



Start – tackling childhood obesity in Kirklees

Project Overview

Start was commissioned in Kirklees by the Public Health team to tackle the rise in childhood obesity across the area. Kirklees is a diverse community with a wide range of needs including ethnic minority groups, priority communities (e.g. those on low incomes) and rural communities.

The local National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) data from 2010-2011 shows that amongst Reception age children, just under a fifth (18.6%) of the children measured were either overweight or obese. In Year 6, this proportion was just under one in four (27.4%). The percentage of obese children in Year 6 (16.3%) was over double that of reception year children (7.9%).

Hospital based dietician clinics were unable to accommodate increasing demand, and referral pathways restricted care for children requiring a more specialist service.

Start offers one to one appointments with children and their families over 24-36 weeks. Children on the programme also have the opportunity to join a healthy lifestyle course (8 week programme), weekly specialist activity sessions and holiday schemes. They also receive a card to enable discounts at Sports Centres.

Start combines physical activity, healthy eating and behaviour change to enable children to live a healthier lifestyle. Key partners involved include Kirklees Active Leisure (sports centres), School Nurses, Dietetics, GPs and Schools.

Project Outcomes

In the last year (2012-13) Start has worked with nearly 300 children and their families. Of those completing the programme, over 60% have achieved Body Mass Index (BMI) reduction or maintenance. Furthermore, qualitative data obtained from the children on the programme demonstrates that over 80% have reported positive changes in the following outcome scores: physical activity, reduced screen time, balanced diet, happiness, self-esteem, and motivation.

One 11yr old boy came onto the programme via the NCMP with a BMI of 23.7. Following his first appointment it was clear that he engaged in too many sedentary activities, and scored low for diet, happiness and physical health. Goals were set to attend a healthy lifestyle course, weekly specialist activity sessions, alongside improvements to his diet.

Following 24 weeks on the programme, his BMI reduced to 21.9 and his outcome scores improved for all measures. His mum said 'the Start programme is a brilliant way to get children to try different foods and find fun ways to exercise. It has helped him to eat in moderation, exercise more and it has given him a lot more confidence'.



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A tailored, personal approach has worked very well for children on the programme, as well as being able to offer them a range of opportunities to participate in, from group based activities and courses alongside more one to one support. Engaging families in the process has also been key to achieving lifestyle changes.

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