

M&S  
— FOOD —

sparkling  
change.

*The Challenge*

Impact report



In collaboration with



Registered Charity No. 1158700



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# Introduction

Throughout 2021 Hubbub and Marks & Spencer (M&S) teamed up to help M&S customers explore healthy and budget friendly diets that are also good for the planet. As part of the retailer's [Plan A](#) commitment to become a Scope 3 net zero business by 2040, M&S is supporting customers to live and enjoy lower carbon lives by providing solutions and highlighting the simple steps that can be taken today to protect the planet for tomorrow.

Hubbub is an award-winning charity with a proven record in creating effective, evidence-based campaigns that inspire people to make choices that are good for them and the environment.

In principle, changing how we eat is one of the simplest actions we can take to reduce our environmental impact. From eating everything we buy, to choosing less and better meat there are opportunities for change at every meal. However, whilst there has been a surge in discussion on sustainable diets in recent years, we know that making healthier and more sustainable choices about food can be confusing and difficult for the public to navigate. And our diets are influenced by complex social, economic and cultural factors too.

Hubbub's food team creates engaging and thought-provoking campaigns exploring sustainable diets and food waste. These include the Community Fridge Network which supports communities to exchange surplus food, Meat Your Match, an in-depth challenge which supported gym going men to halve their meat consumption, and Norfolk and Suffolk's seven-year food waste reduction initiative Food Savvy.

Hubbub's shared ambitions with M&S resulted in Sparking Change: The Challenge - a sustainable diets pilot grounded in behaviour change theory with 92 M&S customer and colleague households.

The pilot had four themes:

Protein from plants

Cutting food waste

Cooking from scratch

Sustainable living beyond the kitchen

Over a nine-week period in 2021, participant households were provided with a range of expert advice, tips and support across the four themes. We then challenged them to put their knowledge into practice.

# Significant change

The pilot helped participants to make some big changes in the kitchen and beyond. Three months after the final challenge, we asked them which new habits they had kept. Here is what they told us.



**90%** were eating less meat.



**75%** were eating more food in season.



**90%** were wasting less food.



**73%** had more sustainable homes.



**73%** were cooking from scratch more.



**70%** were feeling healthier.

# Approach

Hubbub used a tried-and-tested approach grounded in behaviour change theory to design an engaging digital campaign.

## Digital community

A closed Facebook group fostered a sense of community, where participants could try new things together, offer peer-to-peer tips and inspiration, and receive expert advice from Hubbub and M&S teams.

## Flexible and accessible

Our format offered flexibility so that participants could take part in activities live or catch up at their convenience.

## We shared the benefits

The potential to save money, learn new skills and feel healthier – were highlighted alongside the environmental impact of sustainable diets.

## Learn, digest, do!

Learning was reinforced by delivering each theme in two stages. First, we shared expert but simple information using a range of formats from specialist sessions to digital tip sheets. Participants told us that they particularly valued this approach. It gave them the opportunity to learn and digest new information and skills before trying them out and putting things into practice.

## Healthy competition

In the second week of each theme, we set a flexible challenge, providing an enjoyable way for participants to put their learning into practice and take part in some healthy competition.

## Incentives

We awarded spot prizes to motivate and incentivise participants. M&S provided product hampers for the participants to use in themed 'cook-alongs'. All participants also received a voucher incentive to sign up and to thank them for their participation.



# Measuring impact

## Who took part?

The participant cohort was made up of 77 M&S customers and 15 M&S colleagues representing a range of demographics, attitudes and understanding on sustainability issues. Participants were selected from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. M&S colleagues took part in the same way as customers. The customer cohort was made up of 48 households with children, 17 households without children and 12 retired households.

## Academic partnership

Our methodology to capture the impact of the pilot has been developed and delivered in partnership with Joanna Trewern, a PhD researcher focused on sustainable diets at the University of Surrey.

## Capturing impact

We carried out an in-depth baseline survey with each participant household to explore their shopping, eating, cooking and broader sustainability habits. The survey helped us to understand the cohort's skills and knowledge as well as their barriers and motivators to make changes. It helped us design a campaign that met most people where they are on sustainability issues.

The pilot was followed by an end of challenge survey to capture an early indication of the changes people had made. This was completed by all 92 participants.

Twelve weeks on we conducted a survey to discover the changes that people had made and continued with. This was completed by 68 participants (74%). The impact shown in this report is from this in comparison with the baseline survey.

## Participant's stories

We built in opportunities to gather qualitative insight from the cohort throughout the campaign. We also hosted a series of focus groups after the pilot phase to dig deeper into some of the key survey insights.



# Protein from plants



We equipped the group with practical information on eating more plant protein and invited participants to a live session with a nutritionist and a plant-based chef cook-along.

We shared easy and appealing plant-based recipes which participants told us helped them to reduce their meat consumption. An M&S nutritionist provided tips to substitute in plant-based proteins such as beans and pulses for meat in popular dishes. Participants told us that simple switches such as oat for dairy milk helped make change easier.

We then challenged participants to cut their meat consumption and eat more vegetables, fruit, pulses, nuts, seeds and wholegrains. 75% of participants opted to reduce their meat consumption rather than going fully plant-based for the challenge. This may suggest that the group saw a reduction in meat as more achievable in the future than going meat free.

“ When I took on the challenge to halve my meat and dairy I was trying to think about the longer-term. I probably could have cut meat out for a week but then I knew I'd revert straight back to eating the same amount as before. ”

Megan Price, Sparking Change participant, Widnes



## What did we find?

The pilot helped participants to eat less meat and more plant-based food. Three months after the final challenge, most said that they were eating meat just once or twice a week compared to three or four days a week before taking part.

90% were eating less meat.



75% of participants who reported eating less meat said they felt healthier.



34% increase in people 'very' or 'extremely' likely to buy plant-based meat alternatives.



84% were eating more vegetables, fruit, pulses, nuts, seeds and wholegrains.



81% said they knew what makes up a healthy balanced diet compared to 26% before.

## Participant spotlight



### *The 'committed' carnivore*

Damien Cutting lives in Sale. He's married with two primary school aged children.

As a self described 'committed carnivore' Damien was keen to reduce his meat consumption for both his health and the environment.

“ I used to think that plant-based food doesn't fill you up. During the challenge I was concerned when we started to make the vegetable curry whether it would be substantial enough, but it really was. I fed the family and had some leftover for another day. I found that it's a more affordable way to eat.

After five days of the challenge I started to feel the health benefits and think I even lost some weight.

We now plan to eat less meat and more plant-based food going forward. It's not for the challenge now. It's a positive and healthy step for me and my family.

”

## Simple swaps

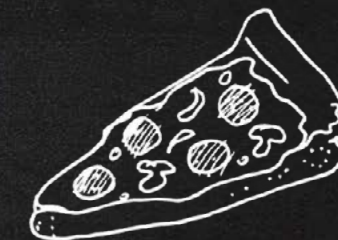
Participants received a product hamper including plant-based products to try. '77% of participants thought the M&S Oat Drink was 'good' or 'amazing'.

“ It gave me the chance to try things I wouldn't normally try. I really like the Plant Kitchen Oat Drink, it's my go to milk now.

”

Philip Bell, Sparking Change participant, London

## Cutting food waste



We equipped the group with practical information to help them plan their meals and to eat everything they buy. We invited them to a zero-waste chef cook-along which focused on some of the most wasted food items.

Participants were sent a meal planner. We provided them with expert tips to build their knowledge about how to store food correctly and how to portion their food to reduce waste.

We gave them recipes and ideas for how to use up leftovers. Participants took this inspiration and knowledge into a challenge week to put their learning into practice.

“ A challenge for us was to reduce food waste as much as possible. It gave us the opportunity to use a range of ingredients. Rather than chucking things away, we started freezing or refrigerating them and using them in different ways.

”

Nimai, Sparking Change participant, London



# What did we find?

The pilot helped participants change their behaviours to bring their food waste right down. Three months on from the final challenge:



**39%** saved money on groceries – an average of £22 per week.



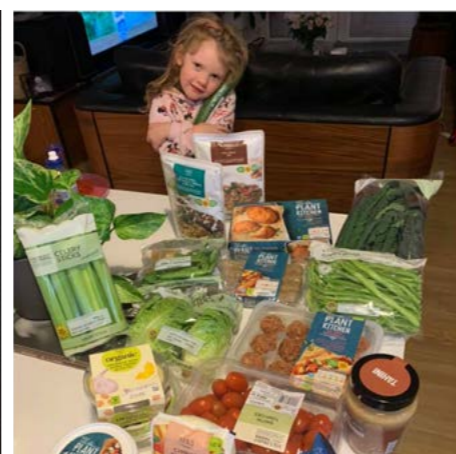
**90%** were wasting less food.



**62%** increase in people 'very' or 'extremely' confident in using leftovers to create new meals.



**52%** increase in people 'very' or 'extremely' confident in storing food to make it last longer.



# Participant spotlight



*Getting creative with leftovers*

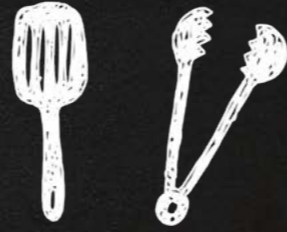
Celine Islam lives in Hertfordshire with her husband and three children. Before the challenge Celine's family weren't big on planning their meals and often shopped when they were hungry.

“ To start off our challenge, we sorted out our food cupboard and planned meals around what we already had in. We then challenged ourselves to only buy fresh ingredients that we knew we needed. We wasted much less and only spent £25 to feed five for a whole week. This was a huge saving based on what we would normally spend.”

My top tip for anyone looking to reduce their food waste would be to ensure that they freeze leftovers and are creative in finding out how to use them up. ”



# Cooking from scratch



We equipped participants to build up their cooking skills and knowledge to prepare more meals from scratch with fresh seasonal ingredients. We invited participants to a scratch cook-along with top chef Chris Baber.

We sent expert tips to help participants sharpen their scratch cooking skills. The group learnt what essential ingredients can be used across a range of home-made meals.

We provided advice to help them prepare dinner in an organised 'chef-like' way. We screened videos on kitchen skills (for example knife skills). We gave participants recipes and then they got involved in a scratch cooking challenge.

Families with children took part in a seasonal food art challenge and a virtual tour of an M&S Select Farm who grow all of M&S's British asparagus.

Some parents were surprised that their children were so open and willing to try new foods.

“ We didn't think the kids would go for the cook-along. We thought we'd be making the veggie curry and only the two of us would eat it. But the kids really couldn't get enough, so it's opened their eyes to new foods as well. ”

Ross Turnock, Sparking Change participant, Yorkshire and the Humber

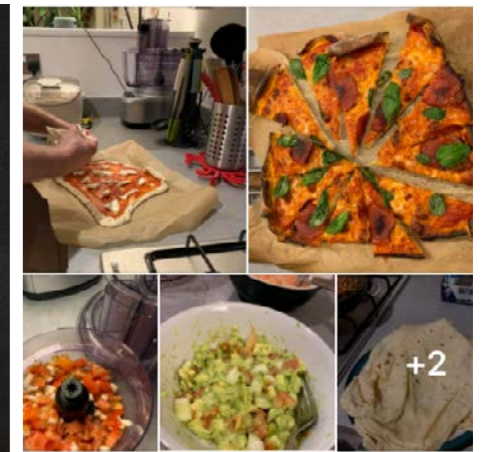


## What did we find?

The pilot helped participants to cook more meals from scratch using seasonal ingredients. Three months on, over three quarters of participants said they were cooking from scratch at least five or six days a week.



**73%** were cooking from scratch more.



**80%** who cook from scratch more said they felt healthier.



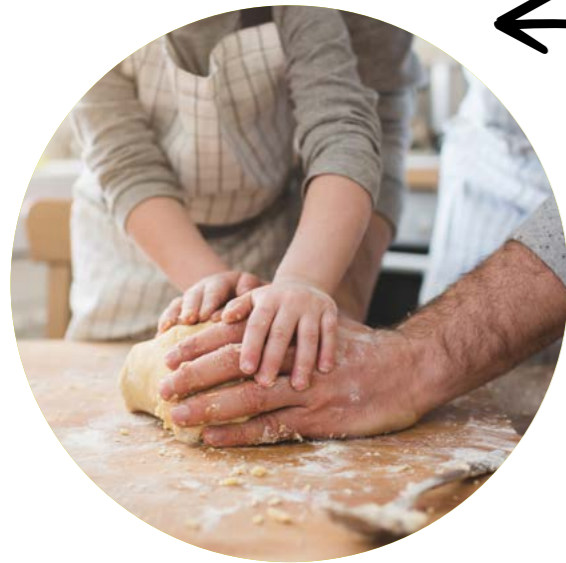
**90%** who cook from scratch more reduced their meat consumption and **96%** waste less food.



**75%** were eating more food in season.



## Participant spotlight



*Our evening meal is now an event*

Tony Hughes lives in Rochdale. He's married with a nine-year-old son. He's from a family of bakers. He used to bake and cook regularly but over the years he lost his spark in the kitchen, but the challenge helped him get it back.

“ My wife, son and I are now planning, cooking and eating together. This has been a big change since getting involved. Our evening meal is now an event rather than us just feeding ourselves. My son now asks what we're cooking for tea, not just what we're having for tea.”

He loves to bake with me, we've made everything from hot cross buns to gingerbread. I used to just be his dad, but now I'm his friend as well. ”

## Scratch cooking ingredients

Participants received a product hamper to help them cook more from scratch including pastes and sauces from the M&S Cook With range and new season M&S Select Farm British produce.

“ When I saw the rhubarb in the hamper, my first feeling was dread. However, since the challenge was to cook dishes we haven't before, I decided to go for it. I created rhubarb muffins and was very pleasantly surprised by the end result. ”

Danielle Elliot, Sparking Change participant, Guildford

# Sustainable living beyond the kitchen



We equipped participants with everything they needed to know to make their whole home more sustainable. We provided participants with expert tips on everything from more eco-friendly cleaning to creating more nature friendly outdoor spaces. We invited participants to a Facebook Live with a sustainable living expert, then set the challenge for participants to give an area of their home a sustainability makeover.

Participants started growing herbs and salad and some gave their wardrobes a sustainability makeover. Participants created their own natural cleaning products and made simple swaps to the M&S eco-friendly range.

“ I didn't really buy any eco-friendly cleaning products, and now I pretty much buy them routinely so that's definitely a big change and I'm set to continue to do that. ”

Steven Miller, Sparking Change participant, Yorkshire and the Humber



# What did we find?

The pilot helped participants to make their homes more sustainable. Three months on, they said they were now more likely to buy environmentally friendly cleaning products, more sustainable clothes and grow their own food.



**73%** had a more sustainable home.



**68%** increase in people 'very' or 'extremely' likely to buy environmentally friendly products.



**84%** increase in people 'very' or 'extremely' likely to buy more sustainable clothes.



**94%** increase in people 'very' or 'extremely' likely to grow their own food.



# Participant spotlight



*Getting married in sustainable style!*

Gemma Davis lives in Gloucestershire with her two children and husband. She got married during the challenge. Gemma took inspiration to look fabulous, do her bit for the environment and save a few pounds. She found a beautiful wedding dress for free from Facebook Market Place.

“ After picking up the dress, I hand washed it very carefully in the bath and dried it across two drying racks. I also managed to get a second-hand clothes steamer, so the dress came up a treat.

Wearing a second-hand dress was a great way for me to do my bit for the environment on my wedding day. It saved me a lot of money which I can now spend on a wedding party. I'm even talking to one of the other Sparking Change participants about her daughter's wedding and whether my perfect dress could be her perfect dress too.

”

## Simple swaps

Participants received M&S Eco Friendly Non-Bio Laundry Liquid to try.

“ The environmentally friendly laundry liquid was amazing. It made good bubbles, smelt amazing. A little went a long way. I would buy this again.

”

Jodie Dawe, Sparking Change participant, Colwyn Bay

# Kids in the kitchen and beyond



# Sparking change for every M&S customer

Families with children at home made up the largest segment of pilot participants. Parents and children learnt together to make healthy and sustainable choices in the kitchen and in all areas of their homes. We saw families spending time together, having fun and taking on challenges.

Before the pilot 69% of participants told us that they enjoy cooking for their family. This was one of their biggest motivations to want to cook from scratch more. But Sparking Change wasn't just about parents enjoying cooking for their families more. It was also about getting the whole family cooking and eating together.

After the challenge period, 76% of participants with children told us that their children are more likely to get involved in cooking.

We provided families with all the information they needed to help them make healthy choices for them and their children. We invited participants to an expert session with an M&S nutritionist and sent them a digital tips sheet covering what a healthy more plant-based diet looks like. 69% of participants whose children eat meat told us that their children now eat less.

Children and their parents got involved in cook-alongs with chefs, grew herbs and salad and enjoyed getting a product hamper to try out.

“ Receiving the hamper with lots of products to try helped get my children excited about the chef cook-along. ”

Hazel Dixon, Sparking Change participant, London



At M&S we want to make sustainability easier and more rewarding for our customers. As part of our [Plan A](#) approach to becoming a fully net zero business by 2040, we are investing in new products and services to help and inspire customers to Spark Change and enjoy lower carbon lives.

Sustainability is something that we know our customers care deeply about and using the encouraging results and insights garnered from this collaboration with Hubbub we have created Sparking Change: The National Challenge. Launching in January and spanning two months, we're helping our 13.5 million Sparks customers to eat and live more sustainably one small change at a time.

Kicking off with Protein from Plants, participants will be provided with recipes, tips and inspiration to help double the quantity of plants in their diet whilst eating less and better meat and dairy. Then, it's all about More Taste, Less Waste, with a series of tools available to help those embracing the Challenge reduce their food waste and weekly shopping bill.

To find out more and join the Challenge please visit [Sparking Change: The National Challenge](#).



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