

Progress in Practice

The Chai Centre

The Chai Centre in Daneshouse, Burnley is an integrated healthy living and children's centre, promoting sustainable development and healthy lifestyles amongst the local community.

Summary

The Chai Centre is an excellent example of a multi-strategy approach to sustainable development in the community. The building itself, healthy living programmes and food procurement policy have had a hugely positive impact.

The project was started in 2004, in part as a response to the racial disturbances in Burnley in 2001. The local area was also suffering from health and social problems such as high levels of illness and substance misuse, poor access to health and fitness provision and social exclusion. Funded by a partnership between the East Lancashire Primary Care NHS Trust and the Big Lottery Fund, the Centre was set up to address these issues by improving quality of life, reducing health inequalities and promoting social cohesion in the local community.

Building The Centre

In partnership with representatives from the local community, a representative management board was set up to plan the construction of the centre. The building itself was built in a highly sustainable way. Reclaimed stone and flooring were used, solar panels provide the centre's hot water, rainwater is collected and re-used in the community garden and kitchen waste is composted on-site. The process also engaged local contractors, providing employment opportunities for the local community.



"The Chai Centre has succeeded in bringing together the local community and businesses - it is the hub of life within the area."

Sajda Majeed – Project Manager

"A stunning example of partnership work."

Professor Al Green – Children's Commissioner

Links and organisations involved: East Lancashire Primary Care NHS Trust (www.eastlancspct.nhs.uk); Big Lottery Fund (www.biglotteryfund.org.uk); Sure Start (www.surestart.gov.uk); Refresh (www.refresh-agency.com).

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Healthy Living:

An on-site gym, help in stopping smoking and complementary therapies are all provided by the centre. In addition, positive mental health programmes increased social cohesion by raising cultural awareness within the community.

Food Procurement:

Health services are major purchasers of food and can therefore have a significant impact on economic, social and environmental trends through food procurement policies. The Chai Centre has raised the awareness of healthy food, sources local produce and is committed to Fair-trade products. It has also helped to foster healthy eating amongst children and increased cultural awareness by providing a culturally diverse menu and service.

Strategic Learning Points:

- The engagement of the local community in the management of the project improved the uptake and perception of the centre and programmes.
- Health and fitness programmes can help reduce social exclusion, bringing culturally diverse communities together.



Facts and Figures:

Since its opening in 2004, the Chai Centre has:

- increased access to services, especially amongst women wanting to address issues such as post-natal depression and domestic violence.
- led to members of the exercise programme, on average, losing 2.4kg of weight, reducing their body mass index by 0.86 and seeing a significant decrease in blood pressure.
- helped 278 people gain employment through a scheme involving the Job Centre Plus.
- become a focal point for the local community.



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