

Young people with type 1 diabetes bring thoughts about their condition to life in puppet film



DRWF-funded film project gives young people with type 1 diabetes a platform to explore their feelings about the condition.

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Looking after yourself

A novel creative approach to help children and parents better understand and talk about their treatment has been funded by UK-based charity Diabetes Research & Wellness Foundation.

DRWF gave a small educational award to the Royal Free Hospital Children's School (RFHCS), a community Special School for pupils aged five to 16, for the patient centred multi-disciplinary approach to diabetes education using puppet making and film skills to help with learning.

DRWF Chief Executive Sarah Tutton said: "We were really pleased to support this innovative project which helps young people to explore their diabetes diagnosis and management. The film will allow the work to support other young people, and their parents, in talking about type 1 diabetes and what it means to live with a long-term condition. It helps to dispel some myths and share some important messages in a fun, creative way."



The grant funded four sessions of learning puppet and film making skills for young people, which resulted in a short film to be used as an educational tool for other young children newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes.

Following the sessions there was a great improvement in both the children and their parents' knowledge and confidence discussing type 1 diabetes. The project had other benefits as well, as the social aspect of the activities encouraged a strong bond to form between parents and children, which can be hard to achieve in a clinical setting.

Steve Green, Deputy Headteacher and Examinations Officer at the Royal Free Hospital Children's School, said: "Parents and children were rearranging their schedules to ensure they attended as many sessions as possible and happily shared experiences.

"Children were explaining insulin pump functions to each other and parents were discussing the importance of control using conventional means as a prerequisite before being offered a pump.

"The film is being shown at the Royal Free Hospital to children newly diagnosed with diabetes as an educational tool and 'mythbuster'. The film was a delight to make and all parents and children were thrilled with the outcome and thoroughly enjoyed taking part."

Steve and his colleague Victoria Dublon will be presenting the video and a poster about the project at the British Society for Paediatric Endocrinology and Diabetes Annual Conference in Newcastle from 22-24 November.



Around 14% of the school's children have a long-term medical condition, with 200 young people diagnosed with type 1 diabetes across the Royal Free Trust, which includes Chase Farm, Barnet and Royal Free Hospitals.

An estimated 125,000 UK children miss more than 14 school days per year meaning most hospitals have an education provision.

The RFHCS offers high quality education for all children who are inpatients at the Royal Free Hospital. It also provides a limited number of places for children who are not inpatients but who are receiving support from medical or mental health services and may benefit from attending the school on a daily basis.

The school operates within a multidisciplinary framework; working closely with a range of professionals including consultant doctors, mental health professionals, physiotherapists, speech therapists and other agencies.