
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

The 'Power of Sport' in Communities

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Widnes Vikings and Halton CCG Partnership: Widnes Vikings and Halton Clinical Commissioning Group have developed a working partnership which is focused on delivering innovative projects that lead to tangible health benefits for the local community. One example of this is their work on the successful World Record attempt for the most people participating in a group exercise video. Over 3,000 people of all ages and backgrounds from the community participated in the attempt the Vikings stadium, beating the previous record holders from Beijing. The attempt showcased how a sports club can work in a positive way with health authorities to engage the community for a common cause whilst delivering simple healthy lifestyle related messages.

The partnership understanding led to the creation of an integrated 'Community Director' post in April 2015 – the first of its kind in England. The focus of this post was on developing the Viking's community programmes across areas such as Education, Social Inclusion, Sport and Health. The partnership understands that the Vikings can develop programmes that engage hard to reach clients from a health perspective and through the integrated approach; the CCG can then link relevant health professionals into the projects to work with the participants.

Unlocking new investment into the partnership is key as proved through the link with the Cheshire and Merseyside Maternity Vanguard to deliver the 'Game Changer' project. Halton has a significantly higher percentage of overweight children in reception in compared to England and the North West with 36.2% of year 6 children in Halton classed as obese or overweight.

Game Changer represents an innovative approach to tackling obesity in children through promoting regular physical activity and healthy eating. The project contributes fully to the child obesity implementation plan and will support the year on year improvement trajectory for percentage of children who are overweight or obese. It has a simple Mission Statement: 'Make Halton school children the most active and healthy in England' and will work through utilising the brand of Widnes Vikings and its players to advocate the importance of children getting their daily physical activity and eating well.

With a major focus on tackling child obesity rates in Halton schools, 'Game Changer' aims to change behaviour by encouraging children to be physically active for 80 minutes per day (20 minutes more than government guidelines) whilst making healthy options for food and drink. Whilst the core focus is on promoting health and wellness, Widnes Vikings wants to build a new generation of rugby league fans who are strong, healthy and athletic.

Keywords: health; sport; obesity; integration; innovation
