



Exercise referral – Cambridgeshire City Council

Project Overview

The evidence for the benefits of physical activity is strong. People who are physically active reduce their risk of developing major chronic diseases, such as CHD, Stroke and Type 2 diabetes, by up to 50% and the risk of premature death by about 20-30%. Recent evidence has emerged around the benefits of physical activity for treating diseases such as dementia, mental health, hypertension, type 2 diabetes and musculoskeletal conditions, including osteoporosis, back pain and osteoarthritis.

Within Cambridge City, deaths from circulatory disease make up the main causes of death. Over the last ten years, death rates from all causes of death for both males and females and for premature deaths (those in the under 75s) from heart disease, stroke and cancer have decreased in Cambridge City and are lower than the national rates. However, the improving local trends have tended to level off in recent years and become closer to the national average. The gap in mortality between Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire's average has been increasing and has been above the county average the last four time periods.

Local health strategic needs assessments suggest that in Cambridgeshire, prevalence and/or early mortality from CHD, Type 2 diabetes, stroke and cancer have been identified as priority areas; physical activity has a contribution to make in terms of both primary and secondary prevention. In addition, obesity is suggested as a priority due to it being a risk factor for both CHD and Type 2 diabetes, with more than 1 in 5 people in Cambridgeshire, estimated as obese. Mental health is also a major concern.

To help address the health inequalities and health profile of Cambridge City, the Council provides an exercise referral scheme for those living with long term medical conditions, disabilities and disease. At present, the scheme is jointly funded through Cambridge City Council and the Public Health team at Cambridgeshire County Council. The scheme works in partnership with NHS services and local leisure providers.

Project Outcome

From the data collected between March 2011-April 2012, 56% of exercise referral clients when starting on the programme considered themselves to be physically inactive. After their 12-week programme, this decreased to 27%. This increase in activity is also seen amongst clients who completed a 6 and 12-month questionnaire, post the exercise referral intervention.

In the same year, 95% reported a "very satisfactory" or "fairly satisfactory" improvement in their mental health since being on the programme. 83% of respondents reported a "very satisfactory" or "fairly satisfactory" change in their medical condition/s.



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Initial data collected between March 2012-April 2013, show that there were 5382 attendances to an exercise referral activity session and 191 new referrals. Of these, 19% were for musculoskeletal reasons, 15% of referrals were for obesity, 12% for mental health, accounting for the top three most prolific reasons for referral. In total, 63.6% of exercise referral clients completed the 12-week programme between March 2012 and April 2013. Client data regarding perceived changes to health and mental well-being are yet to be collated for this period.

Testimony:

"I have walked through a door into a whole new world since joining the exercise referral scheme. Whereas before the referral scheme I was depressed, feeling very low, but now I can think, I can do this (walking), I am doing this, and now, I can walk over the common to the gym instead of taking the bus".

Patient referred for COPD and weight loss.

Contact details for further information

Name: Debbie Kaye Head of Arts & Recreation

Organisation: Cambridge City Council

E-mail: Debbie.Kaye@cambridge.gov.uk