

Councillor Briefing

Healthy, Happy Communities – Culture and sport essential for well-being

This briefing is intended to help Members maximise the role of culture and sport in improving the health and well-being of local communities.

Overview

Engaging in sport and physical activity has multiple health benefits; it can reduce the risk of developing illnesses ranging from cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes to stress, anxiety and depression. The lifetime healthcare costs for someone who takes part regularly in sport compared with their sedentary counterparts is valued at up to £46,000¹.

Wellbeing is more than an absence of problems or illness, it is about the personal and the social. Culture can make a real difference to the quality of people's life by providing the 'five-a-day' ingredients of a healthy, productive and fulfilling life.

In future public health services will be commissioned and run with more local focus on provision and a greater use of existing organisations, including GPs, Local Authorities and the voluntary sector.

Why it Matters

The cost of physical inactivity, including direct costs of treatment for the major life-style related diseases, and the indirect costs caused through sickness absence, has been estimated at £8.2 billion a year. This does not include the contribution of inactivity to obesity, which itself has been estimated at £2.5 billion annually.

Furthermore many people are living longer and may face challenges such as social isolation, increasing physical frailty and declining mental health. The ability to access cultural services can help older people maintain their health and wellbeing into their later years.

Key Messages

- Local Authorities have a key role to play in improving the health and well-being of communities. As portfolio holder for cultural services you are likely to have a bigger influence over people's well-being than many of your colleagues.
- While life expectancy is increasing, healthy life expectancy is not increasing at the same rate. People are spending a longer time living with conditions that seriously reduce their quality of life.
- Ensuring adequate local opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity either through direct provision or working with the private sector, trusts, sports partnerships and community groups is vital.
- Keeping people active and engaged in their communities will lead to a better quality of life as they get older.
- Well-being is more than happiness; local authorities have a responsibility for creating the conditions that enable citizens and communities to flourish.

1 Understanding the value of engagement in culture and sport, CASE Research, June 2010 DCMS

Background

The Chief Medical Officer for England has stated that the target of 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity on at least 5 days per week can best be achieved by helping people build this into their daily lives.

To create a healthier nation, future focus will be on behaviour change, driven by shared social responsibility rather than state regulation. change4life is an example of a campaign that aims to inspire a societal movement in which everyone who has an interest in preventing obesity, be they Government, business, healthcare professionals, charities, schools, families or individuals, can play their part.

The white paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*² pledges a ring-fenced public health budget. This paper along with *Healthy Lives, Healthy People*³ outlines the priority for helping people to live longer, healthier, more fulfilling lives and to improve the health of the poorest, fastest.

Local authorities are set to take responsibility for public health in 2013 and the main purpose of the Health and Well-being Boards will be to join up commissioning across the NHS, public health, social care to meet the priorities identified in the strategic needs assessments.

Furthermore, Councils in England have been tasked with transforming the social care they provide by placing the person at the centre and promoting choice and control. Underpinning this is a focus on supporting people to maintain their independence and quality of life.

Improving the well-being of local communities involves strengthening local connections and enhancing the sense of belonging. The *Foresight report*⁴ highlights a 'five-a day' menu for well-being.

Connect by helping people develop relationships with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours that will enrich their life and bring support.

Be active by creating opportunities through sport, dancing, visiting historic sites or just a daily walk to make them feel good and maintain fitness.

Be curious by engaging people in activities and events that enable them to experience the positive, everyday moments, and appreciate what matters to them.

Learn by engaging people in reading, playing an instrument or being creative, providing them with a challenge, satisfaction, fun and confidence.

Give by helping them to volunteer, linking their happiness to a wider community benefit.

As such culture and sport should be seen as a key contributor to improving health and well-being outcomes in every locality.

Your next steps

- Familiarise yourself with the key health and well-being challenges faced by your communities.
- Ask what policies exist to drive up participation and how cultural services are contributing to tackling health inequality.
- Encourage preventative culture and sport services that promote well-being and reduce the need for intensive health or social care.
- Investigate how culture and sport is contributing to improved choice and control.
- Consider how best you can ensure culture and sport are engaged in delivering the outcomes of your Health and Well-being Board.

² http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/documents/digitalasset/dh_117794.pdf

³ www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/documents/digitalasset/dh_122347.pdf

⁴ *Mental Capital and Well-being – Government Office for Science, September 2008*