

Focus Group with Young People

December 2021

Facilitated by Sarah Davenport and supported by Charlie Temperton, Community Works and 2 Youth Club Volunteers



The focus group took place at a Youth Club in Adur during their regular drop-in session. There were 13 participants (though a few dipped in and out of the session), mix of male & female, ages 9-16.

Key findings: summary

The young people were excited to talk about food and feedback showed they were glad to be heard. The Youth Group Facilitator did a great job of introducing the idea of a focus group which helped the young people feel their views would be taken seriously.

Older participants had more knowledge around food groups. Everyone was excited to talk about fast food which was widely available in the area, a local shopping centre with a few outlets was mentioned as a key place to purchase food, as well as a local newsagents for snacks, with some young people going to the newsagents every day.

When questioned further the young people talked more about school dinners and home cooked food being their main sources of food, and takeaway/fast food being less regular.

A number of young people talked about being able to easily get to the supermarket. Some of the older of the group were walking to and back from the nearest supermarket for their weekly family shop (about 2 miles round trip).

One young person expressed that there were not enough vegetables offered with their school dinners, and that the pandemic had influenced the lack of vegetables on offer.

A young person who had recently started working, cited time as one of their main reasons for eating less healthily. Instead of their usual breakfast they had started to eat cereal bars for breakfast and meal deals at lunch-time.

The older people in the group were more likely to talk about healthy diets, food and nutrition in terms of nutritional content of the different foods, for example protein, carbohydrate etc. However when pressed about the types of foods these were found in, some struggled to translate the knowledge into the types of food.

A number of children viewed Coke Zero and other 'sugar-free' drinks as healthy.

One young person became very uncomfortable once the topic of food was mentioned and became withdrawn and refused to participate or eat any of the food. Concerns around a potential eating disorder were flagged as a safeguarding concern, the young person has been offered support.

Recommended next steps:

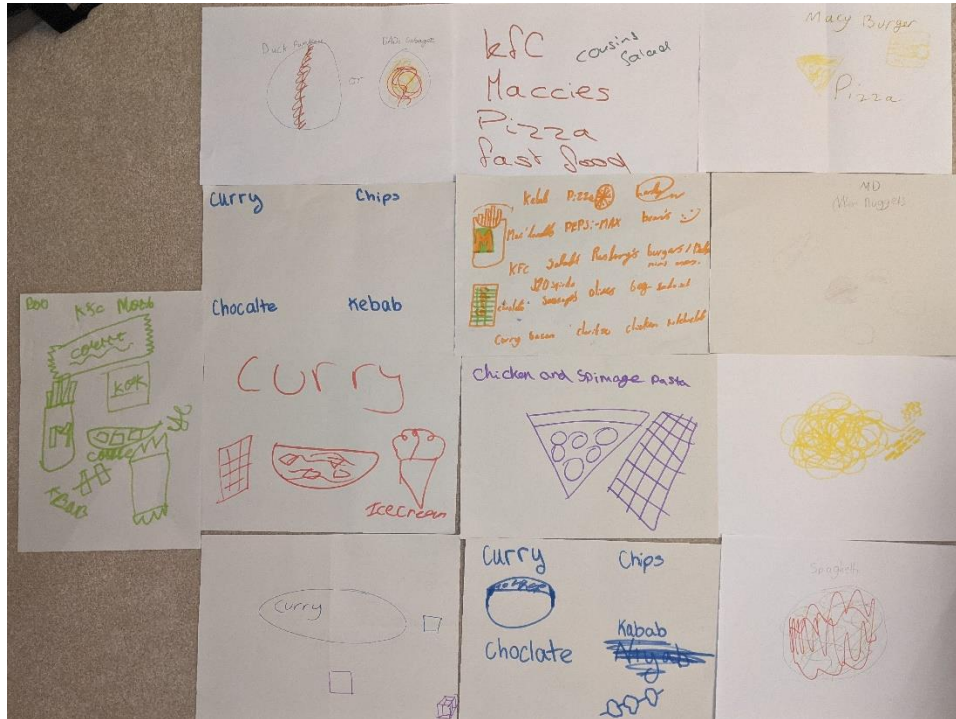
- Speak to young people in schools about school food
- Hold a focus group with young people in Worthing
- Visit the newsagents to see how healthy/unhealthy the food offer is, and what items are being promoted

Next steps outside the scope:

- Promotion around eating disorders and links in to advice services in schools and places younger people hang out
- Education around fizzy drinks and fruit juices

The Discussion

Activity: "Draw a picture or write down your favourite food"



- Duck pancakes, dad's spaghetti
- KFC, McDonald's, pizza, fast food, cousin's salad
- McDonald's burger, pizza
- Curry, chips, chocolate, kebab
- Kebab, pizza, McDonald's, Pepsi max, beans, KFC, salads, raspberries, burgers, chocolate, J20 spirits, sausages, olives, curry, bacon, chorizo, chicken
- McDonald's chicken nuggets
- Kebab, KFC, McDonald's, curry
- Curry, ice cream
- Chicken and spinach pasta, pizza, chocolate
- Pasta
- Curry
- Curry, chocolate, chips, kebab,
- Spaghetti

Question: "What makes a good diet?"

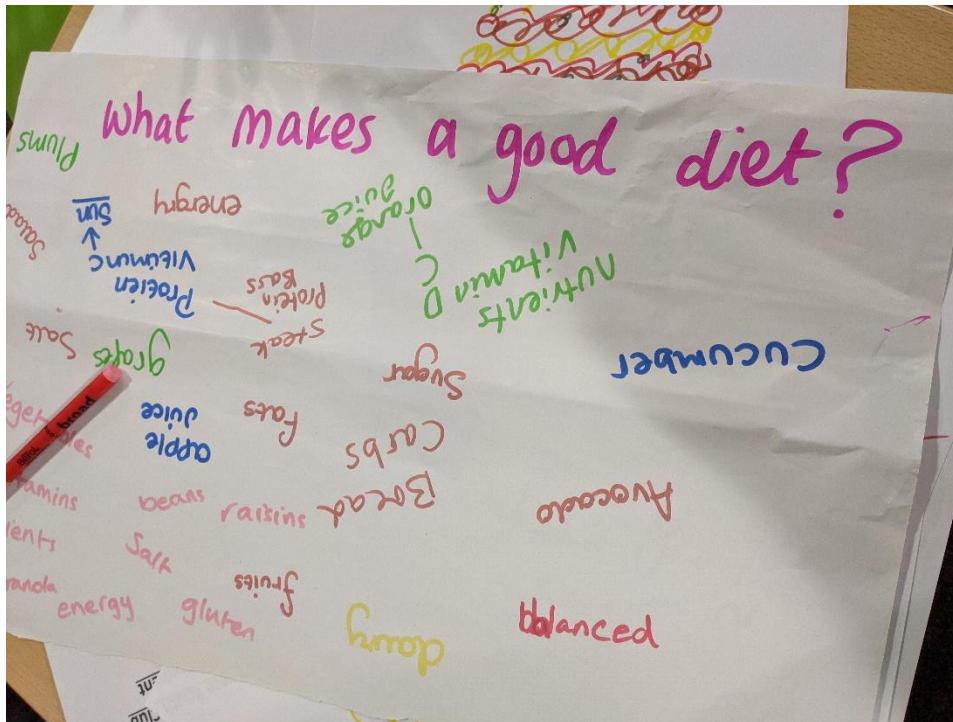
The young people sat in groups of 3-6 and wrote on flipchart. We observed that:

- Older group – understood more about nutrition.
- What they'd been taught in school.
- Could say what the words were, but didn't understand what foods they were in.

- Keen to write down, protein and fat.
- Took a while for them to remember about vegetables!
- Young kids seemed to understand – salad!
- Said sugar and coke zero.
- One person thought only a little meat and too much wasn't healthy and fattening.

On the flipchart they wrote:

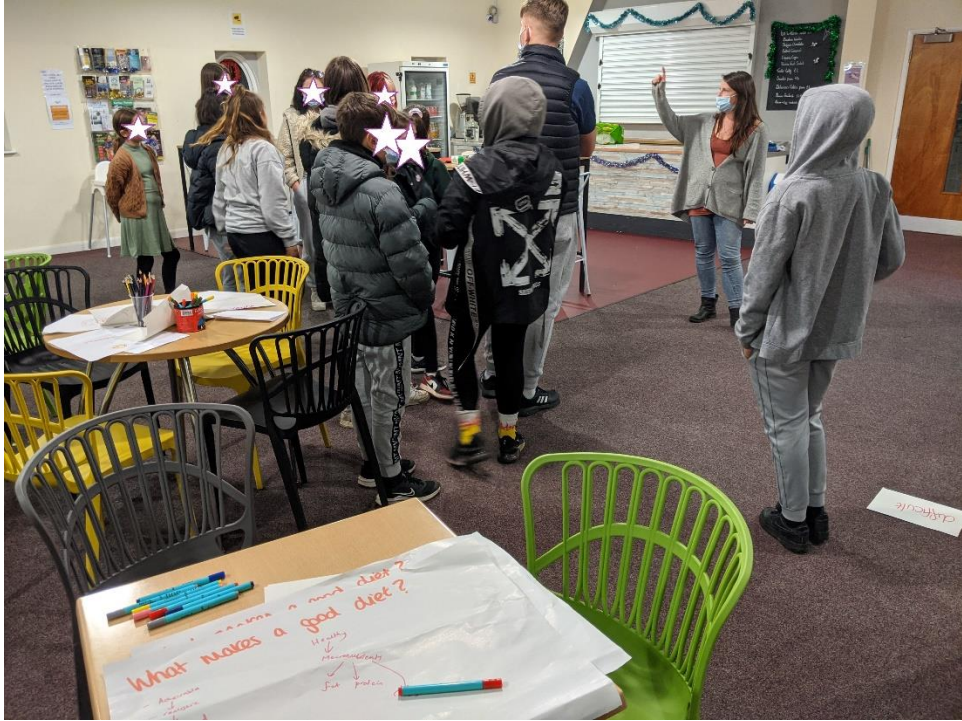
- Achievable – realistic – balanced
- Healthy – Macronutrients: Fat, protein, carbs
- Energy
- Vitamins
- Dairy
- Sandwiches
- Granola
- Coke
- Diet coke
- Fruit and vegetables
- Salad
- Cucumber
- Avocado
- Balanced
- Nutrients, vitamin D & C
- Plums
- Salt
- Nuts/granola
- Protein bars
- Raisins
- Gluten
- Sugar
- Energy
- Apple juice
- Tomato
- Strawberry
- Five a day
- Grapes
- Good amount of fats and nutrients
- Not too much meat but not too little maybe 1 or 2 times a week



How easy is it to access a good diet?

Participants were asked to stand somewhere along a line between 'Easy' - 'Difficult' to demonstrate how easy/difficult they find it to access a good diet. The response was mostly Easy (with one young person standing next to Difficult to make a point as no one else would stand there!). Participants talked about visiting the local newsagents to buy food and snacks.

- Due to not having much purchasing power?
- Mostly parents/carers providing food
- Use their pocket money to buy snacks
- School dinners



Mapping activity

The goal of this exercise was to draw out more detail about where the participants accessed their food.

