

Project Overview

Ashfield District suffers from a number of health inequalities, related to a reduction in manual employment as the traditional industries have closed down, the impact of former employment in e.g. mining, and an inactive community.

Although the rate of childhood obesity is now slowing as a result of intervention, and participation in physical activity (1 x 30 mins per week) has increased between 2007 – 2012, the district has high levels of drug abuse, smoking, cardio-vascular diseases, deaths from cancer, and increasing adult obesity. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than regional and national averages. There are also relatively high levels of poverty in the district. The need for interventions, to encourage increased regular physical activity, was driven specifically by the following:

- more than a quarter of the local population are obese (28.4%), but fewer people are smoking
- less than a quarter of the adults in Ashfield (22.7%) eat healthily
- 18% of the over 64s are unable to manage at least one activity on their own; illnesses such as dementia are increasing
- 8% of 18 to 64 year olds have some form of moderate disability
- only 75% of the adult population are in physical good health (PANSI / POPPI estimates)
- around 17.6% of Year 6 children are classified obese

Active Ashfield, a forum of local organisations representing healthy eating, education, community safety, sports development, sport, young people, health and Ashfield District Council developed an Active Ashfield Strategy, focussed on co-ordinating interventions to increase participation in physical activity.

Project Outcome

The Active Ashfield Strategy had 4 strategic aims, and a specific programme was developed for each.

This cases study focuses on Strategic Aim 4: To raise the profile of the benefits of physical activity for health.

Public consultation identified that family commitments and childcare provision is a key barrier preventing people taking part in sport and physical activity. A more recent consultation conducted by Sure Start with their service users highlighted that Ashfield parents wanted a local buggy fit programme; the nearest was in a neighbouring district - cost and distance to attend this sessions was a barrier.

‘Push 4 Fitness’ sessions were developed initially funded by the Sport England Sportivate programme. Push 4 fitness involves a brisk walk suitable for parents with



Push 4 Fitness – Ashfield

pushchairs lasting 30-45 minutes to gradually improve fitness levels. The adiZone outdoor gym equipment is also incorporated into the session where possible. The walk is then followed by a short 15-20 minutes muscle toning session which takes place within a leisure centre setting.

Parents are encouraged to get babies out of their push chair during the exercise session to improve parent interaction with their children whilst exercising at the same time.

The sessions are delivered as a partnership approach between Ashfield District Council, Sure Start and Everyone Active. This partnership approach has enabled the sessions to be sustained on a long term, basis without the need for further funding. Participants pay a small fee of £1 per session overcoming the cost barrier. Weekly sessions are now delivered at Lammas and Hucknall Leisure Centres.

Since Push 4 Fitness started, participants have been encouraged to attend walk leader training to enable them to lead the walks if they feel confident to do so. A parent now leads the walk part of the session at Hucknall Leisure Centre on a weekly basis.

An average of 8 to 10 parents attend each weekly session.

Push 4 Fitness is a great example of multi-agency working, utilising green spaces and local leisure centres, increasing the number of adults engaging in physical activity whilst overcoming the two major barriers of childcare and cost. Since the sessions have been delivered participants have also engaged in further Sure Start services and some have become members of their local leisure centre, further increasing their activity levels.

Testimony:

Quotes from parents attending the sessions below.

‘It’s a good way to get fit, tone up your muscles and lose some baby weight. It gives you something to look forward to every week’.

‘Push for fitness is great for meeting up with people, getting some fresh air and having a giggle’.

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(consultants appointed to work with Active Ashfield to develop their second Active Ashfield strategy, building on the achievements of the first)

