

Why is health so important?



Reducing health inequalities should be at the heart of all social policy. If strategies do not address and consider the impact of the strategy on reducing health inequalities they will continue to widen. At present, within the West Midlands, a child born near New Street Station can expect to live 10 years less than one born near Lichfield Trent Valley station.

The Regional Health & Well-Being Strategy, developed through the Regional Health Partnership, highlights the main factors affecting people's health and well-being as social and economic including the houses people live in, the jobs they do and their access to services and amenities.

The relationship between health, employment and the economy, which is summarised in the Government's response to Dame Carol Black's report "Working for a Healthier Tomorrow", is also crucial.

Dame Carol Black estimated that the annual economic cost of ill-health in terms of working days lost and worklessness was over £100 billion – equivalent to the annual running costs of the NHS. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) estimated that last year, 172 million working days were lost due to absence, costing employers £13 billion. Against a backdrop of a wider economic downturn, both taxpayers and businesses can ill afford to bear these largely unnecessary costs.

There are about 2.6 million people on incapacity benefits and 600,000 people make a new claim each year; of these, half had been working immediately before they moved onto benefit. Once out of work, it is likely that an individual's health will worsen and they, along with their families, are more likely to fall into poverty and become socially excluded. Therefore, health-related inactivity prevents individuals from fulfilling their potential, causes needless financial hardship

and damages the communities in which people live.

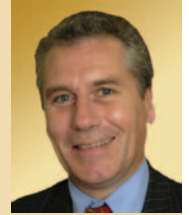
Work can have both positive and negative effects on health and it is the responsibility of employers and employees alike to work together to reduce the impact of the negative effects and promote a safe and healthy working environment. About 45,000 people (1.3% of workers) believe themselves to be suffering from work related stress, depression or anxiety. Even among employees who are present at work, poor eating habits such as having no breakfast or lunch, leads to a productivity loss of almost 97 million working days, worth £16.85 billion a year (BaxterStorey Workplace Productivity Survey, conducted by Ipsos Mori, November 2007).

The current total cost to employers of mental ill-health is estimated at nearly £26 billion a year, including the costs of sickness absence, reduced productivity and staff replacements, equal to £1,035 for every employee in the UK workforce (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, December 2007).

The recent Foresight Report reinforced how a person's health is linked to social policy and how a Single Integrated Regional Strategy could help address these issues: "Common mental disorders are extremely costly, for example depression in England accounts for about £9 billion per year, mainly in lost productivity. However, the evidence shows that they are crucially affected by factors which are influenced by policies in diverse areas unrelated to mental healthcare eg employment and the economy; housing; welfare; and criminal justice."

Foreword

A Single Integrated Regional Strategy



At the Regional Health Partnership meeting in December, members considered the vision for the future Single Integrated Regional Strategy (SIRS) and the headline messages which should be incorporated from a health point of view. Three key messages were agreed.

Health inequalities will decrease.

Decisions made without considering the impact on health and health inequalities could widen health inequalities. For example, a decision made for faster housing growth and improvements in quality of housing in areas where health is already good. If all major policies consider the impact of health inequalities, there is more chance they will reduce.

Economic Inclusion will be addressed.

Poor health is strongly correlated with high levels of unemployment and low levels of skills and learning. Skills and learning programmes are an essential mechanism for tackling such multiple disadvantages. If these areas are not addressed, economic exclusion could get worse.

Economic Growth will occur.

An unhealthy population is a less productive one. The role of the public sector in creating a resilient economy will not be realised and **sustainable communities will not be developed.**

The Regional Health Partnership will continue to work towards a Single Integrated Regional Strategy as we move forward into the future.

Councillor Steve Eling
Chair of the Regional Health Partnership

Regional Spatial Strategy and Health

Design and planning decisions have an impact on health as well as health and social care services providing an opportunity to make spatial planning work for people's health.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy provides the strategic planning framework for Local Development Frameworks. The Phase 2 revision looked at housing, land, sustainability and waste. NHS West Midlands and Department of Health West Midlands provided a commentary on four areas:

Health and Spatial Strategy

The priorities are to improve health, reduce health inequalities and the health indicators which reflect these inequalities including obesity, alcohol misuse, poor mental health and smoking. The scale of the avoidable costs of poor health is enormous. Britain could, for example, be a mainly obese society by 2050, where the costs in health services, reduced income, earlier retirement and higher dependence run into billions.

The unequal distribution of health-damaging experiences is not a natural phenomenon and there is a need to tackle the factors that affect health

such as poor housing, transport, lack of green space and other issues. While planners are already working to try to ensure high quality and healthy living environments, there is a need to reinforce this through policy, strategy and implementation.

We need to tackle our 'obesogenic environment' with its easy access to high calorie foods coupled with the decline of physical activity. Planning needs to 'engineer' activity back into people's lives through walking and cycling, access to green space, sports facilities & amenities and reducing car usage.

Health Services and Infrastructural Issues

The national direction for health services is captured in the regional health service strategy, which puts earlier intervention and prevention at the heart of local NHS services. This is in the context of the growth in the older population, the numbers of people surviving into old age, often with chronic long-term conditions and the expectations that the public has of health services.

Health care services plan on the basis of population size and age distribution, and NHS West Midlands and Primary Care Trusts will be looking at the implications of housing once there is more precise information

about location and the demography of the occupants, using tools at its disposal. Any significant increase in new numbers or shifts from one part of the region to another will need to be planned into health services.

Action on Health and Planning

Work to support the implementation of spatial strategy within the West Midlands Health & Well-Being Strategy is being progressed. An important development of inter-professional learning between public health and planning professionals, steered by the West Midlands Teaching Public Health Network, has begun and a recent initiative has seen the formation of a Built Environment Sub-Group of the Network to foster this development.

Checklist for Planning for Health Gain

A checklist for planning for health gain has been devised and adapted from the London Healthy Urban Development Unit. The Checklist raises various questions when looking at planning policies from healthy lifestyles through to accessibility, food access, crime, climate change and much more.

You may access the Checklist at:-

http://www.healthyurbandevelopment.nhs.uk/documents/integrating_health/HUDU_Delivering_Healthier_Communities.pdf

An Action Plan for Inter-Professional Learning

The publication of two key regional strategic documents on "spatial planning" and "health and wellbeing" has demonstrated the significance of cross sector partnership working and the importance of inter-professional learning as the antecedent to inter-professional action.

The Department of Health West Midlands commissioned a scoping study to map both the Regional Health & Well-Being Strategy (RH&WBS) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) to identify areas of synergy. The goal was to examine the common aims of spatial planning and health and the potential for inter-professional collaboration across public health and spatial

planning in the West Midlands.

In reviewing the common aims, in the context of the RH&WBS and the RSS, current and past inter-professional activity with relevance to the principal areas of commonality and the significance of the shared goals of building sustainable communities were highlighted. Existing examples of health planning tool kits were reviewed and shown to be beneficial for sharing knowledge and improving multi-disciplinary understanding. The areas of 'transport and health' and 'housing and health' were explored in detail and exemplified the depth of cohesion between the two strategies. Both approached the underlying determinants of health from similar viewpoints and were found to be deeply inter-connected. In common, they reinforced the familiar

message that the "main forces for health improvement may lie outside the health sector and that consequently it is necessary to work in partnership with other agencies and organisations to achieve objectives of mutual concern".

Hence, the findings of the scoping study highlighted the real potential for collaborative working between public health and spatial planning professionals in the West Midlands.

Details of this report are available from the West Midlands Teaching Public Health Network at

<http://www.wmpho.org.uk/westmidstphn>
For more information, please contact:
Patricia Bond {P.A.Bond@wlv.ac.uk}, Colin Thunhurst {c.thunhurst@coventry.ac.uk} or Rowena Clayton {Rowena.Clayton@dh.gsi.gov.uk}

The West Midlands Gets Active with the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad

When the Government announced plans to use dance as a way of getting more people taking part in physical activity, the West Midlands was already one step ahead. Here Paul Kaynes, West Midlands Creative Programmer for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, talks about the region's plans for the Cultural Olympiad and how they can contribute to the health and well-being of the region.

When Pierre de Coubertin founded the Modern Olympic Movement he made the 'wedding of sport and art' one of its founding principles, with medals for architecture, literature, music, and sculpture awarded alongside sporting achievement. Less well known is the story of Dr William Penny Brookes who inspired the young de Coubertin and in 1850 founded the Wenlock Olympian Games in Much Wenlock in Shropshire.

Brookes' original objective for the Wenlock Olympian Games was to "promote the moral, physical and intellectual improvement of the inhabitants of the Town and neighbourhood of Wenlock". Concerned by the excessive drinking habits and lack of fitness of many of the town's young men, his Games were devised as a way of improving all round health and well-being, raising the aspirations of individuals and building a stronger, safer and more effective community.

Those issues still have strong currency today and London's commitment to placing culture back at the heart of the Games with its four year Cultural Olympiad programme, is testament to that. So much so that when the West Midlands was asked to develop a regional programme for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, we wanted to bridge the gap between sport and culture and deliver genuine benefits for the health and well-being of the region.

The main thrust of our cultural programme in the West Midlands focuses on three key programmes of activity. Two of these, People Dancing and Community Games have a particular role in increasing participation in physical activity, tackling obesity and improving mental health and well-being in the West Midlands.

Our Community Games programme, due to launch in early 2010, will encourage communities across the region to stage their own version of the Games. Providing practical support and advice the scheme



gives local people ownership of their own 'Olympic Moment', encouraging thousands of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds across the region to take part in physical and sporting activity – perhaps for the first time in years.

Likewise, People Dancing is aimed at getting people across the West Midlands moving for themselves. The programme is founded on the principle of encouraging mass participation in dance activity and we want to inspire people of all ages, skills and abilities to make dance part of their everyday lives. Resources have been created to enable different types of activities which will deliver maximum benefit for the widest spread of people across the region. The five areas we are looking to make an impact on are:

- 1) dance at grass roots level;
- 2) enabling mass participation in dance using a portable dance stage which will 'tour' the region in the summer months;
- 3) dance leadership initiatives – training dance leaders and other professionals (eg school teachers) who could play a role in encouraging dance as a means of physical and mental well-being;
- 4) site specific dance – projects where dance takes place in unusual and unexpected places;
- 5) marketing and creating a digital and image archive.

Parts of the programme will target specific health objectives and initiatives. For example, in Shropshire where there is already a focus on dance as a means of promoting

improved health and well-being, we will work with the PCT to train and enable dance leaders to become part of the county's Active4Health exercise referral scheme in conjunction with Local Authority arts officers. Similarly we will aim to offer dance and movement as part of end of life care for children, families, the physically frail, the elderly and people in hospices. Another focus will be on encouraging young women to adopt more active lifestyles through dance. Young women typically 'fall out' of physical and sporting activity after leaving school, but dance and exercise related dance are increasingly popular amongst these groups. People Dancing will also develop specific initiatives to target young people, work with people with disabilities, and communities in rural/ isolated areas with few community resources.

We are now inviting commissions for grass roots dance, dance leadership development and site specific dance activity from non-commercial organisations, groups and individuals. Anyone interested should contact: peopledancing@artscouncil.org.uk

The Olympic and Paralympic Games have the ability to inspire in a way that no other event can. Ultimately our objective is to harness that unique inspirational quality and build on the legacy of the Games to encourage people to take up sporting and cultural activity as an integral part of their everyday lives. The end result – we hope – is a region that feels fit and well in both mind and body.



Creating a Physical Activity and Health Participation Legacy in the West Midlands from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games



Regional 2012 Roadshow, photo supplied by Sport England West Midlands

The Physical Activity Network West Midlands (PAN-WM), the Regional Health Partnership and the West Midlands Leadership Group for the 2012 Games are collaborating to develop a plan to ensure that the West Midlands will capitalise on London hosting the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The initial stages of this development saw the West Midlands lead the commissioning of a systematic review of the evidence base for developing a physical activity and health legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games which will be published in the next few weeks.

The plan will detail how we in the West Midlands will challenge ourselves and capitalise on London hosting the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games to speed up progress on increasing participation in physical activity, increasing healthy eating, tackling obesity and improving mental health and well-being in the West Midlands. We will use the London 2012 Games as an opportunity to create;

- Faster progress to a healthier region
- Higher aspirations for individuals

Forthcoming Events

Achieving Excellence in Public Health Work Wealth & Health Conference
Monday, 8 June 2009 - Birmingham, venue tbc

Since its inception in 1997, the annual West Midlands Excellence in Public Health Conference has attracted a wide range of professionals across the health, local authority and voluntary sectors and evaluations have proved year on year its effectiveness as a networking medium and forum to share best practice.

The 12th Conference, scheduled for 2009 will have as its theme "Work, Wealth and Health" and should be of particular interest to anybody working on the employment and health and well-being agenda.

"The prize is the greatest in a generation – the chance to turn the rhetoric of Olympic Legacy into fact. Faster progress towards a healthy nation. Higher aspirations for young people in their work and play. A stronger community, bound by self belief and the knowledge that Britain has hosted the greatest ever Games."

Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP

Minister for the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games in London

and communities with regards to their health and well-being,

- Stronger Communities who are motivated to make full use of their local environment.

This plan will integrate with the other regional legacy programmes and plans to create a coherent approach to ensuring that, in the run up to the London 2012 Games and in the immediate aftermath, we have supported organisations, communities and individuals to be the "Best Version of Themselves" to meet the challenges presented to us by modern life in the West Midlands. The plan meets one of the priorities in the Regional Health and Well-Being Strategy.

The draft plan sets a vision to:-

"Embrace the spirit of the Games to inspire and motivate communities and organisations in the West Midlands to commit to a future of increasingly active, healthier lifestyles and environments".

The draft plan focuses on 6 challenges for the region and some individual and family based challenges to encourage people to get involved in community activities in the run up to 2012.

An interactive web based action planning resource will be developed to enable organisations, communities

and individuals to sign up delivering specific actions linked to the challenges and priorities within this plan.

A phased consultation on the draft plan is now underway with key organisations being contacted to aid the development of the final draft version of the document. A full consultation will then follow to confirm the contents of the region's 2012 Health and Physical Activity Legacy Plan.

If you would like further information on the plan's development or would like to be involved in the consultation regarding the final plan please contact Suzanne Gardner, Regional Physical Activity & Sport Co-ordinator – West Midlands at Suzanne.gardner@pan-wm.org.uk



Steve Town, Regional Director (Sport England), Lord Coe, (LOCOG), Dr Rashmi Shukla, (Regional Director of Public Health & Medical Director (DHWM & NHS West Midlands), Cllr Chris Saint (Chair of the West Midlands Leadership Group for the 2012 Games) at the PAN-WM "Legacy for a Lifetime Event" held December 2008.

Further details of this Conference will be posted on the West Midlands Public Health Observatory website (www.wmpho.org.uk)

Living Well West Midlands Annual Conference
22 October 2009
The Centennial Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

Living Well West Midlands will be hosting its second Annual Conference in October this year. The conference will include a number of guest speakers as well as workshops for delegates.

Further details will be posted on the Living Well West Midlands website www.livingwellwestmidlands.org