

THE NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

MAKING EVERY PATIENT CONTACT A PUBLIC HEALTH CONTACT

Report Purpose:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision / Approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Brief description of the item and any significant issues:

This paper describes the work underway within the Trust which goes beyond acute care and facilitates improvement in public health overall.

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MAKING EVERY PATIENT CONTACT A PUBLIC HEALTH CONTACT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2004 the Department of Health produced the public health white paper “Choosing Health”, which highlights six key priorities for delivery based upon more people making more healthy choices. This built on the findings of the Wanless Report (2002) “Securing Our Future Health: Taking A Long-Term View” which recommended “more success in public health” stating the need for a “substantially larger positive impact on health needs from the focus on health promotion and disease prevention”.

Public Health is concerned with preventing disease, and promoting, and prolonging, the health of people. It focuses on the population as a whole, rather than the treatment of individuals. The core business of the Trust is to deliver health care to patients, and this provides a number of opportunities to influence behaviour and lifestyles of the local community, with potential benefits to public health.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the increasing involvement in the public health agenda, and to describe how it will strengthen its contribution to improving the health of the local community, and highlight opportunities to further this work.

2. BACKGROUND

In 2004 the Department of Health produced the public health white paper “Choosing Health”, which highlighted six key priorities for delivery based upon more people making healthier choices:

- tackling health inequalities;
- reducing the numbers of people who smoke;
- tackling obesity;
- improving sexual health;
- improving mental health and wellbeing;
- reducing harm and encouraging sensible drinking.

Choosing Health set out the Government’s agenda for the provision of the opportunities, support, and information that people wanted to enable them to choose health. It aimed to inform and encourage people as individuals, and to help shape the commercial and cultural environment we live in so that it is easier to choose a healthy lifestyle.

Public Health is concerned with preventing disease, prolonging healthy life and promoting the health of the people. It focuses on the population as a whole, rather

than the treatment of individuals and, as the core business of the Trust is to deliver health care to patients, this provides a number of opportunities to influence behaviour and lifestyles of the local community, with potential benefits to public health. Issues that affect health are wide ranging and include the environment, social and economic factors, and lifestyle and behaviour. Access to, and the quality of, health and social services, undoubtedly, impact on these aspects of health, and also influence behaviour and lifestyle. The Trust is, therefore ideally placed to make a contribution to this agenda.

3. HOW THE TRUST CAN CONTRIBUTE

“Securing Our Future Health: Taking A Long-Term View” (“The Wanless Report”) was published in April 2002, reporting on the long-term resource requirements for the NHS. The report concluded that in order to meet people’s expectations and to deliver the highest quality over the next 20 years, the UK would need to devote more resources to health care and that this must be matched by reform to ensure that these resources were used effectively. One of the key recommendations of the report referred specifically to “more success in public health” stating the need for a “substantially larger positive impact on health needs from the focus on health promotion and disease prevention”.

The core business of the Trust is to deliver health care to patients, and this provides a number of opportunities for the Trust to contribute to this agenda, and to influence behaviour and lifestyles of the local community, which impact on public health. These opportunities can be summarised in the following categories:

- (i) As a provider of health care
- (ii) As an Employer
- (iii) As a Corporate Citizen

(i) As a provider of healthcare

The Newcastle Hospitals have in excess of one million patient contacts per year, having the opportunity to directly influence the health and well being of these patients by the treatment provided. Access to such a wide section of the population also provides an opportunity to intervene from a public health perspective to influence lifestyle and behaviours. There is evidence that at the time patients are receiving treatment they are more receptive to messages about health and well-being and the Trust should take every opportunity to ensure that they “make every patient contact a public health contact”.

Actively pursuing the Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Agenda can also help to address inequalities by ensuring inclusive approaches to service delivery and access to services.

(ii) As an employer of staff

As an employer of over 11,000 staff the Trust also has the potential to influence the behaviour of a major section of the local population. This can be in terms of, for example, their working environment through the implementation of its Smoke Free Policy, or their economic status through the employment and career opportunities it provides.

Actively pursuing the Equality, Diversity and Human Rights agenda can also help to address inequalities by ensuring inclusive approaches to recruitment and employment.

(iii) As a “corporate citizen”

There are major opportunities for the Trust to contribute through its strategies to minimise environmental pollution and to promote “green policies”.

The NHS Sustainable Development Commission describes how NHS organisations can embrace sustainable development and tackle health inequalities through their day-to-day activities, stating that; *“This means using NHS organisations’ corporate powers and resources in ways that benefit rather than damage the social, economic and environmental conditions in which we live. How the NHS behaves – as an employer, a purchaser of goods and services, a manager of transport, energy, waste and water, as a landholder and commissioner of building work and as an influential neighbour in many communities – can make a big difference to people’s health and to the well being of society, the economy and the environment”*.

4. ACTIVITY TO DATE

For many years the Trust has been actively contributing to the public health agenda through its day to day services to patients and the public by supporting health protection through immunisation and screening programmes. Health improvement has also been on the Trust’s agenda for some time now with, for example, the introduction of the Trust’s Smoke Free Policy in 2006, and the continued emphasis on infection control. A proactive approach to clinical governance and risk also contributes to this agenda by the continuous improvement in the quality of services. The Trust now provides its own, in-house, Health and Well Being Service, affording support for the physical and mental health of its employees and the opportunity to promote healthy lifestyles. For many years now the Trust has supported the provision of a Staff Fitness Centre, run by the Staff Social Club, which encourages physical activity, and is well used by a regular membership of approximately 600 staff. In addition, the Trust’s Green Transport Policy, including the “Bike 2 Work” scheme further emphasises the Trust’s support for the health and well being of its staff.

The Trust’s Green Transport policy offers many advantages in terms of responsibilities to staff, as well as from the perspective of being a corporate citizen. A co-ordinator is in post with a remit to promote better use of public transport to access work and to encourage more staff to take up walking and cycling as other methods of getting to work. Further enhancing the Trust’s contribution as corporate citizen is the ongoing energy reduction work, being lead by the Estates Department and the Trust’s recent enrolment in the NHS Carbon Reduction Strategy. The NHS currently contributes approximately three per cent of England’s total carbon dioxide emissions. The Carbon Reduction Strategy commits the NHS to reduce these emissions by 60 per cent by 2050 in all areas, including procurement, travel and building energy use and sets out ways that this can be achieved. The more immediate target for the Trust is to reduce carbon emissions by 15%, from the 2000 baseline, by 2010.

In addition the Trust now has a well established Public Health Group, which includes the Local Director of Public Health, and has been very active in developing a comprehensive action plan to ensure collaborative working with colleagues in primary care, and that it uses all opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles and behaviours for its staff, and patients and service users, at a time when they are receptive to such messages. The action plan focuses on:

- Tackling the issue of being obese or overweight
- Reducing smoking
- Enhancing health and well being
- Sensible drinking
- Improving sexual health
- Reducing accidents
- Reducing drug related harm

For each of these strands a detailed action plan has been developed, and will form the focus of the future work of the group. Much of the agenda of the group cuts across existing initiatives, for example the work of the Nutritional Steering Group, with regard to weight management, and the work of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group in tackling health inequalities. The Public Health Group will be instrumental in supporting a co-ordinated approach to this wide-ranging agenda. The group has recently had a poster displayed at a National Public Health Conference, highlighting the contribution that an Acute Trust can make to the public health agenda. It was commended as an example of good practice because of the pro-active approach that the Trust is taking to this issue, which appears to be unusual.

The Trust is not tackling the public health agenda in isolation from other health and social care organisations, but is actively involved in local strategic partnerships, to ensure a collaborative approach to improving public engagement and health. The Nursing and Patient Services Director represents the Trust on the Newcastle Partnership, for which she is also the Deputy Chair. Her Deputy now attends the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership on behalf of the Trust.

5. SUMMARY

The Trust's active contribution to the public health agenda is seen as positive, particularly when considering Lord Darzi's recent report, on his review of the NHS to advise on how to meet the challenges of delivering health care over the next decade. This report emphasises the need to deliver more care in the community, highlighting opportunities for the Trust's further involvement in this aspect of care, and supports opportunities for the Trust to expand its contribution to community service delivery.

6. RECOMMENDATION

To receive the briefing and support continuation of this work.

Helen Lamont
Deputy Nursing and Patient Services Director