

## **Outcomes from the networking seminar and extractions from programmes targeting this group**

### **Important to remember**

We do not want to instil panic and over react as many children grow into their weight  
Rather than a 'traditional' advice giving approach, a behavioural approach has been shown to be more effective when supporting clients with lifestyle change At the core of the process is working in a more client centred way where parents and carers and their families feel enabled to control the decision making process based on what is right for them

### **Key messages**

There are no "good" and "bad" foods. It is about balance

Eating cannot be separated from lifestyle issues.

Avoid mixed messages Remove conflicting messages i.e. Advertising, vending machines with unhealthy snack options

Messages need to be delivered to children in a way which they understand and which interests them.

Messages need to be adapted to various age groups

Messages need to be consistent and recurrent as changes are likely to take time

Allow time for change

Give the children ownership of making changes

Manage behavioural issues to influence eating in the following ways:

- Activity and leisure time
- Social awareness
- Family relationships

5-11 year olds and their families need close support and assurance.

One parent at least to be involved in the interaction

In group sessions is not advisable to weigh children. If they wish to know their weight it is something that they can do in the privacy of their own home. It is better to talk about how they feel.

### **Build confidence**

When relating to the child use:

- Empathy – not sympathy;
- Constructive non-judgemental approach
- Supportive language
- Reassurance
- Sensitivity

Introduce new activities so they have opportunity to find something that they like

Creative activity is motivating as is non-competitive and informal in approach

Choose an appropriate venue. Informal environment with an emphasis on fun rather than skill development

### **Partnership Work**

These children need a complete package of care which each agency can only partly provide because of limited resources therefore need to plan a team approach

Avoid professional arrogance and identify boundaries to clarify roles in supporting the child.

Information and support to community clubs / leisure services / sport clubs

### **Parental involvement**

There is only a 50% probability of being able to successfully help an overweight child if one parent is overweight;

If both parents are overweight then there is no chance of behavioural change unless it is the right time for the whole family to embrace the issues together

Ask yourself if this is the right time for the family to change

### **Respect the parent's role**

With parents being the ultimate role models it is essential that they are provided with the knowledge and support to assist their children in making these changes to either their eating habits or physical activity patterns. Parenting skills are needed to encourage involvement of children in healthier lifestyle

- Educate the parents. Invite to healthy lifestyle presentations/workshops with their children. E.g. cooking skills, fun physical activity, packing a healthier packed lunch. / understanding food labels ,smart shopping etc. Involve other parents who are willing to share their skills
- Add info on to chats with another main agenda e.g. Healthy eating messages or information on healthier packed lunches, on to events like harvest festivals , assemblies or parent evenings. Providesome follow up leaflet for them to take away if they wish.
- Organise physical activity sessions that parents and children can take part in together Provide taster sessions for parents, with info sheets to be taken away.
- Provide information in the schools newsletter or on the schools web site

### **Practical steps that can be taken**

It is not recommended that children are weighed during any programme thought this is something that parents can arrange in a relaxed manner at home if there is co-operation from the child

Parents can follow the **ABC** as the first steps to helping their children towards a better health

#### **Availability**

Direct children's' eating habits by controlling availability. You can't complain children don't eat fruit if there isn't a bowl of fruit in the house. Buy more interesting fruit and less interesting biscuits. Always serve vegetables at lunch meal times Encourage water as a drink by keeping a chilled supply in the fridge Quantity is important too- buy small or regular sized portions and reduce the chances of excess consumption by avoiding super size products

#### **Behaviour**

Parents are powerful role models for young children. Seeing parents enjoying vegetables increases the chances that children will view them positively too. Try to be more active in your family life - walk or cycle for short journeys rather than rely on the car. Consider how your behaviour influences your children attitudes so if you want to treat them take them to the local swimming pool rather than to a burger bar

#### **Consistency**

Protecting your weight needs to be a lifelong habit. Children quickly spot inconsistencies and exploit them. If you mean it, stick to it.