

# Work, Wealth and Health



## 12th Annual Excellence in Public Health Conference

On Tuesday, 9 June 2009, almost 300 representatives from a wide range of organisations including health, local authorities, the economic sector and the voluntary sector came together at the National Exhibition Centre to discuss issues around the links between work, wealth and health.

The links between work, wealth and health are of particular importance at the moment amidst the economic downturn that the country is currently experiencing. There is strong evidence that long-term unemployment is associated with higher mortality rates and poor health. It impacts upon people's sense of identity and their role and status within society. Some of the issues discussed were:-

- The impact of the current economic downturn on people's health and what public sector organisations are doing to address these issues.

- Latest developments around worklessness including the development of over 1,400 new apprenticeships in the region in NHS and social care jobs; the establishment of a regional public sector hub that will engage employers in trying to assist those at risk of redundancy or currently unemployed.

- Workplace health and how investing in your workforce makes good economic sense for employers. Good employee health aids productivity, ignoring the effects of the recession on employees may reduce business effectiveness, as more people in work are worrying about losing their jobs which reduces their productivity. Also some people with health problems may not seek treatment because they are worried that revealing their ill-health may increase the risk of them losing their job

### Speakers at the conference were:-

- **Ian Austin** - Regional Minister for the West Midlands
- **Professor Dame Carol Black** - National Director for Health and Work
- **Nic Marks** – Founder of the Centre for Well Being
- **Dr Rashmi Shukla, CBE** – Regional Director of Public Health

The conference was chaired in the morning by Mark Pearce, Corporate Director of Economic Regeneration at Advantage West Midlands and in the afternoon by Elisabeth Buggins, CBE – Chair of NHS West Midlands.

### Foreword

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.

This year was no different as we headed to the National Exhibition Centre for the 12th Conference.

This year the theme was, "Work, Wealth and Health" and it was of particular interest to anybody working on the employment and health and well-being agenda.

In this issue of the Regional Health Partnership newsletter we have put together an overview of the topics covered at the Conference.

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

The Partnership strongly believes the improvement of health and well-being within the region relies on a shared vision across public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

**Councillor Steve Eling**  
Chair of the Regional Health Partnership

# New Regional Initiatives



West Midlands Regional Minister, Ian Austin

## The West Midlands Regional Minister, Ian Austin, highlighted a number of new and forthcoming initiatives:-

The Department of Health (DH) and the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) will launch the Health, Work and Well-being Challenge Fund this summer to help local partners kick start health and work activity. It is hoped the Fund will encourage small businesses to develop new and innovative ways to enhance their employees' health. The Fund will be used to encourage initiatives that improve workplace health and well-being with new and innovative ideas which ensure worker engagement.

The need for better partnership working highlights the need for an individual to assume the role of central co-ordinator to fill a leadership gap in the Health Work and Well-being infrastructure. Recruitment will shortly begin for a Health, Work & Well-being Co-ordinator for the West Midlands (who will work to the Regional Director of Public Health).

The Economic Inclusion Panel brings together public sector organisations from across the West Midlands to tackle worklessness and to identify new and better ways in which the public sector can help a greater number of long-term unemployed people benefit from the eventual upturn in the economy.

The NHS is making a major contribution to the Panel's agenda, working alongside Local Authorities and others in the public sector to

identify and fill any gaps in current employment and training provision for young people, those with health and disability issues and people from disadvantaged and excluded communities.

Finally, the panel is developing a 'Public Sector Procurement Framework for Jobs' that can be embedded in every stage of the public procurement process - from commissioning and contracting, through to post-tender negotiations - to ensure targeted recruitment and training initiatives are included in public sector contracts - not just for major capital and infrastructure projects but right across public sector procurement of goods and services - so that we can provide local jobs for local people as a result of the investment we are making

Again, the NHS plays a key role in these developments, as in the case of the impressive work done to broaden access to jobs and training, linked to the development of the University Hospital Birmingham.

The NHS in the region employs over 142,000 people and as the largest employer of women, it has a huge potential to help us tackle unemployment and boost skills - our region's number one priority.

The NHS is working with Jobcentre Plus and social enterprises such as Gateway Family Services who provide both pre employment and post employment support to people from areas with high levels of unemployment. It is also working with schools to increase awareness of the careers available in the health sector

by, for example, investing £1.5 million to offer work experience to school and college students or the unemployed.

The Government has committed to creating 35,000 new apprenticeships. Starting this April, the plan is to drive up the number of apprentices in the public sector by 21,000, including 5,000 more in the NHS and social care, in areas like nursing, customer service, dental nursing and estates.

The SHA and LSC have jointly made available up to £30 million to enhance skills, learning and qualifications including apprenticeships to improve patient care and the delivery of services across the sector. As part of this, NHS West Midlands was given a target of 541 new apprenticeship starts by 2010, but NHS organisations in the region have requested support for over 1,400, more than double the original target.

NHS West Midlands and the West Midlands Learning & Skills Council are also investing £2 million to launch a regional sector hub which will help identify opportunities for people who are unemployed or at risk of redundancy to find employment in the NHS.

## Well-being at Work: the key to health, wealth & innovation



Nic Marks, founder of the Centre for Well-being at the New Economics Foundation talked about the need to design a welfare system fit to meet the social, environmental and economic challenges of the 21st Century.

These are:- people :the human and core economy; the planet :the natural economy

and markets: a regulated market economy. The talk also included the role of emotions at work. High performance teams operate in an expanded chaotic (creative) emotional space, mid performance teams are still somewhat creative, while low performance teams 'collapse' into a non-inquiring 'strange attractor'. Teamwork and management style are the keys to well-being at work.



# Good Work, Good Wealth

Professor Dame Carol Black, National Director for Health and Work highlighted the potential the workplace offers in terms of targeting messages and initiatives about healthy living and disease prevention (74% of working-age people in Britain are in employment). In order to do this, however, the work needs to be 'good work'. Good work is characterised by job security, it should be varied and interesting, workers should have a degree of autonomy, control and task direction, fair rewards (not just financial) for efforts made. There should be supportive social relationships with strong social ties in the workplace and worker engagement is essential. Poor relationships and poor work environments on the other hand, can lead to poorer health.

Most people that are off work have conditions that people in work may have; mild and treatable conditions including depression, anxiety, stress-related problems, musculoskeletal symptoms, cardio-respiratory conditions. These conditions are responsible for over two-thirds of

sickness absence and long-term incapacity.

Good management plays a vital role. Line managers have a key role in ensuring that the workplace is a setting that promotes good health, well-being and performance – but line managers are often poorly trained and supported in these areas. Visible top-down commitment from senior staff is also needed to ensure initiatives maintain momentum. All such initiatives must be designed with employee engagement.

Within the Heart of England NHS Trust, a multi-strand Health and Well-being Review led to: a health promotion programme, an on-site gym, training for managers, a review of Occupational Health processes and an employee assistance programme. This in turn led to a month on month reduction in sickness absence, from a peak of 6% in 2007 to 3.5%. The number of long-term absence cases reduced by 37%.

## **The workplace is an essential forum to promote health and well-being:-**

- Better collaboration between Occupational Health, GPs and employers would facilitate better work-health outcomes

- Health and Well-being messages promoted in the workplace should reach all employees regardless of age/gender/role
- Screening programmes could be delivered in the workplace – men do not visit their GPs easily.

As a result of her review of the health of Britain's working age population, Working for a Healthier Tomorrow, Dame Carol Black made the following recommendations to Government:-

- The Government should work with employers to develop a robust model for measuring and reporting on the benefits of investment in health and well-being
- Employers should report at Board level on the health and well-being of their staff
- A Health and Well-being consultancy service should be set up to provide employers with advice and support
- Expansion of the role of Safety and Health practitioners and where present, trade union safety representatives, in promoting the benefits of investing in health and well-being
- Exploration of practical ways to make it easier for smaller employers to establish health and well-being initiatives

## Work, Wealth and Health: Why Is It Important?



Dr Rashmi Shukla, Regional Director of Public Health, explored the relationship pathways between health, work and well-being. Work provides income: material well-being and participation in today's society. Work meets important psychosocial needs in societies where employment is the norm, it is central to individual identity, social roles and social status. Employment and socio-economic status are the main drivers of social gradients in health.

At the same time, however, various aspects of work can be a hazard and pose a risk to health. Alongside this, there is strong evidence that long-term unemployment is associated with higher mortality; poorer general health, somatic complaints, long-standing illness and

limiting longstanding illness; poorer mental health - more psychological distress, minor psychological/psychiatric morbidity, suicide and higher medical consultation, medication consumption and hospital admission rates.

Dr Shukla referred to a report from the Global Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, Closing the Gap in a Generation, chaired by Professor Sir Michael Marmot. The Commission called for full and fair employment, economic and social policies to secure work, protection and improved working conditions. The Department of Health has commissioned Sir Michael Marmot to propose actions for England from 2010. His report will be available later on this year.

# Masterclasses and Future Work for the Regional Health Partnership

A series of thirteen masterclasses ran throughout the day and the delegates at each session were asked to think about actions which could be taken at national, regional and local level which would help in the delivery of this agenda.

Actions were identified around building the evidence base, capacity building, joining up policy, advocacy, data and what each organisation could do.

In addition to the feedback at the conference, we are asking for feedback through the short survey which is on the web link below. This feedback will be considered by the Regional Health Partnership and its Workplace Health Sub-Group and an action plan will be produced.

## Sharing of Good Practice

Forty six organisations took the opportunity to use the conference to share the work of their team with conference delegates. The winners of the poster displays were:

**Best Presented** - Well@Work, Telford & Wrekin

**Most Innovative Idea** - Influencing Body Image Perceptions in Children, University of Birmingham

**Easiest Idea to Copy** - SUSTAIN



## Further Information from the Conference

If you would like to access any of the presentations used by the speakers and in the masterclasses, you may download them from the conference website:-

<http://www.wmpho.org.uk/excellence/default.aspx?id=2033>

**If you would like to be involved in taking forward any aspect of work which was covered at the conference please send an e-mail to [janet.baker@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:janet.baker@dh.gsi.gov.uk)**



## Forthcoming Events



## DATE FOR THE DIARY

**Mental Well-being & Commissioning**  
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 theme of this year's conference will be mental well-being and commissioning.

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](http://www.livingwellwestmidlands.org)