

FSA takes small steps to encourage young people to eat well, get active and feel good

Tuesday 2 February 2010

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) today officially launched SmallSteps4Life – an innovative approach to motivating young people to take simple steps towards improving their health and well-being, both inside and outside the classroom.

The programme also supports the Change4Life movement, and is part of Get Set – the London 2012 education programme that will help deliver the lasting legacy of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

SmallSteps4Life invites young people to set themselves challenges relating to the themes of eating well, getting active and feeling good, over a period of at least four weeks. Examples include: eat a healthy breakfast every day, walk to and from school, and get more sleep.

SmallSteps4Life is the result of an FSA research project, piloted by the National Children's Bureau in six schools in Kent during 2008. Four months after the end of the pilot, over 70% of primary school students and 65% of secondary school students who completed questionnaires reported that they were still going with their health challenges.

Gill Fine, Director of Consumer Choice and Dietary Health at the FSA, said: 'SmallSteps4Life is a unique project because it addresses healthy eating, exercise and emotional health. We know from the pilot in Kent that the approach can really make a difference to young people. The results showed it made them feel fitter, healthier, and more positive – and most importantly, they had fun!'

London 2012 Sustainability Ambassador and Olympian, James Cracknell, is helping to ensure the sustainable nature of the 2012 Games, and helped to launch SmallSteps4Life. James said: 'SmallSteps4Life is a novel and exciting initiative that supports London 2012's sustainability and Get Set education programme goals to encourage healthy and active lifestyles.

'I am proud to help launch this unique project that addresses well-being in a way that is fun and meaningful for young people. My SmallSteps4Life challenge is to eat breakfast every day and keep positive so I always have the energy to do my best. I look forward to seeing the kind of creative challenge ideas that young minds come up with as they are shared on the SmallSteps4Life website.'

Public Health Minister Gillian Merron said: 'SmallSteps4Life builds on the success of the Government's Change4Life campaign, giving school children the chance to make the small changes to their daily routines that can add up to big health benefits.

'We've seen some fantastic results in the SmallSteps4Life pilot schools – now we want to see young people across the country getting involved.'

From today the website has been fully updated, so that all primary and secondary schools have access to the complete interactive site. There is a variety of resources for young people on the site, such as areas where they can post their own challenge ideas, share their thoughts on how they are getting on, play games and take part in a quiz. There are also opportunities

for teachers share their schools' successes and nominate individuals or groups who have done particularly well as SmallSteps4Life 'champions'.

The FSA is working with a range of partners across the UK on SmallSteps4Life, including youth charity The Prince's Trust, Fairbridge West, ContinYou and the National Organisation for Pupil Referral Units, to ensure SmallSteps4Life reaches vulnerable young people throughout the UK.

Notes for editors

- Printed resources are also available for schools to order, to help them bring their challenges to life. The free resource pack includes wall charts and stickers to track progress, certificates and posters. These can be ordered through the website: www.direct.gov.uk/smallsteps4life.
- Get Set is the official London 2012 education programme for schools and colleges across the UK. The Get Set website contains a whole host of free resources for 3–19 year olds, which explore the Olympic values of friendship, excellence and respect and the Paralympic values of courage, determination, inspiration and equality. Get Set also provides additional resources and education programmes to enhance learning in a number of additional topics and subjects, including healthy and active lifestyles. Schools and colleges can register on Get Set to gain access to additional resources, and those who join the Get Set network gain the right to use the London 2012 education logo and will also receive priority access to exclusive London 2012 rewards and opportunities. Visit www.london2012.com/getset to find out more.
- The London 2012 sustainability programme covers five key themes: climate change, biodiversity, waste, inclusion and healthy living. The London 2012 Sustainability Plan, published in November 2007, outlined London 2012's commitment to ensuring that the 2012 Games are managed in a way that remains economically viable, but is also environmentally sound, socially responsible and ethical. Visit www.london2012.com/sustainability to find out more.
The London 2012 Inspire programme is run by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is a broad participation programme spanning sport participation, education, sustainability, volunteering, and business opportunities and skills. By awarding the Inspire Mark, London 2012 recognises the new opportunities that are being created to inspire young people and encourage the whole of the UK to join in.
London 2012 has extended the Inspire Mark for the programme to recognise the pioneering work of all the project partners to encourage young people to choose healthier lifestyles in the run up to and beyond the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- SmallSteps4Life is a key part of the Change4Life movement. Change4Life is a groundbreaking campaign bringing government, community groups, health workers, teachers, and businesses together. Our shared goal is to help everyone eat well, move more and live longer. For more information visit www.change4life.com
- The National Children's Bureau's (NCB) mission is to advance the well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. As a membership and infrastructure support agency for the children's sector in England and Northern Ireland, NCB provides essential information on policy, research and best practice for members and the members of its wide range of partnership bodies, which operate under charitable status and are based in its London headquarters. For further information visit www.ncb.org.uk

- The Food Standards Agency leads on SmallSteps4Life across the UK with support from current partners including the Department of Health, Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Youth Sport Trust, National Children's Bureau, Change4Life, National Healthy Schools Programme, the School Food Trust and London 2012 organisers.
- The four partners that will work on local engagement with vulnerable young people are:

The Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust helps change young lives in the UK through practical and financial support, developing skills as well as confidence and motivation. Since the charity was founded by HRH The Prince of Wales in 1976, it has helped over 600,000 young people across the UK and continues to support 100 more every working day.

The Prince's Trust will deliver SmallSteps4Life through 11 of its in-school xl programmes in Northern Ireland and Scotland. The Trust's xl programme helps young people who are facing difficulties at school, including those at risk of exclusion. A key objective of this project will be to produce a toolkit and case studies that can be used as guidance for engaging disadvantaged young people in healthier lifestyle activities.

www.princes-trust.org.uk

National Organisation for Pupil Referral Units (soon to be known as 'short stay schools') Covering up to 40% of PRUs and working across England and Wales to, among other issues, encourage the development of creative and innovative approaches in working with young people with a range of complex social, emotional and special educational needs. A toolkit development approach will be taken, based on individual behaviour, the emotional and social needs of the seven PRUs involved in England.

www.shortstayschools.org.uk

ContinYou

A community learning charity working across the UK using learning to tackle inequality and build social inclusion. ContinYou promotes learning opportunities to people of all ages who have gained the least from formal education and training. ContinYou will look to develop a 'How to Guide' for SmallSteps4Life to support teachers and the wider workforce in schools with extended services in the East Midlands and across a cluster of Community Focused Schools in Wales. SmallSteps4Life training will be developed to support a peer education approach linking to year 6 transition activities in secondary schools.

www.continyou.org.uk

Fairbridge West

Fairbridge work with young people, aged 13–25, who face multiple issues ranging from social exclusions and homelessness to antisocial behaviour, often without family support and existing on the margins of society. Fairbridge supports young people to develop the confidence, motivation and skills they need to turn their lives around. Fairbridge West (Bristol) plan to develop and trial SmallSteps4Life activities with 40 young people who would not have had the opportunity to be engaged with the website. A toolkit of good practice and training will be developed, with the plan to roll out to other youth workers using the Fairbridge model.

www.fairbridge.org.uk

- SmallSteps4Life evolved from a health challenge pilot programme. The Food Standards Agency commissioned the NCB to work with Kent Healthy Schools to pilot the 'Health Challenge' approach in three primary and three secondary schools in Kent. This aimed to help young people, their families and whole school communities initiate healthy lifestyle changes. This ran for four weeks in spring 2008, and over 1,000 students took part in both group and personal challenges, including walking a mile a day and trying new healthy foods. The main findings of an evaluation report on the Kent pilot programme showed that:
 - four months after the end of the Health Challenge, over 70% of primary school students and 65% of secondary school students who completed questionnaires reported that they were still going with their health challenges
 - all schools intended to repeat the programme in future, and all primary schools were continuing some activity throughout the school year
 - students' intentions to keep up healthy activities were high – with over 60% of primary school participants and just under half of secondary school participants reported sustained changes in activity, which they intended to keep up
 - schools felt the programme had linked well with the healthy schools agenda and kept health high in the priorities of school life

The full evaluation document can be found at the following link: www.foodbase.org.uk

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/2010/feb/smallstepslaunch>

View Report Details

Evaluation of a pilot intervention in Kent schools

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National Childrens Bureau

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Children's health has been an increasing concern and recent policy driven initiatives point to the importance of actively involving children and young people and their families in decisions about their health.

The Health Challenge Programme helps to support young people and the wider school community to make and sustain lifestyle changes that contributes positively on their health and well-being.

The pilot based in schools involved students and other participants choosing at least one challenge to maintain for a four week period. Challenges chosen fell under the following three themes: healthy eating, getting active or feeling good.