

Suffolk Libraries and the CSV Suffolk Smoothie Bike Project

Project Overview

Suffolk Libraries' Mental Health and Wellbeing Information Service funded this project across the county and worked in partnership by providing promotion, venues and contacts. The aim was not only to improve people's wellbeing through advice and guidance, but to engage in a fun way with hard to reach groups. There is a direct link between mental wellbeing and a healthy diet and the bike project carries a large amount of other self help material to signpost participants to other agencies that can help.

The 10 x 2 hour Smoothie Bike Health and Wellbeing workshops were delivered across Suffolk; working with a wide mix of organisations and services to provide informal, fun and educational interactive workshops to groups of service users and family carers of 8-20 people to promote the importance of a positive, healthy and happy life.

These specialist workshops focussed on Food, Nutrition and Diet and were delivered by qualified nutritionists and health professionals who provided people with excellent information and guidance to embed the importance of looking after yourself and how beneficial regular physical exercise and activity is as part of a healthy lifestyle and positive mental wellbeing.

The link between cognitive impairment by not having the right food stuffs is key in physical and mental health development. Bad diet and food poverty across Suffolk drove the project to work with organisations that worked with hard to reach groups and economically challenged communities.

The project had solid support from partner organisations and they saw great value in the sessions and promoted and encouraged their service users and family carers to get involved and come to the sessions.





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Project Outcome

This project worked really well; one organisation 'Feedback', ran by mental health service users, reported that the project has been really positive and 93% benefited from engagement with Smoothie Bike and found the activity useful and inspired people to change behaviours, embedding the importance of a healthier lifestyle.

All partners requested further courses and opportunities to help educate and enlighten their service users, family carers and staff on simple steps to healthier lifestyles that we can offer in these sessions and others that can be developed as a result of these pilot activities.

The aim is to resource further activities and sessions, offering this to many more organisations and services in Suffolk as we have really seen a great benefit:

- 84% said they will change their diet to a more balanced and nutritious one,
- 84% will take up more regular physical exercise and
- 89% understand the effect food and exercise has on good mental health.

The project is an excellent example of the way in which Suffolk Libraries can provide a focus for health and wellbeing activities both in the library and by reaching out to local people.

It is vital that a modern library service continues to offer a wide range of relevant community services and it has the opportunity to link customers to the information and organisations who can make a difference to their lives.

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