# **Organising a ‘Libraries4Life’ session**

* **Prepare yourself**

Being well prepared will build your confidence and help the session go well.

Read the section of this toolkit for library and other professionals and familiarise yourself with the key messages about the importance of eating well and leading a healthy lifestyle.

Remember that the message comes across best with a light touch, and children and families will respond best to activities that are fun and non-preachy.

Think about how the venue will work, how the session will be organised and how you are going to attract families and children to come along.

* **Practicalities**

**Venue:** where will the session be held? Think about comfort and wellbeing of participants (e.g. access to toilets) whether the session is in the library or somewhere else

**Length of session:** this depends on the type of activity you are organising and the age range of the children you are targeting. Smaller children respond best to shorter activities or ones broken up by breaks.

**Target audience:** do you want to target particular families? Activities for school age children are likely to take place at weekends or in school holidays.

**Staffing:** it is easier to organise activities which include parents and carers. If children are by themselves, you will need to think about ratios of adults to children and whether all the adults have a DBS check. It is never a good idea to leave one adult with a group of children. You will also need a contact for parents (mobile phone) and to have information about any health concerns or disability a child may have.

**Booking:** do you want people to book or just come along? Is the session free – if so always say so on the publicity. Do you want to have any conditions e.g. should people be a library member?

**Refreshments**: are you supplying any? Is this free or will you ask for a donation to cover costs? Remember part of the message is healthy eating so refreshments should fit in with the theme.

**Access:** is the venue accessible? Are there any directions needed?

* **Recruiting families and children**

The toolkit contains a pro-forma leaflet to download and amend to meet local needs – if you want to use it for social media, save the final version as a jpeg.

**Advertising in the library:** use the leaflet (enlarge to A4 size for a poster) in the library**;** talk to people who come to existing activities and encourage them to advertise the activity for you

**Social media:** use Facebook and Twitter. Post information about the sessions on relevant on-line noticeboards e.g. on Mumsnet and other relevant groups (see key partners)

**Work with partners:** put an e-mail mailing list together from the key partners and get in touch with as many of them as possible. Talk to partners to ask them to advertise your session. Find out if they have any regular meetings you could attend to spread the word.

**Ask people who attend the activity to spread the word:** personal recommendation is the strongest form of advertising

* **Prepare the activity**

**The detail of each activity could be very different – the examples in the toolkit tell you how each library has approached this issue and the ideas cover a wide range from a quiz to story walks. Each case study gives enough details for you to plan a similar session, a contact to find out more if necessary and top tips for delivering successfully.**

**Activity plan:** draw up a plan for the activity. Map out each part of the session and how long it will last. Note down what materials and equipment you will need and how many staff and/or volunteers. You might need to produce a briefing note on how an activity will work and/or hold a briefing session for staff/volunteers.

**Risk assessment:** you will need to carry out a risk assessment for each new activity – this will also help you to plan the session and think about how best to organise the space and materials you might need.

**Materials and equipment:** put all the materials you will need to one side well in advance to make sure you have got everything and clearly label the box so no-one else helps themselves.

**Venue:** allow time to get the venue ready and make sure other library staff or partner staff know the session is taking place

**Joining the library:** encourage everyone to join the library and explain that it is free. Make it as easy as possible for people to take a book home with them today. Have a simple leaflet to explain how being a library member works.

**Feedback:** ask for feedback (could be verbal or use a feedback form if you have one. Comments on a flip chart also work well). Think about how you can use the feedback to improve the next session.

**Contact details:** ask for contact details (e-mail or ‘phone number if you are able to send library texts). Start a contact list for future sessions and other library events that would be appropriate for 5-11year olds making sure that you follow data protection principles (store personal information securely and only use it for the purpose you identified at the time of asking).

**Photographs:** photographs will help publicise the library and any future activity but you will need permission to use photos of children. Your library service will have a permission form – make sure you have some to hand and that they are kept in a safe place afterwards.