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

THEME 4: SOCIAL INFLUENCES
5 opportunity platforms for interventions

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

A social layer sits on top of physical spaces that is often invisible to outsiders. People’s food choices are influenced by what they see their parents and peers doing. By following what others do, families can become blind to other possible options.
Opportunity overview

4A  
Passing down habits
- How might we interrupt the transferral of bad food habits from one generation to the next?

4B  
Seeding social media
- How might we seed social media with better food influences?

4C  
Challenging stereotypes
- How might we remove gender and age stereotypes from the food environment?

4D  
Local heroes
- How might we identify and work with local heroes & trend setters to promote better food options?

4E  
Social spaces
- How might we create healthier social spaces that appeal to young people?

Disrupting negative influences
Influencing the influencers
Opportunity 4A: Passing down habits

Design brief: How might we interrupt the transferral of bad food habits from one generation to the next?

What we heard:

Food habits are often transferred from parent to child.

The food behaviours observed by children at home are what they grow up thinking of as ‘normal’. These habits are then often replicated in adulthood.

However some parents do not want to give their children the same as what they had as a child, and try to do things differently.

Relevant settings:

STREET

HOME
Opportunity 4A: Passing down habits

Examples:

Becoming independent

Instant noodles and cereal are among the first foods that children learn to prepare themselves as they become more independent.

Show don’t tell

Parents learning how to cook often use instructional videos on YouTube or Instagram as they like being shown exactly what they should be doing.

New lifestyle aspirations

Youth-centred media brands such as Buzzfeed and Vice have launched food apps/sites specifically designed to cater to young people’s growing interest in food.
Opportunity 4B: Seeding social media

Design brief:
How might we seed social media with better food influences?

What we heard:
- Families and young people are exposed to food-related content everyday on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat.
- The food featured is often, but not always, unhealthy. Some of this content is generated by local businesses seeking to build their local ‘follower’ base.
- This content acts as inspiration for what to buy or cook e.g. young people show their parents food images that they would like to try.

Relevant settings:
- STREET
- HOME
Opportunity 4B: Seeding social media

Examples:

Local & online

YouTubers popular with children often create food challenge videos (e.g. eating contests, gummy vs real food, weird food combinations).

Entertaining challenges

Locally-made ‘food porn’

Local food businesses, particularly those targeting young people, are investing in building social media presence on Instagram, regularly sharing food photos to remind their followers of the food available. E.g. Mel's Midnight Munchies dessert delivery has over 7,000 followers.

Younger parents share food photos on Instagram and Snapchat. Photos are of food they are proud to have made themselves or special food purchased.
Opportunity 4C: Challenging stereotypes

Design brief:
How might we remove gender, age and ethnicity stereotypes from the food environment?

What we heard:

- Children and young people resent it when they feel that others are stereotyping them.
- Some shops and supermarkets restrict entry to children in groups or in school uniform. Takeaways have no such restrictions on age and feel more welcoming.
- There is positive work being done locally to challenge gender stereotypes in relation to cooking and in sports. However in the home setting, some cultures still think of cooking as a female only job.

Relevant settings:
- STREET
- HOME
Opportunity 4C: Challenging stereotypes

Examples:

Renegotiating shop rules

Young people feel they are treated with suspicion by shop staff. There are certain shops that ‘police’ the entry of young people e.g. the Tesco superstore on Kennington Lane does not allow Lilian Baylis pupils in school uniform. This reduces their food options after school.

Empowering girls

Black Prince Trust offered Muay Thai classes to girls aged 9-15 led by a female instructor and Fight For Change has trained many local girls in boxing.

Making it normal

Food tech classes in school are an important touchpoint for boys and cookery - particularly if they are not seeing men cooking at home.
Opportunity 4D: Local heroes

**Design brief:**
How might we identify and work with local heroes & trend setters to promote better food options?

**What we heard:**
There are certain individuals and groups who wield influence local area among families and young people.

Some of these are people working in food businesses, famous for being local characters.

Others are young people known among their peers as trendsetters who others will follow. These trendsetters can help make or break the success of local food businesses.

**Relevant settings:**
STREET
Opportunity 4D: Local heroes

Examples:

On-the-ground influencers

There are people that everyone seems to know. E.g. a boxing trainer who used to work at Fight4Change called Gizmo is well known among young people who use the facilities at Black Prince Trust, and is one of the reasons why young people come to the facility.

Identifying the bossmen

Being featured in a Harlem Spartans’ music video has solidified Tennessee Express in Kennington’s reputation among local young people. Being known by Sanji - one of the staff famous for his friendliness and discounts - is a social badge of honour.

Influencing trends and rumours

Within young peer groups influential individuals create trends (where to go) or rumours (where not to go). Chinese takeaway Tasty House fell out of favour after a rumour spread that staff cook with their feet.
Opportunity 4E: Social spaces

Design brief:
How might we create healthier social spaces that appeal to young people?

What we heard:

Food is not the only reason why young people go to takeaways.

Young people value the physical and social environment of takeaways - they are warm, non-judgemental, friendly, safe places to sit with friends.

Because so many other young people go, young people can feel pressured to go and worry that they will be viewed as ‘odd’ if they do not go.

Relevant settings:
STREET
Opportunity 4E: Social spaces

Examples:

**Allow congregating**

The pavement in front of Tennessee Express in Kennington is wide and therefore an ideal spot for young people to congregate after coming out of the shop. It is a place to see and be seen.

**Entertaining spaces**

Shalamar Chicken in Clapham Common is a famous local institution. The shop doubles up as an after-party as they play music videos on their TVs and staff do dance performances that go viral online.

**Warm, safe, comfortable**

McDonalds are ideal places for young people to eat at because there are lots of seats, the atmosphere is familiar and non-judgemental and it is warm in winter.
Thank you

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