



Physical Activity Champions - Team Wakefield

Project Overview

In Wakefield District, the care costs attributed to physical inactivity have been calculated at £2,848,354 / 100,000 population (Be Active, Be Healthy, 2009). The Active People Survey indicated that participation levels in Wakefield have become static with no significant increase. In light of these findings Wakefield Public Health (WPH) commissioned Wakefield Council, Sport and Active Lifestyles (SAL) to provide various physical activity interventions to increase participation, such as supporting the new weight management service, an exercise referral scheme and community based activities in the 7 most deprived areas of the district.

One of the main barriers to implementing these intervention schemes was communicating effectively with target communities, and providing the right services for communities to become active. Wakefield Council and WPH needed to understand better the barriers to participation within communities in order to plan their services more effectively. Wakefield Council and WPH identified local volunteers as an effective resource to understanding local barriers to physical activity and supporting new recruits to take part in the interventions.

Supported by Coventry University, Physical Activity Champions (PACs) is a volunteer-based programme that enables people to become active and supports local focus groups in collecting information on barriers to participating in physical activity. The PACs attend a one day training course to understand the benefits of physical activity, how they can support new users, what are a focus group and their role in supporting the collection of information. Volunteers have the option to support various interventions in their local community or their place of work. Each volunteer is provided with a volunteer mentor for support.

Project Outcome

The PAC programme uses Sport England market segmentation data to identify target groups within communities. The two common profiles in the priority areas are;

- *Profile 9 – Kev, pub league team mates
- *Profile 10 - Paula, stretched single mum's

The PAC programme identified and recruited volunteers from the two specific profiles. After induction and training, the volunteers supported focus groups and engaged with communities at local events to advise on the benefits of physical activity.

The PACs identified 'Kev's' wanted to take part in activities linked to work, while 'Paula's' would be encouraged by dance based activities in-between nursery sessions, or with crèche provision. Both profiles also highlighted cost as a barrier.



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In response, the scheme worked with employers in a bid to target men in general, but especially 35 – 45 year old 'Kev'. Examples of work include a programme of taster sessions for employees, and discounted rates in local sports facilities. For Paula's, there are low cost Zumba sessions in local venues or children centres. There was a drive to recruit new Physical Activity Champions linked to workplace health and local children's centres.

Overall there are now 18 Physical Activity Champions supporting 26 regular physical activity sessions. There has been an increase in self referrals to local activities of 50%. Since the introduction of Physical Activity Champions the number of participants completing a 12 week programme has increased by 40%. In targeted programmes 75% of all referrals complete 12 weeks where a Physical Activity Champion is in place to provide support.

Two of the Physical Activity Champions who supported Zumba sessions have been supported back into employment after redundancy. With the support of a small grants scheme they were supported through NVQ Level 2 Fitness Instructing and Zumba qualifications.

Physical Activity Champions have also supported the Olympic legacy by volunteered to become Marshalls when the Olympic torch relay travelled through Wakefield District last summer and they attended Sportsmaker training to gain extra skills in organising informal sport sessions within local communities

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