

## **Executive Summary**

In common with most of the United Kingdom, Newcastle Upon Tyne is a city that faces huge health problems. Evidence shows that people are becoming less active and obesity levels are rising at all ages. Such health related risks can limit personal aspirations, development and ability levels but also present fundamental and worrying longer-term risks for the City's economy and health prospects.

The Council's strategic objectives relating to its desired outcomes for Children and its Adult Social Services & Health portfolio illustrate the importance of supporting adults and children to be healthy, make a positive contribution and have a good quality of life.

Against the backdrop of the successful 2012 London Olympic bid, the Council responded to these long-term community based risks and strategic objectives by leading a coordinated campaign to raise the profile of sport, exercise and physical activity in Newcastle with one main aim: to encourage residents to become more active more of the time. Working alongside a range of partners, it was agreed that:

- The campaign would be called the Year of Exercise and Sport – **YES2006**
- A steering group involving Newcastle's private, public and voluntary sectors would be created to oversee the initiative.
- A community engagement exercise should inform and drive the programme of activity whilst linking in with other local and national strategies and campaigns.
- Evidence would be gathered to establish the effectiveness of **YES2006** and inform and encourage future health-related and sporting legacy initiatives.

With a relatively modest budget, secured via Council and partner commitment, **YES2006** hosted an exciting grassroots activity programme for all ages and abilities involving high profile performance events, innovative outreach activities which did not rely on participants having to use traditional leisure centres to take part in activities and offered match funding of community initiatives based on sport and exercise.

Early indications of the success of **YES2006** are hugely encouraging: increased participation in physical activity across the City, increased coaching capacity for further initiatives, improved community cohesion and partnership working as well as linked reductions in anti-social behaviour. Improved longer term outcomes will surely follow...

## **1. Why the Need for YES2006**

Newcastle Upon Tyne faces major problems of obesity and physical inactivity amongst its citizens. In 2004, 32% of children starting primary school were deemed overweight or obese and, at present, 41% of children aged 5 years attending the 10 East City primary schools are deemed to be overweight or obese. (PCT childhood obesity survey).

The desire to manage these risks infiltrated national and local aims via the Every Child Matters Framework (including the “Be Healthy” outcome), a Sport and Physical Activity Plan, the Newcastle Plan, the Open Spaces strategy and similar strategic aims within the Council’s Adult Social Services & Health portfolio. The opportunity to develop a major citywide campaign promoting healthy lifestyles and encouraging people to become active was grasped, with the aim of creating real momentum to make sport, exercise and physical activity accessible and enjoyable – thus improving the health prospects and quality of life for communities across Newcastle.

**YES2006** also enhanced opportunities to further meet Council’s partnership working aims, by bringing sports and health partner organisations together across private, public and voluntary sectors, whilst addressing a number of local and national agendas e.g. “Choosing health” and “Choosing activity”<sup>1</sup>, “Game Plan” and the “Everyday Sport” Campaign run by Sport England.

## **2. How it worked**

The main approach exploited the opportunity to focus Newcastle’s vibrant approach to cultural activity on sport, exercise and physical activity during 2006. **YES2006** provided, or signposted existing, physical activity opportunities for all residents regardless of age and ability. Activities took place in sports centres, schools, community centres, swimming pools and parks throughout the City. Three strands of opportunity were offered:

- A community activity programme
- A schools programme
- A high profile events programme underpinned with sports development opportunities.

**YES2006** created a safe, enjoyable activity programme and targeted parts of the community that have difficulty accessing sports and exercise opportunities. Community groups were helped to plan and

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Health plans for improving the health of the nation

deliver activities, usually in the form of taster activities with advice on how to continue. High profile and localised events were encouraged and delivered via **YES2006** funds, with the following aims:

- To innovate and show how new events could be successful in inspiring participants and spectators to follow up via grass roots development programmes
- To raise the profile of those particular event disciplines.
- To attract both national and international talent to the City e.g. Women's International Football Tournament, International Gymnastics Event, International Senior Games Event, Leazes Park Cycle Races which featured Commonwealth and Olympic Gold Medallists
- To use events (e.g. 2006 community festivals) to market the **YES2006** theme

Local community initiatives included purchasing gardening tools for older people in sheltered accommodation, funding sports and exercise programmes for older people's activities groups and for children's and resident groups as well as a Newcastle Tigers (a BME sports group) multi cultural sports event in the West of the City.

### **3. Innovation**

We knew that the inspirational individuals, volunteers and staff working at grass roots level were our main strengths in increasing participation. By all partners thinking "outside the box" an innovative programme driven by the imagination and ambition of the City's communities was created – furthering community involvement aims in the process.

Initial community consultation indicated that communities wanted outreach activity and not just in the City's leisure centres. To this end, the innovative **YES2006** "outreach bus" containing rowing machines, exercise bikes and other fitness related equipment was commissioned to tour the city visiting numerous community groups with the aim of encouraging them to "cross the barrier" into mainstream activity. This approach was enormously successful, visiting numerous community centres across the city and stimulating the formation of new sports or health centred groups.

The most successful, innovative element of the **YES2006** campaign was the award of grants to community groups, enabling them to organize their own activities. Each of Newcastle's 26 wards was awarded £3000 from **YES2006** and the ward councillors asked to match it from the ward's own grant aid budget. This money – a total of £135,000 - was then bid for by community groups, residents associations, youth groups from within each ward for their own **YES** activity.

The involvement of Your Homes Newcastle is an interesting feature. YHN manage the city's housing stock. Their investment in **YES2006** was to reward their tenants and also to see if diversionary activity on their estates would reduce anti social behaviour.

One particular innovation which demonstrated that reducing health risks to the City's residents doesn't need to cost the earth was the "The Longest Day" Event, which took place on Wednesday 21st June. This event sought to involve as many residents of Newcastle as possible in physical activity. Schools held their sports days, leisure centres offered free activities, events were held in all the city centre parks, voluntary sector sports clubs were encouraged to host events and activities were organised for the general public in Newcastle City Centre. The event was a resounding success with excellent media coverage. At a cost of £3,960, over 23,000 participants were involved (£0.17 per person) which demonstrated excellent value for money.

#### **4. Partnership Working**

From the outset, it was recognized that collaboration was the key to success and Steering Group partners included Newcastle PCT, Newcastle Chamber of Commerce, Newcastle School Sports Association, BEACON (BME support network), YHN<sup>2</sup>, Newcastle's Professional Sports Clubs, The Elders Council and the City's two Universities. An objective of the steering group was to provide something for everybody.

To maximise the value of the partnership approach, partner facilities, resources and connections were fully utilized during **YES2006**:

- Culture 10<sup>3</sup> enabled us to organise and deliver elite, high performance events strategically planned to help influence and increase grassroots participation;
- YHN promoted sport, exercise and health programmes to City tenants, with a keen eye on the possible impact on anti-social behaviour trends;
- Universities and Sports Associations profiled events with students and members
- Connecting with ward citizens via local councillors and the ward funding initiative.

At a grass roots level, **YES2006** brought together parks managers, facility operators, play and youth workers and community development officers. The range of formal and informal links created via

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<sup>2</sup> Your Homes Newcastle, which manages the City's public housing stock

<sup>3</sup> NewcastleGateshead's Event programming organisation

**YES2006** has now produced a “Community Sports Network” partnership to continue projects through 2007 and beyond. Establishment of a CSN is a key element of Sport England’s single system for sport.

YES2006 stimulated the different elements of Newcastle City Council’s Leisure services to work together more closely and this improved collaborative approach to achieve the agreed aims of the initiative has led to a more efficient and innovative use of Council facilities and staff.

## **5. Impacts and outcomes**

Thus far, participatory and anecdotal evidence indicates that **YES2006** was a major success and met the desired early outcomes:

- More than 76,000 individuals took part in **YES2006** activities across the city with some “mainstream” facilities reporting a 50% increase in participation;
- Over 1,000 people gained a recognized leadership or coaching qualification via the initiative’s coach education strand, providing immediate and legacy impacts for future generations.
- Increased requests from local communities to stage a number of the **YES2006** mass participation events again in 2007, including the Longest Day Event, the International Women’s Football, Gymnastics and Cycling events, Community Fun Runs and the City Centre taster events.
- Evidence of youth behaviour changes due to increased diversionary facilities e.g. new outdoor Park facilities has helped reduce anti-social behaviour in YHN housing estates such as Blakelaw;
- Over 100 community projects organised their own ward based physical activity programmes via the electoral ward community project scheme.
- Strong partnerships were created, via the Ward funding initiative, between over 80 community groups and the different elements of Leisure Services providing strong foundations for future legacy work.

The partnership led innovative approach to tackling these deep-rooted social trends and the risks they create for the City as a whole has sparked huge interest from other Councils – **YES2006** is currently a finalist in the MJ Awards - and from other countries. As an example of national, if not international, best practice the immediate impact and legacy created by **YES2006** will improve longer term outcomes and exploit opportunities to ensure the City’s social, health, regeneration and educational goals are met.