

May 2009

## **CHANGE4LIFE MARKETING STRATEGY FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND FAMILIES WITH BABIES**

### **BRIEFING NOTES, MAY 2009 from the DOH**

- **Overview**

Following the successful launch of Change4Life, the Department of Health is looking at widening the audiences to help support more families with healthy living.

Giving babies a good start in life can really help build the foundations for healthy living later on. DH is currently developing a marketing strategy to support families to give their children the best start in life, which will focus on breastfeeding, weaning and active play. It will provide pregnant women, their partners and new parents useful information to encourage them to adopt behaviours in the first year of a child's life, which will help prevent childhood obesity.

The branding of the new campaign is currently under review, but may be called Start4Life.

- **Target audience – pregnant women and families with babies**

Research indicates that adopting specific behaviours, such as breastfeeding, timely weaning on appropriate foods and active interaction with babies and toddlers early on in life can help prevent childhood obesity.

- **Other target audiences**

This campaign will target pregnant women and families with babies. Currently, Change4Life focuses on families with children between 5 and 11 years of age. However, as Change4Life develops as a movement, it will expand to include the 1 – 5 age group. Within the 'Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: One Year On' report, DH is committed to developing a set of evidence-based clear messages on healthy eating and active play to support children in their early years.

- **Breastfeeding – background**

DH recommends that babies should be exclusively breastfed for around

the first six months of life. While rates for initiation of breastfeeding have risen, continuation levels in England are comparatively low: nearly eight out of ten mothers initiate breastfeeding but less than a third of these are still breastfeeding at six months, and only 1% of mothers are exclusively breastfeeding at six months.

Our research shows that there are a number of factors which prevent mothers from continuing to breastfeed and it is important to support them in making informed decisions which will benefit them and the future health of their babies.

The new campaign is being created to support parents by providing practical and useful information to give children the best start in life. Its focus on breastfeeding, weaning and active play will be reinforced by a tone echoing that of Change4Life, ie accessible, easy to understand and reassuring.

- **Weaning – background**

DH recommendation is that babies should be introduced to solid foods when they are developmentally ready and this is usually at around 6 months (26 weeks). Advice is that solid foods should not be introduced earlier than 4 months (17 weeks). However, 40% of women wean their babies between 3 and 4 months, and 15% before 3 months. The current average age for weaning to start is 19 weeks.

- **Growth charts - background**

The new World Health Organisation growth charts indicate that 6% of babies are overweight. Identifying weight issues at an early stage can play a crucial role in helping to prevent obesity in older children and adults

- **Partnerships**

As with all Change4Life activity, DH will be taking an inclusive stance of working with a range of relevant partners to ensure its messages are easily available when mums and families need them. No partners have been confirmed for the new campaign as yet. If partners do become involved, DH will ensure they are the most appropriate to help mums and their families make healthier decisions.

- **Marketing activity**

We are planning to launch the campaign in Autumn 2009. The plans are still being developed so we are unable to confirm any details.

- **Celebrities**

The communications plans for the campaign are still being developed, so we cannot confirm any details.

There has been minimal celebrity involvement in Change4Life since its launch.

The Department of Health uses carefully selected celebrities as professional communicators in its campaigns to help get across public health messages to identified target audiences who are unlikely to listen to Ministers or Government. However, only a tiny fraction of the Department's campaign budget is spent on celebrities – 0.09%.