

## The Essex Fitbods Programme – a model of good practice

Fitbods is a physical activity project, which enables children to learn about health and healthy active lifestyles. The programme has been designed to correspond with Essex Local Authority practices and procedures, as well as appropriate Codes of Practices. The programme aim is to increase physical activity levels amongst primary school children by providing a wide range of supervised activities, appropriate for within and beyond the curriculum. Fitbods can support schools in achieving Public Service Agreements relating to physical activity, which also relate to local objectives:

- Halt the year-on-year rise in obesity among children under 11 by 2010, in the context of a broader strategy to tackle obesity as a whole (National target confirmed in the Essex Local Area Agreement)
- By 2009 to halt the increase in the percentage and numbers of obese children who are 5-10 years of age (Essex Children and Young People Plan, 2006-2009)
- Enhance the uptake-up of sporting opportunities by 5 to 16 year olds to meet the government's minimum of 2 hrs each week on High quality PE and School Sport within and beyond the curriculum
- The long term vision for sport and physical activity by 2020 is, as outlined in the Sport England Plan (East of England), 'to increase significantly levels of sport and physical activity, particularly among disadvantaged groups; and to achieve sustained levels of success in international competition'.
- To assist schools in contributing to the physical activity component of the National Healthy Schools standard and to support the target of 100% Essex schools engaged being engaged in the National Healthy Schools Programme by 2009

The project is designed to encompass a whole school approach to the promotion of physical activity amongst primary school children. It can support schools with the delivery of activities and games appropriate for lunchtimes, playtimes, extra curricular and within the curriculum. Fitbods has been specifically designed for the non specialist practitioner including teachers, Mid Day Assistants, Learning Mentors, Learning Support Assistants, Teaching Support Workers, Peer / Play Educators, Leaders and other Adults other Than Teachers associated with primary school. The programme is designed to encourage **all** children, whatever their ability to enjoy physical activity whilst gaining obvious personal, social and health benefits.

A key objective of Fitbods training involves practical familiarisation with the Fitbods Resource Pack. This develops an understanding, through demonstration, as to how practical ideas and approaches can be used to bring about improvement and make a difference to children's learning. The Fitbods Resource Pack provides staff and schools with games and activities that can be used to organise a Fitbods session, in accordance with the PE section of the Essex Code of Practice (No 25) and Adults other Than Teachers (11.1) policy. The Fitbods Pack activity resources are divided in to six main areas: warm up games, aerobic games, circuit games, parachute indoor and outdoor games, non equipment games and tag games. Non equipment games may be most appropriate for short sessions, such as playtimes. Fitbods training objectives also focus on the importance of staff that attend training determining relevant and realistic child

centred objectives, or target groups of children, to be specifically targeted by the programme. Support takes place with the planning process for the identification of 'signs of success' and the setting up of post-course work, which takes in to account school circumstances and needs. Familiarisation with the Fitbods Incentive Scheme also takes place, which evidence has shown increases and ensures the sustainability of the programme in schools.

The Essex PE Advisory Team, in partnership with the Healthy Schools Advisory Team, have offered the Fitbods programme to 38 target schools who are working towards their Healthy School Award. To date, we have trained 289 staff from at least 22 schools. Fitbods training has also taken place to support achievement and development in other areas such as Extended Schools, Primary Care Trusts (related to Key Performance Indicators), School Sport Partnerships and SEALS. Feedback has indicated that where the whole staff training of support staff has taken place, e.g. whole school training of Mid Day Assistants, Learning Support Assistants, this has positively raised the profile of these colleagues within school, as well as having a positive impact on their role. It also firmly supports the adoption of a fully inclusive whole school approach and the use of Fitbods both within and outside of the curriculum. Feedback has clearly evidenced that support staff have acquired the confidence to lead, and take responsibility for, the coordinated implementation of Fitbods within school and familiarise other members of staff with the Fitbods programme.

From Sept 05 to date (November 06), delegate evaluations evidenced 100% of delegates were satisfied or better by the deliverers and thought the course contents met their needs. In addition, 100% of delegates anticipated an impact on practice. Monitoring and evaluating procedures, and case studies, evidence impact by increasing the level of physical activity for the 1678 targeted primary school children, in particular fitness levels, hand eye co-ordination and skill development. In addition, case studies have demonstrated impact on whole school improvement. In particular, attainment, behaviour at lunchtimes, attitudes to learning, self confidence, concentration, enthusiasm, team work, listening skills and leadership, e.g. where children are involved in the structured delivery of Fitbods using a 'buddy system'. Examples are attached. Finally, many schools have actively linked the implementation of Fitbods to School Action Plans and Development Plans, which ensures a whole school approach and maximises impact of this hugely successful programme.

For further information or support related to Essex Fitbods please contact:  
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