

# Southwark Good Food Retail and Wholesale project

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# Southwark GFRP seeks to increase the availability of healthier food, and contribute to a more sustainable, affordable and accessible food system.

## WHAT DID WE DO?

- Offered expert advice and support to 35 local convenience store retailers, helping identify and stock healthier foods, and minimise the risks attached to making the move to healthier lines
- Developed a 100 Healthier Lines Framework from which tailored recommendations were made on which healthier products each retailer should stock.
- Worked with wholesaler Bestway to increase the proportion of its sales from healthier ranges to local convenience stores by making simple, practical changes to the positioning, promotion and pricing of healthier products.
- Secured support from food suppliers to ensure healthier products were readily available to wholesalers and independent retailers and facilitating collaboration with wholesalers on promotion of healthy lines.

# Southwark has been an ambassador borough and pioneered this work, bringing together both Local Economy and Public Health teams

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- **Impact on Urban Health** - an independent urban health foundation that takes a place-based approach to tackling urban health issues.
- **Rice Marketing** - is a retail marketing specialist agency who engages with convenience store owners, their wholesalers and suppliers to bring about effective change.
- **Southwark Council** - priority is to ensure that all residents have access to healthy, affordable food in the borough.
- **Bestway Wholesale** - the largest independent wholesaler in the UK. It supplies core groceries, including fresh produce, snacking and impulse categories to independent convenience store retailers
- **35 Good Food Retail Convenience Stores** located across Camberwell, Walworth, Bermondsey, Peckham, and Rotherhithe

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## PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- Working on this since 2019 thanks to the Good Food Retail Fund from Sustain and the GLA, and funding from Impact on Urban Health
- Southwark Council have been an ambassador borough and have pioneered this work in London bringing together Public Health and Local Economy teams through the High Street Recovery Fund
- Bestway and their suppliers have been working with us to establish their healthier range, with the creation of a Top 100 healthier range, depot trade days and regular healthier range promotions
- We have built an engaged network of retailers in Southwark who have listened to our advice and taken risks to develop their healthier product range in store



# Convenience stores are an important asset within low income areas, but they need support in order to start selling healthier products

## KEY LEARNING

- Customers rely on convenience stores, especially in low-income areas
- Convenience retailers in low-income areas stock fewer healthier options than their supermarket counterparts as there is a perceived risk
- If convenience retailers stock healthier products, they will sell
- Wholesalers are low-margin businesses so new projects need focus to succeed



# Wholesalers have the ability to influence the buying habits of stores, and expert support and collaboration were key to the success of this project

## KEY LEARNING

- When wholesalers provide healthier products in high profile traffic locations supported by their suppliers to offer price marked packs, attractive margins and compelling promotions, sales uplifts are significant
- Suppliers are investing in new products and product reformulations, driven by HFSS and are eager to work with wholesalers
- Local government support for the project helped secure store owners buy-in
- Expert support and collaboration were key to the success of this project and to overcoming barriers



# Convenience stores and wholesalers have seen sales of healthier products and wish to maintain engagement and momentum

## OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

- Average 22% increase in availability of healthier options on shelf
- All retailers indicated that they intended to keep these products on shelf, and many said they would further grow their healthier range
- Wholesaler Bestway reported a nine-fold increase in sales of featured healthier lines during their trade day event in Lewisham. The event was supported by 13 key suppliers
- Bestway have introduced a national healthier promotion that runs throughout the year
- Supported the promotion and use of Healthy Start
- Demonstrates that convenience stores can be part of a strategic plan to improve access to healthier food in low-income areas





# Phase 2 will expand the number of stores engaged, and focus on culturally appropriate foods, as well as increased sustainability of products and the Southwark project

## NEXT STEPS

- Increase the number of stores that are part of GFRP, raising the profile of the project
- Develop the partnership with Bestway to scale the project nationally
- Validate the Top 100 tool using Kantar data, focusing more on culturally appropriate and foods with lower environmental impact, as well as those aimed at children
- Continue to embed evaluation into the core of the project, demonstrating customer use and buying patterns
- Further consider the sustainability of the project, capturing the learning and expertise gained, e.g. by developing an accreditation and training tool



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## WHY GOOD FOOD RETAIL?

- Can support the closing of the gap between sales of healthier options in multiples and in independent convenience stores, thus supporting the local economy
- It provides wholesalers with a framework to make the change without the prompt of legislation
- It is a strategic fit with many council priorities
- Can have a positive impact on community health and wellbeing

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