



## Case Study: Promoting Well-being through Healthy Cooking Sessions at AMAT UK

### Introduction

AMAT UK, a dedicated charity focused on supporting homeless individuals, recently launched an initiative to promote healthy eating habits among its service users. With funding from the Community Health Catalyst Programme, the organisation hosted a series of healthy cooking sessions aimed at teaching participants how to create simple, nutritious, and cost-effective meals while fostering a sense of community.

### Objectives

The primary goals of the healthy cooking sessions were:

- To educate participants on preparing healthy and cost-effective meals.
- To provide a social activity that reduces isolation and promotes mental well-being.
- To distribute portions of cooked food to the local community, extending the benefits beyond the immediate participants.
- To improve participants' understanding of nutrition and its impact on health.
- To empower participants with skills that can lead to increased independence and self-sufficiency.

### Methodology

The initiative was conducted by AMAT UK at their facilities with a budget of £300 to purchase resources such as ingredients and containers. The sessions were conducted weekly, involving hands-on cooking classes led by an instructor. The sessions were designed to be interactive and educational, with each class focusing on different aspects of healthy cooking, from meal planning to nutrition education.

### Results

The healthy cooking sessions were highly successful, with notable outcomes:

- **Skill Development:** Participants learned various cooking techniques and recipes, enabling them to prepare healthy meals independently.
- **Social Benefits:** The sessions provided a valuable opportunity for social interaction, significantly reducing feelings of isolation among participants.

- **Community Help:** Participants distributed the food to approximately 7 people from the local community, offering a nutritious meal to people in need.
- **Mental Well-being:** Engaging in the cooking activities and being part of a group contributed positively to the participants' mental health.
- **Nutritional Awareness:** Participants gained a better understanding of how to make nutritious food choices.

## Participant Feedback

Feedback from the participants highlighted the program's positive impact:

- "It feels so good being out here doing something new and getting to meet new people. Staying at home gets me bored so being out here cooking means a lot."
- When asked if they would recommend the sessions, one participant responded, "Yes because you get to learn new skills and some people don't know how to cook so it's an opportunity for them as well."

## Evaluation by Organisation

AMAT UK evaluated the initiative as exceeding expectations. Key observations included:

- **Positive Engagement:** Service users not only enjoyed the sessions but also participated enthusiastically, with some returning each week.
- **Collaborative Effort:** The sessions evolved into a collaborative effort between the clients and the organizer, with participants contributing ideas for future cooking activities.
- **Relationship Building:** Initially quiet and reserved, the group eventually developed strong, supportive relationships, enhancing the overall experience.

## Future Opportunities

Building on the success of the healthy cooking sessions, AMAT UK plans to apply for additional funding to expand the program. Future objectives include:

- **Larger Venue:** Securing a bigger kitchen venue to accommodate more participants.
- **Extended Impact:** Increasing the amount of food prepared to benefit a larger portion of the local community.
- **Skill Expansion:** Introducing more advanced cooking techniques and nutritional education modules.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborating with local businesses and organizations (exp restaurants, food banks) to provide more resources and support.

## Conclusion

The healthy cooking sessions at AMAT UK have demonstrated the profound impact of community-based health and well-being programs. By teaching essential cooking skills, providing social interaction, and fostering a sense of community, the initiative has improved the lives of its participants. AMAT UK looks forward to expanding this successful program, continuing to support the homeless community through innovative and impactful activities.



