

The success of a comprehensive child obesity project is assessed

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AS the UK faces up to a growing obesity crisis among youngsters, a University of Huddersfield expert has told a major conference about a [successful project](#) which saw a large number of children not only lose weight but also gain in self-esteem and begin to enjoy exercise, which they had previously grown to hate.

Kiara Lewis, Head of the Division of Health and Wellbeing in the University's School of Human and Health Sciences, specialises in the promotion of physical activity among overweight and sedentary people and she was invited to address a workshop organised in Durham by Public Health England. The event dealt with issues arising from the National Child Measurement programme, which gathers data used to support [public health](#) initiatives.

One of six invited speakers, Kiara reported on her research, which includes analysis of interviews with [overweight children](#) and her evaluation of a scheme called Young PALS, run by Kirklees Council and now known as the Start scheme.

"The children on the scheme were very successful in reducing the weight, but they also increased their self esteem and they became more active. I have been researching what it was about the scheme that made them feel better about themselves and why they now enjoy exercising. Beforehand they often disliked PE, but after they had been on the scheme they discovered they liked exercise and activity."

During the period of evaluation by the University of Huddersfield, the Young PALS project involved more than 300 Kirklees children. Some 60 per cent of them reduced their BMI.

"Many of these [children](#) hadn't had a positive experience of being physically active, so it was something they avoided. But now they were saying that they were enjoying exercise and they wanted to be generally more active."

Head of Health and Wellbeing Kiara Lewis addresses national Public Health England workshop on her research into activity schemes for overweight youngsters

Provided by University of Huddersfield

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