

December 2008

# Living Well West Midlands calls for Shared Solutions



Keynote speakers at Living Well West Midlands first Annual Conference

Living Well West Midlands celebrated its first year achievements at its Annual Conference in Birmingham on Monday 17 November. Over 170 delegates including regional leaders from across the health sector including PCTs, Local Authorities and representatives from all of the 29 projects in the portfolio gathered at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens where they discussed and contributed their views on the key areas of healthy eating, physical activity and mental well-being. A cross-section of projects also gave presentations to the conference examining their individual journeys so far.

During the day delegates had the opportunity to provide their thoughts and feedback on what will be needed to support work in the three key areas of the portfolio – physical activity, healthy eating and mental well-being – and what the delegates believed would be the key priorities to be addressed as we move into the future.

Consultation by commissioning bodies before projects and programmes were devised and launched was an area that many delegates felt was important. Indeed, ensuring commissioners know about the health promotion initiatives and how to bring

them into mainstream delivery was vital to ensure future sustainability. It was recognised that services should be available at the point of need and that a robust evidence base be in place to support the need for projects or programmes. Many delegates also believed that PCTs in particular would need to be more flexible when working with the local community sector.

Another priority identified as vital for taking projects forward beyond the three years of this portfolio, and indeed for any new projects in the future, would be the need to establish multi-sectorial partnerships. "The theme that seemed evident from the feedback we received from delegates, during both the round table discussions and the workshops, was that there is a need for shared solutions and that groups, be it PCTs, Local Authorities, third sector voluntary organisations, need to be working together to find the solutions to the problems we face going into the future," said Zena Lynch, Director of Living Well West Midlands.

This Conference provided a great opportunity to bring people who are involved in decision making together with those who deliver projects on the ground to discuss the issues facing us in the coming years.

## Foreword



Firstly, I would like to welcome you to the first Regional Health Partnership newsletter. 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. As such, this newsletter aims to give an insight into the areas that the Partnership is currently working on as we strive to make our shared visions a reality.

As Chair of the Regional Health Partnership I was proud to have chaired the very first Living Well West Midlands' Annual Conference just last month. The regional bid to BIG Lottery was supported and driven forward by the Regional Health Partnership and now the successful delivery of this initiative is helping the region to deliver its objectives of improving mental well-being, diet and increased levels of physical activity; helping to close the health inequalities gap as outlined in our Regional Health and Well Being Strategy, launched in January this year.

Improving the health and well-being of people in the West Midlands will contribute directly to the region's economic growth and enable citizens to play a greater and more active role in their local communities.

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

# Workplace Health

*“To develop workplaces as appropriate centres for promoting the health and well-being of the workforce and their families and to promote both health and safety at work as a way of increasing productivity”*

Since the publication of the Regional Health & Well-Being Strategy (RH&WBS) in January 2008, there have been a number of key policy documents and initiatives that will affect the implementation of the RH&WB Action Plan for workplace health.

Dame Carol Black's Review of the health of Britain's working age population: Working for a Healthier Tomorrow was published in March 2008. The report provides 10 key recommendations, but particularly in relation to connecting the employment and health sectors it is proposed that the Government should launch a major drive to promote an understanding of the positive relationships between health and work among employers, healthcare professionals and the general public. The Government Response was submitted as a Command Paper to Parliament on 24th November, followed by a public launch on 25th November. Among the proposed key new policy initiatives that have implications for the region are:

**Revised Medical Certificate** – The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has developed a revised Medical Certificate (more fit-note than sick-note) to focus on what a person



can do and not what they can't, whilst recovering from illness or injury. The new form is currently being tested by over 3000 GPs. The next stage will be to build on the findings and work towards rolling out a Medical Certificate during 2009.

**SME Helpline** – To get messages and support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Government is looking at how to effectively signpost locally available health and work advice needed by them. Government is proposing to pilot a telephone helpline to offer advice on dealing with specific health related problems in individual employees.

**Fit for Work Pilots** – these take forward the idea proposed in the Review of ensuring access to support for those in early stages of absence due to a health condition. This will be done by piloting different models of a Fit for Work service, building on and linking with the Pathways Advisory Service extension (Employment Advisers in GP surgeries) and the Employment Advisers in the Improving Access to Physical Therapies (IAPT) Programme pilots.

**Extension of NHS Plus:** this will extend and build upon the experience of the existing NHS Occupational

Health support for SMEs. NHS Plus will also work with stakeholders to develop a unified voice around occupational health issues and facilitate the development of standards for the practice and delivery of occupational health services.

**Regional Health and Work Coordinators** – their task is to ensure effective focus on health and work issues at a local level. Most likely this will work through the auspices of the Regional Directors of Public Health based at the Government Offices for the Regions. The coordinators will champion the workplace health agenda and promote activity.

**SME Challenge Fund** – the Fund is intended to make start-up funding available for SME businesses to introduce local initiatives around health and well-being in the workplace in the West Midlands. It will be available to SMEs across all sectors/industries and aims to collect best practice and disseminate this to other SME businesses. The Fund will be allocated by the regional health and work coordinator using a pre-determined set of criteria.

**David Elliott**  
*Department of Health West Midlands*

## Key findings

**The Review's key findings on health and work were:**

- Costs to the economy of working age ill-health in the UK are estimated at around £100 billion each year (including sickness absence, lost production, benefit expenditure, health services, forgone taxes etc)
- Over 170 million working days are lost each year to sickness absence
- Musculo-skeletal disorders affect more than one million people in the UK and cost society £7.4 billion a year - accounting for up to a third of all GP consultations and 9.5 million lost working days.
- Lower productivity whilst at work due to common mental health problems could cost in excess of £15 billion a year
- 2.6 million people are on Incapacity Benefits – the majority have been there for 5 years or more. 600,000 new cases flow on each year.



# Taking Inter-Professional Learning Forward

## Action planning to deliver the key objectives of the Regional Health and Well-Being Strategy (RH&WBS) is now underway..

In common with all public health activity, the need for effective partnership working is a significant feature of the actions identified in support of delivering the RH&WBS objectives.

The West Midlands Teaching Public Health Network (WMTPHN) has an objective of promoting the public health competence of the wider workforce through inter-professional learning (IPL).

Shortly after the publication of the RH&WB Strategy, the connection was made between the partnership working needed to deliver its key objectives and the IPL focus of the WMTPHN. The general premise being that effective IPL is a precursor of effective inter-professional working. A short exercise looking at opportunities for IPL in support of the Strategy priorities is nearing completion and will be available shortly.

Overall the scope for promoting inter-professional learning and rolling out good practice in support of the Strategy appears to be promising. There is strength in terms of existing stakeholders and networks,



policies and guidance, training and development offerings as well as a clear opportunity to use these and future regional policy development as vehicles for IPL. Indeed, some stakeholders have already indicated their willingness to support this.

Additionally, members of most professional bodies have Continuing Professional Development (CPD) targets and there is the opportunity for low cost Public Health IPL to be made available to help fulfil this need and to deliver the Strategy objectives.

However, in many areas there is a weakness in respect of the current diversity of stakeholders, guidance and activity because there is no unifying focus, priority or network. In these circumstances there is a threat of individualistic, uncoordinated, repetitious and even conflicting activity. This situation presents a significant leadership and organisational challenge.

Whilst the work began with a focus on developing the public health competence of the wider workforce, it is equally important for the specialist public health workforce to develop their understanding and competence in other areas. A comprehensive

IPL approach is needed having the objective of providing the whole workforce with appropriate knowledge and competence to deliver improvements in health and well-being.

If IPL development and delivery is to be effective and efficient there is a need for the West Midlands Regional Assembly/Department of Health West Midlands/West Midlands Teaching Public Health Network to fulfil this leadership role and to:

- Promote the Regional Health and Well-Being Strategy as the key policy document
- Establish appropriate stakeholder groups
- Facilitate agreement of joint priorities and the alignment of stakeholders' policies, guidance etc
- Agree leads for IPL development in support of Strategy objectives
- Performance manage the development and delivery of IPL
- Measure and review the effectiveness of IPL
- Take IPL forward into the future

### Michael Parkes

*West Midlands Teaching Public Health Network*

## Opportunities

A short exercise looking at opportunities for IPL in support of the Strategy priorities is nearing completion. Here is a brief selection of some of the findings:

### 1. Planning and Health

- Royal Town Planning Institute has a Policy Statement "Health and Spatial Planning" issued in 2007 in which it identifies the need for joint working. It is now preparing "Good Practice Note 5: Delivering Healthy Communities" and has indicated a willingness to engage in discussions and IPL in support of this.

- Local Planners and planning training providers have indicated an interest in being involved in further inter-professional learning.

### 2. Workplaces and Health

- Working for Health, a cross-Government programme launched in 2005 is working in support of the findings of the Dame Carol Black report and lists good practice case studies and also has a Pricewaterhouse Coopers report setting out the wider business and economic case for employers to invest in staff wellness.

### 3. Housing and Health

- Care and Repair England is involved in a range of activities. A recent IPL example designed to encourage joint planning across Housing, Health and Social Care sectors was delivered in Birmingham on 19th June 2008.
- National Energy Action already organises workshops on excess winter deaths and affordable warmth and they are willing to work with partners in developing suitable training resources in the region.

# Action on Preventing Childhood Injuries

**Unintentional injury is one of the biggest killers of children and puts more children in hospital than any other cause, yet many deaths and injuries are preventable.**

In the West Midlands the most common cause of injury deaths in children aged 1-14 are transport accidents, of which the vast majority are deaths on the road as pedestrians or cyclists, or less frequently as car occupants.

Child injury is a priority in the Regional Health & Well-Being Strategy and includes actions to prevent accidents in the home and on the road. The priorities at regional level are: supporting local action on prevention, improving data collection and enhancing partnership working. The Strategy shows that, as a result of regionally led initiatives, good progress is being made to prevent child injury.

The Department of Health West Midlands (DHWM) is working in partnership with other government departments, including the Departments for Transport, Communities and Local Government and Children, Schools and Families to provide leadership, policy co-ordination and delivery, advocacy and improved communication on child injury. The voluntary sector is another important partner in preventing injury and DHWM continues to work in collaboration with the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) to promote child injury as an important priority.

Regional initiatives addressing this

issue continue to go from strength to strength. Most recently CAPT and DHWM are developing an advocacy toolkit to support delivery, which looks at training and core skills in injury prevention. It is currently out to consultation.

In October 2008 DHWM chaired a workshop for the West Midlands Home and Leisure Safety Council (WMHLSC) and ROSPA in Birmingham. Entitled "Making a Song and Dance about Child Safety", the event included a focus on how the arts can play a part in tackling accidental injuries. A set of actions have been identified to be taken forward regionally including improving regional networking using WMHLSC and developing a dedicated website.

The World Health Organisation's "Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe" (CEHAPE) addresses environmental risk factors that most affect the health of children, including accidents. As part of this a West Midlands pilot programme to develop a set of children's environmental health indicators, including childhood injury, was developed during 2007/8. This pilot is being used as a model to develop an international resource on children's environmental health indicators. DHWM organised a workshop on the CEHAP UK strategy consultation with the Health Protection Agency in September 2008. Child injury was a focus for the workshops and a conference report is anticipated.



The Regional Health & Well-Being Strategy, provides us with further opportunities to promote action in this area and to look at broader issues affecting people's health. Programmes such as Healthy Schools, Extended Services, Sport England, Play England, School Travel Programmes and Local Area Agreements include priorities on child unintentional injury prevention, safety and safe risk-taking and will continue to support and enable delivery of the agenda.

**Karen Saunders**  
*Department of Health West Midlands*

## Forthcoming Events

**Annual Obesity Summit 2009**  
**Friday 6 March 2009 – Aston Villa Football Club**

The Government's Change4Life movement, launched in September 2008, calls on the energy, involvement and knowledge of a range of regional and local partners – from local government, the NHS to media, commercial and voluntary sectors – to help tackle obesity. The conference will cover the regional and local actions to date in the five main areas of "Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: A Cross-Government Strategy for England".

It will also provide opportunities to discuss strategies, networks and actions in the West Midlands to prevent obesity.

**Achieving Excellence in Public Health**  
**May 2009 – Date and Venue TBC**

Since its inception in 1997, the annual West Midlands Excellence in Public Health Conference has attracted a wide range of professionals who have found it effective as a networking medium and forum to share best practice. The 12th Conference 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.

Further details of this Conference will be posted in 2009 on the West Midlands Public Health Observatory website ([www.wmpho.org.uk](http://www.wmpho.org.uk))