

NUNEATON & BEDWORTH HEALTHY LIVING NETWORK (HLN)

APRIL 2009

Background

Our aim is to raise the awareness of the link between lifestyle and health, to encourage and support a healthier lifestyle, improve access to primary care and tackle health inequalities. The HLN targets people in the most disadvantaged areas of Nuneaton & Bedworth, a Spearhead area. We work in 'hard to reach' places meaning there are no such thing as 'hard to reach' groups.

As part of our outreach work we offer a Health 'MOT' which includes weight, blood pressure and diet, screening and advice. When the weather is favorable it will be delivered on green spaces, outside mosques, football pitches, allotment sites and industrial estates. When the weather is not so good we work in pubs, clubs, bingo halls, betting shops and workplaces.

In our experience men are opportunists, they will take a check if it is there, prompted- bullied even by their partners or colleagues. Taking the health screening into male domains as a dedicated project has enabled us to meet men on their territory, build trust and breakdown some of the barriers to accessing healthier lifestyles.

The Approach

We have developed a protocol for the 'MOT' in partnership with our PCT.

- 2 Community Health Development officers set up a 'MOT' station with fold up chairs and tables, there is a register to record name, address, telephone number and results, plus who they are referred to if anyone.
- If referrals are made to appropriate other services, such as Health Trainers, Smoking Cessation, GP, Leisure Services, Alcohol & Drug counseling then a certain degree of 'hand holding' to get men there may be necessary, and we commit to the extra help where it is needed.
- Consent is sought to share results with GP's and a follow up agreed as necessary.
- Each participant is given a 'Health MOT' card which records their results.
- The officers talk to people using a very common sense approach and language.
- The screening is very basic, it is done more to raise awareness of what things should be, and their impact on health rather than a 'medical' test.
- Each screening takes about 8 minutes and is usually just long enough to get the man talking and interacting.

Outcomes

- Since September 2008 we have provided 24 outreach sessions and worked with 374 men between the ages of 35 and 64 years.
- We have referred 44 men to their GP, 23 went and as a result 10 men now prescribed medication for high blood pressure, 13 received advice about controlling BP with diet and exercise. All had not seen their GP for 5 years +
- 2 men were referred to the local Lifestyle Consultant and now receive 1-1 support for physical activity and improving their diet.
- The need for a male orientated Weight Management class was indentified and subsequently a weekly class now takes place in a working men's club and includes a circuits class. 8 men attend regularly.
- 4 men were referred to smoking cessation support but none quit.
- 56 men report making changes to their diet as a result of advice and support received (6 month evaluation)
- 78 men report taking more physical activity as a result of advice and support received (6 month evaluation)
- Regular health days have been provided at the Local Authority 'Depot' for low paid & manual workers. We have been able to provide advice on testicular and skin cancer after building up a relationship and trust with the workers. One man is now seeing a consultant and receiving treatment.
- Other local service providers benefit through effective referrals of some of the most 'hard to reach' people.

Top Tips

- There is no such thing as 'hard to reach' you just have to be flexible.
- Using a well known route to a Mosque at prayer time has proven very effective
- Make friends with your local Chamber of Commerce & College they can provide a conduit into working with businesses
- SME's seem to find it difficult to 'fit in' time for health, they believe they haven't got a big enough work force or can't spare the time because of capacity issues. Our solution has been to set up on industrial estates close to the hot food outlets. Keeping the MOT's short mean's people can participate while waiting for their food. We now have 4 vans that we work with and have even started to influence their food options.
- Be persistent, we were rejected by all but 2 of the local working men's clubs in the first instance. However, once we started and set up a 'health competition' between the participants at the clubs word soon got around and we had approaches from others.
- Go the extra mile. It is worth making an appointment on behalf of someone, going with them if necessary, calling them back and checking they are ok, did they go? If not, why not? Can you help any more?
- Men talking to other men is a very powerful tool. " *This was good for me..*"

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