



## How libraries in West Sussex are playing a key role in improving the public's health

West Sussex County Council's public health team have extended their reach into communities through a range of council teams including library, education, family and environmental services, in order to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities for local residents.

Through the county's extensive library network, the council has tapped into a valuable, non-clinical channel that extends into deprived and harder to reach areas.

### Libraries as a key channel for improving public health

West Sussex County Council's Libraries Peer Challenge (2015) highlighted that libraries could be key spaces for innovation in public health and improving health and wellbeing in local communities.

Taking this forward, the council set up a joint working group of library service and public health staff to develop an action plan that would identify opportunities to maximise reach across communities. Together they developed an agreement that library space could be used for the delivery of public health outreach work such as NHS health checks, stop smoking services and as a channel for communicating social marketing campaigns, such as [Change4Life](#) to families.



This partnership has positively evolved over recent years, with libraries supporting both core and wider public health programmes, linked to increased health literacy, self-help, and reduction on loneliness and isolation.

### Bringing Change4Life to West Sussex

In January 2017, Change4Life launched the national Be Food Smart campaign, empowering families to take control of their diet by making healthier food and drink choices. The Food Scanner app was launched, allowing consumers to scan the barcode of products to reveal the total sugar, saturated fat and salt inside. The app also included hints and tips for adults plus fun food detective activities for kids.

Leads from public health and the library service decided to engage local families by hosting a low cost Change4Life Be Food Smart challenge in all 36 of the county's libraries, building on a Sugar Smart challenge that ran in 2016 through the county's libraries.

The Change4Life challenge involved a Be Food Smart quiz and treasure hunt for children and families, with the answers hidden throughout the library. Starting in late January to coincide with the Be Food Smart national campaign, the challenge ran over the period of a month.

Participants learned key tips and facts about healthy eating as they completed the treasure hunt. Those who completed the challenge were entered into a draw, with twelve contestants picked at random to receive a family healthy eating cook book funded by the library service.





Prize-winner Oliver Page-Berelian with his family  
at Southbourne library



## Results

By working in partnership, public health and library teams achieved the following results:

- ✓ A **25% increase** in the number of Be Food Smart packs distributed and a **doubling of competition entries** from 2016 to 2017.
- ✓ Development of an **aligned marketing strategy** between the library service and public health campaign calendar, to ensure coordinated and consistent public health messages throughout communications channels.
- ✓ Access to the libraries' social media channels increased the council's online reach to **over 115,000** members of the public.
- ✓ This activity has inspired Change4Life to create **resources specifically for libraries**, that will launch in early 2019 with the upcoming nutrition campaign.

## Key findings

- ✓ Non-clinical community hubs such as libraries can play an important role in supporting the integration and normalisation of public health messages.
- ✓ Using free Change4Life resources available to order on the **Campaign Resource Centre** kept costs low and allowed all participants to receive a take home Be Food Smart pack. Other resources to support activation of the campaign were also available, such as posters and ready to use and customisable social media content.
- ✓ Ensuring activities in the treasure hunt relied on strong visuals and limited text meant that the activity was inclusive and could be completed by children across a wide age range and with varied levels of reading comprehension.
- ✓ Due to staff availability and budget constraints, libraries were more likely to activate if they were provided with ready to use hard-copy resources.

Visit the **Campaign Resource Centre** for more ideas on how to bring Change4Life to your local area, or email [partnerships@phe.gov.uk](mailto:partnerships@phe.gov.uk)

