

A photograph of two women wearing hijabs and aprons, cooking at an outdoor food stall. One woman is stirring a pan of food, while the other stands beside her. The stall is equipped with a stove, various cooking ingredients, and finished dishes. A red speech bubble graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image.

COOK & MEET

Connecting migrant
parents to each other



Stockwell
Partnership

BRIXTON
PEOPLE'S
KITCHEN

What it is?

A network of informal self-help groups, led by migrant parents, using the power of food to connect people to each other.



MEET

- Stockwell Partnership recruits a team of migrant parents, who invite other parents to **cook and eat** sessions.
- The sessions take place in a local **children's centre** and, where possible, a creche is provided to give parents the space and time to connect with other parents, without the pressures of childcare.

COOK

- Parents connect with local businesses and arrange collections of **surplus food**, supported by the Brixton People's Kitchen.
- Parents **cook together**, share recipes, become more adventurous with food and enjoy being creative!

SHARE

- The menu is devised together on the day, inspiring **creativity** and team work.
- Parents get to **relax**, form friendships and exchange advice.
- A **healthy, free** meal is created for families to enjoy together with their children.

LEARN

- As parents are supported to run the group themselves, they develop **confidence** as well as cooking skills.
- Cooking with people from different cultural backgrounds inspires **intercultural curiosity**, and enables parents to grow their language skills.
- Inspiring **healthy eating** and resourceful cooking habits at home.

Our vision

We want migrant parents across Lambeth, and beyond, to feel empowered through running their own cookery projects.

This will enable them to strengthen and diversify their **social networks**, increase their engagement with mainstream services, and grow some **cooking and leadership** skills.

Connected and confident parents are equipped to raise healthy and happy children.



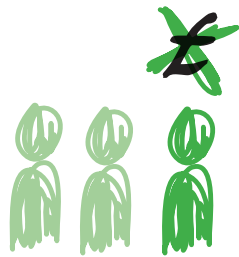
Who is it for?

For mums and dads in Lambeth, who were born outside the UK who have children under 5, and who live in low income households.



1/3

of Lambeth residents were born outside of the UK



32%

of Lambeth households are low income



Meet Carmen

Carmen is from Madeira. She has been living in Stockwell for two years, with her partner and four year old daughter, Denise.

When Carmen first arrived in the UK, she spoke little English. She was living with her sister in law and rarely left the house.

‘In the beginning, it was very sad to be all day in one room...I felt lost.’

Carmen saw her nephew struggle at school because he spoke hardly any English and she decided she didn't want her daughter to go through the same thing. Gustavo, Portuguese Advocate at Stockwell Partnership, referred Carmen to an ESOL class and supported her to visit her local Children's Centre for the first time.

At the Children's Centre, Carmen struggled to leave her daughter in the creche. Denise would cry and make herself sick and Carmen considered giving up. But she persevered and Denise is now happy playing with other children when Carmen attends activities at the Children's Centre.

Gustavo told Carmen about the **cooking sessions** and she decided to go along. Through the cooking sessions, Carmen has met lots of other parents in the local area. She has made **friends** with Gelson and Paula, a couple from Brazil, who also love cooking. Their daughters get on well together. Carmen helps to **translate** instructions into Portuguese for Paula and Gelson, who sometimes struggle with English.

Carmen loves how informal and relaxed the sessions are. She has **learnt new recipes**, including Japanese tempura and Ethiopian stews! Carmen was one of the main organisers of the Stockwell Festival cooking event.



‘I don't only come so I can cook. I come because I meet new people and learn new things’

COOK

MEET

SHARE

LEARN

What's the issue?



Social isolation

- 'Children's social networks mirror their parents'¹
- Migrant parents more isolated due to lack of extended family and **language barriers**
- 8.6% of Lambeth households are **single parent** households with dependant children
- Lambeth ranked second **least peaceful** place to live in UK²



Disempowered communities

- 'There is an entrenched culture of **dependency** on services among both families and professionals'³
- 'The community development approach has been lost in children's centres'⁴
- Lambeth **unemployment** rate is 8.9%, compared with 7.7% nationally



Convenience cooking, food poverty and food waste

- Availability of **cheap, processed food** - Lambeth has 247 fast food outlets⁵
- Prevalence of adults consuming 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day estimated at 37.5%⁵
- 10.7% of children aged 4-5 years are classified **obese** in Lambeth⁵
- 'Children from food-insecure families...are at risk of developmental and behaviour problems'⁵
- UK generates over 16 million tonnes of **food waste** from plough to plate every year⁶

1. (Design Council report, 2013)

2. (UK Peace Index, 2013)

3. (Design Council, 2013)

4. (Glass, 2005)

5. (Lambeth Public Health Team, 2013)

6. (Sustainable Food, "Written evidence written by WRAP", Parliamentary Business. Parliament May 17 2011)

How are we unique?



FOOD PROJECTS THAT DO THAT

Come Cook With Us
Meet and Two Veg
Casserole Club
Big Lunch

FOOD PROJECTS THAT DO THAT

Myatts Fields Food
Heroes
Cook Collective
Mazi Mas



FOOD PROJECTS THAT DO THAT

Food Banks
FoodCycle
People's Kitchen
Kitchen Canny
Culinary Misfits
FareShare

We do all this



- **Led by migrant parents.**
- **'Self-help'** – how could the team support and signpost other parents to services activities?
- Creative activities are often provided for children. This focuses on **parents' own development.**

How will it be sustained?

Our vision for success: a network of self-help cookery groups has developed, demonstrating best practice in engaging migrant parents in shaping the delivery of services.

1 *Sustaining the project in Stockwell*

- Co-designing a **step-by-step training programme** to support the group to develop and deliver their own cookery sessions in a children's centre.
- Embedding **reward and accreditation** mechanisms to keep parents motivated
- Film to engage new volunteers?

2 *Scaling the model across Lambeth and beyond*

- **Visual guide** (film) to setting up your own 'Cook & Meet'
- **'Graduates'** of the training programme coach groups of parents in new locations
- **Franchise model** sold to children's centres and council

Why us?



Stockwell Partnership

Supporting 500 migrant families each year

- Bilingual Advocates delivering one-to-one advice and support
- Public realm improvements
- Community development (Stockwell Forum / Stockwell Festival)
- Strong links to community facilities



BRIXTON PEOPLE'S KITCHEN

Bringing people together to reduce food waste

- Reducing food waste (1.5 tons in 2 years - a baby elephant!) from local food businesses
- Encouraging people to share skills and grow confidence through creative cooking
- Flexible model - bicycle kitchen popping up in parks, pubs, children centres, etc.
- Coaching community groups to set up their own people's kitchen.

Testing the idea

What did we already know? Stockwell Partnership and Brixton People's Kitchen ran 5 cooking sessions in various children's centres over the summer. We learned that:



What parents value most is the opportunity to **meet** and learn from other parents.

"It really showed us how so many things can be created from so little."



It's about growing employability skills, but in an **informal** way.



Hosting in **children's centres** led to some parents discovering new services and activities.

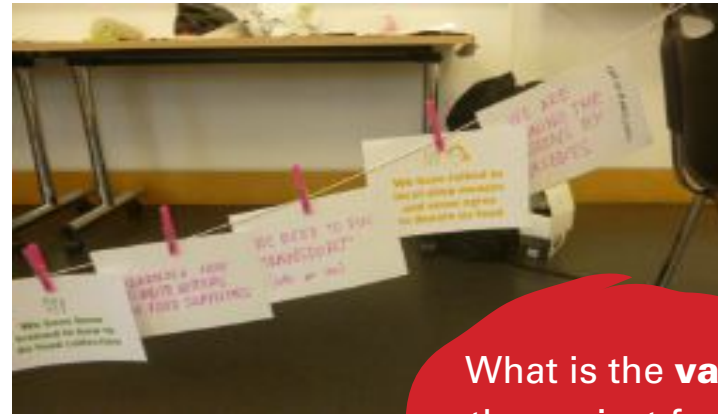


Parents welcome the fact that the cooking session is a **break** from childminding.

Testing the idea

What did we test?

We ran 2 prototyping sessions with 28 parents. We asked participants to share the skills they could bring to the project and role play the benefits and challenges linked to taking part in the project. We also co-designed a timeline of activities to support them to progressively run the sessions themselves.



What would we need to change about the **format** we have already tested?



What is the **value** of the project from the perspective of the parents?

What might be some of the **barriers** faced by parents to getting involved?

How ready are they to take ownership of the project?

What would enable them to do so?

What did we learn?

Benefits

- Learning skills
- Learning from each other
- Meeting new people
- Learning new recipes to try out at home

Challenges

- The most isolated parents might not feel confident to join a session
- Lack of time

'You learn a lot by cooking with other people'



Principles

- Bring a friend
- Keep it informal
- Take into account school holidays!
- Make it very local and convenient
- Keep it inclusive
- Text reminders

Group needs

- Legitimacy - being backed up by an organisation
- Support from a committed team
- Training and skills building

How will we ensure the project engages the families it is aimed at in the right way?

The project is being developed by a diverse group of migrant parents, who all have their own reasons for being involved in the project. However, it is possible to draw common principles to make sure the project reaches the families it is aimed at. During testing, they have told us it is essential for the model to be:



Rewarding

parents want to gain skills from the experience – volunteering certificate, food hygiene training

the project is not culture-specific - everyone is welcome!

Inclusive

materials and training are inclusive of different levels of English

Flexible

recognise transitory nature of communities; aim to teach process in way that can be passed on if core team members leave

Measuring impact

Outputs

- Training programme
- Guide to the process, (e.g. film)
- Formal accreditation?
- Recipe cards?



Outcomes

- Mapping **social networks** and services used, to measure the extent to which the project tackles isolation
- **Skills audit**, to measure to the development of both formal and informal skills
- **Food diaries**, to measure whether parents apply the learning from the sessions at home with their children



Impact

Connected parents
+
Empowered parents
=
Healthy, happy and
confident children

In 3 months

Further testing

- Confirm **space** - develop offer to children's centres and other community spaces
- Progressively handing over **responsibility** to the team of parents
- Building the **team** - from interested parents to a committed volunteer team

Challenges for us

- Will **children's centres** be flexible enough to host the cooking sessions? What would be the pros and cons of hosting in other community spaces?
- What steps do we need to take to **sustain** the motivation of the group beyond the initial period of support and training (e.g. buddying / accreditation)?
- Is there an **alternative to the crèche**? Could parents take it in turns to watch the children? Could the children be more involved?
- How can we make the job of **food collection** as easy as possible?
- It is straightforward to measure impact on parents' wellbeing - but how do we **measure impact on children**?

Potential collaborations

- Stockwell Children's Centre, Larkhall One O'Clock Club, St Stephens Children's Centre
- Work with Max Roach One O'Clock Club, who have also worked with Brixton People's Kitchen to set up their own food project, and are further along their journey, to develop the model
- Seek support scaling the model and getting buy in from children's centres
- Contact accreditation bodies, e.g. AQA
- Contact Lambeth Council about providing food hygiene training