



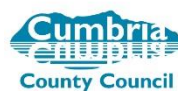
Diminishing Disadvantage Healthy Movers Evaluation

October 2018 – March 2019

Our Vision:
Everyone in Cumbria is
appropriately physically
active as part of their
everyday life.



Be part of it!



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INTRODUCTION

1. HEALTHY MOVERS BACKGROUND

Nationally, statistics tell us that just 9% of boys and 10% of girls aged between 2-4 are sufficiently physically active. Sedentary behaviour has become widespread and it is slowly being accepted as the norm. This is leading to children dying five years earlier than previous generations due to inactivity. This is a trend that must be reversed.

The Youth Sports Trust Healthy Movers programme has been designed to do just that. Both families and practitioners are supported to develop the necessary skills and knowledge; enabling children to increase their self-esteem, movement and ability to learn.

During 2016/17 Active Cumbria led on a pilot roll out of Healthy Movers (formerly Smart Start) in Cumbria. The intention was to implement the programme with families of children in chosen settings, using physical literacy as a means of increasing physical activity, and improving young children's readiness to learn. The pilot was externally evaluated by the University of Northumbria and shown to increase young children's participation in daily physical activity, leading to improved concentration and engagement with learning.

2. AIMS OF HEALTHY MOVERS

The Healthy Movers programme formed Strand 5 of the Diminishing Disadvantage project. In order to support the overarching aims of the project, the focus of the Healthy Movers strand was to;

- *Use physical literacy as a means of increasing physical activity and improving young children's readiness to learn.*
- *Embed a sustainable approach to physical activity in the early years contributing towards social and emotional wellbeing.*
- *Improve parental engagement regarding Physical Activity.*

3. EVALUATION METHODS

The intention of the evaluation was to monitor and evaluate the Healthy Movers strand of the project. The evaluation concentrated upon assessing the impact on practitioners and children through obtaining information directly after the training, and a subsequent activity conducted three months into the delivery phase.

The focus was upon capturing the views of participants in relation to their experiences, and subsequent impact upon their knowledge, skills and confidence. Furthermore, the evaluation has sought to evidence the impact this had upon those children participating.

KEY FINDINGS

I. WHAT WAS DELIVERED?



80% of practitioners rated their training experience as very good.

In addition practitioners were asked to identify any additional benefits they had acquired through the Healthy Movers training.



2. IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The baseline survey completed by practitioners attending the Healthy Movers training highlighted that 77.5% of respondents felt that Physical Activity and play was very important in their schools.

In addition, practitioners were asked to compare the importance of Physical Activity in relation to other areas, namely speech and language development and social skills. The findings highlighted that 90% rated physical activity and play as either very or equally important.

90% of practitioners believe that physical activity is as important as other subjects.

Alongside capturing views regarding attitudes towards physical activity, practitioners were asked to consider what both helped and restricted them to support children's physical activity and play within their schools. Analysis of the responses highlighted that the most common factors were as follows;

What Helps

- *Outdoor Space*
- *Positive Role Models*
- *Motivated and knowledgeable staff*
- *A range of ideas and resources*

What Restricts

- *Lack of specific resources*
- *Time Pressures*
- *Competition with other areas of the curriculum*
- *Lack of available space*

3. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

80% of practitioners work with parents to promote the importance of Physical Activity.

Prior to the Healthy Movers training 27% of practitioners surveyed outlined that they already worked with parents to promote physical activity.

Results from the second survey conducted in March, outlined that 80% of practitioners were now working with parents, a significant increase of 53%.

To support the programme and improve the engagement of parents each participating school was provided with a supply of Healthy Movers packs, enough to cater for all Reception aged children within their schools. The packs provide the opportunity for parents to build upon the activities their children learn within school. The activities are designed to develop balance and movement using simple equipment that can be found within the home.



Armathwaite School Healthy Movers

*“Healthy Movers packs were a big hit and we have seen parents sharing what physical activities the children do out of school **increase** a lot. Colleagues who attended the course including myself feel it has given us a wave of **new ideas** and made **PE** more enjoyable all round. We love healthy movers!” (Practitioner, South Cohort)*

4. IMPACT ON PRACTITIONERS

Directly after the Healthy Movers training sessions the majority of practitioners reported that their motivation and inspiration had increased. During the post-delivery phase motivation remained equally high, highlighting practitioner's passion for physical activity.

93% of practitioners reported that their motivation and inspiration to improve children's physical activity and play had increased.



Westfield Primary Healthy Movers

*“Children are more **engaged** with the sessions. My knowledge has increased and confidence to take sessions has grown.” (Practitioner, North Cohort)*

Alongside changes to their motivation and inspiration, practitioners also reported that their knowledge and skills had increased. 97% of respondents felt more equipped to support physical activity and play with regards to the knowledge acquired through the training. Although the second survey reported a slight decline with responses closer to 86%, this could be attributed to the fact that the greatest gains occurred directly after the training. More respondents opted for ‘Increased a lot’ during the baseline survey whereas the second survey leaned more towards ‘Increased slightly’.

5. IMPACT ON CHILDREN

The second survey which was conducted during the delivery phase of the programme prompted practitioners to consider the direct impact, and changes that had occurred to the participating children. Questions were asked in relation to both the children's enjoyment and participation, and their knowledge and attitudes towards play and physical activity.

Our findings highlighted that;

80% of practitioners felt children's enjoyment and participation in physical activity and play had increased.

In addition to the above 73% of practitioners felt that the children's skills and attitudes towards Physical Activity had also increased.



Petteril Bank Healthy Movers

“The children enjoy the Healthy Movers sessions and are much more settled and concentrate better in our 'phonics' lessons which follow it.” (Practitioner, West Cohort)

*“The children's **ability** to catch objects has greatly improved. They **love** using the music with the activities.” (Practitioner, South Cohort)*

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the Healthy Movers programme set out to measure the impact that physical activity has upon a child's development and readiness to learn. The programme focused upon the provision of a dedicated training session and supporting resources, seeking to enable schools to embed a sustainable approach to physical activity in the early years.

Analysis of the findings in relation to the three main aims of the project concluded the following;

Physical Literacy to increase physical activity and improve readiness to learn

Practitioners were able to provide examples and evidence of the impact they believed the Healthy Movers programme had made within their schools. A 75% increase in skills and attitudes was positively reported, and a greater understanding of gross motor skills development was highlighted.

A sustainable approach to physical activity in the early years

The increase in motivation, understanding and skills had prompted practitioners to feel more engaged and able to deliver more meaningful activity in their schools. Practitioners felt more empowered to ask for new resources, whilst also making better use of those they already had. In addition a greater emphasis was placed upon utilising their outdoor space.

Engagement of Parents

The evaluation highlighted a 57% increase in the number of schools working with parents post the Healthy Movers training. A strong emphasis was placed upon introducing the programme to parents and stressing the importance that Physical Activity has upon their overall development. The Healthy Movers home packs were a real success both in and out of school.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To support the findings of the evaluation several recommendations have been identified;

1. SUSTAIN AND GROW PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Whilst good progress has been made, the challenge will be for schools to sustain what they are doing and consider their plans for future cohorts of children. It is recommended that practitioners ensure that this continues to form part of their day to day planning, apply the principles of the Healthy Movers training and build upon existing activities. Good practice is already emerging which could be cascaded further.

2. RAISE THE PROFILE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN EARLY YEARS

The training made practitioners acutely aware of the links between physical, social and emotional development. The importance of developing physical literacy skills at an early age needs to be embedded within schools, and employees need to be supported in terms of their development. It is recommended that schools explore opportunities to share learning and key messages, adopting a whole school approach.

3. SUPPORT PRACTITIONERS TO SHARE BEST PRACTICE

Practitioners welcomed the opportunity to network with other practitioners during the training sessions. It is recommended that they seek to explore opportunities through the existing PE networks co-ordinated by Active Cumbria, ensuring that Early Years provision forms an integral part of discussions moving forward.

4. INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THE WIDER EARLY YEARS SECTOR

Whilst not an action directly attributable to schools, it is recommended that partnership approaches between schools, health partners, communities and other settings could be considered to explore future activities on a local footprint.

5. INCREASED USE OF THE PRIMARY SPORTS PREMIUM ACROSS THE EARLY YEARS

One of the most commonly cited reasons as to which factors restrict Physical Activity in schools referred to the lack of specific resources and space for early years provision. Many practitioners referred to the current use of the Primary Sports Premium and the scope to ensure that this filters down to early year's provision. It is recommended that schools seek to utilise funding to ensure that age appropriate resources and opportunities are made available.



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