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West Somerset Healthy Movers: Interim Evaluation Executive Summary

August 2019



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Executive Summary

West Somerset is one of 12 Opportunity Areas across the UK. It is ranked the lowest in the Government's Social Mobility Index which measures the chances that a child from a disadvantaged background will do well at school and gain employment. The West Somerset Opportunity Area has received funding through the Department for Education, with Somerset County Council commissioning the Youth Sport Trust (YST) to deliver Healthy Movers alongside Futures for Somerset.

Healthy Movers aims to increase children's self-esteem and wellbeing, and develop their physical literacy skills, which all help children gain a better start to their life. The project is being delivered in 15 early years settings across West Somerset. It started in October 2018 and will continue until March 2020. YST Research is conducting an evaluation of the project. This report presents the interim research findings.

Research Approach

The interim evaluation is based on the following research tasks. Further details on the research approach can be found in the appendix of the full report.

- Three surveys completed by practitioners: at the start of the project, at the end of the training and at the interim stage of the project.
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) data and Physical Literacy Progress Assessment¹ data for a cohort of children involved in Healthy Movers at the start and interim stages of the project.
- Three case studies, which can be found in the appendix of the full report.

Key Findings

Project Activities

- Between October 2018 and July 2019, there have been 132 visits to settings by YST Healthy Movers staff, 36 Stay and Play sessions and 487 rucksacks for children sent out.
- Settings adopted a flexible approach to delivering Healthy Movers activities.
- The majority of parents found out about Healthy Movers by talking to staff at the early years settings.

Project Reach

- 15 early years settings have been engaged in Healthy Movers, with over 46 practitioners delivering Healthy Movers activities to over 431 children.
- 135 different parents have attended Healthy Movers Stay and Play sessions.



¹ As part of the project, a physical literacy progress assessment tool was developed. This aimed to provide a simple way to establish a baseline for children's physical literacy and observe any progress over time.

Supporting Children's Physical Literacy

- From baseline to interim, 70% of children improved their physical literacy across all areas.
- 97% of children in the older cohort demonstrated improved motivation (2) and 90% of children in the older cohort demonstrated improved responsibility.
- Across all children who had their physical literacy progress assessed, 88% improved their locomotion (1), 83% improved their locomotion (2), and 80% improved their object control.
- Overall, the older cohort of children demonstrated greater progression in their physical literacy than the younger cohort.
- 92% of practitioners felt that Healthy Movers had a positive impact on the amount of time children spend being physically active at their setting.
- 95% of parents felt that Healthy Movers had helped their child to have better movement skills.

Supporting Children's Wider Development

- From baseline to interim, Early Learning Goals data showed that 64% of children demonstrated improvements in understanding, 57% demonstrated improvements in listening and attention, and 55% demonstrated improvements in speaking, along with managing relationships.
- Only 46% of children recorded improvements in their movement and handling on their Early Learning Goals data.
- 100% of practitioners felt that Healthy Movers had had a positive impact on children's attitude to learning at their setting and children's ability to follow instructions.
- 92% of practitioners felt that Healthy Movers had improved children's engagement in active story-time and their listening skills.

Supporting Practitioners

- 100% of practitioners reported that Healthy Movers has helped them to feel more confident, competent and motivated in delivering physical development and physical activity for children aged 2 – 5 years old.
- 100% of practitioners stated that Healthy Movers had inspired them to change how they deliver physical activity in their setting.

Supporting Parents

- 100% of parents agreed that Healthy Movers had helped them to know more about why it's good to be active.
- 95% of parents had been given ideas to help their child to be active and 90% of parents felt more confident in helping their child to be active.

"I have noticed improvements in his catching, throwing and coordination. He is more confident in this now."

(Parent)

"The children are now school ready and Healthy Movers has played a big part in this."

(Practitioner)

"I can't believe the progression that the children have made. The assessment tool is showing improvements that we would never have believed to be possible!"

(Practitioner)

Views of Healthy Movers

- 100% of practitioners rated Healthy Movers positively.
- The YST Healthy Movers staff were rated very highly, along with the resource cards and the home packs.
- Feedback suggests there is scope to improve the wall chart and physical literacy assessment tool.

Conclusions

The interim research has shown that Healthy Movers is a well-regarded programme amongst the practitioners at the early years settings. All practitioners now feel more confident, competent and motivated in delivering physical development and physical activity for children aged 2 – 5 years old, with Healthy Movers inspiring them to make changes to how they deliver physical activity in their setting.

Within the first six months of project delivery, a large number of children have been involved in the activities and positively, the children have demonstrated high levels of engagement and enjoyment from the activities. The interim research has highlighted that children have demonstrated significant improvements in their physical literacy skills and there is evidence to show that children are now more active, both within the early years setting and at home. What is more, they enjoy being active more. The project has also demonstrated how it can complement other activities in the settings and support children's wider development such as their attitudes to learning, ability to follow instructions, listening skills and confidence.

To date, parental engagement has been good and the project has been well received by parents who have taken part, but settings are keen to increase parental engagement further as the project progresses. Parents have been upskilled and feel more confident and able to help their child to be active, which means that the benefits of the project can be extended beyond the early years settings and into the children's homes.

The key success factors of Healthy Movers have been the YST Healthy Movers staff, who have provided ongoing mentoring to the settings, plus the resource cards, which have been simple and inclusive. A unique and valued aspect of the project has also been the engagement of parents in the activities.



“Healthy Movers has helped staff massively because it has given us ideas and inspiration for making physical activity fun, exciting and stimulating for the children. Healthy Movers provides such a variety of activities which is great because it actually caters for all of the children's interests and abilities.”

(Practitioner)

YST RESEARCH

The Youth Sport Trust (YST) is a national children's charity passionate about creating a future where every child enjoys the life-changing benefits that come from play and sport. YST Research offers research, analysis, insight and evaluation services to organisations with an interest in the wider children and young people's sector. Our research expertise is focussed on improving the wellbeing of children and young people through sport and physical activity.

Our specialisms include:

- Education, PE and school sport
- Community sport / clubs
- Early years settings
- Life skills and employability
- Activism and volunteering
- Health (physical, social and emotional)

By working with us, you are supporting us to achieve our mission to improve children's lives and their future.

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