

Case Study
London Borough of Hackney
September 2012



Contribution of library services to health and wellbeing
Great Grub Club at Woodberry Down Library

Abstract

This case study is about the Great Grub Club at Woodberry Down Library which is run by volunteers. The London Borough of Hackney is involved with the Team London 'Love Libraries love volunteering' project which aims to create volunteering opportunities which will help put libraries at the heart of the local community. The first Great Grub Club session began in January 2012 and has attracted to date 20 children plus their parents and carers.

The issue/background

The Great Grub Club idea comes from the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF UK), a charity dedicated to cancer prevention. Scientific research has shown that about a third of the most common cancers could be prevented if we eat healthily, maintain a healthy weight and lead an active lifestyle. The Great Grub Club encourages children to develop healthy habits between the ages of 4-7 which could help reduce their risk of developing cancer later in life. The Club concentrates on promoting healthy eating and physical activity in a fun way.

Woodberry Down Library was chosen to pilot the project due to the library already being run by volunteers and it was seen as a way of extending our library offer.

The project works as follows:

- The Club meets at least 4 times a year. The sessions run for approximately one hour
- Parents/carers of the children are encouraged to sign up to the programme so that they will receive a copy of the free magazine, which is produced 4 times a year, sent to their home address.
- The volunteers run the sessions in the library which promote healthy eating through games, quizzes and giving ideas on making healthy packed lunches
- Children and their parents/carers are also encouraged to access the Great Grub Club website to find out lots more information. The volunteers show the children and their parents/carers how to do this during the sessions.

Partners and funding

The partners for this project are the WCRF UK and the Manor House Development Trust whose aim is to motivate local communities to participate in the regeneration of the area where the library is situated. The Trust also refers parents/carers with young children to the Club.

What we did

The Great Grub Club contributes to the aims set out in Hackney's 'Library and Archives Development Strategy 2011-15' which states 'libraries have an important role in raising awareness of health issues within the borough. This is reflected in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Hackney and the City where the library service is acknowledged to have a role in the prevention of the occurrence of health problems in the population and in raising the wellbeing of library users.' The Great Grub Club is especially important as it is such an early intervention in health issues and goes a long way to raise community health. This work is just one part of a bigger plan to raise health awareness throughout Hackney.

It would not have been possible to have run the sessions without the volunteers. The library recruited 3 volunteers to prepare for and run the sessions. The Club was promoted in all of Hackney's libraries by posters and leaflets. Our Volunteer Support Officer meets with the volunteers regularly to plan the content of the sessions and to resolve any issues that have arisen.

Evidence

The Great Grub Club sessions are tailored to meet local family's needs and the sessions are therefore flexible to take this into account. The sessions have generally shown that children are not eating as healthily as they could and that parents/carers need more information on what constitutes a healthy diet. The sessions were very well received and it was obvious to all involved that there is a demand for this type of activity to carry on into the future.

The impact

- The sessions are free and open to all children aged between 4-7
- Children love the fun way that healthy living is promoted
- Parents/carers learn how to provide healthy meals/snacks for their children

Key learning points

- Recruiting volunteers who are interested in promoting a healthy lifestyle is vital
- Access to computers is essential so that everyone can learn how to access the appropriate websites
- Libraries are a great venue for this type of activity as they are free to access and open to all
- There is a need to provide more of this type of activity including events for older children and adults

Future plans

There are plans to continue running Great Grub Clubs in all of our libraries in Hackney as well as extending this type of work to older children and adults.

Further information

sue.comitti@hackney.gov.uk

<http://www.greatgrubclub.com/home>

<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/cl-libraries.htm>

Love Libraries Love Volunteering

<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/culturetourismand2012/lovelibraries/>