

Background Briefing Paper

Dear Colleague,

Since the publication of the NICE guidance about physical activity interventions, specifically exercise referral schemes, there has been some uncertainty about the future of exercise referral schemes and concerns about how professionals will ensure their schemes are complying with NICE guidance. Late last year the BHF National Centre for Physical Activity and Health (BHFNC) held a meeting with the Regional Physical Activity and Health Coordinators to consider how we can best support exercise referral practitioners in implementing the NICE guidance.

At this meeting it was agreed that the BHF National Centre would lead a project to examine the feasibility of developing a framework for the design, delivery and evaluation of exercise referral schemes.

Over the last 10 months the BHF National Centre has been working in partnership with the regional physical activity and health coordinators on this project. Initial groundwork has required professionals working in exercise referral schemes to complete a questionnaire detailing what their scheme involves and how their scheme is evaluated. This audit has enabled the identification of schemes taking place across the Midlands and Northern regions, highlighting strengths, gaps and challenges in practice.

The BHFNC are now working in partnership with the regional physical activity coordinators in the South East and Eastern region to continue gathering evidence about existing schemes.

Why is it important for you to be involved?

An audit of current schemes will enable us to benchmark what schemes are doing across England, aid in the identification of strengths and weaknesses in various approaches to exercise referral and provide us with a rationale for the development of the framework. It is hoped that the framework will assist professionals in designing and implementing exercise referral schemes based on evidence of best practice and help identify resources to ensure schemes are evaluated adequately.

What does this audit involve?

We are asking scheme coordinators to spare 30 minutes to complete the attached questionnaire, this will allow us to gather evidence about schemes and to benchmark what's happening around design, delivery and evaluation.

Please email your completed questionnaire to: K.E.Buxton@lboro.ac.uk
Alternatively you can return your completed questionnaire to Kim Buxton, BHF National Centre for Physical Activity and Health, James France Building, Loughborough University, Leicestershire, LE11 3TU.

If possible, please could you base responses to evaluation related questions on the most recent annual report.

Following the initial paper audit, the BHFNC in conjunction with your regional coordinator will be hosting a consultation seminar to gain your views about the content and design of the framework.

This seminar is provisionally booked for Thursday 31st January 2008, between 10-1pm in London; please could you let me know your availability for this seminar.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire or indeed any part of the proposed project, please do not hesitate to contact me on 01509 223267.

Yours sincerely,



Kim Buxton,
Assistant Director - Project Manager Primary Care.

BHF National Centre for Physical Activity and Health.
Activity.



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