



Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service

Supporting, promoting and developing the local voluntary sector

Cyngor Gwasanaeth Gwirfoddol Castell-nedd Port Talbot

Cefnogi, hyrwyddo a datblygu y sector wirfoddol leol

Response to the National Assembly for Wales' Health and Social Care Committee Inquiry into the implementation of the national service framework for diabetes in Wales and its future direction

Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service is the County Voluntary Council and a Charitable Company set up to promote, support and develop the Third Sector in Neath Port Talbot. We have over 500 organisations in membership and are regularly in touch with over 1,000 Third Sector organisations operating in Neath Port Talbot.

Neath Port Talbot CVS welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to this inquiry.

One of the key standards of the framework going forward will be reducing the risk of the Welsh population developing Type 2 diabetes and also reducing the inequalities in the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. It is recognised that diabetes is more prevalent in those who are socially disadvantaged and the impact of the economic downturn is more likely to have an effect on these individuals. It is important that strategies are put in place to reduce the risk of diabetes for these individuals.

The Third Sector has an important role to play in the prevention and health promotion agendas. For example, Neath Port Talbot CVS will shortly launch a Hearty Lives project which will work in Neath Port Talbot's most disadvantaged areas to train volunteers as 'health champions' to promote healthy lifestyle messages in their community. Although the project is targeted at heart health, it is anticipated that the cascading of information on healthy lifestyles through local volunteers will have a wider impact on the health of the most disadvantaged.

Other projects such as the Amman Valley Health and Wellbeing project aimed at the over 50s also provide an opportunity for engagement with community members around health issues. Changing lifestyles following retirement means that many older people become less active. The project engages with older people

encouraging them to become more active again and also provides messages on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Another local project is also looking at working in partnership with community transport providers to enable older community members to be able to access local health services. This will enable older people with diabetes to have better access to services and also enable those who haven't been diagnosed to access appropriate medical advice.

The Third Sector can also contribute further in supporting the healthy lifestyle agenda in a time of recession. Third Sector organisations can support the development of initiatives such as food co-operatives ensuring community members can access reasonably priced fresh fruit and vegetables. It can also provide support to community members with regards to managing a budget and training on how to cook healthy nutritious meals on a budget.

It is important that the information circulated around diabetes and healthy lifestyles is in a format which is clear and easy to understand. The Hearty Lives project mentioned will provide an informal way to distribute accurate health messages from someone the community trust in a format which is easy to understand and appropriate for them.

The community can feel overwhelmed by the number of healthy lifestyle messages that are out there, and can be confused over what the priorities are. One of the key tasks in ensuring the delivery of consistent health messages to the community will be upskilling the workforce, including paid staff and volunteers, so that all deliver the same accurate messages.

Third Sector organisations work with some of the most disadvantaged communities and can effectively distribute messages through their work and challenge any misconceptions that people have, but as mentioned, it is important that the messages being given are consistent with those being delivered by health professionals. It is also important that if messages are distributed via local media that they can be easily understood.