How Change4Life is supporting families in Leeds to be food smart

What is the scale of the challenge?

In Leeds, almost a quarter (21%) of Reception children and over a third of Year 6 pupils (35%) are either overweight or obese.

Leeds is a city with considerable socio-economic inequalities. One fifth of people in Leeds live in areas ranked in the most deprived 10% in England. In 2015, some 21% of children in Leeds were classed as living in poverty, rising to 40% in the three most deprived wards of the city.

Childhood obesity in deprived parts of the city is double that in the most affluent areas and barriers to making healthier lifestyle changes are often higher. Families in deprived areas are therefore a particular priority for Leeds City Council.

What is Leeds City Council’s approach?

The Leeds City Council public health team overcome the lack of a social marketing budget by maximising use of the Change4Life brand and resources to promote healthy eating and behaviour change for little or no cost.

Public services are commissioned to focus on nutrition, physical activity and weight management. These include local after school physical activity clubs such as multi-sports, dance and skateboarding, healthy eating and cooking sessions. They all provide valuable access to the target audience and a local, trusted voice.

By working closely with their partners, the council has been able to amplify its overall aims and strategy for improving nutrition and physical activity in Leeds. Collaborative workshops allow the council to share their latest insights and priorities with partners, tap into local expertise and brainstorm upcoming opportunities.

By engaging in this process, the council can ensure partner activities are ‘on brief’ with the local and national strategy, and activities are linked in terms of their timing, focus, content and reach.

Developing close working relationships with health services in the community has allowed the council to easily share updates on new Change4Life tools, resources and upcoming activities.

“The Change4Life campaign is making a valuable difference in Leeds. It is really popular with local schools and encourages children and their families to switch to healthier behaviours. Whether it is eating a decent breakfast or reducing sugary drink consumption, there are lots of ways to support children and everyone else to be a healthy weight and this investment in healthier behaviour can pay dividends for years to come.”

Councillor Rebecca Charlwood
Chair of the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board

Leeds City Council
Bringing Be Food Smart to Leeds

In 2016, the Leeds public health team attended a Public Health England social marketing event to hear the latest audience insight and strategy for the Change4Life Be Food Smart campaign.

This helped inform planning by giving the council off-the-shelf ideas for planning local activities (for example, the behaviour change model of Aware, Inform, Motivate, Sustain), and ensured activity was timed to fit alongside the national campaign.

The team used a range of free materials and collateral from Public Health England’s Campaign Resource Centre such as customisable ‘empty belly’ posters, tailored tweets and an email signature.

“‘We have a good infrastructure with our partners, who are experts in interacting with these audiences and happy to get involved. There is real power for us in using endorsed communication channels and having them as brand ambassadors. Involving them in the planning stage has meant all the ideas they have executed have been on brief and in line with the national activity.’”

Emma Strachan, Health Improvement Specialist (Food), Leeds City Council

Working together to be food smart

The Be Food Smart campaign has been brought to life in Leeds by frontline partners such as:

- sports clubs
- leisure services
- children’s centres
- schools
- charities
- NHS services
- social services

The local voices and expertise of these on-the-ground services have amplified the national campaign in Leeds, making it tangible and relevant to local families.

Frontline partners have personally delivered Be Food Smart messages and placed tools directly into the hands of families, demonstrating how these can help with making healthier choices. Individually and together, partners have helped normalise the idea that being food smart is the way to go in Leeds.

The collaborative approach taken by Leeds City Council and partners has a cumulative effect. With partners using consistent, localised campaign tools such as the Leeds Food Detective, target audience families are exposed to the same messages more often.

Leeds Food Detective

Leeds City Council took a key image from the Be Food Smart campaign to create the Leeds Food Detective. Partners have been encouraged to use this character in engagement events and on their own social media to remind and encourage the public to continue exploring what is hidden in their food.
Tailoring Be Food Smart for Leeds

Leeds Rhinos

Leeds Rhinos Foundation, the affiliated charity for the Leeds Rhinos rugby club, uses sport as an engagement tool to deliver important lifestyle messages that inspire positive changes to behaviour. The Foundation supported the council’s work to promote Be Food Smart through social media posts which highlighted nutritional advice and promoted the Be Food Smart app during the delivery of the Foundation’s school and family programmes.

Five tweets were made from the Foundation’s Twitter account which has 9,500 followers. The tweets included the hashtag #BeFoodSmart, a tag for @Change4Life, and a link to further information, either on the Change4Life website or to an information page on the Leeds Rhinos Foundation website.

Free analytics data, available through the Twitter account dashboard, showed the Be Food Smart Twitter activity generated 258 engagements with the Leeds Rhinos Foundation’s Twitter community.

The tweets featuring photos of the players were most successful and led to retweets and click-throughs for further information.

To support this activity further, Be Food Smart was promoted through the Foundation’s Facebook page which has over 4,000 followers, on the Leeds Rhinos Foundation website and in an article in the Yorkshire Evening Post, which has over 74,000 online visitors per day and circulates around 18,000 print copies per day.

Active Leeds leisure services

Active Leeds, part of Leeds City Council, has 17 leisure centres. The Active Leeds community programme ‘Leeds let’s get active’ provides free and reduced price sport and physical activity opportunities to help people get active.

Active Leeds has hosted the Be Smart digital banner and sign-up URL since the campaign was launched. They have also supported the Be Food Smart campaign through their Pop Up Sports programme, which provides sports coaching in local communities, especially those with inequalities around access. Aimed at 8 to 18 year olds, trained coaches deliver free or low cost sessions on a range of different sports in locations where there is no formal sports club.

Through Pop Up Sports they were able to show families how to sign up to the Change4Life website, and engaged with around 75 target families.

The Leeds Rhinos Foundation shared images of their team promoting the Be Food Smart app on social media.
Feel Good Factor

Feel Good Factor work with communities across Leeds to provide activities, projects and services to improve access to health opportunities for some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

They run free Cook4Life courses, which include four sessions over four weeks, with information about nutrition, useful tips for healthy eating and cooking, recipe practice and a dish of food to take home. All ingredients and equipment are provided free of charge.

To support ongoing behaviour change from the course, Feel Good Factor has promoted the Be Food Smart app in their Cook4Life sessions. Over 50 people in the first quarter of 2017 have been personally introduced to the app and shown how it can support them to make healthier choices for their family.

Meanwood Children’s Centre

Like many children’s centres, Meanwood are well placed to reach Change4Life target families. They offer a range of groups and services for families at their centre and through outreach services.

The centre helped raise the profile of Be Food Smart by displaying posters in the nursery for all families to see. They also took ‘How Food Smart are you?’ packs to families visited on outreach to give a personal introduction to the issues and to the Be Food Smart app. Around 200 families were reached with this activity.

Leeds and York partnership, NHS Foundation Trust

Be Food Smart sessions were delivered by Healthy Living Advisors to 20 patients at the Becklin Centre, an inpatient ward at St James’s Hospital.

The app was used to scan everyday products including those from discount food stores. The sessions also used the ‘How Food Smart are you?’ packs to look at the daily recommendations of saturated fat, sugar and salt and at the traffic light food labelling system as a way for service users to make better informed choices for them and their families.

Both patients and ward staff participating were surprised by the levels of sugar and salt in foods they considered to be healthy, especially when they compared levels to the daily recommendations.

Information from the Be Food Smart sessions is now embedded in ongoing health promotion sessions across Becklin’s wards, reaching around 20 people per week.

Schools

As a finale to activity in Leeds, a local school is working with the public health team and school health and wellbeing service to organise a Leeds Food Detective Treasure Hunt. The event helps celebrate the campaign and showcases to other schools how healthy eating messages can be easily delivered to children and promoted to parents in innovative ways.

The treasure hunt is being designed by the team and school in partnership to demonstrate:

- how to embed the Be Food Smart messages on healthy eating into the curriculum using free School Zone resources
- how to shape the school environment to support the campaign messages
- ideas for activities and free resources to engage parents.

The event will bring benefits to all involved:

- it’s a fantastic opportunity to engage pupils and parents on the benefits of healthy eating
- insight and ideas from the event will help the public health team and School Health and Wellbeing Service design a guide for other schools on how to deliver the event and promote healthy eating in school
- the school will be recognised for its role in sharing good practice with other schools and as an ambassador of the Be Food Smart campaign.
**Evaluation and assessment**

The unique URL provided by Public Health England to Leeds City Council for the 2017 Change4Life Be Food Smart campaign allowed the team to access data to help track the results of their campaign activities. The council received website sign up information and email open rate data from Public Health England to measure the impact of their own activities against other local authority areas which helps to demonstrate return on investment at a local level.

**Results**

- Involving partners in the planning process and sharing overall strategy has helped create buy-in to council priorities and directly contributed to the quality and diversity of activities, as partners have delivered services with the wider context in mind.
- Nutrition and physical activity messages are communicated on the ground in a consistent way by using Public Health England material, but this can be adapted to a local context, the spokesperson, channel and whichever local brands are also present.
- Messages, information and tools on healthy eating and physical activity reach the target audience at a highly relevant moment – when they are actively engaging with these topics.
- With Leeds’ public health team providing leadership and resources, partners can concentrate on engaging and delivering messages and materials without having to develop these themselves. This saves each partner time and money, and avoids duplication.
- There’s a valuable halo effect in activities where the Change4Life brand has prominence. Partner work on nutrition and activity can benefit from endorsement of a national brand.

“How having off-the-shelf resources that are easily accessible on the Campaign Resource Centre saves a huge amount of time.”

Emma Strachan, Health Improvement Specialist (Food)
Leeds City Council