

Putting health at the heart of convenience

Impact on **Urban Health**



Lessons from the Good Food Retail and Wholesale pilot



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Executive summary

About the Good Food Wholesale and Retail Pilot

The Good Food Wholesale and Retail Pilot was set up to improve access to healthier food options in the London Borough of Southwark, by increasing the range of healthier products sold in the borough's local convenience stores. The project was co-funded by Impact on Urban Health and Southwark Council and delivered by Rice Marketing – a marketing agency specialising in local retail.

Why are we doing this?

Access to healthy food in the UK is incredibly unequal. Our chances of accessing healthy food at an affordable price depends on where we live. Many urban areas with a high proportion of families living on a lower average income, like Southwark, are flooded with unhealthy food options. As a result, children living in these places are more likely to be both malnourished and obese.

The food industry needs to come together to address this issue. We believe it has a collective responsibility to help consumers, particularly those living on low incomes in cities, by providing healthier, affordable options where they shop. For many families living on low incomes, the only available option is to shop in a local convenience store, far more so than for their wealthier

counterparts. However, often these stores stock fewer healthier options.

The drive to increase the range of healthier products available in convenience stores has become even more vital over the last two years. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen these stores become more important in communities as more people shop local, demonstrated by sustained increased sales since 2020. The current cost-of-living crisis means that families, now more than ever, need access to affordable healthy options. Without action to ensure healthier products are available and sold at either the same price or cheaper than unhealthy alternatives, people, particularly those living on a low income, will be pushed towards the unhealthy food and drink that floods many urban communities and contributes to health inequalities.



Supporting and encouraging the food industry to work together to meet this need will not only have the greatest impact on health but can also support increased retail sales.

This report shares insights gathered during pilot activity which ran from January 2021 to April 2022, building on lessons learned from a 2020 small-scale pilot¹. The project brought together food industry retailers, wholesalers and suppliers.

Activity included:

- Offering expert advice and support to 35 local convenience store retailers to help them to identify and stock healthier foods, to minimise the risks attached to making the move to healthier lines and to demonstrate the commercial case for change.
- The development of a 100 Healthier Lines Framework from which tailored recommendations were made on which healthier products each retailer should stock.
- Working 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.
- Securing 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.

¹ Further details of the 2020 pilot can be found in the Impact on Urban Health report [Engaging with wholesalers and convenience stores to drive uptake of healthier options](#).



Key findings

If convenience stores stock healthier products, they will sell

- Stores taking part in the pilot reported the new healthier products sold, sometimes much better than expected.
- An independent evaluation showed retailers **increased the availability of healthier options on the shelf by an average of 22%**. This equates to between eight and nine new products available per store.
- All retailers indicated they intended to keep these products on the shelf and further grow their healthier ranges, demonstrating the value these products have brought to their businesses.
- Wholesaler Bestway reported a nine-fold increase in sales of featured healthier lines during its in-depot event in Lewisham. This example will be used to encourage suppliers to participate in future healthy line campaigns and promotions.

Expert support and collaboration can overcome barriers to stocking healthier products

- Convenience store owners will stock healthier options if supported to do so by expert, objective advice and practical measures including good availability in wholesale depots, price-marked packs and good margins.
- Local government support for the project helped secure store owners' buy-in, as the involvement of Southwark Council added legitimacy to the pilot.
- Collaboration between wholesaler and suppliers ensured healthier products were available in depots and successfully promoted to store owners.
- Wholesalers will welcome expert external resource to lead the development of a health strategy, as their lean internal teams are focused on managing multiple market challenges.
- Suppliers will invest in marketing healthier products when supported by wholesalers to achieve better distribution for their products.
- It's vital that wholesalers, retailers, and suppliers are aligned on making healthy options more available.

Recommendations

Insight gathered during this pilot helps to build an even stronger case for wholesalers and suppliers to put health at the heart of their business. It provides the food industry with a successful example of how a customer strategy focused on health can complement and grow core business, as well as benefiting consumers and communities.

If you are a wholesaler business, you can contact us for help in creating and delivering your own health strategy, as Bestway has done. Resource is available to help time-poor wholesalers embed the 100 Healthier Lines Framework into their business-as-usual activity.

Our call to industry and government

We call upon wholesalers, suppliers and manufacturers to put health at the heart of your strategies to ensure healthier options are as, if not more, affordable as unhealthy products. We ask industry bodies to help make this case and promote the actions your member stores can

take to increase their proportion of healthy sales. Local authorities can support by incentivising convenience stores to stock healthier products. Lastly, we ask policymakers to support a new fiscal measure that incentivises manufacturers to make their food product recipes healthier.





The partners

Impact on Urban Health

Impact on Urban Health is an independent urban health foundation. Working in partnership with others, it takes a place-based approach to tackling urban health issues in the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark, sharing what it learns with other cities around the world. Impact on Urban Health takes a programmatic approach, focusing on a small range of big issues. Its childhood obesity programme aims to tackle the inequality that exists for children and families in accessing nutritious diets, by making healthier food options accessible and affordable to all families in the places where they live and spend their time.



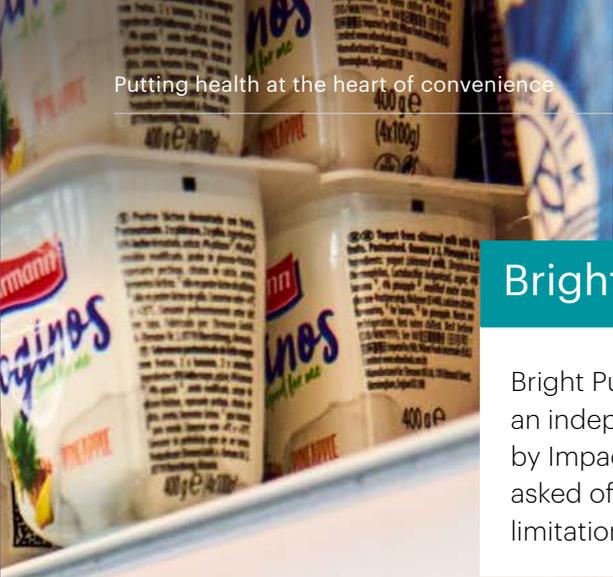
Southwark Council

Southwark Council's priority is to ensure that all residents have access to healthy, affordable food in the borough. The Good Food Wholesale and Retail pilot is one of several initiatives the council supports designed to achieve this goal. Southwark is one of the first boroughs to have a food strategy as part of the Health and Wellbeing Plan, launched in 2021. The council recognises convenience stores as an important part of the borough's diverse food system and set the framework for the project by identifying five wards from which Rice Marketing identified convenience stores to approach.



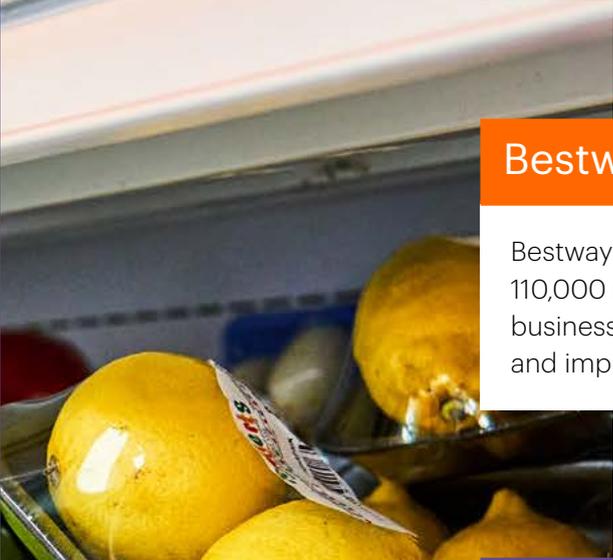
Rice Marketing

Rice Marketing is a marketing agency specialising in local retail which provides marketing consultancy to a range of independent food retail and wholesale businesses. The agency has been involved in several London Food Strategy implementation projects and works with Sustain's London Food Link network on the Good Food Retail project, improving access to healthy and affordable food for communities.



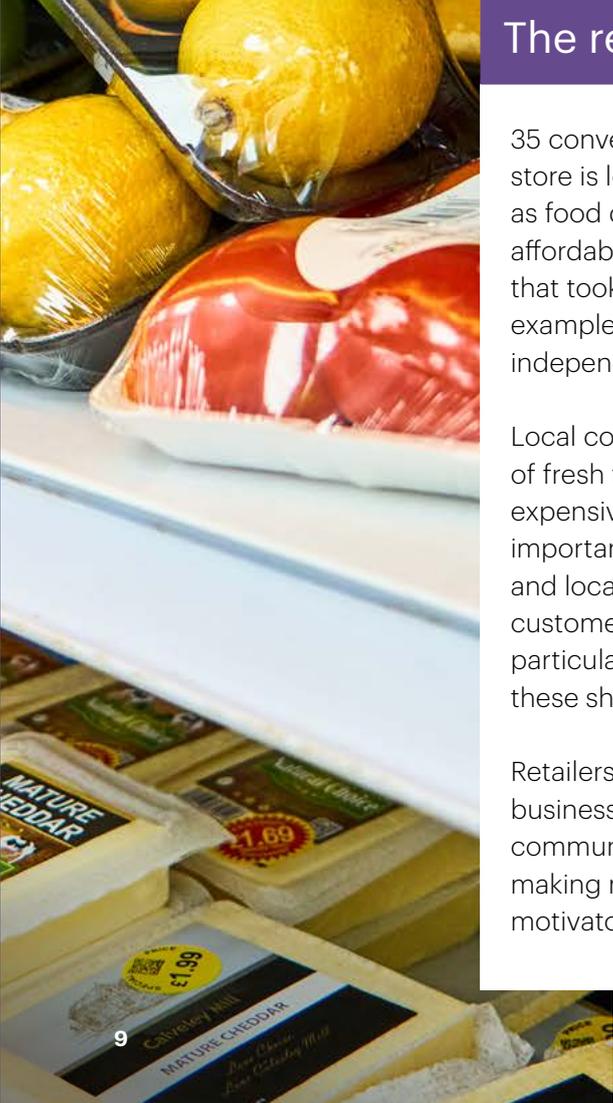
Bright Purpose

Bright Purpose specialises in evaluation and research and provided an independent practical evaluation of the project, commissioned by Impact on Urban Health. See [Appendix A](#) for details of questions asked of participating retailers and wholesalers, methodology and limitations.



Bestway

Bestway is the largest independent wholesaler in the UK. It supplies 110,000 retailers and caterers from 57 depots throughout the UK. The business supplies core groceries, including fresh produce, snacking and impulse categories to independent convenience store retailers.



The retailers

35 convenience stores participated in and completed the pilot. Each store is located in one of five wards classed by Southwark Council as food deserts – areas where there is limited access to healthy, affordable food options within a short walk from home. Of the stores that took part in the pilot, nine are affiliated to a Symbol group, for example Booker Premier, Nisa and Costcutter, and 27 are completely independent.

Local convenience stores tend to be small, stock a limited range of fresh foods and produce and are typically around 10-20% more expensive than supermarkets. The pandemic highlighted the importance of local shops to local communities. Sales grew by 10% and local shops not only attracted new customers, but saw existing customers increase their basket spend. Convenience stores are particularly important to families living on a low income who rely on these shops for their everyday shopping.

Retailers who own convenience stores need to run profitable businesses to survive but often also possess a strong sense of community. Helping their customers and the wider community by making more healthier options accessible and affordable was a strong motivator for retailer involvement in the pilot.

What we did

Creation of 100 Healthier Lines Framework

A key element of the pilot activity, which underpinned work with retailers, wholesalers and suppliers, was the development of the 100 Healthier Lines Framework. The framework is designed to highlight healthier alternatives and to help wholesalers and retailers, of all sizes and in any location, to identify healthier options when making stock decisions. It was restricted to 100 lines to allow for effective communication and implementation.

Rice Marketing worked with Bestway to identify 100 bestselling products that were lower in salt, sugar and fat across all key categories stocked in convenience stores. Age-restricted products, including zero sugar energy drinks, alcohol and caffeine, were excluded. They also identified emerging categories where the wholesaler had yet to build meaningful sales, including plant milks, vegetarian products and speciality breads. This range became known as the Healthier Options range.

The framework development was also informed by the:

- Healthier Eating category criteria from Change4Life
- Greenwich Healthy basket: 39 lines identified as being key to families cooking healthily and cheaply at home
- Healthy Range criteria as described by the Greater London Authority Healthy Catering Commitment scheme
- The Full Time Meals campaign, led by Marcus Rashford and Tom Kerridge.

Engaging and supporting retailers

Recruitment

41 suitable stores located in food deserts across Southwark were successfully recruited by Rice Marketing to participate in the pilot. 35 stores completed the pilot, with the others withdrawing due to a change of circumstances, such as a change in ownership.

The stores were a mix of:



High Street convenience stores are situated in high-footfall areas with stronger competition from multiple supermarkets. These retailers welcome the advice as they are trading in a competitive market.



Neighbourhood convenience stores are situated in residential areas serving a tight-knit catchment with little local competition. It takes longer to engage with these retailers to make changes as they do not see the need to innovate.



Ambassador stores are found in both High Street and neighbourhood areas as they are a destination. These are larger stores with a considerable fresh food offer run by store managers who are willing to engage with the advice given.

29 of the participating stores were generalist stores



29 of the stores used one or more of the big three local wholesalers (Bestway, Brooker, Dhamecha).

Six were specialist stores catering to the Turkish, Afro-Caribbean and Ghanaian communities

Turkish stores (4)



Afro-Caribbean stores (1)



Ghanaian stores (1)



Development of action plans

Once retailers had agreed to participate, Rice Marketing worked with each store to develop an action plan. This outlined a list of healthier product recommendations for the retailer to consider stocking during the pilot, drawn from the 100 Healthier Lines Framework. The number and range of products on each action plan was tailored to the retailer's confidence and ambition, as well as the store size, location and mission.

The action plans focused on increasing the retailers' healthier stock of crisps and snacks, snacking, confectionary, chilled food and groceries². These were high opportunity categories, as stores at the time offered few or no healthier options, and were also relatively low risk, based on Rice Marketing's sector insights. Less confident retailers were encouraged to start with lower risk categories such as crisps and snacks and to buy small volumes as a test. They were also advised on location and presentation in store. See [Appendix C](#) for more details on the most common products listed in retailers' action plans.



Ongoing support and engagement

Throughout the pilot, Rice Marketing worked closely with each retailer, offering expert support and advice and demonstrating the value of what was on offer, to the business and to the store's customers. The bespoke action plans created for each store were shared with retailers through WhatsApp for easy reference when restocking at the wholesaler. Regular phone calls were made to check in on progress, offer extra support and to prompt the move to stocking additional healthier options. At the end of the pilot period Rice Marketing visited or called each store to collect data on what was stocked and how sales had performed.



² The crisps and snacks category covers potato crisp bags, tortilla chips and cereal snacks including Wotsits. The snacking category covers all other on the go cereal bars, Graze pots and natural nuts.

Product ranges stocked before and during the pilot

On average, the participating convenience stores were already stocking **45% of the products in the 100 Healthier Lines Framework**.

Figure 1

Most stores were already stocking between 31 and 50 products in the 100 Healthier Lines Framework.

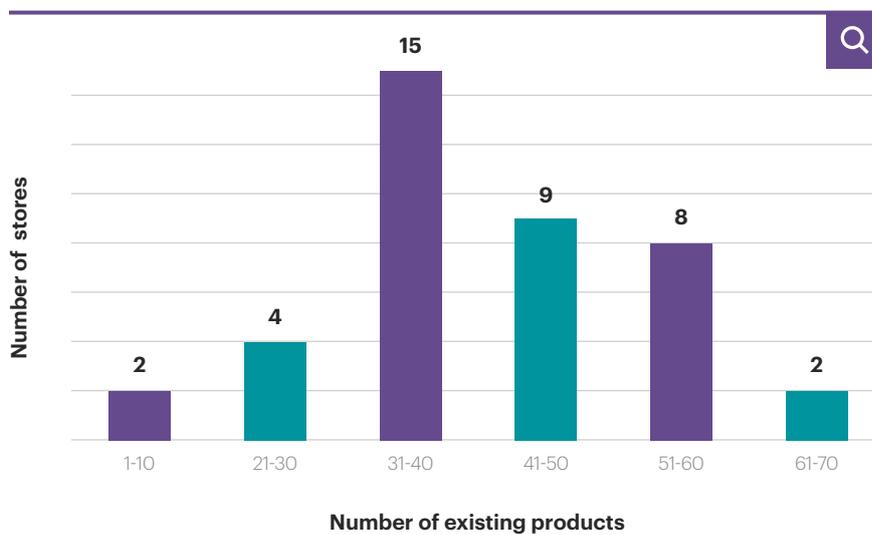
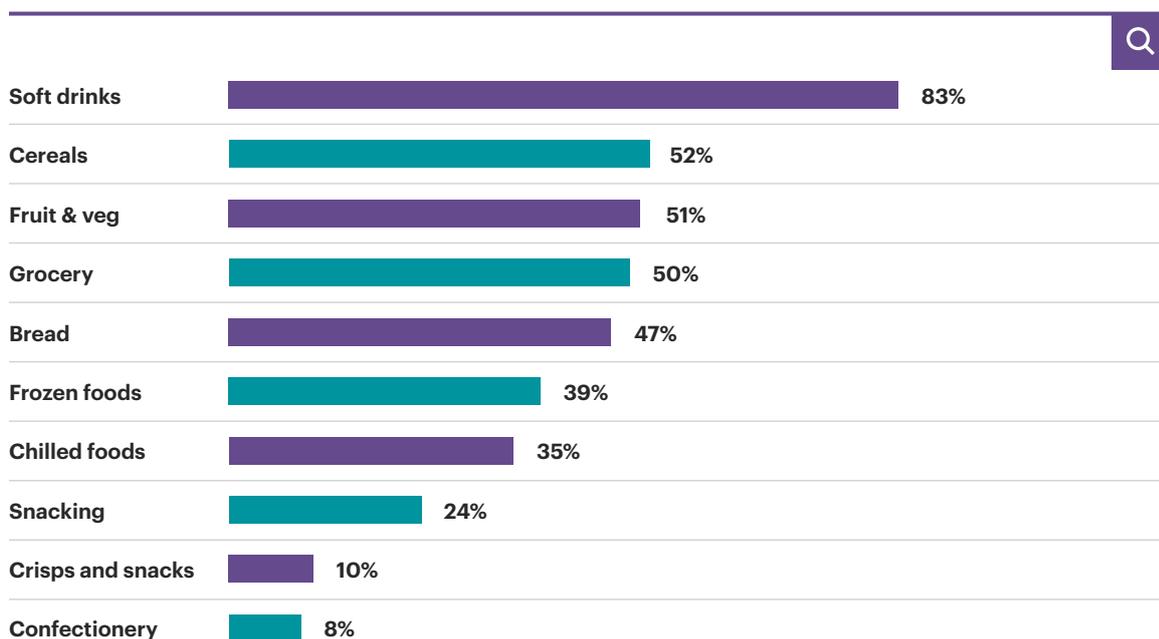


Figure 2

The most heavily stocked products before the pilot were in the 'Soft drinks' and 'Cereals' categories.



On average, retailers already stocked 17 of the 20 soft drink options from the 100 Healthier Lines Framework per store, compared with one of the 11 crisps and snacks options. The fact that soft drinks was the most successful category, with 83% of healthier options stocked, is due in no small part to the soft drinks industry levy which has had a significant impact in smaller stores in low-income areas. Coca Cola has driven the distribution of zero

options through a targeted strategy into wholesale, supported by good margins and a cheaper retail price than the standard variant.

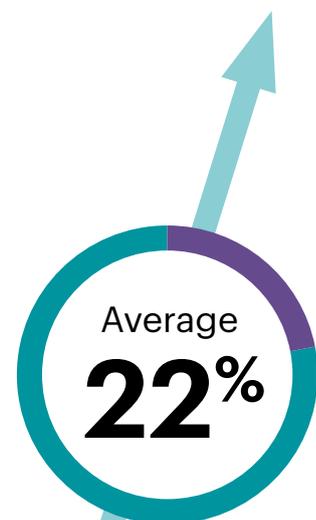
All 35 retailers who actively participated in the pilot increased their range of healthier products. Three of those retailers also moved healthier products to more prominent locations in store.

On average, each store stocked an additional nine healthier options as a result of the trial.

Table 1

Number of new healthier products stocked by stores.

Healthier options stocked	Number of stores
1-5	12
6-10	14
11-15	4
16-20	4
>20	1
Total	35

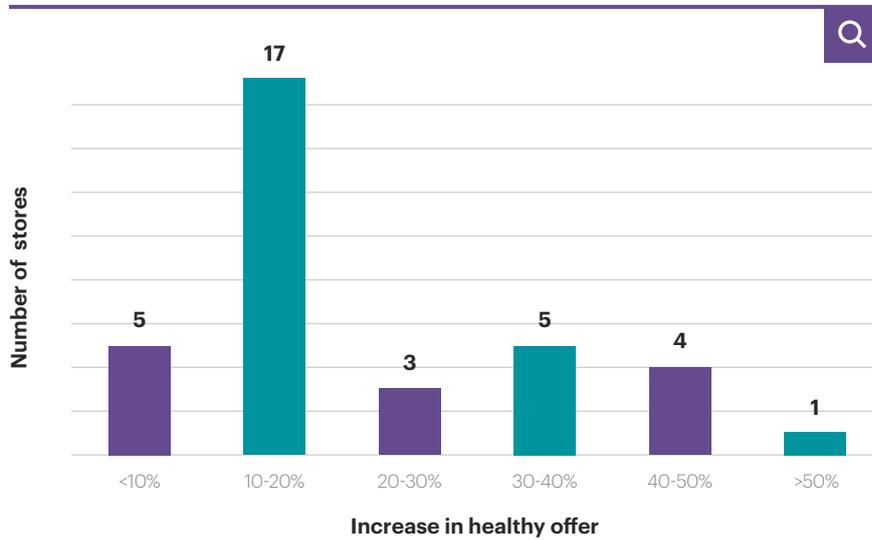


These new products represent an **average 22% increase in retailers' healthier offers**, ranging from 4% (where the store already had an extensive healthier option offering) to 73% (where the store added 33 new healthier products as part of the pilot), as shown in the figure below.

increase in retailers' healthier offers

Figure 3

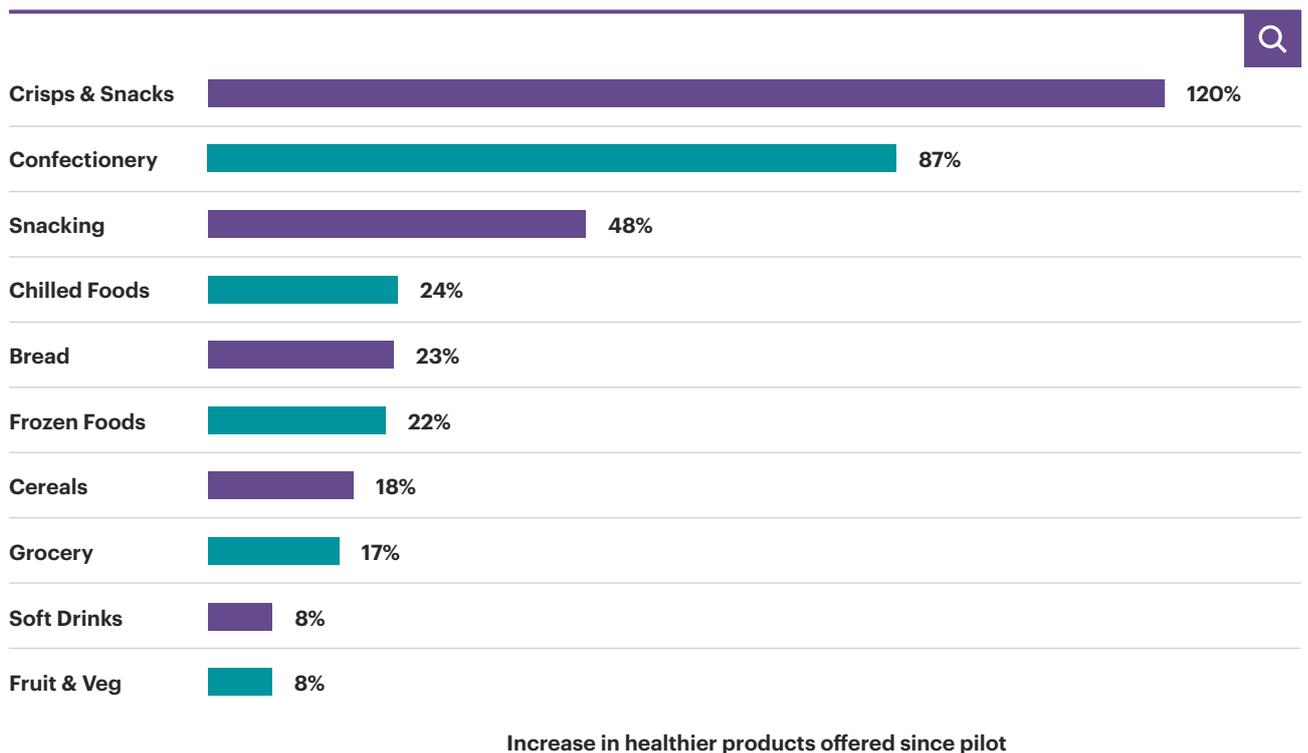
Almost half of stores stocked between 10 and 20% more healthier products by the end of the pilot.



The biggest changes in healthier product availability were in the crisps and snacks and confectionery categories, which had the lowest representation before the pilot.

Figure 4

The pilot made the biggest proportional difference in the 'Crisps & Snacks' and 'Confectionery' categories.



The most common products that were introduced are shown in the table below.

Table 2

Top 10 items introduced into stores as a result of the pilot.

Product	Category	Number of stores who added it during pilot	Total stores now stocking
Transform-a-Snacks	Crisps & snacks	16	16
Baked Wotsits	Crisps & snacks	14	14
Eat Natural bars	Snacking	12	16
Werthers Original sugar free	Confectionery	11	13
50:50 sliced bread	Bread	10	27
0% fruit drinks	Soft drinks	9	31
Alpro oat milk	Chilled food	7	37
Alpro soya milk	Chilled food	7	37
Jacob's Crinklys	Crisps & snacks	7	13
Natural fruit and seeds	Snacking	7	23

The top two products in the table above do not appear in the 100 Healthier Lines Framework, but were introduced to the market during the pilot period with very strong brand promotion. They both fit the criteria used to develop the Framework and were therefore included in the final results as they constitute a new healthier product on the shelf.

This demonstrates the power suppliers have to drive uptake of healthier products if they spend marketing budgets on healthier options, rather than unhealthy ones. It also highlights the educational element of the pilot: once retailers knew what to look for, they were able to select a healthier option that was not listed in their original action plan.

Retailers followed recommendations in their action plan which highlighted specific products to stock, including major brands. There was no requirement to choose stock from a particular wholesaler and retailers could choose which brand they wanted to stock. For example, wholemeal bread, could come from any of their nominated suppliers.



The Good Food wholesaler trial

For the pilot, Bestway and Rice Marketing worked together to develop a promotional campaign for healthier lines that included a two-day event in the Croydon and Lewisham depots serving 24 of the convenience stores in Southwark. Healthier

products were promoted in pre-event materials sent to retailers and through promotional posters in the depots. During the event selected products were also displayed in a prominent position at the depot entrances for greater visibility.

2 DAY TRADE EVENT
25th-26th MAY
CROYDON & LEWISHAM DEPOTS
EXCLUSIVE COLLECT ONLY DEALS

MAKE BETTER CHOICES FOR HEALTHIER PROFITS

BAKER STREET SLICED BREAD
Seeded Rye/Rye & Wheat/Seeded
3A4890 / 3A7007 / 650082
SELL @ £1.49
14x300g / 9x550g

BAKER STREET
POR 32%

VOLVIC
484852
SELL @ £1.35
12x1.5ltr

ALPRO
Almond Original/Almond Unsweetened/Coconut
214028 / 292231 / 234114
SELL @ £1.79
8x1x1hr

ALPRO
POR 37.2%

PEPSI MAX
8hr 775422
8hr 775423
PM 65P
24x330ml

PEPSI MAX
POR 53.9%

QUAKER OATS / SCOTT'S PORRIDGE OATS
711621 / 711632
PM £1.99
6x1kg

SCOTT'S
POR 41.5%

GRAZE
Lemon Drizzle Flapjack/
Cocoa Vanilla Flapjack
679733 / 679722
PM £1.00
9x36

GRAZE
POR 55.7%

The campaign also included successfully negotiating the support of 13 suppliers who, over the two days of the event, offered deeper margins for more than 20 healthier products.

2 DAY TRADE EVENT
 25th-26th MAY
 CROYDON & LEWISHAM DEPOTS



BESTWAY WHOLESALE
 CROYDON & LEWISHAM DEPOTS ONLY
 Offers available Friday 27th May – Thursday 23rd Jun 2022

WE ARE EXCITED TO LAUNCH A NEW HEALTHIER OPTIONS RANGE WITH OVER 100 LINES
 which allows our customers to offer healthier alternatives in core categories which drives sale and profit whilst benefitting their local customers. We are currently launching in Croydon and Lewisham depots with a view to a Nationwide roll out.

**DOUBLE YOUR SALES
 DOUBLE YOUR PROFITS
 BUY INTO MORE HEALTHIER OPTIONS**

Get these...

- Kingsmill Tasty Wholemeal** 87p, POR 30.4%
- Quorn Crispy Nuggets** £1.65, POR 34%
- alpro OAT** £8.99, POR 43.5%
- alpro OAT NO SUGARS** £8.99, POR 43.5%
- Coca-Cola Zero Sugar** £5.29, £1.75, POR 39.5%
- Coke** £5.29, £1.75, POR 39.5%
- Quaker Oat Simple Original** £2.29, £0.79, POR 41.8%
- Baked** £11.99, POR 43.7%

CONSUMERS WANT BETTER CHOICES FOR HEALTHIER OPTIONS

HEALTHIER OPTIONS HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED IN SALES VALUE OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS

Shop the healthier options range here

This incentivised retailers to try something new while reducing their business risk. In return, suppliers' products were heavily promoted and Bestway reported that participating suppliers experienced strong sales of their healthier lines during the campaign.

Impact of wholesaler campaign on sales

Sales data from the Croydon and Lewisham depots show that the campaign successfully led to an increase in sales of featured healthier lines. 38 lines were promoted on the leaflet for both depots. Increased sales at both depots suggest that the in-depot events were an effective promotional route.

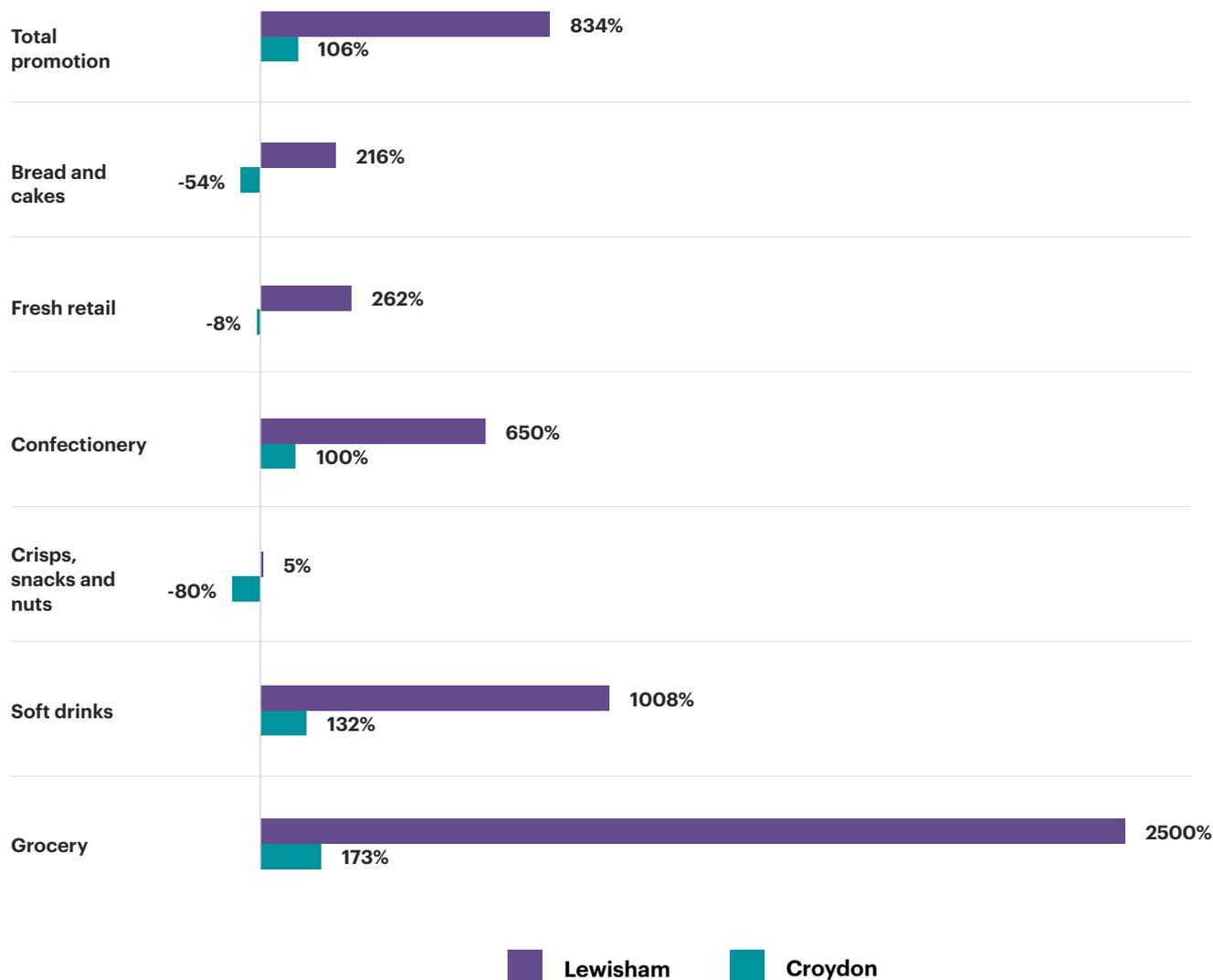
Sales of the featured lines doubled in Croydon week on week. While the increase in Lewisham

was 9-fold in the same timeframe, this is likely to be because a higher proportion of retailers have accounts at the Lewisham depot and the campaign was promoted more heavily in this depot.

All categories showed an increase in sales in Lewisham. In Croydon, the increase came from grocery and soft drinks categories.



Healthier sales by depot



Critical success factors of the pilot

The evaluation identified three critical success factors in achieving the results described above: trust, making it easy and a whole system approach. This model has potential to be applied in other places or on a larger scale, but only if the three critical success factors are replicated and the model is tailored to the local context.

Trust

Change relies on trust. The retailers and the wholesaler trusted Rice Marketing and its motives in supporting them. This trust relied on strong relationship-building, the credibility of its expertise, its continuity of presence and encouragement throughout the duration of the pilot and Rice Marketing's independence from commercial motive, demonstrated by the association with Southwark Council.

Making it easy

Retailers were open to stocking healthier products, but they didn't know about the opportunities presented or how to go about it. Rice Marketing's role as adviser and facilitator made it easy for retailers to explore and grasp the opportunity for the first time by developing the 100 Healthier Lines Framework, advising on low-risk products to try first and providing a list of target products as a WhatsApp shopping list on their phones.

Interviews with Bestway indicated that the pilot had educated retailers about what constitutes a healthier product and made it easier for Bestway to start offering more options to its community; a point reinforced in retailer interviews.

Wholesalers are lean organisations with very limited additional capacity for new initiatives, even when they offer a growth opportunity. Rice Marketing provided independent expert support and a regular presence within the depots, which made it easier for Bestway to keep healthier options on the agenda despite difficult market conditions.

A whole system approach

Getting healthier options onto convenience store shelves requires all parts of the system to work together: suppliers, wholesalers, retailers, the statutory sector (local authority) and voluntary sector (Impact on Urban Health). Without any one of them, this pilot would have been less successful.

Insight gathered from participating retailers

Stores reported that once they are on the shelves, healthier products sell – sometimes better than expected – and customers appreciate the increased choice in their local store. Retailers indicated they intended to keep these products on shelf and further grow their healthier ranges, demonstrating the value these products had brought to their businesses.

Though none of the retailers provided detailed sales data for the evaluation, this anecdotal feedback was explored during evaluation interviews with a sample of retailers.



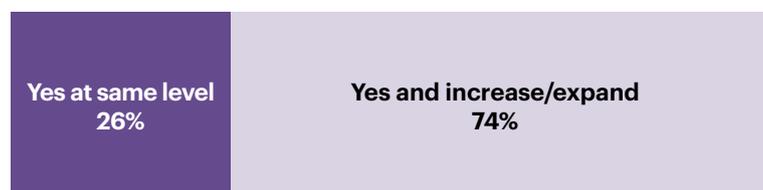
At the end of the pilot, all participating retailers intended to continue stocking the new healthier products based on how well the products have sold. The vast majority intend to expand their range based on:

- a) Seeing other items from their action plan at the wholesaler
- b) Customer requests
- c) Further recommendations from Rice Marketing

Retailers were clear they need help to meet the demand from families looking for healthier, affordable options. They appreciated the expert support and tools given by Rice Marketing to build an understanding of what products count as healthier options. But they also need healthier products to be available and easy to find in wholesale depots, for new healthier lines to be marketed effectively and for price marked packs and good margins on healthier options. Achieving this will require collaboration from every sector within the food industry.

Figure 5

All retailers intend to continue stocking the additional healthier options after the pilot.



What worked well?

Engaging retailers and getting them on board

The local council's involvement in the pilot appeared to open doors, secure buy-in and lend legitimacy to the work. Rice Marketing's credibility as a trusted expert adviser, demonstrated in the strategic advice provided to support each shop owner's mission and ambition, was also essential to the pilot's success. All store owners that were approached expressed interest in participating and were positive about stocking new healthier lines and benefiting from the expert advice available.

Tailored action plans for each store

Each participating retailer was given an action plan, with a list of categories and product recommendations from the 100 Healthier Lines Framework to consider stocking during the pilot. Retailers said they would choose one or two items from any one category, as it would be too expensive and too ambitious to try and stock everything on the action plan all at once. They needed to start small, and the action plan offered them options when they visited the wholesaler.

Within each category, there were several similar product options for retailers to consider. This was helpful given the difficulties retailers sometimes experienced in finding their desired products at the wholesaler, due to supply chain challenges. If one option wasn't on the shelf, the retailer could select an alternative from their action plan.

Making the action plan available by WhatsApp made it easy for retailers to remember what to look for when restocking at the wholesalers, acting as a shopping list readily accessible on their phone.

Working with specialist retailers

Six of the retailers in the pilot were specialist retailers catering to specific markets, with a high percentage of their customer group coming from a BAME background. They tended to use a wider range of suppliers and wholesalers, and to stock a different product mix to others in the pilot, to serve their customer base's particular needs.

Five of the six specialist stores were among the top ten stores for successfully converting their action plans to reality, and three of those stores were among the top ten for most new healthier products added. There is clearly an opportunity to support specialist stores to increase their healthier ranges. Rice Marketing also identified the potential in researching and sourcing healthier alternatives for common culturally specific foods stocked by the stores, in order to broaden the range of recommended products.

What challenges were faced during the pilot and what can we do differently next time?

Difficult market conditions

Market conditions during the pilot were very challenging. Supply chain issues driven by increasing fuel costs, Brexit and the war in Ukraine meant there were both temporary and longer-term shortages of various products, as well as price increases. This affected product availability across the board and meant some retailers couldn't find all the healthier products they wanted to stock.

Juggling the pressures of these additional market challenges, while continuing to bring products to retailers and keeping focus on the healthier options campaign was far from easy for Bestway. These issues are not likely to be resolved soon and will therefore be an important consideration

in engaging other wholesalers in projects in the future.

Finding products at the wholesaler

Some retailers also reported difficulties finding the healthier options they wanted when visiting the wholesaler. Retailers tend to buy the same items and take the same route through the depot on every visit, so looking for the products on their action plan disrupted this routine and they couldn't always find what they wanted.

During the Bestway promotion, healthier products were located at the depot entrance to make them easy to find. However, this was a temporary measure.

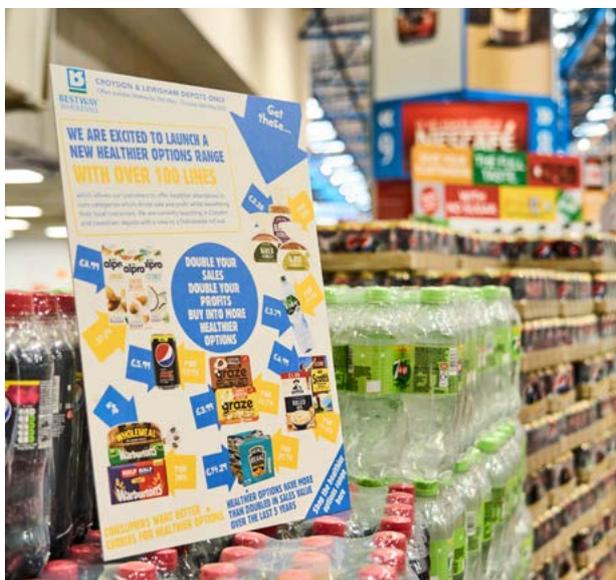
Time taken to get to the action plan stage

Between four and six interactions were needed with most retailers for Rice Marketing to get to know them, provide holistic advice and build trust, before they could get to the action planning stage. Rice Marketing also needed to check in after the action plan was agreed, to give retailers a nudge if they hadn't made any changes yet. While this took more time and resource than originally anticipated, the results suggest this level of support was worthwhile and should be factored into future projects.

Engaging wholesalers

The original intention was to engage three wholesalers in the pilot: Bestway, Dhamecha and Booker. Bestway wanted to build on its previous involvement in the small-scale pilot so supported the launch of this larger scale activity. Bestway shared the experience of the earlier pilot during a webinar hosted by the Federation of Wholesale Distributors (FWD) to encourage other wholesalers' participation.

Despite considerable efforts to engage Dhamecha and Booker, and apparent early interest from both, it was not possible to engage them in the pilot. The current market conditions have consumed wholesalers' attention and energy and left little time for new initiatives. They are already lean, low margin organisations, and keeping them engaged is difficult at the best of times.



This is an important consideration for the next phase of the project.

Securing supplier engagement with the retailer pilot

It took much longer than expected to engage suppliers for the retailer side of the pilot. This was compounded by difficulties in reaching the appropriate level of seniority and decision-making within large, often multinational organisations.

Difficulties accessing data

Data was much more difficult to obtain from retailers than expected, leading to gaps in the dataset especially around hard sales and profit data and any indicators of changes in calorie consumption. Busy independent retailers had limited time available for the pilot and this limited the amount of data that could be collected, as providing support and advice was a priority.

Impact on health and equity

Without more detailed study of buying patterns and customer profile, it is impossible to understand how this shift to healthier products in selected convenience stores is contributing to healthier, more nutritious diets in local communities. However, Bright Purpose concluded that people in Southwark have improved access to healthier options as a result of the pilot.

Recommendations

Insight gathered during this pilot helps to build an even stronger case for wholesalers and suppliers to put health at the heart of their business. It provides the food industry with a successful example of how a customer strategy focused on health can complement and grow core business, as well as benefiting consumers and communities.

If you are a wholesaler business, you can contact Rice Marketing for help in creating and delivering your own health strategy, as Bestway has done. Resource is available to help time-poor wholesalers embed the 100 Healthier Lines Framework into business-as-usual activity.

Contact Stephanie Rice at stephanie@ricemarketing.co.uk for more information.

Contact media@bestway.co.uk for more information.

Next steps – the next phase of the project

Our aspirations for the next phase of the Good Food Wholesale and Retail project are to expand and prove the model locally. We will do this by:

- Further building evidence of what works and the pilot's impact with the existing 35 participating stores and a further 10 specialist stores.
- Increasing affordability of healthier options and demonstrating increased sales among families on low incomes (if possible, showing this is at the expense of unhealthy options).
- Deepening the engagement of Bestway and suppliers with the project locally, and engaging other wholesalers, specifically Nisa, Booker and Dhamecha, through offering dedicated resource to support the development and implementation of a health strategy.
- Continuing to support Bestway at a senior level with resource that develops a national strategy for health supported by 15 suppliers with category health strategies.
- Developing a scalable model, and then potentially testing the model in other major cities including Birmingham.
- In the next phase of our project, we will be working with retailers and councils to make Healthy Start vouchers available in stores and increase uptake of the vouchers among families living on low incomes.

Conclusion

The Good Food Wholesale and Retail pilot has shown profitability and health can go hand in hand. The pilot successfully achieved sales uplifts on healthier options, which can benefit everyone. It has demonstrated it is possible to increase access to healthier options in local convenience stores and that, once they are on the shelves, these products sell and customers appreciate the increased choice.

However, there are barriers to achieving this. To make local convenience stores healthier places to

shop for everyone, we need urgent collaboration from across the food industry and beyond. It's vital that wholesalers, retailers and suppliers are aligned on making healthy options more available – there has been progress made, but much more needs to be done. Now is the time for retailers, wholesalers, suppliers, local authorities and government to get involved and take practical steps to support convenience store retailers to stock healthier options.

Our call to industry and government

Wholesalers, suppliers and manufacturers

- Put health at the heart of your strategies for the convenience market, recognising the moral and commercial cases for doing so.
- Collaborate to educate retailers about healthier options and to promote these products.
- Ensure healthier options are as, if not more, affordable as unhealthy products.

Industry bodies

- Promote the actions your member stores can take to increase the proportion of their sales that are healthy.
- Help make the case for wholesalers and suppliers putting health at the heart of their strategies.

Local authorities

- Incentivise convenience stores to stock healthier products.

Policy makers

- Support a new fiscal measure that incentivises manufacturers to make their food product recipes healthier, replicating the success of the soft drinks industry levy.

Appendices

Appendix A – Bright Purpose evaluation questions, methodology and limitations

Evaluation questions

Retailer outcomes

- a) What healthier lines did retailers choose to stock?
 - a. What factors influenced these choices?
- b) What did they do to raise customer awareness of the availability of healthier lines in store?
- c) What impact did stocking healthier lines have on sales?
 - a. Including on sales of the comparable less healthy lines?
- d) What impact did stocking healthier lines have on profits?
- e) How did retailers' attitudes to stocking healthier options change as a result of the pilot?
- f) How sustainable are the changes in availability of healthier options?

Wholesaler outcomes

- a) What healthier lines did wholesalers choose to stock?
 - a. What factors influenced these choices?
- b) What did they do to raise retailer awareness of the availability of healthier lines?
- c) What did they do to encourage retailers to consider stocking healthier options?
- d) What impact did stocking healthier lines have on sales?
- e) What impact did stocking healthier lines have on profits?
- f) How did wholesalers' attitudes to stocking healthier options change as a result of the pilot?
- g) How sustainable are the changes in availability of healthier options?

Process learning

- a) What factors influenced retailer engagement with the pilot?
- b) What factors influenced wholesaler engagement with the pilot?
- c) What worked and what didn't work in the process?
- d) What were the enablers and barriers to implementation?
- e) How was the process from the wholesaler perspective?
 - a. What was the short-term impact on workload?
- f) How was the process from the retailer perspective?
 - a. What was the short-term impact on workload?
- g) What factors influenced sustainability and legacy beyond the pilot?

Methods

Bright Purpose used the following methods to gather data for the evaluation:

- a) Baseline and post-pilot data collected by Rice Marketing from each participating retailer (41 stores starting and 35 stores completing the pilot) – this data included store characteristics, retailer attitudes, pre-pilot stock of healthier products, additional healthier products recommended by Rice Marketing, actual healthier products stocked and future intentions for stocking healthier products.
- b) Regular learning calls with Rice Marketing (varying in frequency from fortnightly to monthly depending on level of pilot activity at the time).
- c) Semi-structured interviews with nine participating retailers and three lead Bestway staff, at the end of the pilot.

Limitations

Rice Marketing also sought consent to collect wholesaler receipts from retailers at the end of the pilot and EPOS data from those retailers that had an EPOS system. However, none of the retailers supplied receipts or EPOS data for the evaluation and they were also unwilling to share even anecdotal feedback on impacts on profits. Bright Purpose's analysis was therefore based on retailers' self-reported data, supported by Rice Marketing's observations when it visited stores. This means Bright Purpose were unable to accurately calculate changes in sales, profits or changes in consumption.

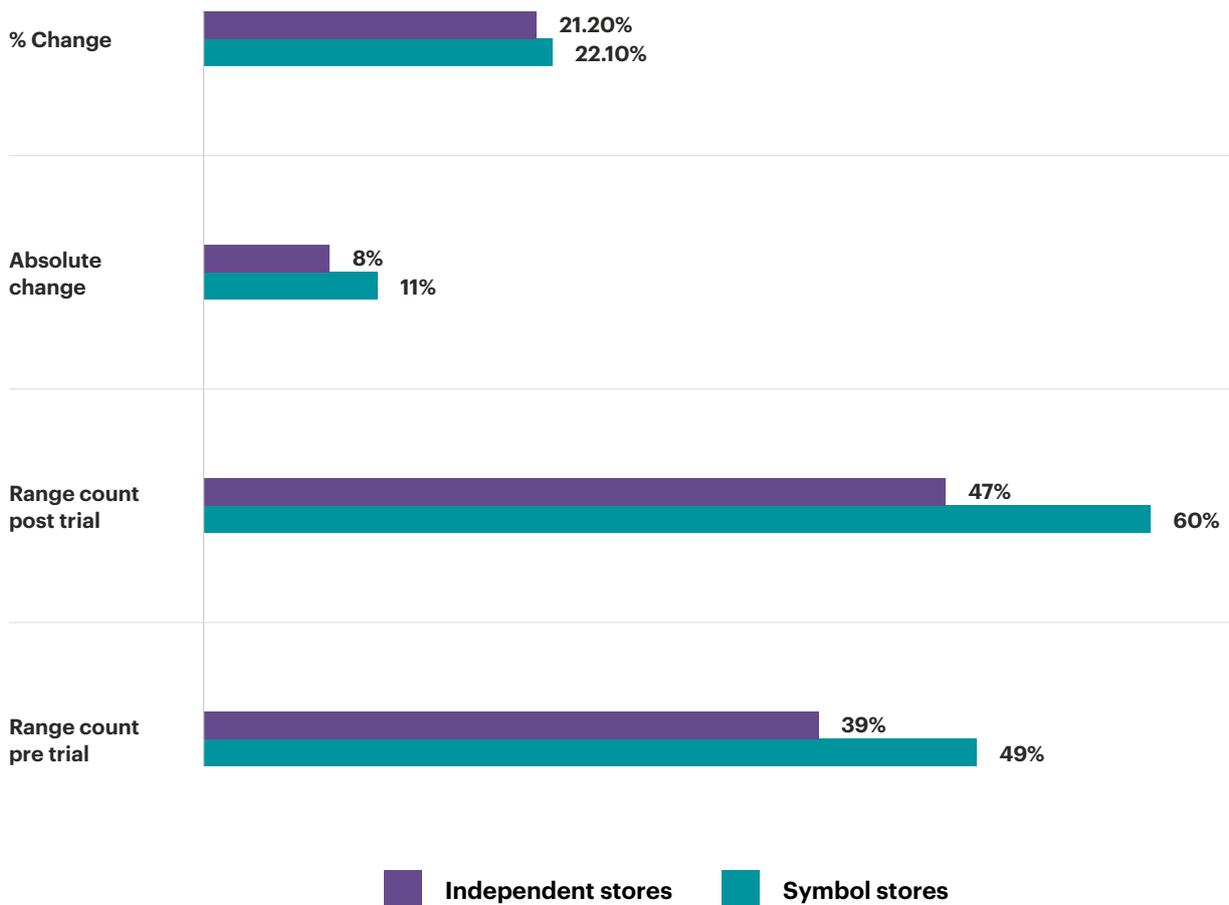
Despite these gaps in the intended dataset, the findings of the evaluation interviews reflect the picture painted by retailers' data and in-store observations from Rice Marketing.

Appendix B – Comparison of Symbol group retailers and independents

The Symbol groups' stores had a higher healthier range count at the start of the trial, stocking on average 49 of the 100 lines compared with the 39 average in independents. The absolute increase was greater in Symbol stores than in independents (+11 vs + 8), as was the proportional increase (22% vs 21%).



Impact of trial in Symbol stores Vs independents



Appendix C – the most common products listed in retailers' action plans

Appeared in 10-19 action plans

- Wholemeal Pitta (11)
- Light Mayonnaise (11)
- 0% Lemonade (11)
- NAS Squash (12)
- Wholegrain Pasta (13)
- Oven Chips (14)
- Alpro Yogurts (15)
- Canned Fruit in Juice (16)
- 0% Mixers (17)
- 0% Fruit Drinks (18)
- 50:50 Sliced Bread (19)
- Bran Flakes (19)

Appeared in 20-29 action plans

- Tuna in Spring Water (21)
- Ryvita (22)
- Brown Rice (23)
- Natural Fruit & Seeds (24)
- Low Sugar Muesli (24)
- 0% Natural Yogurt (26)
- Frozen Jacket Potatoes (26)
- Halls Sugar Free (27)
- Reduced Fat Cream Cheese (27)
- Kallo Rice Cakes (27)
- Linda McCartney Sausages (27)
- Twiglets (27)
- Eat Real Hummus Chips (27)
- Reduced Sugar & Salt Ketchup (28)
- Shredded Wheat (28)
- Sugar Free Sula (28)
- Walkers Oven Bakes (29)
- Reduced Salt & Sugar Beans (29)
- Walkers French Fries (29)
- Wholemeal Tortillas (29)

Appeared 30+ action plans

- Reduced Fat Cheddar Cheese (30)
- Reduced Fat Spread (30)
- Werthers Original Sugar Free (33)
- Eat Natural Bars (33)
- Pop Chips (33)
- Frutella Sugar Free (33)
- Mars/Snickers Low Calorie Bars (34)
- Propercorn Popcorn (34)
- Pombears (35)
- Nak'd Bars (35)
- Snackajacks (35)
- Graze Snacks (35)
- Metcalfe Natural Popcorn (36)
- Sunbites (36)

ENTRY

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