How SERVES tennis sessions gave Emma the knowledge and the confidence to live a healthier, more social lifestyle.

Background

At 15, Emma began attending the Tennis Foundation’s SERVES programme in the Bridlington area. The programme, run in partnership with StreetGames, also operates in conjunction with East Riding Council’s positive lifestyles programme, delivered by their sports, play and arts service.

SERVES offers tennis-based sessions for young people aged 11 years and over. Each session is designed to empower young people to develop key social outcomes, including greater health, wellbeing and self-confidence, through tennis-based games and activities.

When Emma first started attending SERVES sessions, she had very little self-confidence and a limited social circle. She was also struggling at school due to bullying from both students and other young people in her neighbourhood. From the outset, Emma lacked confidence and was reluctant to make friends during activities. Her health and nutritional knowledge was also poor, as she continued to drink various energy drinks during her early sessions, despite being advised of their negative effect on her health.

Since that time, SERVES has given Emma a better understanding of the many benefits of living a healthy lifestyle. It has also helped her to build her confidence, allowing Emma to interact more confidently with her peers, and those of all ages.

Successful change

East Riding was chosen by StreetGames to deliver the SERVES Social Change Programme as part of its sessions in Bridlington. This new element aims to introduce participants to the idea of living a healthier lifestyle and developing their self-confidence through tennis games and activities.

The health module looks at the different types of food groups and what nutritional benefits these have for the body, as well as both good and bad food choices and the correct forms of rehydration. In conversations with Emma prior to the sessions, she had indicated that people at school had commented that she was overweight. Having heard this statement repeatedly from bullies at school and in the area that she lives in, Emma had come to believe that this was actually true, despite the fact that she is not overweight.

Thankfully, the programme’s 10 Social Change health modules have proven to have a positive impact on Emma. They have provided her with insight on the different aspects of health, both physical and mental, and provided her with the means to live a healthier lifestyle. Through this, there has been an improvement in Emma’s attitude towards her health and the topic of healthy living in general. As stated, Emma has now begun to drink more water when rehydrating instead of energy drinks, and has reduced the amount of sugar she consumes in a day.

Contact the SERVES National Team

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At first, Emma was reluctant to answer questions during activities or games relating to health. However over time, Emma became more confident, ultimately becoming the first in the group to answer any question. She would show even greater confidence when recapping at the end of a session - sharing key information which she had retained and recalled from earlier in the programme. In speaking with her coaches, Emma notes that she has seen an increase in her energy levels and has started to have a more positive outlook on her personal body image.

Next steps

SERVES and the Social Change Programme has helped Emma to develop as a person. It has also given her the opportunity to socialise more with her peers, prompting new friendships to form. Emma’s self-confidence has also improved drastically and this has allowed for her to be more expressive with her thoughts and feelings.

The aforementioned health modules have given Emma the opportunity to understand more about leading a healthy lifestyle, as well as the benefits that come with this - demonstrated through her more optimistic attitude, and eating habits. Emma now feels more confident in herself, with her school work also seeing improvement. She is now on track to attain all of her desired GCSEs. Recently, Emma also began attending a ‘sea scouts’ club on Friday nights. This has given Emma even more direction, and she wants now to join the navy and pursue a career in this field.