

# Shaping Stockport – Focus on Health and Well-Being

Stockport Partnership Forums are convened twice per year to bring together representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors in Stockport to discuss key issues for Stockport. The aim of the Forum event held on Wednesday 23 January was to focus on improving health and well-being in Stockport. The Forum was jointly organised by Stockport Council and Stockport's Primary Care Trust.

The welcome by Councillor Clay was followed by a short talk by Mike Greenwood, Chair of the PCT. Dr. Steve Watkins, Director of Public Health, then gave an overview of health and well-being in the borough. Attendees broke up into workshops to look at barriers to good health and possible solutions.

## **Key themes from the discussion tables**

### **1. What is the message?**

#### ***The problem:***

There are a lot of mixed messages and conflicting messages about what is healthy and where to go for advice.

#### ***Ideas for solutions:***

- The message needs to be easy to remember and achievable, eg: a clear message on portion sizes for food and alcohol, type of food to eat/avoid, concentrate on changing one thing at a time rather than changing everything at once, etc.
- Everyone should give out the same message. A lot of work is needed to enable everyone to work together in this way and to get the press on board as a partner.
- Simple guidelines for people to know when to get advice from the chemist, go to the GP, or A&E

### **2. How do we enable people to make the changes they need to make?**

#### ***The problem:***

- Health messages are often listened to by those most able to make changes – we need to think more creatively about how to get the message across to the people who feel they are unable to make changes
- Some groups of people are less likely to see and respond to conventional health messages – particular groups include men, the housebound, people with mental health problems, the homeless, travellers, etc)
- Exercise is seen as an additional thing to add onto the list of things to do – people don't have time to do something extra, even if it *is* good for them

#### ***Ideas for solutions:***

- People respond better to positive messages than to feeling they're being told off
- Teach the message to people who can have a profound influence as a role model - a key family member, people within communities who could be community champions, role models from high profile sports clubs (such as Stockport County, Sale Sharks)
- Be creative in how to get the message across – use libraries, bookmakers, newsagents, workplaces and web based information to promote the message. Take the message out to places where people feel most comfortable, such as working men's clubs, bars and pubs, churches, mosques, etc, instead of making people come to a health or fitness facility where they may feel out of place. Offer 'MOT' health checks in community venues.
- Passion for life - encourage people to find something they love to do and they will do it regularly rather than see it as a chore. Be creative in capturing the interest of people, for example: linking car maintenance with body maintenance, 'drums not drugs' etc

### **3. Accessibility of healthy food, healthy choices, healthy activities**

#### ***The Problem:***

- People on low incomes often have to pay more for fuel due to providers' tariff, lack of insulation, etc so less income for food.
- Paying for social care is a barrier for people who have to pay the full cost and who are on a relatively low income.
- The combination of barriers makes it difficult to have a choice – unemployment, lack of skills, lack of education, low self esteem, low confidence, low income. Choosing low cost alternatives such as cycling and walking are restricted by the level of traffic and pollution as well as personal safety issues.
- Shops selling healthy foods are not within easy reach in terms of cost of the food and cost/availability of travel to get there. High fat, salty, convenience food is often the most easily accessible but not the healthiest choice.
- Leisure is seen as a luxury item, or has the wrong image - going to the gym is not cool
- Isolated people do not engage in activities and people suffering mental health problems and depression lack the confidence to take part in anything.

#### ***Ideas for Solutions:***

- Important that people have full financial entitlement to benefits
- Promoting low cost activities, such as free entry to Sports Trust facilities for people with a Leisure Key, extending the Leisure Key service to include people on low incomes who are not currently on the system, increasing the number of activities available on the Leisure Key system and the 'on prescription' scheme – slimming clubs, swimming clubs, etc
- Improving access to shopping facilities from areas where there are no local shops selling healthy food – change the culture of where you shop and what you buy, look at how to create a mobile farmers' market that can go to specific localities
- Sport is not the only healthy activity - all kinds of leisure activities can improve wellbeing by reducing stress and isolation. There's a need to find activities that interest people as a first step to get involved in any activity (eg: art and craft classes) and a need to recognise the value of supporting people to get involved in something
- Partner with organisations that reach out to people living in isolation (churches / voluntary visitors etc) so they can give out the same message and also give information about local activities – people who lack self confidence need support to get involved in anything

### **4. Intervention at key points**

#### ***The problem:***

Early intervention can help prevent health problems later, but this is not consistent, as joined up working between agencies does not always happen

#### ***Ideas for solutions:***

Aim to target people at key life-change points:

- Start young (pre-school through SureStart, toddler groups, etc)
- School children at all stages of school life (particularly healthy lunch choices, teaching basic healthy cooking skills to young people, school nurses working with GPs to support people likely to suffer from hereditary illnesses and tackle lifestyle issues early)
- Children in care becoming independent
- Young people starting college
- Pregnancy and parenthood
- When experiencing ill health and needing health services, advice to stop the problem becoming worse
- Moving to a new area, taking up a new tenancy (particularly if the person has previously been homeless)
- Moving to sheltered housing or supported housing

## **5. Whose responsibility is it to improve wellbeing?**

As well as individual responsibility for our own health, and the obvious responsibility of healthcare professionals, there are others who can take some responsibility to improve health and wellbeing:

### **a) Communities themselves**

#### ***The problem:***

Lack of community spirit creates social isolation and lack of confidence to be able to make any changes, especially if a community is stigmatised

#### ***Ideas for solutions:***

Developing 'community spirit' and a sense of belonging within communities will affect wellbeing. We need to engage with local communities a lot more, offering practical help and supporting them to identify local solutions for themselves, using a positive message about 'what would help here' rather than 'what are the problems here'. Using community development skills to help communities to develop and effect long-term change will mean that communities are empowered to use 'the system' more effectively, to challenge for better services and to speak out for themselves.

### **b) Workplaces**

#### ***The problem:***

Employers can inadvertently create an unhealthy work environment but don't necessarily see it as their responsibility to help their workforce be more healthy and have healthier lifestyles, eg: sedentary jobs providing little or no opportunity for exercise, a culture of working long hours creating the need for 'ready meals' and alcohol. Everything potentially has an impact on health and wellbeing but organisations often don't see a clear role for themselves in this. Front line staff in various organisations have contact with people but don't always see that 'public health' is part of their day-job.

#### ***Ideas for solutions:***

Working in partnership with employers to help them invest in the health of their staff. Examples could include looking at the length of working hours and flexible alternatives to create a better work/life balance, setting a good example by providing fruit at meetings instead of biscuits, creating a safe environment for employees to admit problems such as stress, creating opportunities for employees to use their lunch hour for a healthy break (walking, going to a gym, swimming – either individually or with groups of friends at work), organising work-based health screening sessions, promoting messages about healthy eating, excess alcohol (ie: it's not just binge drinking that's a risk to health). Employers could also incorporate 'health and wellbeing' message into the role of front line staff, encouraging them to refer people to different agencies for appropriate help and support.

### **c) Schools and colleges**

Young people's experience, aspirations and expectations have a huge impact on their health and wellbeing and the choices they feel they can make. Schools and colleges are in a unique position to be able to influence and change the aspirations of young people by teaching them life skills, such as basic cooking techniques and by increasing their subject choices by promoting educational opportunities that go beyond traditional subjects eg: placing more emphasis on developing vocational skills for appropriate pupils.

## **Next steps**

The results of the Forum will be used in several ways:

### **The Health Inequalities Strategy**

The Forum meeting was an excellent opportunity to share information about the new Health Inequalities Strategy for Stockport and gather ideas for strengthening its implementation. These are some examples of how the ideas from the Forum will be used in the strategy:

- The emphasis on 'community spirit' mentioned by Forum participants is reflected in the Strategy. Public Health Locality Teams are undertaking a series of events in key areas of the borough using a method that focuses on positive experiences of health and health services. This will enable us to build on what is already working well.
- The local focus enables health staff to work effectively with other colleagues, for example in regeneration, children and young people's services and community and voluntary sector organisations, to identify shared agendas and develop and deliver joint action plans.
- The need to offer a wide variety of opportunities to engage in positive health runs through the comments of Forum participants. This is being addressed in different ways, for example, a social marketing initiative is helping us to work out the best ways to reach the various groups within Stockport's population with practical messages that are tailored to their circumstances.
- Finding new and attractive ways to share information about health and ways of staying healthy continues to be a challenge. Messages need to be consistent in content but different in style to influence the full range of people. One proposal is to work more closely with the local press. The Council and PCT will work with Manchester Evening News and Stockport Express on the new 'Be Healthy Be Happy' initiative to provide regular content covering health issues in a more accessible way.
- While diet and exercise remain vital to good health, the message from the Forum was that sport is not the only way to engage people. We are developing new ideas to create stronger links between health promotion and arts and culture activities within the borough, eg: by ensuring that health promotion staff are well informed about the creative opportunities available via the Council and others. Development of a 'wellbeing strategy' is also under consideration to ensure this wider perspective is maintained. The PCT is joining with other regional partners to undertake a survey of levels of wellbeing in Stockport.
- New services are being developed, such as Health Trainers, that will create new access routes for sharing information about staying healthy. Close attention is being given to development of weight management services to address growing concerns over obesity. Stockport health services are taking part in an ongoing wide-ranging review of general NHS services on a national basis, known as the Darzi Review, which may lead to more radical changes in service provision in due course.

### **The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

The Council and the Primary Care Trust have been working in partnership to assess the needs people in Stockport have for health, care and wellbeing services. This is a result of the Department for Health's consultation 'A Commissioning Framework for Health and Social Care'. This argued that health and social care services need to provide access to high quality, responsive and flexible packages of care which focus as much on preventing ill-health and promoting well-being as on providing treatment and care for people who are already ill. A key aspect of the Framework was the requirement to carry out the JSNA.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is being developed in partnership to:

- Assess and understand the needs of individuals and also the needs of the communities in Stockport as a whole, by using current information to predict future health and well-being and adapting these predictions as new information becomes available
- Enable partners to identify common priorities and how best to work together to meet those needs, ensuring that future services are planned as effectively as possible
- Take account of what people want from their services and adapt approaches accordingly
- Inform the Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement

The problems and solutions identified by the Forum will be included as evidence to inform the JSNA and contribute to the planning of new approaches to the services provided to local people.

### **The Health and Well-Being Partnership**

The report from the Forum will be sent to the Partnership who will be able to consider how the information can be used to shape future services. The Health and Well-Being Partnership is a new partnership that will develop Stockport's ambitions for health and well-being. The Partnership is made up representatives of the Council, the Primary Care Trust, the Foundation Trust, Pennine Care Mental Health Trust and the community and voluntary sector. It is accountable to the Stockport Partnership for the delivery of the health and well-being elements of the Local Area Agreement.