Childhood Obesity Opportunity Spaces: Where are there opportunities to impact the local food environment?

THEME 1: ENVIRONMENTAL NUDGES
5 opportunity platforms for interventions

1. Environmental Nudges
2. Healthy Headspace
3. Creatures of Habit
4. Social Influencers
5. Inclusive Regeneration
1. Environmental Nudges
The big challenge

The street and retail environment is saturated with carefully designed cues that nudge families towards high calorie foods such as special offers, advertising, attractive packaging and kid-height shelving. The home environment is less designed.
Opportunity overview

1A Optimise existing
   How might we optimise existing interventions so that they have greater impact?

1B Better information
   How might we improve the way information is presented to families?

1C Reclaiming space
   How might we reclaim public space from unhealthy food advertising?

1D Attractive options
   How might we increase the attractiveness of the available healthier options to children?

1E Comfortable kitchens
   How might we make kitchens comfortable spaces that parents want to spend time in?

Optimising nudges
Removing nudges
New nudges
Opportunity 1A: Optimise existing

Design brief:
How might we optimise existing interventions so that they have greater impact?

What we heard:
A number of families in the research have experience of existing food interventions ranging from national initiatives such as Change4Life’s recipe books to local charity interventions such as MumSpace.

However the impact is often low or short-lived.

Given that these interventions already exist, there is opportunity to maximise their impact through simple design tweaks.

Relevant settings:
STREET
HOME
Opportunity 1A: Optimise existing

Examples:

**Longer intervention shelf-life**

Some parents received interventions such as recipe books when their children were babies e.g. the Change4Life and Cow & Gate recipe books. Parents describe them as useful at the time and often keep them still in their kitchens - although they are rarely looked at anymore.

**More appealing**

Some local schools have a ‘chicken in a box’ day where the canteen serves healthier versions of fried chicken in a box - as it would at a chicken shop. This meal is incredibly popular with pupils, with the box playing an important role.

**Overcoming barriers**

Tesco provide free fruit stands in-store for children to use while their parents shop. However not all parents let their children use it due to their concerns that the fruit is old or dirty, particularly when there is less fruit in the tray.
Opportunity 1B: Better information

**Design brief:**
How might we improve the way information is presented to families?

**What we heard:**
There is a lot of information in the food environment that families do not notice or understand e.g. nutritional labels, use by dates and pricing.

While it may be difficult to change the way information is presented on product packaging, there is opportunity to intervene in shops.

**Relevant settings:**
- STREET
- HOME
Opportunity 1B: Better information

Examples:

**Surfacing information**

Some parents look at nutritional traffic lights when they shop while others do not. One parent turned traffic lights into a game with their children and taught them to go hunting for products without any red. It is much harder to find nutritional information for takeaway.

**Making information more prominent**

Not everyone reads price labels in shops in the same way. Many parents focus on the yellow special offer stickers and the total cost, and do not look at or understand the smaller price per weight information which makes it easier to compare the value of different products.

**Confusing information**

Families find use by and best before dates on food packaging confusing, which results in food being thrown away unnecessarily.
Opportunity 1C: Reclaiming space

Design brief: How might we reclaim public space from unhealthy food advertising?

What we heard:

Everyday families and young people are exposed to a lot of unhealthy food advertising on the streets as they travel about in the local area. McDonalds adverts in particular are highly visible.

There is little advertising on the streets for healthier options.

It’s not just advertising. At night, fast food shops are among the most brightly lit, making them easy to spot.

Relevant settings:
- STREET
- HOME
Opportunity 1C: Reclaiming space

Examples:

Local landmarks

To celebrate the 50th birthday of the Big Mac, McDonalds have turned the Imax cinema at Waterloo - a distinctive local landmark - into a giant burger.

Visible everywhere

As well as big publicity stunts at landmarks, McDonalds are highly visible throughout the local area, particularly at bus stops, billboards and phone booths.

Reclaiming space

Young activist group Legally Black adjusted film posters to show black characters in lead roles, highlighting the lack of black leads. The posters were put up around South London.
Opportunity 1D: Attractive options

Design brief:
How might we increase the attractiveness of the available healthier options to children?

What we heard:

Compared to unhealthy food brands targeted at children, healthy options typically look bland, boring and unattractive.

This contributes to children being less likely to pester their parents to buy healthier products.

Children are more likely to pester for products that have familiar brands, are marketed explicitly at children, are colourful and that are displayed at child’s eye level. The products that do this well are typically unhealthier.

Relevant settings:
STREET
HOME
Opportunity 1D: Attractive options

Examples:

Adding colour

The sweets aisle in supermarkets are noticeably more colourful than any other aisle making it instantly more attractive to children.

Making things interactive

When going around shops children are distracted by anything that invites interaction e.g. games on the back of packaging and free tasters of products.

Stopping pestering

Aldi’s Kevin the Carrot christmas campaign was popular with the younger children in our research.
Opportunity 1E: Comfortable kitchens

Design brief: How might we make kitchens comfortable spaces that parents want to spend time in?

What we heard:

Parents are more likely to want to cook if they like their kitchens and feel comfortable in it.

However kitchens can be dark, cramped, awkwardly shaped, dirty and lack storage and windows.

Parents do not like it when they cannot supervise their children while in the kitchen, e.g. if the living room and kitchen are separate. This means that cooking needs to happen in as short a time as possible - a pull towards convenience foods.

Relevant settings: STREET HOME
Opportunity 1E: Comfortable kitchens

Examples:

New kitchens, new skills
Southwark Council is investing in a new “Kitchen and Bathroom” programme for Council homes. As part of this, cooking classes will be offered to residents who recently had a new kitchen installed.

Mood music
One mum in the research who hated her galley kitchen as it was dark and cramped used upbeat Spotify music playlists to get herself in the right mood for cooking.

Kitchen decorations
Many kitchens are adorned with folksy mottos and sayings about the role of the kitchen in the family home.
Thank you

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