

WWL and Woodfield School “Race to Rio”

Story Highlights

- The aim of the project is to promote health and wellbeing amongst some of the younger residents of the Wigan Borough.
- WWL is one of the biggest employers in the borough and we strongly believe that we have a social responsibility to the residents of the Wigan, young and old
- In addition to physical exercise, children will also learn about different cultures of the countries competing at the Rio Olympics.

Woodfield Primary School has been working closely with the Social Responsibilities Group (SRG) at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust (WWL), to implement a ‘Race to Rio’ challenge amongst the Woodfield School Community. In early 2016, WWL approached Woodfield School to see if they were interested in participating in a new initiative encouraging children to get active. The ‘Race to Rio’ concept sprang from WWL’s award winning staff challenge event whereby, WWL staff collectively walked the circumference of the world. This was part of WWL’s focus and dedication to the well-being of our staff. WWL SRG decided to expand this to the local community and enlist a local school and themed the new initiative around the 2016 Olympic/Para-Olympic games.

Rob Forster WWL Deputy CEO and Chair of WWL’s SRG says: “WWL is one of the biggest employers in the borough. Our vision with regard to SRG, is to be a strong, stable backbone of the community, using a position of influence to increase the well-being of all society. The WWL SRG, is unique within the NHS, formally uniting like-minded individuals, passionate about improving social good. The core team includes representation from Nursing, Governance, Facilities, Finance, HR, Communications and IT. We strongly believe that we have a social responsibility to the residents of the Wigan Borough, young and old. I am delighted that the children have thoroughly enjoyed taking part in this project and that it encourages them to live healthily and to stay active”

The aim of the project is to promote health and wellbeing amongst some of the younger residents of the Wigan Borough. It is also to encourage the children to keep fit, whilst also getting them in the Olympic spirit, ahead of the Rio Olympic Games to be held this summer.

Launched by Wigan Warriors Head Coach, Shaun Wane, in February, both pupils from the school, and staff from WWL, have attempted to walk the accumulative distance from Wigan to Rio, via competing countries. The children record the number of steps they make each week in a grid provided in their Reading Record Books. This enables them to determine how much of the distance they have covered.

In addition to the physical exercise that the pupils are enjoying, they have also learned a great deal about the country they have been assigned. Countries have been assigned on an academic year-by-year basis and have been drawn from the countries competing at the Games this summer. The country each year has been assigned has close links to some of the children in the school.

WWL's SRG have worked closely with staff at the school to provide them with information packs about the countries that they have been assigned. The pupils have learned about the climate, population, food, music, art and sport of their chosen country. This gives the project a tremendous blend of physical exercise and cultural learning.

For their part, the school have extended the challenge to all parents/carers/grandparents of children at the school, so that they can get involved. Support from WWL comes in the form of our dedicated Social Responsibility Group.

Woodfield School Chair of Governors, Mrs Lesley Porter said: "It has been an absolute delight to see the children and their families become so actively involved in the 'Race to Rio' challenge. It has proved beneficial in lots of different ways by improving their physical health and promoting a healthy lifestyle with the added bonus of educating them about the culture of other countries in a fun way. I hope that other schools will look to follow Woodfield's example and participate in WWL's plan to roll out this initiative across the Borough. It has certainly been a brilliant and worthwhile experience and most importantly been of great benefit to our children and their families."

Kate Roden, member of the SRG said: "This has been a really fulfilling project. When we first approached the school, we didn't anticipate how enthusiastic the staff and the children would be. Everyone has really embraced the challenge and we are really overwhelmed at how the project has evolved. We are now planning to use this pioneering initiative and cascade it out to other schools among the borough. We feel it is WWL's duty of care to educate Wigan children to look after themselves and keep active as they could potentially be our patients in the future.

Headteacher of Woodfield School, Julie Charnley says: "We are really grateful that WWL chose our school to be the pilot for this initiative. The children, staff and parents have really risen to the challenge and have been measuring their 'steps' weekly and, by combining the overall steps have now almost walked the distance to from Wigan to Rio de Janeiro. This really has been a partnership approach and we been delighted to welcome the support of Metrofresh, Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, Wigan Athletic, Public Health and Wigan Warriors. Working collaboratively has enabled our project to develop to and include many other positive healthy lifestyle choices, including the daily mile, healthy eating projects, art activities and many competitive sporting events."

As a culmination of this exciting and collaborative work and to ensure we have a legacy on which to build, Woodfield School have organised a 'Race to Rio Carnival Day' at the school on Friday 1st July 2016, 1.30pm to 4.30pm. The Carnival will include a number of healthy lifestyle stalls and activities to view and the children will be performing a very exciting Brazilian dance.

For further information, please contact Lorraine Hesketh, Communications Manager
at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust on 01942 82 2159
or e-mail Lorraine.hesketh@wwl.nhs.uk



Wigan Warriors Head Coach, Shaun Wane, poses with Sports Coach, Audrey Richards and pupils from Woodfield Primary School when launching the project.