

# Making partnerships work

A collection of case studies about some of MEND's most recent partnerships





# Introduction

The Audit Commission defines partnership working as “a joint working arrangement where the partners: are otherwise independent bodies; agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal; create a new organisational structure or process to achieve this goal, separate from their own organisations; plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, often with joint staff or resources; share relevant information; pool risks and rewards” (Audit Commission 1998).

MEND works in partnership with a variety of organisations and individuals to tackle complex community health issues, empowering children and adults to become fitter, healthier and happier and to reach or maintain a healthier weight. We do this by developing evidence-based projects and services and bespoke support systems that are easy to implement.

Our partnership model brings together people and organisations with different core aims and objectives. Together, we achieve common goals and make a real difference to people’s lives, offering long-term solutions that help people improve their health, fitness and self-esteem.

**This document brings together a collection of case studies from some of the organisations MEND has recently worked with, specifically highlighting some of the creative approaches that have been used to engage diverse communities.**



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# Establishing local care pathways that bring communities together

NHS Kirklees successfully integrated the Kirklees MEND programme into the Kirklees Obesity Programme and Care Pathway which supports obese children and young people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The care pathway has been developed to ensure overweight children aged 2-16 and their families living within targeted localities can access a service which provides tailored support to meet their needs.

The Kirklees MEND team have developed a strong partnership approach, identifying key stakeholders and taking the time to appreciate and value each partner in order to secure buy-in and build strong relationships.

The Kirklees MEND team have engaged with a broad range of partners including: school nurses, Kirklees Active Leisure sports centres, The Zone (Sporting Pride Community Trust), schools, GPs, Health in Schools teams, School Sports Partnerships, Dietetics teams, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Children with a Disability Team, FINE team (Food Initiatives and Nutrition Education), Kirklees Weight Management Service, and community groups such as the University of Huddersfield and Huddersfield Giants.

These partnerships are flexible and open and partners are eager to profile work well done. Regular meetings, reporting, web communications and one-to-one meetings have helped the Kirklees MEND team to maintain effective relationships and share best practice. The MEND team actively encourages visits and feedback from partners to see and understand how the programme runs.

Kirklees have maximised the use of partners' resources such as in-kind staff contributions from the PCT, Change4Life marketing support, schools and sports centre facilities for programme delivery and access to free swimming lessons and free publicity through the local press.



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They have also worked with the Newsome and Ossett Sainsbury's programme to share ideas, support and staff, and attended regional meetings to share best practice with Bradford and Calderdale.



**WINNER: 2011 MEND Best Practice Award for Partnership Working**

# A coordinated, county-wide approach

Surrey is a county with 11 borough councils and a population of 1.2 million. NHS Surrey has taken the lead in coordinating a broad range of partners and funding sources to deliver 46 MEND programmes since 2007. Funding has come from Big Lottery 'Awards for All', Big Lottery 'England on the MEND', Sainsbury's and NHS Surrey.

As well as providing MEND programmes, NHS Surrey provided additional funding for complementary activities such as MEND cook and eat sessions and the MEND graduate scheme. Delivery partners have recruited their MEND programme staff from a wide range of professions such as borough council staff, county council staff, dietitians, YMCA staff and commercial employees such as gym managers and Sainsbury's community food health advisors, in addition to using both internal and freelance staff.

Successful relationship building and management have meant local delivery partners have provided in-kind support for programmes such as free venues, support for promotion of programmes and use of internal and partner networks to aid recruitment.

NHS Surrey Lottery group programme managers agreed to meet on a termly basis from autumn 2007 to provide an opportunity for support and networking. This meeting was then opened out to other programme managers in Surrey. A key agenda item at meetings has been sharing good practice on recruitment of families, which has proved more challenging for some programme managers than others.

All programme managers are given each other's contact details and established programme managers have been generous in offering support and advice to newer programme managers. NHS Surrey supported programme managers in their recruitment campaigns by sharing its network of partners, especially in health and education, and by contributing to press releases and articles in Surrey-wide media and newsletters.

NHS Surrey's approach to partnership working highlights how a whole county can be provided for while maintaining a truly local approach to programme delivery.



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# A whole community approach to sustainable healthy living

Tameside MEND are working with a range of community partners, including sports clubs, leisure facilities and local businesses to support MEND graduates in making truly lasting lifestyle changes after the MEND programme has finished.

During the programme, the Tameside MEND team encourage all participants to sign up for X Club membership – this enables children from Tameside to participate in up to 30 weeks of activity per year across a vast range of sports and activities at local facilities. To ensure the family approach is continued, a facilitator from the Adult Health Improvement Service also attends one of the parent-only MEND sessions.

Tameside MEND have partnered with the Tameside Sports Trust to offer MEND graduate families a three-month unlimited swim pass – this has proved very popular with families. They also have formed agreements with the NHS Health and Wellbeing Mentor Team who provide one-to-one support for families on a range of issues including weight management, and accept referrals from the MEND team of families who need continued support.

Finally, all MEND graduates are invited to attend one-day sessions run every half term which include measurement taking, physical activity and nutrition sessions as well as sessions to develop cooking skills. In the past the one-day sessions have also offered additional features such as cooking sessions run through Sainsbury's or skiing lessons at the local indoor ski slope. These 'Fit4Fun Camps' are run in partnership by Denton Community College, The Children's Nutrition team and Tameside Sports Services.

By maximising on the facilities, people and organisations their community has to offer, Tameside MEND are offering graduates opportunities to grow with very little cost or resource implications. The result is a whole community working together to improve its own public health, and support each other in leading fitter, healthier and happier lives.



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Shortlisted for 2011 MEND Best Practice Award for Partnership Working

# Addressing health inequalities and reaching BME communities

BME communities make up 22% of Bradford's population. They are among the highest at risk of obesity and statistically more likely to develop obesity-related disorders like heart disease or type 2 diabetes.

Muslim children attend the local madrasas each evening after school to study and learn about Islam. Therefore, introducing a mid-week, out-of-school-hours programme such as MEND into these communities presents additional practical challenges. The Bradford and Airedale Community Health Services team have worked closely with local mosques and madrasas to help engage Muslim families with MEND programmes.

The Options Team have gained support from local madrasa leaders to align healthy lifestyle messages with fundamental health beliefs and themes in Islam. Aligning key health messages has helped with communicating about childhood obesity and the need for intervention. This in turn helped with the recruitment of families onto the MEND programmes.

Appropriate dates and timings of MEND sessions were also discussed with madrasa leaders, taking into consideration existing commitments, expectations and Muslim calendar events. As a result, MEND sessions were scheduled in agreement with the madrasas to run one mid-week evening session and one weekend session. To date, Bradford MEND programmes have provided for over 50 Muslim families. In future we plan to host a MEND programme at a madrasa supported by madrasa staff.

Where English is a second language for families attending MEND, the Options Team arranged for translators to attend and facilitate learning during the sessions. The translators work with small groups and individuals. This approach empowers parents and children to make informed healthy lifestyle choices and get the most from the programme.

Partnership working between BME community groups and the Options Team in Bradford has allowed them to combine skills and expertise to better support the needs of the local population.



**SPECIAL COMMENDATION:  
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**NHS**

**Bradford and Airedale**



# Influencing key decision makers

The annual MEND Parliamentary Reception brings MEND ambassadors to the House of Commons to tell MPs, Peers and other key decision makers how MEND has helped them become fitter, healthier and happier.

Each year, children and their families invite their MP to meet them at the reception and lead them round a series of stands which showcase different aspects of MEND's work. In the past, MEND ambassadors have run an interactive 'Fats and Sugars' stand, where they demonstrate to guests how much fat and sugar is in the foods they eat. MEND graduate families have also taken to the podium to talk about their experiences of MEND and the lifestyle changes they have made and sustained since attending the a MEND programme.

Each year there is a photo call for MPs with families from their constituency. MEND also assists MP offices with a template press release to help secure local media coverage. This can assist in recruitment to local programmes and serves to showcase the hard work of MEND delivery teams in their local communities. The reception is also an opportunity for other current and potential partners to meet MEND ambassadors and hear about our work.

In 2010, the reception was supported by cross-party sponsors Ms Charlotte Leslie MP, Conservative Member of the Health Select Committee, Ms Liz Kendall MP, Labour Shadow Health Minister and Dr John Pugh MP, Chair of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Policy Committee on Health and Social Care.

Shortly before attending the reception, nine-year-old MEND participant Travis Taillard, along with former Olympic athlete and MEND mentor Adam Whitehead visited Downing Street to present letters to the Prime Minister. Travis explained what a difference MEND has made to his life while Adam called for the Government to promote better public health and support projects like MEND.



Nine-year old MEND ambassador Travis had the chance to explain to MPs and other key decision makers what a difference MEND has made to his life.





# A coordinated local approach – a Child Obesity Taskforce

NHS Barking & Dagenham run MEND programmes in partnership with Community Health Services (CHS) Barking and Dagenham and London Borough of Barking & Dagenham (LBBB) leisure services.

To ensure partners are working in a coordinated way, NHS Barking and Dagenham run bi-monthly meetings of a Child Obesity Taskforce. These meetings are attended by:

- representatives of the PCT such as commissioners and public health specialists
- the LBBB, including those working in education, leisure and catering
- CHS school nurses and health advisors.

At the end of every MEND programme, the group meet to look at feedback questionnaires and satisfaction surveys and discuss recruitment challenges.

Good communication through these meetings ensures that partners are kept up to date and clear roles and responsibilities are assigned.

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# Reuniting MEND graduates through community engagement

After the York MEND programme had finished, organisers decided to hold a reunion by linking up with a local community cultural project, Inspirations. The project encourages community members to create material patches which are then joined to make a patchwork banner representing community cohesion.

MEND graduate children used felt to create images that represented their MEND experience and ironed them onto calico squares. It was a simple procedure which allowed the children to be creative within their capabilities.

The reunion allowed MEND graduate families to catch up, reflect on their progress since MEND together, and support each other in sustaining the lifestyle changes they made through the MEND programme. Crucially, it also allowed MEND families to engage with the wider community in which they live.

The patchwork banner has gone on to be used as an advocacy tool at school assemblies and public events. Each patch represents a child who has made inspirational lifestyle changes through MEND and it therefore has the potential to make a far greater impact on decision makers than numbers on a page.



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# Harnessing community resources to boost recruitment

In delivering MEND, Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board in Monmouthshire formed strong relationships with the National Public Health Service in Wales and local leisure services from the outset. This has ensured that MEND is considered in many different arenas, which has widened recruitment opportunities.

Their MEND programmes have secured media coverage through the support of communications staff in leisure, health and the local health board. This includes a full page spread in the South Wales Echo, a radio interview for Radio Wales and articles in the Monmouthshire Community Spirit magazine, the Abergavenny Focus magazine and Early Years newsletter.

Taking an innovative approach to recruitment, MEND advertised on the back of leisure centre entry tickets for a month prior to a planned programme. Regular meetings of local GPs in the area were used as a platform to raise awareness of the programmes, reaching all practices in Monmouthshire. Where appropriate, leisure staff recommended MEND when promoting their own Prescription for Exercise scheme. The Leisure Healthy Van that drives around the borough attending events has the MEND logo as part of its livery and the staff who attend the events are all MEND aware and have MEND resources to hand out. The MEND team were also invited to attend a training day for playscheme workers where 100 staff were encouraged to promote MEND.

This work highlights how the resources of a community can be harnessed in new, innovative ways, enabling different local partners to get involved in improving the health of their communities.

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