

## 2007 ALARM AWARD SCHEME

ENTRANT: Sunderland City Council

CATEGORY: Strategic Risk: Creating a healthy city

CONTACT: Risk Manager Dave Francis 0191 553 5085 or email [dave.francis@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:dave.francis@sunderland.gov.uk)

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first strategic risk identified on Sunderland's Corporate Risk Profile is the effective delivery of local community strategy targets, including improved health for our 283,000 residents. Also the city's overarching strategic vision is that: Sunderland will be a prosperous city. A desirable, safe and **healthy** place to live, work, learn and visit, where all people can reach their full potential. Yet historically we have poor health levels and face three key challenges: helping our over 50s, one third of our population, age healthily and minimise health and care costs; reducing childhood obesity which costs the city's NHS £3m a year; and closing health inequality gaps in the city and nationally. Our risk management efforts are producing fruit. In 2006 the British Heart Foundation reported improved health levels in Sunderland and a reduction in risk of premature death from coronary heart disease. Also Government Office North East has confirmed that the city has a "green" status in its health self assessment in terms of driving down heart disease and cancer and driving up life expectancy for both sexes.

We are using innovative partnerships at strategic levels with public and private sector organisations to address strategic risks in this area. They include:

**Over 50s:** Partnering with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to find ways of helping people age healthily in our city and share best practice to reduce a range of risks nationally and internationally. Sunderland is involved in developing programmes around ageing healthily and we're creating centres e.g. Bunny Hill, which offer a wide range of services on one site and these are developing as excellent models for older people as well as the wider community.

**Reducing childhood obesity:** Collaborating with the health sector, pupils, school governors, teachers and head teachers and parents to develop new ways of impacting the nutrition of children and young people and importantly, the wider community. This includes innovatively targeting schools according to risk i.e. those with highest obesity levels and low free school meals uptake, for our first wave of 400 fun, interactive healthy lifestyles learning sessions.

**Closing health inequality gaps:** Pioneering dynamic and unique partnership arrangements with the health, private and voluntary sectors to deliver a seamless city-wide Wellness Service which includes a second generation Exercise Referral Programme (ERP) for those with health risks. Health and council staff work in the centres together to deliver outcomes and partnership with Technogym has ensured we can capture vital health data on clients city-wide to risk manage this situation.

## THE NEED – RISKS TO ACHIEVING OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

Ill health impacts the quality of life for our citizens but also has huge costs for ourselves and our partners.

- 28% of Sunderland children are overweight by the time they start school and one in 10 is obese. This costs the city's NHS £3m a year.
- the overall bill for obesity – and one in five residents are classed as obese – is £17m.
- nearly one third of the population is 50 or over.
- people over 65 are 66% more likely to suffer a heart attack than the national average.
- 8,300 diagnosed diabetics in Sunderland.
- 10% of adults are disabled as a result of chronic disease.
- 20% of all deaths are smoking related.
- 4,500 people with dementia and that's expected to rise by 10-15%.
- 1,000 hospital admissions a year due to falls among over 65s - three quarters are women.

## OUR INCLUSIVE APPROACH

We recognised the need for greater and unprecedented levels of partnership working to address the strategic risks we faced. Together, with our key partners, we have developed a joint vision, targets, and shared protocols to produce an integrated, seamless risk-management approach to improving the health and wellbeing of our residents.

**Over 50s:** We are a learning and sharing organisation. We partnered with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to find ways of helping people age healthily so we could access their resources, learn from others who share their experiences via WHO and share our best practice to reduce a range of risks nationally and internationally.

**Reducing childhood obesity:** This challenge needed the full engagement of the health sector, pupils, school governors, teachers and head teachers and parents. Our risk management approach was one of collaboration, support and empowerment ie drawing on the health sector expertise and empowering and supporting schools in their bid to drive up health levels as per the Every Child Matters agenda and Ofsted requirements.

**Closing health inequality gaps:** Historically, organisations worked separately to drive up health levels. Much of that work was developmental, pilot-based, dependant on short term money and was run parallel to strategic work. However, by pioneering dynamic and unique partnership arrangements and protocols with the health, private and voluntary sectors we are delivering a seamless city-wide Wellness Service and targeting people in our Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) wards. This work is underpinned this by comprehensive evidence risk-based strategies.

## INNOVATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Prevention, they say, is better than cure. We have used innovation and opportunity to both tackle existing health challenges and to prevent them for up and coming generations. Strategically, we have a Healthy Cities network which aligns to our area regeneration frameworks and which links to the local strategic partnership's thematic group on health.

**Over 50s:** This age group makes up one third of our current population and this percentage will increase as the demographic time bomb, an economic and social risk recognised by central government, continues to tick. Sunderland is one of 15 European cities partnering with the WHO to pioneer cutting-edge thinking and models around the theme of ageing healthily. We're also commissioned to develop health impact assessments i.e. ways of looking at positive and negative aspects of projects in terms of health outcomes and reducing the harmful aspects. We're currently developing a population profile of the over 50s, identifying their involvement in accessing health and support services, and gathering information on how the risk determinants of health, such as income and social position, housing and the environment, are related. Planning in this way is a practical approach to risk management in that it has provided a baseline from which to plan future services to ensure the city and its facilities are adequate for an increasing older population. The work links with the city's Physical Activity Strategy for Older People. Importantly, our Adult Services team has established what's important to people over 50 in Sunderland - for example, comfortable and secure homes, adequate income, friendship, keeping active and healthy. One outcome is the new Home Improvement Agency (HIA) with a quick response handyman service to reduce risk of older people falling while replacing light bulbs etc.

All Wellness Centres provide programmes specifically designed for the 50+ age group, directly contributing to their improved health and emotional wellbeing, a key outcome of the city's Strategy for People Aged 50+.

**Reducing childhood obesity:** This national risk is translated locally with alarming figures – e.g. one in ten of our children is clinically obese. We have pioneered ways of translating government policy, including Every Child Matters and Tackling Childhood Obesity – The First Steps and Choosing Health in exciting ways which resonate with children, young people, parents, schools, staff and wider partners. We have partnered with Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust (STPCT), City Hospitals Sunderland and wider school partners to produce a Food in Schools Programme to address several health risks in the local community. Innovation includes:

- a dedicated Food in Schools council team which includes a co-ordinator, a specialist dietician and interactive food in school workers.
- targeting schools according to risk i.e. those with highest obesity levels and low free school meals uptake, for our first wave of 400 fun, interactive healthy lifestyles learning sessions.
- working closely with the city's Director of Public Health, hospital dieticians and with teams from STPCT's healthy food programme and the Wear Healthy Early Years programme.
- overcoming challenges for providing new nutritional requirements for meals in special schools where many pupils can only eat puréed or soft foods. We pulled together a 'Velcro' team of professionals, including a

deputy head teacher, a speech and language therapist, a cook-in-charge and dietician to devise a new menu which we risk assessed for texture and consistency.

- hosting a Food in Schools educational conference, with national speakers, for 250 local head teachers and school staff members to mitigate risks of poorer Ofsted inspections which now embrace the nutrition/healthy lifestyles agendas.
- piloting risk-assessed after-school cookery classes for primary school children and adults.
- launching a Passport to Health scheme which gives pupils prizes e.g. free swimming vouchers as a reward for making healthy meal choices.
- producing a School Meals Recipe Book aimed at parents, community groups and Children's Centres.
- partnering with Sunderland AFC Football Foundation to give nutritional, cooking and healthy lifestyle advice in schools involved in their Family Learning Through Football Fitness programme.
- taking a longer term view to the management of risk by introducing fruit and vegetables growing co-operatives with schools and community/voluntary sector.

**Closing health inequality gaps:** With nearly half of the city's wards having NRF status and identified as deprived and needing assistance, we knew we needed city-wide coverage with our network of wellness centres. We also had to develop a robust data collection system so we and our partners can measure and meet floor targets, monitor performance indicators, meet funding criteria etc. We did this by undertaking a robust European procurement route to find a dynamic private sector partner who could: provide us with cost-effective, state-of-the-art, cardiovascular and resistance equipment; and research and develop an ICT-based single electronic key wellness system, which would capture vital data, using single city-wide ICT platform. We have since developed a strategic alliance with Technogym, the Wellness Company, the official and exclusive supplier to the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Innovation includes:

- the total makeover of five former fitness centres within our leisure centres staffed by STPCT lifestyle advisors and council gym instructors.
- developing a 40-question risk-based electronic questionnaire covering current participation in physical activity, long term goals, smoking status, daily consumption of 5 portions of fruit and vegetables, weekly alcohol intake etc. People can then be signposted, for example to smoking cessation health professionals.
- pioneering a new £8m facility of ten co-located services, including a Wellness Centre, community sector-run café and STPCT diagnostic and minor injuries/illnesses centre. The council scrutinised all organisations' risk management plans before opening and meets regularly with health and safety representatives.
- risk managing the construction of a new £19.8million 50m regional pool and Wellness Centre, paid for by seven funding partners. The client project risk register has 75 identified risks shown on a traffic light system for at-a-glance assessments of urgency. It is checked every month, and reviewed quarterly, by a steering group which is supported and advised by the corporate risk management team.

- a second generation GP referral system, a 15-week Exercise Referral Programme (ERP) delivered in Wellness Centres by STPCT lifestyle advisors.
- addressing capacity risks by increasing training and accreditation levels for Wellness Centre staff

## **EVIDENCE OF IMPACT**

- In 2006 the British Heart Foundation reported improved health levels in Sunderland and a reduction in risk of premature death from coronary heart disease.
- The Sunderland Partnership's self assessment for health targets (as detailed in the Performance Management Report, Annual Review 2006,) was a "green" status - which was agreed by Government Office North East.
- There are 7,597 Wellness Centre users – 1,233 are under 19.
- STPCT has cited the Wellness Centre Network and EPR as key to "supporting people in taking more physical activity, also providing support to help improve their diet and stop smoking."
- 59 GP practices and over 40 other health care professionals refer patients to ERP. In 2005/06: 1,661 people were referred; 53.2% to lose weight and 96.6% did so – each lost an average of 3kg; 58% were over 50;
- The Health Equity Audit 2006/07 shows 5,384 people attended the Smoking Cessation Service in Sunderland. As of September 2006 48% of which successfully quit at 4 weeks. This has increased steadily to 66.7% at March 2007.
- All schools we work with (90% of city total) are accredited through the Heartbeat Award scheme, the national hallmark of good practice in catering.
- Our sports development team partnered with NHS dieticians to target clinically obese young people, referred by GPs and other health professionals, and their parents/carers. All participants lost weight and reduced their waist circumferences

"Sunderland's wellness service is full of innovation, not least in its approach to partnership working which is breaking down barriers across the city to make it easier for people to make healthier lifestyle choices. The region can learn much from it, it supports Sport England's targets to increase physical activity and it's reducing health inequalities." - Tim Cattle Jones, Chair of North East Regional Sports Board.

"Sunderland is leading the way in its approach to the school food agenda. It has looked and thought outside of the box and is creating quality services aimed at delivering positive health outcomes for the wider community and that's exciting." - Joe Harvey, Director of the Health Education Trust

"Many of the illnesses that GPs and hospitals see every day in Sunderland are ones that could potentially have been avoided, or their seriousness reduced. The Wellness Service ensures that people at risk are identified earlier and referred to the appropriate health, diet and physical activity advice that will make a difference to their long term well-being" - Dr. Judy Thomas, Executive Director for Public Health (South of the Tyne).