

Chefs Adopt a School

Barts Health NHS Trust operates from four major hospital sites and a number of community locations. Serving 2.5 million people living in east London the Trust has a turnover of £1.25 billion, workforce of 15,000 Barts Health and is the largest NHS Trust in the UK.

Barts Health NHS Trust

Partnerships and networks



What was the issue being addressed?

Tower Hamlets has the sixth highest proportion of obese 10 to 11 year olds in the country. Childhood obesity is associated with a wide range of health problems in both childhood and later in life. Obesity can lead to serious and potentially life-threatening conditions such as type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, cancer and strokes. This is placing increasing pressure on hospitals

Children over-eating foods high in fat, sugar and salt coupled with minimal to zero consumption of fruits and vegetables will gain excess weight but also be starved from lack of significant vitamins and minerals needed for healthy body function and growth.

What action was taken to overcome the issue?

To reverse these health problems the sustainability team worked with the Royal Culinary Academy and funded the Adopt a School Food Education programme. This programme taught food education to 490 primary school children in a holistic way by professional chefs.



The sessions delivered lessons on food, cookery, food provenance, food growing, healthy eating, nutrition, hygiene, table etiquette and the importance of eating together. The eight schools targeted were across three local hospital boroughs: Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest in deprived areas where there is a high percentage of free school meals.

Ultimately the programme taught children to prepare and cook with fresh produce affordably now and in later life.

What was the impact?

The lack of knowledge around food and healthy eating has high costs. The cost to the UK economy of overweight and obesity was estimated at £15.8 bn per year in 2007, including £4.2 bn to the NHS. The Chefs adopt a school programme cost £19,300. 500 children in East London are now able to cook healthy and affordable meals. This will help encourage healthy living and reduce obesity associated health problems saving the NHS money.

Lessons learned / success factors?

Professional chefs with a team of trained volunteers, delivered sessions in the classroom. Children developed a willingness to experience new tastes, an enthusiasm and interest in cooking and a desire to cook at home. Teachers believed that the sessions also helped to aid learning across the curriculum and developed social skills. This programme was a success because the schools welcomed

the classes for their student's education. The Royal Culinary Academy managed the sessions and the trust are keen to continue the programme. Also an understanding of the hospitality industry and the career opportunities that exist was introduced to students.

"The lesson I had with Chef Caldora was amazing and I learnt a lot about cooking. I learnt different ways to cut with a knife." –

Parkside Primary Year 4 Meda

Scaling up

The lessons can enable children to understand the importance of healthy, home cooked meals and discourage them from turning to the takeaways, processed foods and snacks in later life. If all primary schools had access to these sessions, there could be a huge cost savings to the NHS though improved health.



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