

Insight driving innovation and impact

# Healthy Movers Dorset Case Study: Muddy Boots Nursery Schools

Enhancing confidence and physical literacy in children and collaboration between settings.

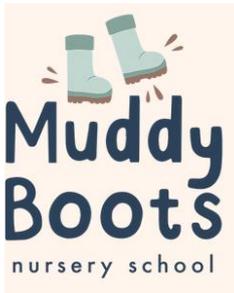
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# Introduction

Across Bournemouth and Poole, there are four early years settings under the name of Muddy Boots Nursery School. This case study focuses on two of them; one is a pack-away<sup>1</sup> nursery located in Hamworthy which caters for around 62 children from the age of two until they go to school, the other is located in Turlin Moor and also caters for around 60 children and includes a baby room.

Both Muddy Boots settings joined the Healthy Movers programme in 2021. Healthy Movers is delivered by the Youth Sport Trust (YST), in partnership with Public Health Dorset. The programme is designed to support two to five year olds' physical literacy, self-esteem and wellbeing, helping them gain a better start in life.

# Background



Prior to the Healthy Movers programme, both settings had a very outdoor based approach to delivering physical activity, for example twice daily learning walks. Both settings also offered yoga and dance activities with a focus on movement and music.

Following the Covid-19 lockdowns, the nursery managers noticed a decline in confidence in children – their personal, social, and emotional development had suffered. As the settings are located in a deprived area and the families of the settings are struggling, particularly over the lockdowns, the Muddy Boots managers felt motivated to provide them with additional support and resources through Healthy Movers.

The settings liked the idea of getting the parents involved, getting the children more active and more excited about being physically active, and supporting the children's emotional well-being.

# Activities

The nursery managers enjoyed the Healthy Movers training, in particular they appreciated being shown the simplicity of the activities, but also the ability to network. The managers cascaded the knowledge to their staff members in each setting, and now everyone at both Muddy Boots settings delivers Healthy Movers activities on a daily basis.

What was appreciated was the fact that the activities are simple to execute, with no expensive resources needed. This is of particular relevance for Muddy Boots in Hamworthy as it is a pack-away setting. Not having to store resources and being able to use everyday objects that they already have makes the activities easier to do.

**“What we loved about showing it to the parents is that it doesn't have to be expensive equipment. You can just gather things from your house.”**

**ZOE, NURSERY MANAGER AT MUDDY BOOTS TURLIN MOOR**

The manager at the Turlin Moor setting highlighted the value of Healthy Movers being adaptable so they can easily link it with other activities and topics they are currently focusing on. For example, when they had a focus on “transport” as a topic, they picked Healthy Movers activities that could be

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<sup>1</sup> A pack-away nursery is one where everything needs to be packed away at the end of each day so the space can be used by someone else.

linked to this. They were also able to take the Healthy Movers resources with them on a learning walk where they litter picked and talked about recycling.

Healthy Movers was easily incorporated into the settings' daily routines. As they are outdoor-based settings, they could take the resources, such as the ribbons for the "Wiggle Weave Watch" activity, with them to the park or to the beach and do the activities there.

**"It's just so lovely that it all fits together with everything that we're already doing. It all links so well, we couldn't have asked for it to be more simple and more effective."**

**ZOE, NURSERY MANAGER AT MUDDY BOOTS TURLIN MOOR**

The Turlin Moor setting created a box in which they put laminated photocopies of the activities for each card with all the resources, so the staff can just pick out the card and do it straight away. The Hamworthy setting incorporated a tick chart on the door where they track who is doing Healthy Movers and what they have done, to ensure that no activities are repeated. In particular, the resource cards were praised by the managers as "very self-explanatory" and that they can expand it to break down content for younger children.

In order to engage parents, the Muddy Boots settings in Dorset planned a joint Stay and Play session where around 60 parents from three settings came together at a local country park. Together they went through a selection of Healthy Movers activities. The managers of the settings emphasised that this helped broaden the parents' horizon in terms of what activities can be done, and it helped prepare them to do the activities at home with the backpacks. The feedback from parents was very positive. Since the Stay and Play session, the parents have reported doing the activities at home, and that they enjoy doing them with their children.

## Benefits

### Increasing knowledge and understanding among practitioners



Both managers agree that Healthy Movers has increased their knowledge in regard to how physical literacy links with other areas of development. This made them feel more confident in sharing that knowledge with parents and other staff members. The activities make it "simpler to realise" how it all links.

The managers both liked the process of attending the Healthy Movers training and then cascading that knowledge to their staff members. While the staff members appeared a bit apprehensive at first, it helped that the managers were able to supervise and support them to get comfortable with Healthy Movers. The managers observed an increase in confidence and competence when it came to their staff members leading Healthy Movers activities. It has become a normal part of their daily routines now.

**"The activities are so fun. The staff have really enjoyed it and got engaged in doing it."**

**ZOE, NURSERY MANAGER AT MUDDY BOOTS TURLIN MOOR**

## Enhancing children's physical literacy and self-confidence



The practitioners have noticed that children who were not active before Healthy Movers are now becoming more active as a result. The programme helped to improve their core mobility and stability, and they are now happy to engage with the resources and going outside.

The managers of Muddy Boots observed their children becoming more confident. They emphasised that the activities are simple and when the children are able to complete an activity successfully, they feel a sense of achievement. This in turn made them feel more confident to move onto other activities. The children now actively seek out Healthy Movers activities. The managers emphasised that this increase in physical activity and self-confidence was particularly rewarding to see after the negative impact of the pandemic and lockdowns.

**“They ask for specific activities that they like and they go and get the resources out of the box.”**

**ZOE, NURSERY MANAGER AT MUDDY BOOTS TURLIN MOOR**

## Enhanced collaboration between Muddy Boots settings



While the two Muddy Boots settings have always been in good contact, working collaboratively on Healthy Movers has enhanced their working relationships in an important way. Organising the joint Stay and Play session with the parents made the managers realise the value of partnership working and is something they are going to consider doing again in the future. As a consequence, they now aim to do at least one joint parent event each year with other Muddy Boots settings in the area.

Networking together and discussing what is working and not working in each settings as part of the programme has helped practitioners maintain the momentum of the programme and evolve the programme to be more effective.

**“It was really lovely seeing how other staff deliver it [Healthy Movers] as we are all delivering it in different ways. It was nice to see how enthusiastic the other staff were, which then affects your staff.”**

**STACEY, NURSERY MANAGER AT MUDDY BOOTS HAMWORTHY**

## Future

Both Muddy Boots settings are continuing to incorporate Healthy Movers into their daily routines. In addition, the managers aim to organise another joint Stay and Play session for parents to attend.

**“In the everyday running of Muddy Boots, Healthy Movers will always be there running alongside it.”**

**STACEY, NURSERY MANAGER AT MUDDY BOOTS HAMWORTHY**

## Top Tips

- ✓ Be ready to engage in the Healthy Movers activities yourself to model it to the children, and do not be afraid to be “silly” with it.
- ✓ Collaborate and network with other settings in the area to give and receive support, in particular to discuss good practice.
- ✓ Incorporate Healthy Movers into your daily routine by linking it to other activities that you are already doing as a setting.
- ✓ Demonstrate the Healthy Movers activities to parents to build their understanding and confidence to deliver it at home – and to emphasise the simplicity of it, i.e. no expensive resources needed.



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