

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**CABINET – 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2008**  
**THE MEND PROGRAMME**

**Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update members in relation to the implementation of a new and exciting initiative called The MEND Programme which focuses upon tackling the health inequalities of children who are above their ideal weight.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Leisure Development Service has a strong and evidenced based track record of providing innovative approaches to health improvement through a dynamic range of programmes and initiatives. These range from community and children's health development programmes through the Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) and the Recreation Partnership services, New Sporting Futures sports development and diversionary programmes for young people, CATCH walking development Initiatives with a focus upon physical and mental wellbeing and the new and exciting Lottery funded EA Positive Play Project.
- 2.1 Recent reports have highlighted rising levels of childhood obesity across Scotland. Within East Ayrshire, the Recreation Partnership initiative within the Council's Leisure Development Service, has implemented the MEND Programme (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition...Do it!) as a way of tackling this issue at a local level.
- 2.2 The MEND Programme has been developed over more than five years by leading experts in the UK. MEND is both evidence based and outcome driven. The Programme's successful feasibility study, which showed statistically significant results in the key outcome measures, has been peer-reviewed and written up in the Journal of Human Nutrition & Dietetics (Sacher 2005). MEND has an ongoing research programme in partnership with the University College London Institute of Child Health and Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust. MEND recently became the first UK child obesity programme to present results of a successful randomised control trial. Findings included statistically significant improvements in the children's body mass index (BMI), waist circumference, fitness, lifestyle and self esteem (Sacher et al. 2007). Furthermore, the results showed a sustained effect 12 months after the start of the trial. Continuing research will hopefully look into whether the changes continue to be sustained and even improved at longer periods than a year. This data will form one of the largest bodies of evidence on the effectiveness of a community-based child obesity intervention in the UK.
- 2.3 MEND is a community, family-based programme for overweight and obese children aged 8-12 years and their families. It combines all the elements known to be vital in treating and preventing overweight and obesity in children,

including family involvement, practical education in nutrition, increasing physical activity and behaviour change. The programme places emphasis on practical, fun learning and is designed to deliver sustained improvements in families' diets, fitness levels and overall health. MEND is not a diet – it empowers children and their families to make life changes and to build a foundation for healthy living for life.

- 2.4 East Ayrshire Council is the first local authority within Scotland to implement the MEND Programme which is attracting significant interest both locally and nationally.
- 2.5 The MEND programme in East Ayrshire is being run as part of a Service Level Agreement with NHS Ayrshire and Arran. The Leisure Development Service is obliged to report on progress in relation to this and other health improvement programmes through the Community Planning Framework in terms of the Fairer Scotland Fund and directly to partners in NHS Ayrshire and Arran in relation to the Service Level Agreement.

### **3. THE MEND PROGRAMME**

- 3.1 The first MEND Programme within East Ayrshire was implemented as a pilot within Shortlees, Kilmarnock between April and June 2008. The programme consisted of 18 two-hour sessions held twice a week for 9 weeks with additional measurement sessions before and afterwards. At least one parent or carer was required to accompany each child at every session which was essential to ensure that families incorporated what they learnt into their daily routines and sustained long-term benefits. Each of the sessions featured an hour of discussion alternating between Mind (behaviour change) and Nutrition topics, and an hour of fun exercise. During the exercise component there was the opportunity for a further hour of guided discussion specifically with the parents.
- 3.2 Eight children and their families were recruited to participate in the pilot MEND programme within East Ayrshire.
- 3.3 The results of the MEND pilot and direct positive impact of the programme on the participants and their families was outstanding. Comparisons in the measurement sessions held before and after the programme showed a decrease in MEND participants' Body Mass Index (BMI), waist circumference, recovery heart rate and time spent in sedentary activity and also an increase in time spent in physical activity and days per week that the children were participating in more than 60 minutes per day of moderate intensity physical activity. A nutritional score also highlighted significant improvements in the children's dietary habits.
- 3.4 In addition to the positive evidence based physiological changes there were a number of other benefits which occurred as a result of the pilot MEND programme. Many children who are overweight and obese suffer from low self confidence and have often been bullied about their weight. The MEND programme enabled children to make friends with others experiencing similar issues which led to improved confidence and feelings of self-worth. Poor diet can also have a significant impact on children's behaviour however by encouraging children to eat more 'MEND-friendly' foods parents reported a

significant improvement in their children's behaviour and also their sleeping patterns.

- 3.5 Parents who attended the MEND programme on a weekly basis also got excellent support from speaking to other parents who were experiencing similar problems and have been empowered to make the changes at home which will lead to sustained improvements in the future.
- 3.6 Children from the pilot MEND programme have now become MEND Graduates and will continue to meet once per week to encourage them to keep the momentum going. Measurements will also be taken at 3, 6, 9 and 12 month intervals in order for the team to monitor the longer term impact which the programme has had.
- 3.7 Over the next few months the pilot MEND programme will be fully evaluated and it is anticipated that the next programme will commence in January 2009.
- 3.8 East Ayrshire Council is the first MEND site in Scotland which has attracted significant interest both locally and nationally. At a local level many health professionals have taken an interest in the programme and are keen to set up a referral pathway for future programmes. Nationally the programme has attracted interest from the Screening, Physical Activity and Obesity Team at the Health Improvement Strategy Division of the Scottish Government. The Scotsman Newspaper also ran an article (13<sup>th</sup> May 2008) on one of the children participating in the pilot MEND programme within East Ayrshire and a follow up article will also be published to highlight the difference the programme has made to this particular individual.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The approximate cost per participant on the MEND programme is £400. This includes specific specialist resources for participants and their parents/carers, monitoring programmes, staff and facility costs. The maximum attendance at any programme is 12, with a total cost of up to £4,800 per programme. The venues for future programmes will be selected with NHS Ayrshire and Arran and will cover several communities.
- 4.2 Following successful evaluation there is a commitment to implement up to three MEND Programmes within East Ayrshire per annum. This forms part of the Service Level Agreement with NHS Ayrshire and Arran. Funding to implement these programmes and support the Graduates programme is included in the direct mainstream contributions from NHS Ayrshire and Arran and the Fairer Scotland Fund, the Councils contribution is based on staff time used to deliver the programme.
- 4.3 The future intention is for Leisure Development to further enhance the provision of childhood obesity and health improvement services through additional funding bids to NHS Ayrshire and Arran in relation to the local delivery of HEAT (Health Improvement, Efficiency, Access, and Treatment) targets.

#### **5. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The MEND programme delivers directly on Aim 2 of the Improving Health theme of the Community Plan by striving for equality in health through the provision of a targeted intervention for a vulnerable group of children and young people who are above their ideal weight.

## **6. LEGAL AUTHORITY / POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The MEND Programme delivers directly on National Outcome 5 within East Ayrshire's Single Outcome Agreement, the Improving Health section of East Ayrshire's Children and Young People's Service Plan, the forthcoming Leisure and Cultural Strategy and HEAT Target (H3) designed to monitor Child Healthy Weight interventions within Scotland.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The MEND programme has provided a targeted approach towards tackling overweight and obesity within East Ayrshire and has made a real and lasting difference to the lives of some of East Ayrshire's most marginalised and vulnerable children and young people.
- 7.2 The sense of achievement felt by the children and young people participating in the pilot MEND programme coupled with the extremely positive evidence based physiological changes demonstrates the real success of this initiative. In addition the informal support network which the participating parents have created has allowed them to become empowered to make the changes necessary to build a solid foundation for healthy living for life.
- 7.3 The successful implementation of the MEND programme has further enhanced East Ayrshire's position as a national leader in the field of community health improvement and in turn has raised the profile of East Ayrshire Council and its community planning partners in terms of innovative and integrated partnership working.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet
- (i) approve the roll out of further MEND programmes within East Ayrshire
  - (ii) otherwise note the content of this report

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Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

WS/JAG  
25<sup>th</sup> September 2008

## LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Spotlight on... The MEND Programme; tackling childhood obesity' British Journal of School Nursing, July/August 2007 (Vol: 02 No: 4)
2. MEND evaluation Report and Results for East Ayrshire's Pilot
3. Service Level Agreement with NHS Ayrshire and Arran 2008-2011
4. Further information regarding the MEND Programme can be found at [www.mendprogramme.org](http://www.mendprogramme.org)

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01563 578178 and ask for John Griffiths, Head of Leisure Services

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