

Sandwell Family Health Programme proves to be a front-runner!



In the UK today, there are around 4 million people who have Type 2 diabetes and around 7 million living with heart and circulatory disease. These can be serious life-threatening conditions. This is why Diabetes UK, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) and Tesco came together to form the National Charity Partnership (NCP) in order to inspire millions of people to eat better, move more and reduce their risk of developing these two conditions, with the roll out of their community based health promotion programme called Make Move and Munch programme.

In Sandwell, Make, Move & Munch is led by Accord, and delivered in partnership with local partners. Make, Move and Munch Clubs were developed to support women and children living in low income areas to live healthier lifestyles in relation to healthy eating and physical activity.

As the NCP involvement in the programme comes to an end, a national evaluation was undertaken of the programme by independent evaluation consultants, Bright Purpose, in October 2017. Some of the highlights of the evaluation make exciting reading:

- in Sandwell a total of 1263 mothers and their children took part in over 50 session cooking and activity programmes with meals that got participants trying new healthy activities, foods, drinks and snacks
- 96 percent of mums also reported that the programme helped their budget go further, following over a third previously finding that they had difficulties in making the food budget last the week.

Of the six Make, Move and Munch programmes delivered through the National Charity Partnership across the country, Sandwell achieved the most significant improvements in almost all areas, and has been recognised through multiple national awards. Of particular note to the evaluators were the relatively easy steps that participants were being encouraged to take to make their lives, and those of their children, easier: Helen Tomblin, Accord's Health & Well-Being Programme Co-ordinator, explained,

“What made Make, Move & Munch so successful and engaging was the fact that it allowed participants to progress at their own pace doing things they enjoyed. Together, mums found simple swaps to healthier food alternatives, and free ways to get fitter and have fun as a family. Through this we saw inactive women take a journey to being active four days a week, and a 38 percent increase in fruit consumption by the end of the programme.”

One of the simplest programme asks was getting families to consider the traffic light messages on food labels. As one mum said

“Normally our meal would be floating in oil, and a lot of frying. I don't do that anymore. Also now we do a lot of veggies and fruits before it was all meat. It's about small steps, having a laugh and learning together.”

Another critical success factor for the programme was that it was delivered in community venues and schools in a simple, relatable way. Sharon Gibson, Head teacher of Devonshire Infants said:

“I am absolutely thrilled with the quality of delivery and the response and engagement of our families in Make, Move & Munch”

Aware of the strategic value of the programme to the region, Sara Woodall, Accord's Executive Director of Communities highlights:

“The programme really does support the West Midlands Combined Authority commitments to reduce Cardio Vascular Disease across the region. Sandwell has the highest preventable mortality rate from CVD for under 75yrs in the West Midlands. If we can get young people and families to move a little more and eat a little better now, then we can really inspire a culture change which is also great news for our economy.”

The next steps for the Make, Move & Munch include the roll out of another 14 programmes across the seven Sandwell Learning Community in primary schools across the Borough. There is also scope for the programme to become embedded in health promotion across Sandwell and beyond, as Angela Blair, Public Health Sandwell explains:

“The evaluation around Make, Move & Munch in Sandwell has been discussed at a the Public Health England West

Midlands seminar where their scope and relevance for future social prescribing, school health improvement and prevention programme development were positively explored by a diverse group of almost 40 stakeholders from across the region.â

To find about more about Make, Move & Munch in Sandwell, and to read the full evaluation report, take a look at <https://accordgroup.org.uk/about/projects-and-partnerships>
