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The University of Bristol worked with Leicestershire County Council to try and identify:

- Who attends the Community Kitchens
- What health and wellbeing benefits the Community Kitchens have for the people who attend them
- How are the health and wellbeing benefits achieved

Community Kitchens in Leicestershire

The Community Kitchen scheme in Leicestershire started in 2017 with the aim to educate attendees to reduce Household Food Waste (HHFW).

There are currently 6 active Community Kitchens in the Borough of Hinckley and Bosworth.

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What are Community Kitchens?

Community Kitchens are community-based cooking programmes in which small groups of people meet on a regular basis to plan, cook and share healthy, affordable meals. Community Kitchens are typically designed for anyone to attend and can be run anywhere there is a kitchen.

Who attends the Community Kitchens?

Surveys found that most of the people attending the Community Kitchens were retired, living alone, carers or had cognitive or physical needs.

What health and wellbeing benefits do the Community Kitchens have for the people who attend them?

Council staff, Community Kitchen volunteers and attendees told researchers from the University of Bristol during interviews and observations of the Community Kitchens that the primary health and wellbeing benefit experienced was socialisation. They also reported that the Community Kitchen sessions:

- Were highly valued
- Provided an opportunity to socialise with others while learning new skills or trying something new
- Encouraged attendees to learn to be healthier, and reduce household food waste
- Were inclusive, offering a safe environment to everyone regardless of background, ability and gender
- Helped build confidence and independence
- Offered respite from caring responsibilities or from being cared for

How are the health and wellbeing benefits achieved?

Attendees told researchers from the University of Bristol during interviews and observations that socialisation was achieved by offering them opportunities to actively participate collaboratively with others in an activity within an inclusive group environment.