

Manchester Learning Disability Partnership

Fighting Fit

**A policy to promote
physical fitness**

Fighting Fit Policy

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1 Introduction

Fighting Fit is MLDP's strategy to encourage and support people to lead **physically active lifestyles** and to **achieve or maintain a healthy weight**, and thereby experience the significant health benefits and sense of well-being that stem from this. This policy is part of the overall FF strategy, it applies to all staff and all service users, and it clarifies specific responsibilities for both staff and the organisation as a whole. It has been developed in consultation with representatives from various areas of the service.

2 Statement of Purpose

"We will work with each person, in partnership with their families, carers and friends to promote independence, health and well-being and to provide support to enable people to lead fulfilled lives as members of their community".

3 The Health Need

Study after study has shown that the fitness levels of people who are learning disabled are much lower than the general population, and that most people get very little physical activity and carry high amounts of body fat. Research in Manchester has found that about 40% of mobile people using the learning disability service are clinically obese. Other research has indicated that one third of people over 40 years old have high blood pressure, and that the majority of adults have moderate to high levels of cholesterol. For these reasons people run a very high risk of heart disease, strokes, diabetes, cancer and poor mental health (national health priorities), as well as other disabilities and illnesses.

Physical activity and healthy eating are the key lifestyle issues which are central to addressing this health need, to provide people with high quality health care, and to help people to meet other social needs such as belonging and having a positive identity. Active people are more likely to: have an efficient, healthy heart and lungs: have more of a sense of well-being: accept their body shape: have joints that move well: be lively, energetic and alert: lift, push and pull more easily: have strong muscles: have less body fat: have fun: eat well: have good posture: live longer: relax and sleep well: be able to handle stress: have time for themselves: have more stamina and be able to sustain their lifestyles: avoid illness and disease.

Physical activity, sport, or fitness is not a luxury, but rather an essential prerequisite for maintaining optimal health and well-being throughout the lifespan.

4 Fighting Fit Aims

- All people to be encouraged to lead physically active lifestyles.
- All people to be supported to maintain or work towards a healthy weight.
- To enhance the likelihood of people experiencing the physical and mental health benefits associated with physical activity and healthy eating.
- To prevent or reduce the risk factors linked to heart disease, strokes, diabetes, some cancers, and poor mental health.

5 Minimum Standards

1 Supporting people must be undertaken in a manner which aims for high quality and adheres to service principles i.e. accessing valued community facilities, informed and real choice, developing and maintaining relationships, addressing individual needs.

2 Person centred planning will assist people to make 'real' and 'informed' choices. This will generally require people to have experienced activities, and to fully understand the health consequences of opting out.

3 All people will be offered a health action plan (HAP) which should specifically address the need to be physically active and to eat a healthy diet. "The HAP is an action plan and will include details of the need for fitness and nutrition" – Valuing People.

4 All people will be encouraged to be physically active in accordance with British Heart Foundation guidelines. In summary "all adults should build up gradually to a minimum of 30 minutes moderate intensity physical activity on 5 or more days of the week".

5 Physical activity must be safe. Activities should be assessed for risk according to other service policies. Guidelines are to be found within the 'FF starter Pack'.

6 All people will be encouraged to eat a healthy diet in accordance with *British Heart Foundation* guidelines. The emphasis is on not eating too much and finding the appropriate 'balance' of foods containing plenty of high fibre foods, 5-a-day fruit and vegetables, and little fat and sugar. See 'FF Starter Pack'.

7 All people will be encouraged or helped to monitor their weight and body mass index (BMI), and waistline.

8 People should see their GP before beginning a program of physical activity to which they are unaccustomed. All people with a BMI above 30 (or other suspected health concerns) should undergo health screening and assessment within primary care prior to increasing activity levels.

9 All carers within supported homes will be able to demonstrate written / recorded evidence that opportunity to be physically active has been planned, made available and is being undertaken. The 'FF Starter Pack' provides a framework for this.

- 10 The recruitment and selection practice of the service will aim (in conjunction with other priorities) to employ staff who are willing and able to support people to be physically active. This issue should be made clear at interviews and induction
- 11 Staff will use the FF Starter Pack when initiating new physical activity and healthy eating programs. Staff will also familiarise themselves with, and utilise, the numerous resources available to them e.g. web site, FF steering group, training, directories, health promotion, etc.
- 12 The service as a whole will endeavour to ensure that key resources are in place i.e. sufficient staff and accessible transport.
- 13 Physical activity and healthy eating will be promoted and encouraged during the care planning process by care managers, and by those responsible for detailed support plans (e.g. Person Centred Plans).
- 14 People who are able will be encouraged to walk whenever possible, incorporating physical activity into daily living.
- 15 Staff should develop more opportunities for people to be physically active at numerous sites and locations across the city: drop-ins, day centres, parks, leisure centres.
- 16 It is recognised that people living with parents or families may need additional support. This will be addressed in care plans.
- 17 The service will make links and develop partnerships and gain support from other agencies, and ensure physical accessibility to community facilities is addressed.
- 18 Managers throughout the service will audit the minimum standards set out in this policy. It is suggested that these standards be added to others already in place and audited with them.
- 19 Staff should be supported to access additional training (e.g. Community Health Tutor Training) or sports coaching qualifications.
- 20 The service will develop a co-ordinated approach to attracting volunteers to support physical activity initiatives and tapping into the momentum initiated by the Commonwealth Games.
- 21 The service will develop a co-ordinated approach to attracting funding to support physical activity initiatives.
- 22 The service should develop a co-ordinated approach to encouraging and supporting staff to be healthy.
- 23 The Quality Research and Development Team should continue to provide guidance and support to demonstrate the clinical effectiveness of the FF strategy.

6 General Guidelines

Within the boundaries set by the 'minimum standards' an extensive variety of approaches to support people to lead active and healthy lifestyles may be adopted. This will depend very much on the person themselves, their abilities and motivations. This will also depend on the role, skills and experience of staff and carers. For some people an approach to help them understand more about their bodies, their health and their rights may be most appropriate. For others staff may find that nurturing and supporting particular interests and hobbies may be most effective. Some may simply require additional support or resources.

7 Policy Implementation

- April 2003: Draft policy to be sent to senior managers for final input.
- May 2003: Presented to Practice Governance committee for ratification.
- May 2003: Policy to be presented to 'People First'.
- June 2003: Policy to be distributed to managers within Manchester Learning Disability Partnership and the Independent Sector.
- May to December 2003: Six dates set for FF TAG training. The introduction of the FF policy is to be central to this.
- January 2004: An 'evaluation' of the extent to which the FF policy has entered into the day to day management and care of people who are learning disabled is to be planned.

8 Resources

See 'Fighting Fit Starter Pack'

9 Review

This Policy will be reviewed in September 2004.