

Big Lottery Fund Research
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Support for Well-being
First year evaluation findings



The Big Lottery Fund's support for Well-being

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Our equality principles, mission and values

We are committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need. To find out more about our equality principles, mission and values, visit our website.

We care about the environment

The Big Lottery Fund seeks to minimise its negative environmental impact and only uses proper sustainable resources.

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Introduction

We support a variety of projects that improve the health and well-being of people who live in deprived areas and experience poor mental and physical health. Our £165 million, England wide, Well-being programme is funding a range of projects that aim to improve mental health, encourage healthy eating and engage people in increased levels of physical activity.



BIG's Well-being evaluation

In 2008, we commissioned the Centre for Local Economic Studies (CLES) and the New Economics Foundation (nef) to evaluate the impact of project activities that aim to improve the health and well-being of people in England. The evaluation is running between 2009 and 2013 and uses a robust set of standardised data collection tools.

The evaluation aims to understand:

- ▶ If and how projects are improving people's mental health, increasing participation in physical activity, encouraging healthy eating patterns and increasing levels of social well-being.
- ▶ Which types of projects are most successful in improving well-being and healthy lifestyles for different groups of people, such as older people and primary school children.
- ▶ Relationships between healthy eating, mental health, physical activity and social well-being.



First year evaluation findings¹

Projects are successfully targeting people with low levels of well-being

- ▶ 64 per cent of people show symptoms of depression when they first join a project. The most commonly reported symptoms of depression were ‘never feeling energised or lively’ and ‘never feeling happy or contented’.
- ▶ The majority of people are not meeting recommended five-a-day targets when they first visit a project. On average, people are eating three pieces of fruit or vegetables each day.
- ▶ People aged over 65 report low levels of physical activity when they first visit a project.
- ▶ Young people report poorer mental health and less healthy eating habits than older people.

¹The first evaluation findings are based on data from 173 questionnaires. The second year evaluation report will analyse the results of approximately 1,000 questionnaires.

- ▶ There are significant differences between attitudes towards healthy lifestyles and healthy behaviour.
- ▶ Although most respondents report a positive attitude towards healthy food, this does not always translate into healthy cooking or eating habits.

“I used to live off take-aways and ready meals but the cooking sessions have helped me to eat better”

Adult participating in the Poole Quay, Healthy Transitions, Foyer Federation project

Increasing access to fresh fruit and vegetables in Dudley

Dudley Healthy Retail, the Living Well West Midlands portfolio

Dudley Healthy Retail aims to increase fruit and vegetable consumption among children and their parents at Hawbush Primary School. Hawbush has a high proportion of children who eat less than two portions of fruit and vegetables per day and low levels of fresh fruit and vegetables available locally. The project is supporting a fruit and vegetable stallholder to visit the school twice a week and runs healthy cookery classes and food taster sessions for both parents and children.

Demand for healthy food is created through leaflets, free food tasting

sessions and free cooking classes. Tasting sessions and cooking classes offer parents and children the opportunity of trying new foods without worrying about the cost. However, some parents still say that the cost of fresh fruit and vegetables prevents them buying more healthy food.

Some parents have participated in the parental cookery classes and are trying healthier recipes at home. There is a broader understanding among the children who are participating in the project that fruit and vegetables are a healthy option, make them stronger and can be eaten as a snack instead of crisps and chocolate.

“Now I always have a piece of fruit before I go to my boxing club, because I know that it will give me energy”

School child participating in the Dudley Healthy Retail project





BIG's support for Well-being

Through the £165 million Well-being programme, we have supported a range of projects that aim to improve the health and well-being of people including:

- ▶ MIND's 'Time for Change' campaign that aims to end the discrimination faced by people who experience mental health problems.
- ▶ The Soil Association's Food for Life Partnership that works to engage young people in growing and cooking healthy, local, seasonal
- ▶ food. The Food for Life Partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture, healthy eating habits and the well-being of young people.
- ▶ Age Concern's 'Fit As A Fiddle' programme that aims to improve the mental and physical health of older people. We are supporting Age Concern to engage older people in a range of activities including gardening, local walks and sports such as badminton.

“My confidence has increased massively...I now have a reason to get up in the morning”

Adult participating in the Community Cafe in Gateshead, New Leaf New Life portfolio

Next steps

The next stage of the evaluation will use quantitative and qualitative methods of research to analyse the impact of different project activities for different groups of people. It will also explore relationships between healthy eating, physical activity and mental health.

If you would like to read the full evaluation report, please visit the Research and Learning page of the Big Lottery Fund's website www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

