

It was through my internship under Dr Shobhana Nagraj that the opportunity for collaboration with Good Food Oxfordshire (GFO) arose. A key interest that drove me to get involved was the important connection between child nutrition and health- one cannot neglect the importance of local community health in contributions to global health. Hence, the work of GFO in promoting equitable healthy and affordable food access across Oxfordshire, in turn impacting community health, was something I definitely wanted to get involved in.

My internship was primarily centred around food and activity programmes available to children of lower socioeconomic background or deprived areas within Oxfordshire, how they were delivered (including food, nutritional education and activities), benefits and how these can be maximised. A particular focus was placed on community-centred projects, taking place in local community centres and youth clubs that were led by people living in the local community. A key example of these include Play:Full projects, which are distinguishable by their commitment to the Play: Full pledge, community-centred hubs and focus on non-stigmatisation of children on the programmes.

The work carried out for the project was quite varied in nature. One element involved was desk-based research on the local Play: Full projects and national schemes like HAF (Holiday Activity & Food Programme) using any available past project write-ups and government reports. Additionally, a large portion of my time was spent on visiting the different centres across Oxfordshire for the service evaluations. This meant I employed a range of my skills throughout: critical analysis for informing my background on the child holiday programmes and developing a specific Theory of Change for Play: Full; organisation for arranging all the visits to the centres; and communications skills to properly engage with the programme leads and find out more about the delivery of their projects and values.

Visiting the different centres gave me many great insights - a key one was the importance of action implementations at a community level to ensure high motivation and engagement with projects. This maximised the many beneficial impacts of the food and activity projects to the children. One of these, which I was repeatedly reminded of by visits to the different centres, was the guaranteed food provision to the children- for some children, their only guaranteed meal of the day. In addition to addressing such holiday hunger, the centres provided children with activities to engage with, key in the healthy development of children, as well as the opportunities to learn about food growing and healthy eating.

I noticed particular aspects of the community-led Play: Full projects that were very beneficial and enjoyed by the children. This included focus on the lack of stigmatisation with programme advertisement and sign-up and the importance placed on community relationship building. Not only did this encourage continued participation from involved families, but also teaching around food and healthy eating that was delivered in a community-relevant context. A key example of this took place in Banbury Mosque, where children on the holiday programme were taught about allotments and did their own crop growing, which specifically included coriander as it is a herb used very frequently in the local culture and would be used in the cooking at home. Activities like these, which are considerate of community culture and needs, help to improve the actionability behind the food education that is encouraged to be delivered in the programmes.

Overall, I learned that community-level food and activity holiday programmes are great examples of several of the actionable changes that can occur to influence health at a local level. I think that it remains of key importance to support the implementation of such activities in communities across England and more widespread to promote healthy and sufficient food access together with child health.