

CASE STUDY - FOOD, COOKING AND MENTAL HEALTH

THE MINDFUL MINISTRY OF FOOD COOKERY COURSE

**MINISTRY
OF FOOD**
♥ JAMIE OLIVER

Mindful MoF with Teens is an 8-week cooking skills and nutrition programme adapted from the Jamie Oliver Ministry of Food curriculum, specifically designed for young people aged 14–25. Developed in partnership between Jamie Oliver Ministry of Food, Nourish Food School CIC, The Foundation for Young People's Mental Health, and the University of Reading, the course combines practical cooking skills with nutritional awareness and an exploration of the powerful link between food and mental wellbeing. Initially funded by Gateshead Council, the course was delivered for free across multiple sites in Gateshead, using group cookery classes to learn and apply the science behind food and mental health, build confidence, independence, and peer support — equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to prepare meals that are good for both their bodies and their minds.

PARTICIPANT CASE STUDY

When Emily joined the Mindful MoF with Teens course, she hadn't thought much about the connection between what she ate and how she felt mentally. Over 8 weeks, that changed. She discovered new recipes, new confidence in the kitchen, and a genuine shift in her mood and energy — changes that have stayed with her long after the course ended, and that have rippled out to affect her family too.

**I DIDN'T REALISE HOW MUCH
FOOD CAN IMPACT YOUR
MENTAL STATE.**

THE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT

One of the central aims of the Mindful MoF programme is to help young people understand and experience the link between food and mental wellbeing — not just as a concept, but in their own daily lives. For Emily, that connection became very real. She noticed a direct change in her mood and energy levels as she began eating differently, and reflected on how significant that shift had been.

"WHILE I WAS ON THE COURSE I CHANGED UP WHAT I WAS EATING... IT WAS INCREDIBLE. IT'S REALLY HELPED ME, BOTH MENTALLY AND ALSO INDEPENDENTLY."

"EATING THE FOOD THAT WE LEARNT TO MAKE ON THE COURSE... I FIND MYSELF FULL OF ENERGY AND ACTUALLY WANTING TO DO THINGS"

"NOW I KNOW THAT, I'VE REALLY BEEN MINDFUL OF WHAT I EAT."

"I THINK THE COURSE COULD REALLY HELP WITH SOME PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH...IT'S IMPACTED ME IN A GOOD WAY AND I THINK IT COULD IMPACT OTHER PEOPLE IN A REALLY POSITIVE WAY AS WELL - ESPECIALLY IF THEY ARE MOVING OUT OR WORRIED ABOUT DOING THINGS ON THEIR OWN"



This course was delivered in Gateshead by

"IT DEFINITELY NEEDS TO BE ADVERTISED MORE BY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES — THIS EXPERIENCE I'VE HAD, I WISH OTHER PEOPLE MY AGE COULD HAVE IT. THE WAY IT IMPACTED ME, I THINK IT COULD DEFINITELY IMPACT PEOPLE IN THE SAME WAY."



NOURISH
FOOD SCHOOL



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SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE

Alongside the mental health impact, Emily developed practical skills and confidence that she carries into everyday life — including managing her own food budget and cooking independently for the first time.

CONFIDENCE

"I'M NOW CONFIDENT ENOUGH TO COOK MY OWN FOOD"

BUDGETING

"NOT ONLY WAS IT GOING TO HELP ME WITH MY MIND AND COOKING, IT ALSO HELPED ME WITH BUDGETING"

CONFIDENCE

"IT'S MADE MY CONNCTION WITH FOOD A LOT BETTER"

COMMUNITY

"THE COMMUNITY PART AND SEEING EVERYONE WORKING TOGETHER AND GETTING ALONG AND CRACKING ON WAS BRILLIANT. I THINK THAT REALLY HELPED ME, IT WAS SUCH A GOOD ENVIRONMENT TO WORK IN - IT MADE ME WANT TO COME BACK EVERY WEEK"



Class action shots from the Mindful MoF Course. Please note: images are not necessarily of the person featured in this case study.

THE KNOCK ON IMPACT ON OTHERS

The impact of the course didn't stay within the classroom.

Emily began cooking for her sister — introducing her to new meals and encouraging her to move away from a very limited diet.

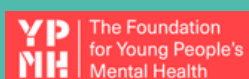
What started as sharing a recipe became something more significant: a change in her sister's eating habits, and by Chloe's account, her mental health too.

EMILY BEGAN COOKING COURSE RECIPES — BOLOGNESE, STIR-FRY — FOR HER SISTER AT HOME, SHARING THE SKILLS SHE'D LEARNED.

"AT FIRST, BECAUSE SHE'S A VERY PICKY EATER, SHE WAS EATING CHICKEN NUGGETS AND CHIPS — SO NOW I'VE ENCOURAGED HER TO EAT SOME MORE."

"I THINK IT'S HELPED HER WITH HER MENTAL HEALTH... NOT ONLY IS IT HELPING ME, IT'S HELPING OTHER PEOPLE IN MY HOUSEHOLD THAT'S EATING IT."

A project developed and delivered in partnership



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