

Emily Fieldhouse, Living Well Schools Coordinator City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

The Background

There are stark inequalities for children who grow up in the Bradford District, with local National Child Measurement Programme data showing that 41.5% of children and young people are living with overweight or obesity by the time they are 11 years old.

The Reducing Inequalities in Communities (RIC) Schools project is a three-year project that aims to reduce childhood obesity and health inequalities in the 10% most deprived areas in the Bradford district.

Project Model

30 primary schools are involved in the project and were split into 3 clusters depending on postcode. Each school was allocated a Schools Facilitator who provides support and delivers a physical activity, nutrition and mental health offer through staff training, networking, conferences, and examples of best practice.



Challenges	Challenges
Reach	The project faced challenges when reaching important stakeholders to create a whole school change.
Implementation	The Covid-19 pandemic, Cost of Living Crisis, teacher strikes and limited school resources brought challenges to project implementation.
Engagement	School engagement fluctuated throughout the project and varied between the physical activity, nutrition, and mental health offers.
Sustainability	The offers implemented by the facilitators must be sustainable once the project support has ended in 2024.

Findings

Physical Activity:

70% of schools agreed that improving their environment had significantly impacted physical activity provision. One stating it had a "huge range of physical activity opportunities now available for the children at breaks, lunches, PE and enrichment times". All schools expressed the importance of having senior leadership on board to create change.

Nutrition:

42% of schools said they face challenges in finding time and space for pupils to grow and harvest food.

74% of schools feel staff only have access to basic resources to help build confidence in delivering cooking and growing.

Mental Health:

When asked about their schools mental health provision, all schools felt that there was a wide range of 'off the shelf' resources available for schools, but 83% felt that financial cost of resources hindered staff development and training.

Future Impact

The RIC Schools project has emphasised the importance of flexibility, collaboration and senior leadership involvement and highlighted the complexity of childhood obesity and health inequalities.

The project champions a Facilitated approach and will transition into a wider schools model to serve all Primary and Secondary schools within the Bradford District.

Testimonials

A Cluster 1 school felt that:

"Our school has turned physical activity on its head and taken advantage of all training, support and funding available."

After receiving £50,000 in funding for free school meals, Head Teacher at Cluster 2 school said:

"Never in our wildest dreams did we imagine this, we just wanted to raise some awareness. This will make such a difference to our families."

