



Feedback report about working with families to help support healthy choices and lives

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communities first **cymunedau yn gyntaf**



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In 2015 Cwm Taf health board wanted to find out how they could make their work with families better so that more people and children attend courses and events about how to cook, healthy eating, different types of exercise and having a healthy body image. They employed C.A.R.P. Collaborations to go and talk to families who had attended these kinds of courses to find out what is good about them and what isn't so good and needs to change.

They asked 43 families about their experiences of going to healthy living courses in their local communities and also spoke to 10 members of staff and health experts about making these courses available in communities. This report is a summary of what all these people said.

1. Some things help families decide to give healthy living courses a try.

These are:

- Wanting to do things with children and having good family time together.
- A family member being ill because of unhealthy living.
- A family member feeling a bit down or critical of themselves because of unhealthy living.
- Hearing good things from other people about a healthy living course.

2. Families will keep going to a course about cooking skills, healthy food and getting exercise if the people running it do the right things.

Families don't want to get bored or be made to feel bad! Courses are best when fun ways of learning are used and children and parents are involved together. People stay on a course when:

- They are all learning new things.
- It's fun and there is a chance for children to make new friends and parents to meet each other.
- The people running the course know what they are talking about but also listen to parents and children. This stops anyone feeling awkward or criticized.
- The course is free and there are things given to families on the course to help them learn, like free vegetables to cook or vouchers to buy new foods.
- They feel that they have a say in how the course is going and can give advice to the people running it about what they want in the course.

3. Organisations and people who work in healthy living need to make sure they are all giving the same advice and working together

It is confusing when different organisations give different advice about what is healthy. Lots of places given advice about being healthy, such as health visitors, schools and G.P.'s but these places also need to know about what else is available for families to learn about being healthy.

People who work in health think healthy living is about food, exercise and sometimes weight loss. Families think that healthy living is also about having good relationships between all family members, feeling good about yourself and helping children to understand 'body image'; which is about accepting your body shape and physical appearance and not being over-weight or under-weight.

4. The length of healthy living courses at the moment doesn't work

Most of the courses run for 10 to 12 weeks. But families find this isn't long enough to learn new things and think about how to change habits in family life. Some parents and children need some individual help to change cooking and eating habits and some need encouragement to keep going to new exercise or activities.

So what do the researchers suggest should happen now?

The researchers have worked with staff in Cwm Taf Health Board and other people who work in communities across the Merthyr and RCT areas. They suggest that:

- Organisations work better to make sure they give the same advice and let parents and children know what is in their local community to help them live healthily.
- There is more help for families after a 10 or 12 week course. When parents and children have finished a course there could be volunteering opportunities for parents and children to help other families who have not learnt about healthy living before. There should be help for individual families and more activities for them to go to, like community meals and fun days.
- Courses must make sure that families are listened to and involved in the courses.
- Courses should also help families learn about feeling good about yourself and healthy body image.