

# Do home delivered 'food boxes' have the potential to inspire healthier eating habits, raise nutritional awareness and encourage cooking confidence?

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## Background

Rising obesity levels in the UK are cause for concern (Capehorn et al, 2016). The availability of convenience foods, limited individual cooking skills and lack of education about healthy meal preparation have been proposed as contributing factors.

A home cooked evening meal has been shown to have the greatest potential to meet the principles of the Eatwell Guide (Larson et al, 2013, Public Health England, 2016) and the experience of sharing the evening meal with family or friends has additionally been linked to increased adherence to nutritional recommendations during the rest of the day (Videon & Manning, 2003). Despite this evidence, recent data demonstrates that informal eating habits and reliance on convenience products are increasing (Lean, 2006). Limited education has been linked to reduced nutritional awareness and lack of cooking confidence (Winkler and Turrell, 2010). Home food delivery boxes can deliver healthy ingredients direct to the home with step-by-step instructions.

**The aim of this research is to investigate whether home delivery food boxes have the potential to inspire healthier eating habits, raise nutritional awareness and encourage cooking confidence**

## Methods

Cross-sectional, qualitative analysis was undertaken with six third-year BSc (Hons) Human Nutrition & Dietetic students. A practical cooking session was followed by a focus group to gather opinions on the experience of using a home food delivery box.

## Results

Key results from this research indicated that the meals provided by the 'Hello Fresh' service were healthy, had potential to increase nutritional knowledge, took an appropriate amount of time to prepare and reduced waste through using recyclable materials.

Participants suggested that the boxes encouraged experimentation with cooking different styles of meals, which may not have previously been considered and suggested that a food delivery box could increase confidence through providing step-by-step instructions. All participants agreed that the meals took a convenient amount of time to prepare, which has been identified as a key concern of those opting to cook from scratch (Lavelle et al, 2016). Participants identified the cost of the box as the main barrier. Further research could be undertaken around the ability to make a cost effective version of the box containing reduced cost ingredients such as beans and pulses as well as cheaper cuts of meat.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the 'Hello Fresh' food box was shown to be a helpful way to concoct new meals. The recipes were found to be convenient to prepare and benefits of having ready measured ingredients have been identified as a way that may increase cooking confidence in those that are wary of creating new dishes. It was not possible to see whether long-term healthier eating habits would result from a home food delivery system without further study, but the benefits identified by participants suggested that the box had the potential to inspire healthier eating habits, raise nutritional awareness and increase cooking confidence.

### Healthy Eating

*"Really healthy. It was well balanced.... it says on here that it's three and a half portions of your five-a-day"*

*"It's definitely a lot healthier than a lot of convenience meals out there"*

*"And there's no extra additives and preservatives... so that was good"*

### Health Awareness

*"More of like a mindful way of eating"*

*"...you've actually spent time cooking ... want to sit down and enjoy it for the food it is and not just something to fill you up quickly"*

*"You're bonding with the food cooking it"*

### Cooking Confidence

*"It means you don't have to have two or three pans going at the same time for someone who's not that confident"*

*"... rather than going out and buying ten different spices, I'd just maybe try it ... and then go and buy my own spices"*

*"It was a really simple process...it just makes you able to do it all really quickly and easily"*

### Time

*"It saves time with going to the supermarket and doing a shop as well ..."*

*"... people who are busy ... young professionals who maybe don't have time to ... go shopping"*

*"...there is the misconception that healthy food takes a lot longer to cook"*

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