

### Issues arising from the Select Committee on Public Health, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011

#### Issues identified and suggestions made

The following suggestions were made during the select committee meeting

1. Community Centres to provide an alternative social club that did not include alcohol – perhaps a juice bar or coffee bar or one providing non-alcoholic cocktails/drinks.

*Reason: Helping people make healthier choices. Concern was expressed about Community Centres seeming to promote alcohol by including a social club providing (cheap?) drinks.*

2. Whenever facilities are provided, transport should also be considered, especially where clients may be elderly and/or infirm.

*Reason: Lack of transport is a problem for elderly people. Many are isolated in their own homes. Isolation has an adverse impact on their health. However good the facilities, they need to be accessible, and for some people accessibility through transport is a barrier to their use.*

3. Explore further building links with faith groups. Consider delivery of services wider than just via Community Centres too.

*Reason: There is under-representation of BME groups at some Community Centres. Some faith groups are exploring making greater use of Community Centres.*

4. Upskill people to take responsibility for their own health. Educate people about proper use of the NHS – change expectations about what is possible. Development of a “community mum” – someone to whom people could talk, in confidence, about health matters that worry them; especially in cases where they did not have anyone else to whom they could talk. Greater emphasis on “pester power” – encourage people to look after their own health by giving up smoking etc.

*Reason: It was noted that there is increased pressure on GP's budgets. A desire to empower people by helping them take control of their own health in easy ways, such as monitoring their own blood pressure, was expressed by Dr Von Eichstorff. The Select Committee also noted that some people were reluctant to visit their GP and it would be helpful to encourage people to attend the doctor when needed for overall improvement of health. On the other hand, some people went to their GP simply because they had no-one else to talk to about quite minor problems.*

5. Move beyond just Community Centres into other centrally placed facilities, for example Bury Knowle House which includes a library and has a play area nearby.

Also, some GPs practices offer sessions from CAB and Back to Work – perhaps these could be offered at Community Centres as well.

*Reason: It is good to catch people where they congregate. Outside issues such as debt and being out of work can increase stress and have an adverse impact on health. It is important to take a holistic approach.*

6. Community Centres could provide “taster” sessions for main activities held in the Leisure Centres. Need to identify those who did NOT access leisure as well as those who did. Outreach work could be provided via FUSION with the help of Community Centres.

*Reason: Taster sessions could act as pointers towards the higher level of activity and provision in Leisure Centres. Some people feel intimidated by a leisure centre – that there would be pressure to be instantly fit and active – whereas Community centres could seem more low- key and less intimidating for a fitness beginner.*

6. There does seem to be a perception that some Community centres do not encourage young people to visit and participate in events. It would be helpful to address the issue that some Community Centres are perceived to be less welcoming than others as far as young people are concerned. Also look at the costs for young people of accessing leisure services

*Reason: These are barriers to participation that need to be looked at.*

7. Collect examples of good practice at Community Centres in other parts of the country. There are opportunities to build health initiatives at Community Centres because people who feel uncomfortable going elsewhere might well feel comfortable going there.

*Reason: Widen access to services*

8. Suggest that Community Associations look at shared services. There is a need to equip volunteers with the skills they need to run their centre and their services successfully.

*Reason: Build up skills bank in the wider community – community empowerment.*

### **Gaps in service provision.**

As a result of the above, the following gaps have been identified (some may duplicate the suggestions made above)

- A. Advice should be given to Community Associations on the balance of activities delivered via their Centre with particular emphasis on the profile of the communities;
- B We need to consider the whole community when planning for activities in Community Centres. There are particular issues around:-
- Young people who often want their own facilities and may have difficulty getting there. They sometimes feel unwelcome at existing facilities
  - Older people who don't always find them very welcoming and they find lack of transport a barrier.
- C Health promotion and getting the message to target groups is very important and often a challenge. Local venues such as community centres could help with this.
- D Support and advice for parents and young people on healthy eating may be better received if delivered through local facilities such as community centres. This could include "life skills" for young people.
- E Dr Peter Von Eichstorff gave a list of suggestions of support that could be delivered through community centres:
- Education towards self care;
  - Lay referral (he called it a "Community Mum"). Somewhere where people could get the sort of advice that is often received from family members without referral to GPs;
  - Activities and events that encourages people to take up preventative medicine such as cervical smear tests. Also general support to GPs with their outreach work for health checks;
  - "Pester power" on issues such as smoking, obesity, looking after yourself, taking responsibility for your own health.
- E There is a pressing need to encourage more activity amongst children and better eating habits in an effort to tackle obesity and the consequential lifelong health problems. Community Centres have a part to play in this in conjunction with leisure facilities and schools

- F Maybe Fusion could use community centres to run taster sessions to encourage people to take up regular exercise in leisure centres
- G Provide support to get Community Associations going, and then sustain them – by building skills, confidence and a possible sharing of back office facilities. We are doing some of this already, but it costs time and money.