

Innovation in health education helping children ride ups and downs of life, study shows

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A new study by the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) into work going on in Gloucestershire schools shows that young people

are becoming more responsible for looking after their own health.

[Facts4Life](#) is one of a suite of health and wellbeing programmes and interventions being delivered in Gloucestershire schools. The programme, run by a GP and a former deputy head teacher, helps [children](#) understand that their mental wellbeing and physical health are inextricably linked and that they don't always need medicine in order to get better.

Instead of simply telling children to make [healthier choices](#), the programme helps them to understand why doing certain things will lead to better health, and that good health and wellbeing is very much linked to their environment and the choices they make. They are encouraged to make sense of their own experiences of illness to understand this and to identify how their attitudes and behaviour have changed, improving their personal health and wellbeing. So far, Facts4Life has worked with more than 160 schools in the county and trained more than 1,000 teachers.

The study, carried out by Professor Jane Powell, Emma Bird and team at the Centre for Public Health and Wellbeing at UWE Bristol, involved more than 400 primary and secondary aged school children over a three year period. It identified a significant improvement in resilience after six months among intervention group pupils in years 5 and 6. Younger pupils in years 3 and 4 reported improvements in managing three key aspects of their health: a decreased need for medication when feeling unwell, new strategies for promoting mental health, and the usefulness of learning about illness. Teachers indicated a change in philosophy around the teaching of [health](#) and illness, high levels of engagement and an impact on the way children behaved.

Hugh van't Hoff, founder of Facts4Life and a practising GP, said:
"We're delighted with these findings. They offer real encouragement to an approach that is aimed at true prevention rather than costly medical

intervention later in life.

Dr. Jeremy Welch, Clinical Lead for Children and Young People at NHS Gloucestershire CCG, said: "Facts4Life helps to give children a different perspective by encouraging them to understand and learn how to manage both their physical and mental [wellbeing](#). Lots of illnesses that manifest later in life, such as type two diabetes, are preventable through good lifestyle choices, and helping children to understand this and make good choices at a young age will benefit them in later life."

More information: Full Evaluation Report – eprints.uwe.ac.uk/36934/

Executive Summary - eprints.uwe.ac.uk/36935/

Provided by University of the West of England

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