Child health interventions

Researchers from the department of Psychological Sciences, University of Worcester have conducted two large scale evaluation studies of behaviour change interventions targeted at children and families:

- Regional evaluation of weight-management programmes
- Evaluation of the Food Dudes healthy eating programme

Regional evaluation of child weight management programmes

This research evaluated seven child weight management programmes in the West Midlands between 1st July 2007 and 1st July 2009:

1. Carnegie Fun for Life: Walsall
2. Fitter Families: Stoke on Trent
3. Goals: Sandwell
4. MEND: Birmingham; Coventry; Dudley; Herefordshire; North Staffordshire; Sandwell; Shropshire; Stoke on Trent; Walsall; Warwickshire; Wolverhampton; Worcestershire;
5. One Body One Life: Coventry
6. Watch It!: Birmingham
7. YWB?: Telford and Wrekin

The study involved an audit of the Standard Evaluation Framework (SEF) essential and desirable data collected by each intervention programme, a review of programme materials, including the theoretical rationale and evidence base for each intervention programme, an assessment of physical and psychosocial benefits to programme participants and an economic evaluation of the interventions.

Our research has been used by commissioners of child weight management programmes to inform decisions about future funding allocation to programmes involved in the evaluation. Read more here: http://bit.ly/11sPi7H

Our publications

Regional evaluation of weight management programmes for children and families.

Recommendations for Commissioners of Weight Management Programmes for Children and Families.

Weight management programmes for children and families: A toolkit for measuring behaviour change, psychosocial wellbeing and participant satisfaction.


Evaluation of the Food Dudes programme

We recently undertook the first long-term evaluation of the ‘Food Dudes Programme’, a school based health promotion initiative for primary school children. In recent years, large sums of money have been invested in interventions to improve children’s fruit and vegetable intake, but do they work?

Commissioned by Wolverhampton Primary Care Trust and funded by Department of Health West Midlands, we set out to discover whether the Food Dudes Programme brought about changes in children’s consumption of fruit and vegetables, at school and at home and whether these could be sustained over a period of time.

Over a period of 12 months, the team visited 15 primary schools across the West Midlands and measured food intake at school and home: before the programme started, at three months and one year post intervention using a combination of weighed intake, visual estimation and photographic food diaries. Children’s food intake was recorded at break-time and during school lunchtime. Children’s knowledge and attitudes towards healthy eating, family eating habits and the experiences of school staff were also assessed using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. This enabled the team to explore possible reasons for any changes in child behaviour and also identify reasons for children not changing their behaviours or not maintaining changes in the long term.

The intervention had a positive impact on children’s consumption of fruit and vegetables; particularly three months following the intervention but this was not sustained 12 months later. Interestingly, larger increases in fruit and vegetable consumption were found for children who consumed school meals at lunchtime compared to those who brought in a packed lunch. Children’s break-time consumption of fruit and vegetables increased in schools receiving the intervention three months following the programme however also did not lead to longer term changes in eating behaviour. Although the programme worked well in school, the impact at home was less clear and fruit and vegetable consumption decreased over the course of the study.

Our findings have been presented at national and international conferences including the British Psychological Society’s annual conference and the annual meeting of the International Society of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity in Texas in addition to a number of publications in peer reviewed journals.


