - Right now, losing weight, being more active feels **insurmountable**
- It takes huge personal commitment / discipline to lose weight. All have been here before....
 - All have a story of being a **healthier** size
 - All know how hard the journey is

"I feel like i need to lose around 5 stone in weight i am 6ft and 24 .5 stone so im quite a big guy any way jut need to get healthy - id like to lose my belly yes ive always struggled with my belly if i were honest." Male, 49, Urban

"I don't like the size of myself. I hate that I weigh 16stone and I feel very unhealthy....I have always been the kind of person that's 'either on a diet or not ' I can't eat a normal healthy balanced diet.....I wish I could change my mindset towards food. However I just look for food all of the time. Back a few years ago I was 12st and I felt great , I felt happier and I enjoyed running.....but I feel I've gone so far the wrong way I can't get back to it." Female, 40, Rural

Many not in a positive mindset to address weight loss issues

Barriers and challenges to staying on track



"We don't tend to meal plan which in all honesty I think is our biggest downfall, we buy out shopping for the week obviously of ideas of what we can have for meals but until it comes down to actually eating we don't think about what we are having to eat. I keep the cupboards, fridge and freezer stocked up with anything we may need. My husband works night shifts and the kids are out all day Mon to Friday and then with after school clubs and things, we tend to eat quick convent foods. We do tend to treat ourselves to takeaways on the weekend.

I tend to not eat much throughout the day but snack all evening. Crisps and chocolate mostly. Sometimes I'll snack on sandwiches and pastries. Anything that's comforting and easy to grab. My children have snacks after their meal in the evening and twice on weekends, they are allowed a packet of crisps and chocolate or cake bar and sometimes an ice cream or ice lolly." **Female, 35, Rural**



Snacking – everyone knows it a big problem

- More working from home = more temptation to snack during the day
- But also, lots of late-night snacking (packets of crisps, biscuits, etc)
- They know its not good for them but...
 - **quick, easy** when constantly on the go
 - **hard to control** (although better at restricting children!)
 - **Instant gratification** – to feel better about themselves
 - **Reward** for hard week
 - Got into a **habit** of grabbing snacks

“I tend to not eat much throughout the day but snack all evening. Crisps and chocolate mostly. Sometimes I'll snack on sandwiches and pastries. Anything that's comforting and easy to grab.” Female, 35, Rural

“Snacking is really my guilty pleasure and I do it far to much when I should have more planned small meals/healthy snacks instead. I work from home most of the time (will be returning to office work more days soon), so it's very easy for me to grab an unhealthy snack like crisps, chocolate, croissants and sweets. I do eat apples when there available so it's not all bad. I do tend to snack more in the evening, but daytime snacking occurs a lot as well.” Male, 50, Urban

“I don't snack much during the day. I do sometimes at night. Crisps, biscuits, chocolate, sweets, whatever is at home. The kids don't snack much. They are only given one thing a day.” Male, 56, Urban

Snacking is having a significant impact on weight gain

"Snacking is a huge problem. I snack between each meal. Then I go to bed with snacks...I wud say I consume a lot of calories through snacks. I will buy 6 Cherry Bakewell. I will eat all 6 before the day has finished . I am greedy and eat because I am bored." Female, 40, Suburban

"I'm terrible for crisps, I can eat a family size bag to myself which is t good but I'm being honest, on the weekend we have wine or beer which makes me want to eat more, I have a cupboard and a tin with snacks treats in, once they are gone for he week I don't rebuy more , biscuits are a big thing also I'm my house, but no one admits to eating them 🙄" Female, 47, Rural

"I'm a big snacker I can easily put away 4 bags of crisps and a choc bar with out even thinking." Male, 39 Urban

"I snack on cheese and crackers and crisps my daughter like to snack on Pringles and those cheap sweets which I don't agree her buying as she has a lot of sugar intake and has suffered a lot with abscess and tooth ache." Female, 46, Rural

"I always have a bowl of chocolate on my table. Everything I walk past I eat one, I'm sure sometimes I don't realize I'm doing it. Really I should get rid of them." Female, 31, Urban



A lack of portion control and too many sides extras

- While meals can be generally well balanced with meat, vegetables etc, often the **good work** is **undone**
 - **Oversized portions**, being a family of ‘**big eaters**’
 - Additional ‘**sides**’ to go alongside main dinners (garlic bread, nann bread, poppadom's etc) – more so that ‘puddings and deserts’
 - **Sauces** and additional ingredients frequently added

“I do cook healthy meals, but again I think we eat too much if it. For instance, now and again I will do a nice salad but by the time I've put the ceaser dressing on it and put cheese in it, I might as well of had pie and chips!!!!” Female, 40, Suburban

“Our typical kind of meals are bolognese , chilli, shepherd's pie veg, cold meats and salad, curry , carbonara. We do eat alot of pasta. Our portions are way too big mind !!!!! We do occasionally have a takeaway but this is only once or twice a month. Not much mainly as it is too expensive.” Female, 35, Rural

“Good meals to me are big meals with a side. For instance I can't just have a Bolognese...we gotta have Garlic bread. We can't just have chili.....gotta do fresh bread and Doritos with it. With a curry we gotta have nann bread and poppadom's. I treat myself to these good meals every night. However realistically I know I'm consuming too many calories. A healthier meal would be a smaller portion and maybe more salad and veg, and less carbs. However I wouldn't enjoy this meal as much. I would consider a salad a diet meal.” Female, 40, Suburban

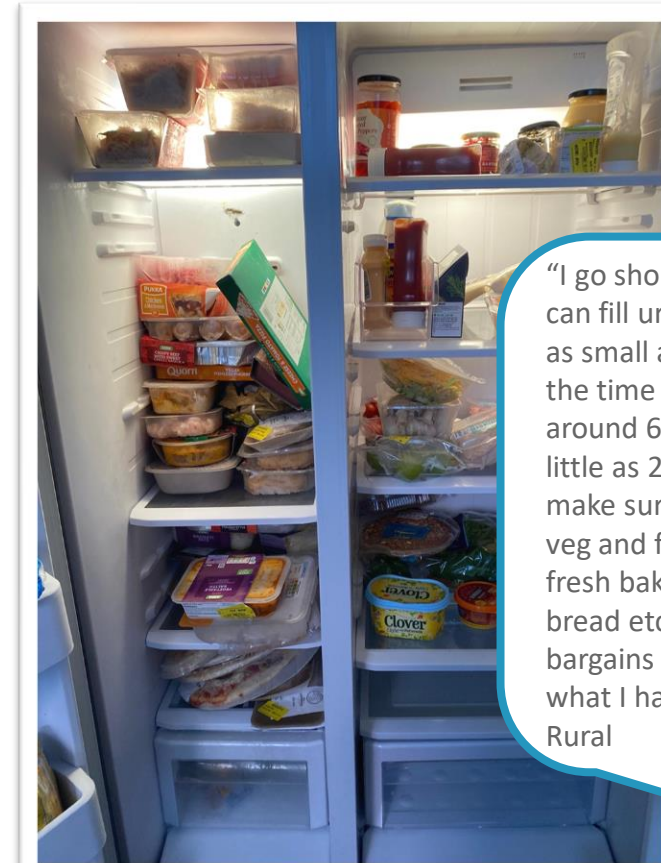


A meal without the extra sides just isn't as appealing

Time and money getting in the way of staying on track

- Unsurprisingly given the busyness of family life, time is cited as a **key barrier** to stay on track
 - **Time** to prepare **food** from **scratch**
 - **Time** to sit down together
 - **Eating** late a night
- People are also feeling **cost of living increases**
 - Buying quality food items (esp fruit)
 - Increase cost of diesel and petrol
 - Increase in gas / electricity

"I go to Asda or Aldi for food shopping usually once a week. It's much the same each week, though not always the same day. I am watching my expenditure, as the prices are increasing almost daily now." Male, 59, Urban



"I go shopping to a local van where u can fill ure bag and give a donation as small as £4 I also go to Asda at the time they red em foods so around 6 pm I get lots of food as little as 20 p so most things I buy I make sure I freeze I get to pick up veg and fruit for as little as 10p and fresh bakery for 10 p I also freeze bread etc I actually enjoy looking for bargains and making meals up from what I have brought." Female, 46, Rural

"Fruit is very expensive especially strawberries, raspberries even apples these days. Biscuits are 50p for the whole packet, where as a tiny pk of raspberries is over 2 pound !!!" Female, 40, Suburban

Many also looking for easy options

CONVENIENCE



"We are a very busy family, so some times we buy ready made meals from Costco for 4 nights of the week, beef stew, chicken casserol, macaroni cheese, on weekends Friday night is nice for night Chinese or chip shop, Saturday we go out for lunch, Sunday is a roast, breakfast is cereals I always have strawberries and yogurt lunch in have sandwiches q packet of crisis sometimes a coral bar ways fruit." Female, 47, Rural

TAKE AWAYS



"Mealtimes are stressful and hectic. We all eat separately and on our laps. I prefer weekends when we are all home and have a takeaway, and we all sit around the TV with our food and have a chat and spend quality time together." Female, 35, Rural

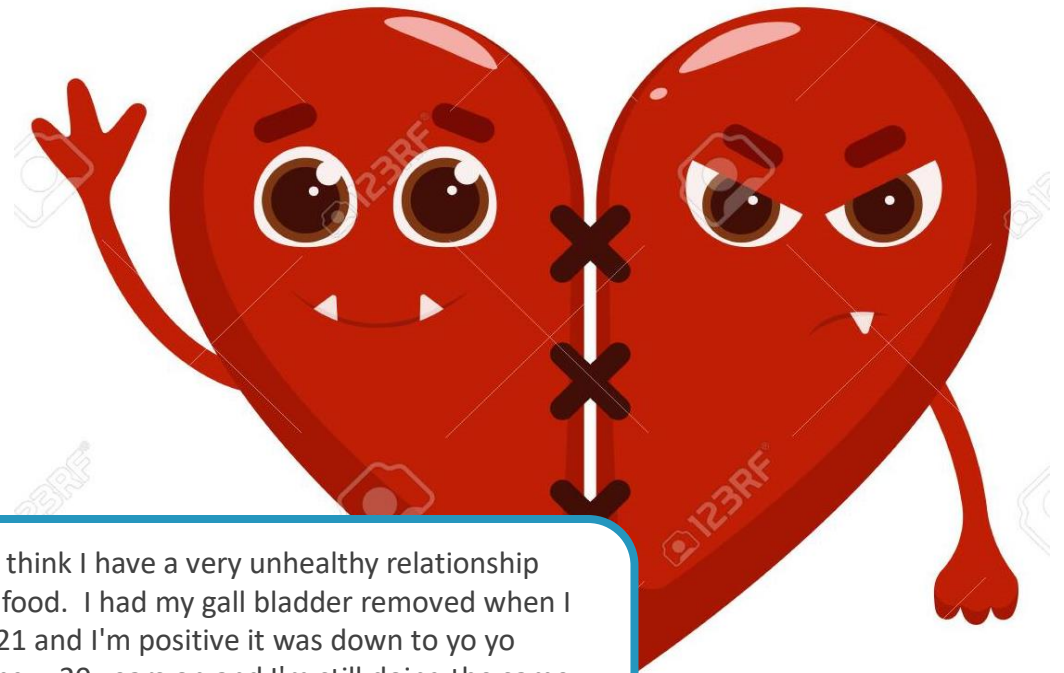
EATING OUT



"My ideal meal time would be a meal in a restaurant, all done for us and we all sat together talking and enjoying our food with no stress." Female, 40, Suburban

All recognise they are using food as a coping mechanism for low self esteem and low confidence

- Complex relationship with food – all self defined **emotional eaters**
- They know '**the problem**' and the reasons why
- But finding it hard under a backdrop of COVID
 - good habits disrupted
 - stresses of changes to family situation
 - working from home more
 - general stress and worry in life
- Food and especially **snacking** taps into their emotional needs



"I do think I have a very unhealthy relationship with food. I had my gall bladder removed when I was 21 and I'm positive it was down to yo yo dieting.....20 years on and I'm still doing the same !" Female, 40, Suburban

Comfort eating - a safe thing to turn to when life feels out of control

Food has become a much needed emotional comfort

- Lots of acknowledgement of weight gain, comfort eating during **lockdown**
- Food being used as a way to bring about much needed comfort in times of worry, stress and anxiety
- Many stuck in a pattern of poor mental health, difficult habits to undo and over-eating compensate for feeling **low / depressed**

“I'm not happy with myself. I have nearly no self esteem and have lost so much confidence. I really want to lose weight but I find it so hard. I have a love hate relationship with food and I'm an emotional binge eater. I really struggle and have tried lots of ways to lose weight and I always end up back at the start again. I always get told I have a pretty face and would be hot if I lost weight lol. AND I WANT TO BE HOT but I can't stop eating. Its been worse the past few years. Especially since covid. I have lost weight before and been slim but life happens and the weight piles back on” **Female, 35, Rural.**

How do people feel about
keeping active?

“I honestly think my **biggest challenge** is just having that **self discipline** to stay active and **say no** to myself when I want to snack unhealthy especially when I don't need to. I suppose it's about having the ability to stop yourself in your tracks and say "**do you really need to eat this snack now or could you leave it for another time?**" Or "just put your trainers on, open the front door and start running. You don't have to a 10km jog. Just run and don't think about it.” Male, 50, Urban

Most 'happy' to do low level exercise with family

- Generally much less to say about keeping fit and active from the community of participants
- Enjoy 'getting out and about' with the family at weekend and walking in the local area
- Some gym going, horse riding, swimming, dog walking and playing outside with kids



"We go for walks around the neighbourhood, were lucky as we have a lot of parks and good walking places. I enjoy being active on nicer days. If the day is wet and cold i rather just stay at home. I don't make it a priority to be active on weekdays as I am busy doing other stuff but weekend i try and go to the gym or classes." Female, 31, Urban

"I love going to the gym had to leave when I changed jobs but am going to join back as one is opening near my house and it's reasonable in price.

I have got a really active job but I feel like I need to get motivated again as I'm starting to gain weight again." Male, 65, Urban



If anything children are a really positive influence

- Very little difference in families with primary vs secondary school children.
- But nearly all parents described how their children were a **positive influence** and 'made a massive difference.'
 - helped them to get out to parks, go for walks and keep active
 - trying to eat healthy and instil good habits
- But, children do bring temptations (snack drawers) and its easy to finish off their foods!

"I always want what they have. They are my biggest temptation. And I finish their food. They want me to be happy and they know being fat doesn't make me happy. We do love going walking and having outdoor adventures so they do motivate me to get up and get out." Female, 40, Suburban

"My Daughter loves going for walks and it encourages me to get out more with her. She is also a big healthy eater as she learns so much in school, which is great. So this helps me always keep Fruit and Veg in the house." Male, Urban, 56

"My children make a massive difference for me, as my son is really into football at the moment. My daughter also loves going for walks. So if I didn't try and stay fit I could not do anything of these things with them." Female, 47, Rural

"Having children affects my ability and motivation massively. As a father who has just turned 50; Keeping up with my boys and keeping them healthy and active is a responsibility that I take on naturally but is so important. Having them makes me want to at least attempt to keep active. As I get older I am feeling myself slowing down and not being so flexible. So I find myself trying to be active to be bothered the kids sake and mine." Male, 41, Urban

Children are the biggest enabler to eating well and moving more

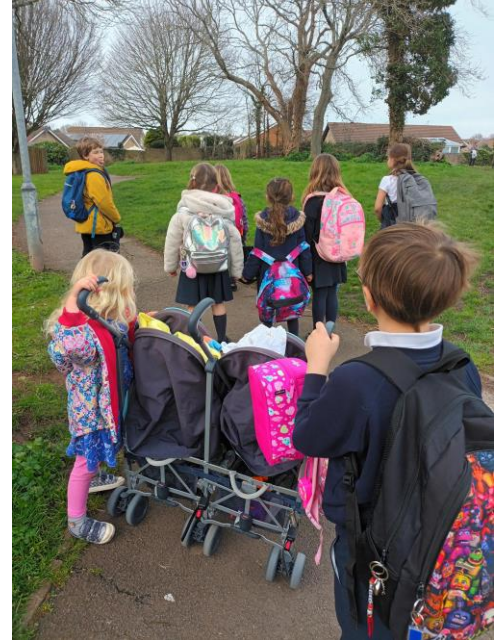
Some active travel, cycling, walking for short trips

- We know from previous active travel research that key barriers to short trips by foot / bike are related to time, weather, safety, convenience
- We see some active travel taking place
 - Walking kids to school
 - Walking, cycling to local shops
- But still a big **reliance** on the **car** for big food shops - especially for those who live in rural areas or anything more than 2 miles away

"If we were doing a big shop in the local Tesco we take the car. If we were just going to do a small shop or get a few things we walk. Always depends on the weather." Female, 31. Urban

"Short trips for school runs I usually walk as the traffic can be quite bad at those times. The walk usually takes about 10 to 15 mins depending on if I'm in a rush. If it's raining heavy we would take the car and that actually takes just as long." Male, 50, Urban

"I use my car for most trips. I try to make myself walk when I need to go to the shop around the corner though, as it is no more than 5 mins walk and it would be a crime to take the car for that. I have a bike and go for a ride on my own or with my son, occasionally, if the weather is good. I'd like to do that more often but, again, getting motivated and into the habit is a bit of a problem these days." Male, 59, Suburban



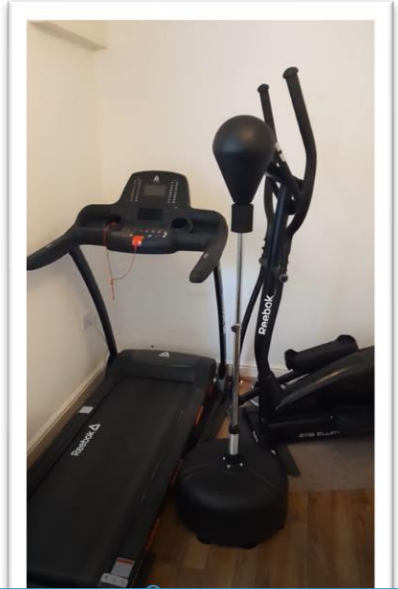
A real sense that Lockdown has broken the habit of being more active

- Lockdown definitely **disrupted** gym memberships, fitness classes
 - Cost of gym membership feels really prohibitive right now
- Some did bring gym into the home, but the novelty has since worn off
- Many finding it **difficult** to re establish exercise / gym / classes back into their routines.



"I love going to the gym had to leave when I changed jobs but am going to join back as one is opening near my house and it's reasonable in price.

I have got a really active job but I feel like I need to get motivated again as I'm starting to gain weight again."
Male, 41, Urban



"Before covid I started going to the gym and swimming - I preferred the swimming more and I got really into it I felt fitter as time went on however once covid struck I gave up. I am planning on going back. I prefer doing the swimming and aqua sports compared to in the gym it supported my weight more and it was more fun to take part with time to do either."
Female, 35, Urban

Many feeling 'too big' to get moving

- Significant emotional barriers getting in the way of being more active (particularly outside)
- Many described feeling
 - **Too big** or **too embarrassed**
 - **Lacking** energy
 - **Worried** about **catching Covid**
 - Too low or **depressed**
- Recent weight gain is having a significant impact on self confidence and desire to want to exercise publicly

"I am not happy about doing activities with others with the Covid situation. I would (and should) like to ride my bike more often and also to walk more often around the neighbourhood. Laziness, Covid, injuries and family commitments get in the way of this, but I would have to say laziness more than all the others really. do either."
Male, 59, Urban

"I used to attend a trampoline exercise class and I absolutely loved it. I got super fit and lost loads of weight but unfortunately the group stopped and I've never found anything that I love like I did that. Everyone always tells me to try the couch to 5k but I wouldn't feel comfortable running in my neighbourhood in my area. There's no where private I could do this and I would feel so vulnerable going out to do it." Female, 47, Rural

"When I can and not depressed I like taking my dog for a walk and I have a park right next to where I live a few years ago before depression kicked in I would attend the gym everyday doing different classes and feeling much slimmer I am now overweight and haven't the confidence to attend classes." Female, 46, Rural



Longer term healthy habits are hard to instil – you are either ‘on a diet’ or ‘not’

- For some (esp the men) weight gain has been more gradual over the years but **accelerated** since the **lockdown**
- There is a strongly held belief that you are either **on a diet** (and being very restrictive) **or not** (and therefore anything goes).
- Many need the crutch of a **committed** or **formal diet plan** to ‘get going’ and nearly all lack the motivation to do this right now

“When I’m on a diet I eat 3 small meals, usually low calorie ready meals and I never snack. Whereas when I’m not on a diet I snack between every meal and I eat carb loaded foods like bread and pasta.”
Female, 40, suburban

“I’m the kind of person that is either on a diet or I’m not. There’s no in-between with me. I either have weeks where I consume under 1200 calories with no treats and I’m extremely strict...or I’m in the mode where I have no control and I just eat anything and everything. For example yesterday I ate 7 pieces of bread (2 breakfast, 3 at lunchtime , then I went to bed at 8pm a piece of toast, galaxy Choc and a packet of wotsits !!! I always take food upto bed to eat whilst I’m watching TV. If I’m on a diet I’m miserable....if I’m eating whatever I want I’m happy. Don’t really know what I want from the doctors but surely there’s a pill out there that would make me feel full all the time !!!” Female, 46, Rural

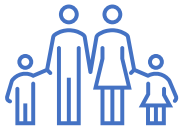


Many need the crutch of being on a formal diet to eat well and move more



“There is 2 sides to thiswhen I'm on a diet I'm active. When I'm not on a diet I do nothing !!!
When I'm in a diet I exercise daily, I feel good when I do it. 2 years ago when I was fit, healthy I ran a 10k weekly and I felt amazing. 2 years on and I've put on 4 stone, feel huge and struggling to get myself bk on a diet. I have no excuse for not exercising as I have lots of equipment in my house.....I'm just lazy.” Female, 40, Suburban

Many of the same barriers at play for eating well and moving more



New family dynamics e.g separation, divorce, caring for parents impacting life in many ways such as new routines, mental health, focus on children.



Lack of **perceived time** – but less about the actual hours in the day, more about prioritising ‘**me time**’



New **working from home** practise's are leading to more **snacking temptation** and more **inactivity**



Money – cost of living rises impacting on day to day finances. Gym memberships not renewed after COVID, increased costs of fresh and quality food items. Convenience foods cheaper and readily available.



Hard to find the motivation in winter months for being more active. Tendency to stay at home, ‘hunker down’ and eat more.

Conclusions and Recommendations

“I think it's a combination of juggling all the other things in your life like work and looking after the kids, then having the energy (or motivation) to be additionally more active as opposed to crashing in front of the TV or with your mobile phone. Building and maintaining good habits is maybe the only way.” Male, 50, Urban

Conclusions

- Among those at an unhealthy weight, there is a strongly held belief that the only route to achieve weight loss is through a **structured / formalised diet** plan.
- At this point, many did not feel they were in the **right mindset** to address their weight or get more active
 - Past experience has shown them that it requires commitment and a period of significant restriction
 - Many felt 'too big' to get going, especially in terms of physical activity. The task feels overwhelming and exercise in public embarrassing.
- It is therefore important to show this community, that eating well and moving more can be achieved in **smaller steps**, through establishing **good long term habits in order build self esteem** and **self motivation**.

Incorporating a **healthy lifestyle** doesn't mean **committing to a stringent diet**

Opportunities to optimize the campaign

1

Trigger the change so people can see what's possible

Set small behavioral challenge so people can see that change doesn't necessarily mean huge restrictions and sacrifices. Simple challenges such as 'no sides for a week', 'no snacking after 7pm' 'takeaway once a month'

2

Consider ways to incorporate positive images and iconography to address barriers

Move away from standard dieting / weight loss imagery to establish a new narrative on what it means to Eat Well and Move More in day-to-day life. For example, linking more to active travel (walking with shopping bags, short trips by bike) showing smaller portions for dinner and challenge new norms on side dishes at every dinner time

Opportunities to optimize the campaign

Leverage the enablers

3

- **Meal Planning:** Communicate the importance of meal planning and the benefits in terms of costs, health, getting a balance healthy meals, less 'on the go' eating. Provide tools, ideas to support people to do this so it becomes habitual
- **Children / Family:** Children were the biggest enablers of healthier eating and being active - find ways for parents to;
 - Reflect on their approach with their children and how they **mirror the rules** / boundaries set for their children become good **role models**
 - Create opportunities for parents and children to get active together – **community local fun runs**, family activity sessions at local community centers, discounted memberships with children etc)
 - Encourage **family goal setting** / **household rules** (no snacks after 7pm, fruit bowls only during the day etc).

What do they need...in their words

- *Free active sessions for families*
- *Safer and more cycle paths*
- *Less traffic*
- *Healthier food options that are cheaper (local produce, local shops)*
- *Weight loss classes run by LA (cheaper)*
- *Less fast food chain advertising and meal deals - discount salads and healthy options*

"I'd like to see less fast food chains and adverts for fast food such as a 99p menu and more savings on salad and veg. I would also like to see weekend specials on fruit and salad such as the 15 p veg rates around xmas time." Female, 35, Rural

"local weight watchers / slimming world type of classes run by the local doctors surgery at a discounted price. This would help the people take part who can't afford weight watchers etc". Female, 35, Rural

"Free or heavily subsidized family access to health facilities. Lots of families are very limited in what they can afford, especially those with 3 or more kids. Sports like tennis and golf remain exclusive to those who can afford pricey membership fees." Male, 39, Urban

"A dedicated community outreach team encouraging/educating on fitness and healthy eating. It would be nice to see flyers about local sports and leisure facilities coming through the letterbox rather than the endless raft of pizza and kebab shop ones." Male, 56, Urban

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This project has been delivered to ISO 9001:2015, 20252:2019 and 27001:2013 standards.

