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BARKING AND HAVERING

LIFESTYLE STRATEGY

Prepared by:

Dr. Simon Wallace
Senior Registrar in Public Health Medicine
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Address for correspondence:

South East Institute of Public Health
Broomhill House,
David Salomon's Estate,
Broomhill Road,
Tunbridge Wells,
Kent TN3 0XT

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The South East Institute of Public Health has been commissioned by the Barking and Havering Health Authority to undertake an independent review of health promotion activity in smoking, sensible drinking, physical activity and healthy eating amongst organisations/agencies in the district and to make recommendations.
- 1.2 The review plans to assist in the development of a health promotion strategy for Barking and Havering which will contribute towards the Health of the Nation targets and support the lifestyle chapter of the Barking and Havering Health Strategy.
- 1.3 A focus group of participants involved in health promotion from different organisations was formed to support the project. A series of 22 face-to-face interviews with professionals working in health promotion in various organisations in Barking and Havering were held. They lasted up to one and half hours, were taped and a semi-structured questionnaire used as a guide.
- 1.4 The findings suggest that there is much activity taking place amongst the various organisations within Barking and Havering. As well as examples of innovative and successful practice, there were initiatives that had not worked well and areas with significant gaps.
- 1.5 Examples of successful working included:
 - 1.5.1 A peer-led drama production called The Chain Reaction which explored issues around young women and smoking.
 - 1.5.2 The planned "Prescription for Exercise" scheme in each borough where the PHCT will be able to prescribe a course of physical activity for suitable patients at a local leisure centre.
 - 1.5.3 The involvement of the Dietetic Department with Radio Essex and Breeze radio discussing live a wide range of issues around healthy eating and supported by a telephone help line.
 - 1.5.4 The Western Road Medical Centre in Romford have used the Body Shop, gift vouchers from Boots and articles in the local press to attract young people to adolescent clinics about lifestyle. The same practice has also undertaken health promotion consultancy work for a local business and run their own "Prescription for Exercise" scheme at a local leisure centre.
 - 1.5.5 Organisations with a designated health promotion officer have a more centralised focus for health promotion activity eg. Barking and Havering FHSA and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.
 - 1.5.6 Health Fairs involving the commercial sector eg. Community Healthcare Week, the London Borough of Havering Environment Fair.
 - 1.5.7 A comprehensive programme for coronary patients in the Havering Hospital NHS Trust giving information and advice about lifestyle

- changes after a heart attack.
- 1.5.8 A comprehensive health education syllabus as part of the PSE programme at Chafford School, Rainham.
- 1.5.9 As part of Drinkwise day, a Fun Run supported by the Havering Joggers and Juvenile Bureau of Police and organised by the BHB Alcohol Advisory Service.
- 1.5.10 A wide range of activity at Ford Motor Company supported by the philosophy that promoting healthy lifestyles is just, if not more important for their employees as the clinical work.

The above is only a selection of work being undertaken by the various organisations. A full description is detailed in the main report.

1.6 Areas of concern include:

- 1.6.1 Nearly all organisations expressed concern about the lack of resource (mainly human) to implement health promotion initiatives more fully. Some felt that this reflected the significance of health promotion as perceived through the eyes of senior staff and management. This has led to low morale, negative attitudes and a disincentive to deliver a service perceived as having little credibility.
- 1.6.2 Many felt there could be better communication about activity and joint working between the organisations, thus decreasing the threat of duplication and delivering a more effective service with limited resources.
- 1.6.3 With the pressures of the National Curriculum, the greater independence of schools and the loss of both the borough advisory teacher for health education (one in each borough) and the health promotion officer for schools, the delivery of health education in schools has been seriously compromised. Teachers believe in the need to teach health education, but are lacking confidence and the necessary support to deliver this often difficult and controversial subject area.
- 1.6.4 There is a concern among professionals that the messages being given in smoking, sensible drinking, physical activity and healthy eating are not consistent.
- 1.6.5 Despite the large amount of effort given to health fairs and national campaigns, the success of these ventures is often poor.
- 1.6.6 Despite a potential for income generation by various organisations from health promotion activity, little takes place. This may reflect the present package being offered, the lack of a financial structure to support such a venture or a lack of incentive to participate.

1.7 Several recommendations have been made as a result of this review. The general recommendations will be detailed in this summary with those referring to individual organisations found in the main report. The general recommendations include:

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- 1.7.1 Formation of the Barking and Havering Health Promotion Alliance consisting of a team of professionals from the relevant organisations in the district.
 - 1.7.2 Each organisation should have or be planning for a comprehensive and updated smoking policy, alcohol workplace policy and policy for healthy eating.
 - 1.7.3 There should be a designated officer within each organisation responsible for coordinating health promotion activity.
 - 1.7.4 Two health education advisors, one for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and one for the London Borough of Havering are appointed to coordinate and support health education in primary and secondary schools, colleges for further education, special schools, youth and community.
 - 1.7.5 To develop and implement a comprehensive system of purchasing, providing and financing of health promotion services of different organisations in Barking and Havering.
 - 1.7.6 To encourage the concept of income generation but to have professional packages to support this. (See specific recommendations for BHB Health Promotion and AIDS Services and the Havering Hospital NHS Trust).
 - 1.7.7 A campaign working party (subgroup of the Barking and Havering Health Promotion Alliance) is formed to develop a strategy for national campaigns and health fairs, generating new ideas for presentation and delegating settings and population groups among the various organisations to achieve maximum coverage.
 - 1.7.8 All organisations should be proactive with the media in all of its health promotion activity.
 - 1.7.9 A working group of the Barking and Havering Health Promotion Alliance is formed to develop an inventory of resources in each of the lifestyle areas and to develop a small handbook for professionals detailing the recommended messages.
 - 1.7.10 To develop a Directory of all professionals in Barking and Havering working within the field of health promotion.
- 1.8 It is hoped that this review will assist those working in the field of health promotion to develop a strategy which allows closer and more effective working. Children are a key target audience and should act as a central focus when planning services.