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# LEAP Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) Programme for Pregnant Mothers with a BMI of 25 or over

A Better Start case study



A Better Start is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and is a ten-year programme focused on developing and testing new approaches to promoting good Early Childhood Development (ECD). The A Better Start partnerships have developed locally tailored strategies to promote ECD, focusing on three key child development outcomes: speech, language and communication; social and emotional development; and diet and nutrition.

# LEAP Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) Programme

LEAP Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) Programme is a service for pregnant women with a BMI of 25 or more living in the Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP) area of Lambeth. It aims to support women to make healthy lifestyle changes to enhance their own and their baby's health.

A Better Start child outcome(s) the service aims to improve:



Speech, language and communication



Social and emotional development



Diet and nutrition



## What are the key aims of the service?

The aim of the service is to support pregnant women with a BMI of 25 or over to make healthy lifestyle changes to enhance both their own and the developing foetus's health.

In the medium term, the service aims to:

- increase knowledge, awareness and opportunities around healthy diet and exercise during pregnancy – and the link between the mother's diet and that of her unborn baby
- improve early detection and management of gestational diabetes
- improve and sustain positive changes in diet and physical activity
- reduce prevalence of a BMI over 25 in subsequent pregnancies
- increase identification of other issues and needs (including mental health) and appropriate referrals

In the long term, it aims to:

- reduce (by 3% per year) the proportion of large-for-gestational-age babies born to mothers in the LEAP area of Lambeth
  - reduce the proportion of birth complications associated with a BMI of 25 or above for babies born in the LEAP area of Lambeth
  - reduce the proportion of children in the LEAP area who are overweight or obese at 2 years old
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## Who is the service for?

The target group are pregnant women with a booking BMI of 25 and over and their babies, who live within the four LEAP wards. Women with particular health concerns, including pre-existing diabetes and thyroid disease, are not able to take part.

## What is the evidence base for the service?

The LEAP Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) Programme builds on evidence from the UK Pregnancies Better Eating and Activity Trial (UPBEAT) research study undertaken by Kings College Hospital, London. The UPBEAT study was an RCT of the impact of behavioural interventions on clinical outcomes in pregnant women who are obese. The UPBEAT study showed that support from health trainers had a significant positive impact on women's diets.

[Poston, L. et al. \(2015\) Effect of a behavioural intervention in obese pregnant women \(the UPBEAT study\): a multicentre, randomised controlled trial. The Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology. 3\(10\), 767-777.](#)

LEAP Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) Programme was developed by a team of health professionals and experts and tested in the Lambeth community over the last five years. It has since been modified, drawing on local data on pregnant women at booking to identify groups with the highest prevalence of obesity. Insights from local parents have been used to adapt programme materials to be culturally appropriate to the needs of pregnant women in Lambeth.



## How is the service run?

The service is delivered by Health Trainers. Women join the service between 12 to 20 weeks of pregnancy. Women who may benefit from the service are identified and recruited by a midwife, who is also responsible for collecting data for the evaluation purposes.

The service can be delivered in groups or as a one-to-one intervention, and is offered in local children's centres and other community settings.

Women have eight sessions with the Health Trainer. At these sessions, they set personal SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Specific) goals in relation to dietary intake and physical activity.

## Core content of the service

The service supports women to have a healthy diet based around foods with low glycaemic index (GI). Women are also encouraged to take part in physical activity, with a particular focus on walking as a safe and easy-to-do activity.

Core elements of the service include:

- group sessions with a Health Trainer focused on supporting healthy diet and physical activity during pregnancy and in the early years, through tailored information, goal-setting and peer support
- one-to-one midwifery sessions, including breastfeeding support
- tailored accessible information including recipes and simple food swap guidance found within the Community Action and Nutrition Manual
- ‘Cook & eat’ sessions based on recipes taken from Community Action and Nutrition guidance
- gestational diabetes testing for all pregnant women with a BMI of 25 or over in LEAP area of Lambeth

## How is the service being evaluated?

Measures built into the LEAP Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) Programme to capture outcomes on a continuous basis include:

- NVS UK healthy literacy screening tool
- Gestational diabetes test
- Babies’ birthweight
- Edinburgh Post Natal Depression Scale (EPDS)
- Generalized Anxiety and Depression Scale (GAD)
- Dietary behaviour questionnaire for mothers

A process evaluation of the LEAP Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) Programme is underway.

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**“LEAP Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) Programme has been a wonderful experience for me. I was given the support I needed to make little changes that had such a positive outcome for both myself and my baby. I lost weight, became more active and feel so much better. I absolutely loved being part of it”**

**- Parent**

**“Each of my completers have identified that learning about food labelling has been one of the most positive threads of the programme. Participants have commented that they are now confident in accurately identifying products high in fat and sugar using both the 100-gram column in the nutritional information and the ingredients list. This is now a very valuable skill allowing them to action the knowledge they have learnt during the sessions when food shopping and choosing snacks”**

**- Health Trainer**



For more information, please go to  
[www.leaplambeth.org.uk/info-for-parents/can](http://www.leaplambeth.org.uk/info-for-parents/can)



# Contact

[abetterstart@biglotteryfund.org.uk](mailto:abetterstart@biglotteryfund.org.uk)

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