

Best Practices in action: how to transfer, implement, and sustain effective health promotion interventions for children (0-12)

Module 3 - Smart Family: a Best Practice to support and empower families in promoting well-being and healthy lifestyle

Session 3.2 - Pre-implementation phase of Smart Family

Unit 3.2.2 - “A tool for implementation: pilot action plan in Eivissa, Balearic Islands, Spain”

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Slide 1

Good morning. In Module 3, we will explore today the action plan, a tool to aid the implementation of the Smart Family intervention to support and empower families in promoting well-being and a healthy lifestyle.

Slide 2

I'm Maria Ramos, a PhD doctor and expert in Health Promotion and Public Health. We are implementing the Smart Family in the Balearic Islands, Spain.

Slide 3 - Index of the action plan template

First, I will show you the index of the template that we have used for writing the action plan. It's a template provided by the Finnish team that coordinated this best action. Then, we will go through each of the points. As you can see, this index is similar to those used for research projects, as it starts with a description of the problem and the area where you want to implement the intervention; then the definition of the specific aims or objectives and the target population; the description of the actions you will take to achieve these objectives; the design of the evaluation, and the timeline.

Slide 4 - 1. Problem description

Childhood obesity is one of the greatest challenges in Public Health. In the Balearic Islands, we conducted two studies on the prevalence of childhood obesity, in 2005 and 2017, and we found that the prevalence of childhood obesity was higher in Ibiza than in the other islands, and that one of the factors associated with it could be that most children went to school by car.

Slide 5 - 2. Available knowledge in your country about the situation

In Spain in Primary Health Care, we have a free Child and Adolescent Health Programme, developed by nurses and paediatricians. So, we decided to implement Smart Family in Primary Health Care in three health centres in Ibiza city, which is a city with high socioeconomic inequities, as you can see in the map.

Slide 6 - 3. Rationale

As you know, childhood obesity is not mainly due to individual factors, but to factors related to the social environment. In the Balearic Islands, we do not have a specific programme for the prevention and treatment of childhood obesity, so Primary Health Care professionals do “what they can” and we don’t know the results of these interventions, even though their perception is that these interventions are not effective.

Slide 7 - 4. Specific aims

The objectives of our Pilot Action Plan were:

1. To train a group of primary health care professionals in the Smart Family model.
2. To design an intervention for the prevention and treatment of childhood overweight and obesity in primary health care based on the Smart Family model, but from the perspective of the social determinants of health.
3. To pilot the intervention for the treatment of childhood overweight and obesity in primary health care.
4. To pilot the intervention for the prevention of childhood overweight and obesity in primary health care.

Slide 8 - 5. Target population

Our target population was different for each objective. For objective 1 there were three paediatric nurses of primary health care and three paediatricians, although the paediatricians participated secondarily to the nurses. For objective 2: The entire population of the Balearic Islands this programme we want to extend to all the Islands. For objectives 3 and 4: our target were families, in the first case (objective 3) with a son or daughter up to 14 years old who is with overweight or obesity; and in the second case (objective 4), we saw families with son or daughter without obesity but with risk factors, especially that the mother has obesity and a basic educational level. We carefully defined also inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Slide 9 - 6. Local implementation group

Here you can see our pilot local team of implementation group: the three paediatric nurses, the subdirector of primary health care in Ibiza. And on the right, you can see the Finnish team, our mentors with me.

Slide 10 - 7. Context

The island of Ibiza is mainly devoted to tourism, and it is a complex context, with high rates of immigration, with high socioeconomic inequalities, and a significant housing problem, especially for temporary workers. At the same time, Primary Health Care in Spain was one of the best in the world, but now it is changing, somehow losing its essence. In 2023, during the implementation, there were elections, the Government shifted to the right, and the Primary Health Care director and subdirector changed. All these factors have influenced the Smart Family pilot in Ibiza.

Slide 11 - 8. Intervention

You can see the actions performed for each objective. For training the nurses, we followed the online platform provided by the Finnish team, but we also had two online mentoring sessions with them, and weekly meetings with the local team. We selected 66 educational materials from the hundreds developed by the Smart Family project. We not only translated them but also adapted them to our Mediterranean context. Then, we designed the intervention. One important point is that organisational changes in the schedules of the paediatric nurses were necessary because the Smart Family is an intervention that requires more time than the 5-10 minutes of regular visits, and to get this was not easy to get this time from the subdirector.

Slide 12 - 9-10. Evaluation of the intervention and measures

Here you can see the design of the evaluation. We combined quantitative and qualitative methods. We used two questionnaires addressed to the professionals, provided by the Finnish team, and we also designed a data collection notebook for the families. We also planned open and in-depth interviews with the paediatric nurses, paediatricians, and the families, including their children.

Slide 13 - 9-10. Evaluation of the intervention and measures

In the data collection notebook, we collected information about the social factors of the families' environment, as well as anthropometric measurements of the child and their parents. Therefore, we had to seek permission from the Balearic Islands Ethical Committee, and it took time to correctly complete all the paperwork.

Slide 14 - 11. Chronogram

For all this and other reasons, the pilot was planned to begin in 2024, but finally, it began in February 2025.

Slide 15 - Factors influencing action plans

This action plan has been essential in this limited-time project to keep us on track, and for communication between us in the local team, as well as with the Balearic Islands Health Services staff, with the Finnish team, and with other European partners. In our humble opinion, we recommend you use it, and be careful because paper holds everything, so try not to be too ambitious, as you will also encounter unforeseen events that force you to modify the plan or the schedule.

Slide 16 - General recommendation

Therefore, our final recommendation will be that before acting, it is essential to plan. Before planning, it is essential to diagnose the situation. When you plan, try to be realistic and consider possible unforeseen events. And even considering unforeseen events you will find them, so will be prepared!

Slide 17 - Thank you all for your participation!

Thanks for your attention.