September 15, 2017

***Press Release***

 **Health Champions welcomes latest NICE guidance for preventing diabetes**

Today (Friday, September 15) NICE[[1]](#footnote-1) (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) has advised that people at highest risk of developing diabetes should be given intensive support, including being referred to cookery classes.

The guidance has been welcomed by Storrington-based social enterprise company Health Champions, which has been running free cookery classes across West Sussex for over seven years. Course leaders have taught more than 1,000 people to cook and eat more healthily, an experience which is life-changing for many participants.

Working with the Worthing and Chichester Wellbeing teams, Health Champions offers six-week community Cook and Eat classes, aimed not just at telling people what to do, but showing them practically how to do it.

Denise Kennedy, Health Champions Registered Dietitian says “We get people cooking 10 minutes after we start on week one. We focus on healthy food, with lots of vegetables, that is tasty and easy to prepare. People arrive on week one a bit scared and nervous and by the end they don’t want the course to end! We enthuse, we inspire and we educate. And it really makes a difference because we don’t just tell people what to do, we actually get them to do it for themselves in a safe space.”

Health Champions can also deliver one-to-one courses for individuals in their own homes if circumstances or health means they cannot attend a group course.

Evidence from Health Champions’ evaluations show that positive changes made during the courses, including cooking from scratch, eating more vegetables and controlling portions, are maintained long after the courses have ended.

Referrals come from local hospitals, diabetes services, local GP practices, public health teams and other health professionals. GPs and other health professionals can refer their patients to courses currently running across Adur, Worthing, Chichester and Arun.

Denise said: “It would be wonderful to be able to offer these courses to a wider group of people, especially those who are at high risk of developing diabetes and integrate these services with other local diabetes prevention courses. Our experience in this area shows our courses can literally be life-changing for many people.”

Some quotes from recent course participants:

Cathy attended a course in Worthing. She not only wanted to start cooking from scratch to improve her health but also because she simply cannot afford to keep buying expensive pre-packaged meals. Her weekly food budget is just £20. Cathy says: **“**This course has been so good! I have really enjoyed being able to do ‘hands on’ cooking and to be able to cook with other people and try their cooking! It has made me look more carefully at what I am eating and made me buy more vegetables! It has been a great course and my teacher has been great and had lots of patience. The course has been perfect!”

Helen attended a course in Worthing. She said: “I like to cook but I don’t have much confidence. I am really funny about trying new food. I am making this vegetable soup but I don’t eat veg, I am not a big vegetable person. I am worried that as my little boy gets older he will start to copy me and start refusing to eat things because I am like that!” By the end of the course Helen said: “Overall I really enjoyed learning new skills and recipes. I like the fact that you get to keep the recipes that you have made so you can do it again at home. I have really enjoyed the course.” And she did eat the vegetable soup!

Lisa (attended a course in Adur) said: “Before the course I never prepared a meal from scratch, but now I am cooking around twice a week. I like cooking from scratch and I am now quite good at shopping on a budget. I would recommend that others give the course a go, I would book onto another one, it has been fun and easy to do!”

Mary and Josh had cookery leader Debbie Lomas come and help them at home. Both mother and son were significantly overweight and at high risk of developing diabetes. At the end of the course the cookery leader commented: “Josh really enjoys cooking and his confidence is high during the sessions as he is proud to share what he has cooked. Mary and Josh were really enthusiastic about the sessions and by the end Josh was confidently following recipes and cooking them by himself. He was also suggesting healthy ways to change meals i.e. adding herbs and trying out fish nuggets. Josh was really keen to continue with cooking and has now been referred onto a group.”

A range of simple recipes[[2]](#footnote-2) that Health Champions uses on its courses are available for free download for anyone to use.

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1. NICE News and Features 15.09.2017 Available at <https://www.nice.org.uk/news/article/more-than-a-million-people-should-be-offered-lifestyle-tips-as-a-way-to-avoid-type-2-diabetes> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.health-champions.co.uk/52/Recipes> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)