

Bikes Action Research



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What is the Problem?

- Since 1992 there have been 14 obesity strategies and 698 reports that obesity is increasing.
- According to the Greater London Authority, 'Unhealthy Weight in London's Children. What We Know'. London's Child Obesity Taskforce, 2019 nearly 40 per cent of children across London are overweight or obese.
- Recent statistics for the UK showed that 13% of children aged between two and four years old are obese and a further 16% are overweight.
- Childhood obesity can lead to debilitating and challenging health conditions like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, breathing problems, fatty liver disease and high cholesterol.
- Obesity leads to declines in motor skills across childhood.
- Children's low confidence and poor motor proficiencies are interrelated causes of obesity, as children's low motor proficiencies and self-perceptions of poorer physical competence may serve as a catalyst for inactivity and consequence weight gain.



Our Partnership with Bikeworks!

- Bikeworks is a social enterprise with a purpose to encourage people to cycle.
- They run leadership programmes where participants make bikes which they donate to LEYF.
- Since 2018, Bikeworks have donated 200 bikes to LEYF.
- Access to bikes meant we could offer them to families at weekend as part of a Bike Lending Scheme.
- This made us consider how we could extend this across London.



But How Could We Check?

We decided that before we set up a bike lending scheme, we needed to better understand how children accessed bikes at nursery and at home.



What did we want to measure?

- How are bikes used in nurseries?
- What do staff think about how bikes are helpful for children's learning and development?
- What do parents think about how bikes help their children's learning and development?
- Does regular use of bikes develop a positive attitude towards a healthy lifestyle.



How did we choose which nurseries should participate?



- Higher rates of obesity.
- Disadvantaged communities.
- Slow development of gross motor skills and coordination.
- Lack of access to resources such as bikes.
- No storage space for bikes.
- Poor understanding of healthy lifestyles and importance of exercise.
- Decline in emotional wellbeing.

What Are We Finding?

- Staff see many benefits to the use of bikes both physical and sociolinguistic.
- Barriers to usage including the cycling surface and the state of bike repairs.
- Parents also see benefits of riding bikes but only for their children's physical skills. They identify weather and limited time as the biggest barriers to talking their children outside on their bikes.
- Parents consider bikes as a key part of their children's nursery life.
- Parents are divided almost evenly as to whether they could use a bike lending scheme.



What Next?

- Stop competing with the Scandinavian cult of outdoor learning and recognise our own environment. Thomas Weaver calls for us to return to the poetry of the back garden.
- LEYF definition of urban outdoors and how we use it to benefit our children's ability to become confident cyclists.
- Is there room for our regulator to judge how we balance improved nutritional quality of food served to children with an increased length of time for the children to engage in physical activity.
- How do we support staff to promote healthy behaviour?
- More studies on parent perceptions regarding nutrition and physical environment.

A review in US concluded that interventions in childcare settings had the potential to impact nutrition and physical activities outcomes as a response to obesity. Let's not miss the opportunity.