

## **Slimming club teen programme shows power of weekly support**

Young people who attend weekly sessions at a family-focused slimming club are successful in making positive changes to their lifestyle habits and reducing their Body Mass Index (BMI), a new study has found.

In the UK one in five (19 per cent) children under the age of 16 has an obese Body Mass Index (BMI)\*. Yet there are relatively few community-based weight loss solutions available to young people and, of the current options, most only offer short courses of 6-12 weeks and few are available across the whole country.

The paper 'Weight, body mass index and behaviour change in a commercially run lifestyle programme for young people', published in the Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, looked at young people aged 11-15 who attended one of Slimming World's 8,500 local community-based groups under the club's Family Affair scheme. Under the scheme young people aged 11-15 can attend a group for free with a paying parent or guardian who is responsible for their meals, as long as they have the permission of their GP or nurse. The support focuses on healthy lifestyle changes rather than weight loss, is available on a weekly basis and can be accessed by families for as long as it is required.

The study found that, since joining a group, young people had made positive changes to their eating habits and become less sedentary. These lifestyle changes led to a significant reduction in BMI as children grew in height.

"This study shows that providing young people with long term healthy lifestyle support through specialised weekly sessions can help them to make changes to their behaviour and maintain those changes over time," says Dr James Stubbs, Slimming World's obesity research specialist and study author.

"It is in the crucial 11-15 age bracket that many young people begin to establish ingrained dietary habits. We understand the challenges faced by today's teenagers – TV and computers, fast food, fewer family mealtimes, less sport at school. It's not their fault. In today's 'obesogenic' environment it's increasingly difficult for young people to navigate to a healthy lifestyle, but with structured support that centres on the family and is rooted in the community it's possible to provide young people with the practical tools and long term emotional support they need to make their own healthy choices.

"Slimming World's Family Affair programme, which helps around 10,000 young people each year, is focused on healthy lifestyles rather than on weight loss. The study showed that participants in the programme ate more fruit and vegetables, ate fewer unhealthy snacks at home and in school, took more interest in food and its preparation and became more active, while moving away from sedentary behaviours such as TV viewing and playing computer games. These changes led to a healthier BMI as young people grew into their height. By working together, families, Slimming World groups and health professionals can help young people to develop life-long healthy habits that result in fitter, healthier, happier lives."

Lifestyle changes made by young people aged 11-15 since following Slimming World's Family Affair programme:

<b>More</b>	<b>Less</b>
Regular meals	Unhealthy snack food (at school and home)
Likely to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables	Unhealthy pre-prepared meals
Taking part in sport	Takeaways/fast food
Walking	Sugary drinks
Time spent socialising with friends	Time spent watching TV
	Time spent on computer games
	Likely to avoid activity

-ends-

For further information or opportunities to interview Dr James Stubbs please contact the Slimming World Press Office on 01773 546101 or email [public.relations@slimming-world.com](mailto:public.relations@slimming-world.com). The abstract can be viewed here: <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0952-3871>

Notes to Editors

\*National Child Measurement Programme 2011

- Slimming World is the largest and most advanced slimming organisation in the UK. Margaret Miles-Bramwell (OBE, FRSA) founded the company in 1969 and there are now more than 8,500 groups held weekly nationwide via a network of more than 3,500 Slimming World trained Consultants.
- 450,000 members attend Slimming World every week and achieve outstanding success.
- Slimming World pioneered referral schemes in the UK and actively supports the building of partnerships with the NHS and local authorities to develop effective strategies to manage overweight and obesity in the community. Slimming World works with university researchers and specialists in an active research programme to further knowledge of the causes and treatment of obesity.
- Slimming World's healthy eating plan, Food Optimising<sup>®</sup>, and the principles behind Slimming World's philosophy are based on a deep understanding of the challenges faced by overweight people. Slimming World integrates practical, up-to-date dietary advice with a highly developed support system.
- Slimming World Consultants receive specific training in dietary aspects and the role of physical activity in weight control. The highly developed training focuses on facilitating behaviour change in a group environment, acknowledged by experts as being the most effective way to support long-term weight management.