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The DIY Health Programme – Empowering patients and helping to manage demand

An innovative new project, the DIY Health Programme, gives the parents of young children the knowledge and skills to confidently manage their children's health at home, and know when to seek further help. Co-produced by Bromley by Bow Health Partnership (BBBHP, Tower Hamlets, London) and the local community, the pilot of the programme has seen outstanding results. Parents feel confident and empowered to look after their family's health, there has been a significant increase in access to the Pharmacy First scheme, and GP attendances, out-of-hours GP and A&E use have all reduced. Following success of the pilot programme it is being up scaled and evaluated for more extensive adoption in collaboration with UCLPartners, an academic health science partnership.

The Health Education England funded programme works through empowering parents with skills and knowledge in a safe, family learning environment. The weekly health promotion sessions are facilitated by a Health Visitor and Adult Learning Specialist with support from local Children's Centres and based on a 12-week curriculum that was co-designed based on outreach in the local community and analysis of clinical presentations in the 0-5 age group to elicit specific needs. The core curriculum covers fever management, diarrhoea, vomiting, coughs, colds and flu – and is continually negotiated to incorporate parent identified topics.

Dr Khyati Bakhai, GP Partner and Darzi Leadership Fellow, who led the initial development of the DIY Health (0-5) pilot explains its many benefits: "DIY Health addresses the high proportion of GP appointments used by parents for children with self-limiting conditions. Parents were often leaving the consultation with nothing more than generic advice about self-help and monitoring or reassurance that they were doing the right thing with how they had managed

the issue so far. The DIY Health model aims to co-design solutions to these common problems and empower parents with skills and knowledge to self-manage their child's health appropriately, and increase confidence in doing so. This in turn has the potential to result in more appropriate use of NHS resources, with parents turning to, for example, pharmacists, health visitors, local children's centres or online resources where it was appropriate instead of defaulting to the GP or A&E."

"The co-produced peer-led learning model used for DIY Health: 0-5, has helped develop social capital and recognises the experience and expertise of parents in the group as a core resource. The pilot saw tremendous outcomes and through collaborating with UCLPartners, DIY Health: 0-5 is being rolled out more widely to reach even more parents and draw on the expertise of a host of professionals in the children and young people's health landscape."

"We also believe that our 'DIY Health' learning model can be successful in meeting the needs of groups of children facing different health challenges. Robust evaluation of DIY Health: 0-5 in partnership with UCLPartners and meeting clearly defined objectives will demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach to participants, medical professionals and commissioners."

Dr Saul Marmot, GP Partner, who is currently chairing the project adds: "As GPs, so many of our interactions with patients are about telling them what they can't or shouldn't be doing. It makes such a difference to be able to work with people to give them the confidence and the tools to be looking after their health and the health needs of their children.

"The DIY health project is really about primary prevention, the sort of education work that we all know we should be doing but never seem to have the time to do.

"A welcome side effect of empowering parents in this regard, is that they are able to decide in an informed way as to whether they need to bring their children

in to see a GP. Through working with UCLPartners, we are able to demonstrate on a larger scale the impact that this project has on 'unnecessary GP attendances on a larger scale and reaching a broader audience."

"We know that if we can improve the health knowledge of parents, then the impact on the health and wellbeing of those children, who are under 5 now, will be profound and enduring."

Professor Lakhanpaul from UCLPartners adds: "Working with families to design interventions that are developed with and for them is key to their success. The DIY project is underpinned by this approach. We are excited to be working with our partners and families to upscale DIY and spread it across London and further afield."

A case study has been produced that provides further information on the development of the programme and how it works in practice. This can be downloaded from the Self Care Forum website at:

<http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/DIYHealthBBBHPcasestudy.pdf>

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The Self Care Forum is a network of doctors, nurses, patient groups, NHS managers, pharmacists, the Department of Health, NHS England and the OTC medicines industry. The purpose of the Self Care Forum is to further the reach of self care and embed it into everyday life.

Visit the Self Care Forum website at: www.selfcareforum.org

For further information or to interview a GP from the Bromley by Bow Health Partnership please contact: Libby Whittaker at libby.whittaker@selfcareforum.org or on 020 7421 9318



UCLPartners (www.uclpartners.com) is an academic health science partnership that supports the healthcare system serving over six million people in parts of London, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Essex. Together, its member organizations from higher education and the NHS form one of the world's leading centres of medical discovery, healthcare innovation and education. They have come together through UCLPartners to improve health outcomes and create wealth for the local population at scale and pace.