

Local government and community development: partnerships for health

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Introduction

- Policy and Practice - background
- The imperatives for partnership working
- The role of local government in health
- Examples of local authority health initiatives
- Links between local government and community development – principles



Imperatives for partnership working

- The economic and political climate
 - Cuts in government funding
 - Government policy on shrinking role of state
 - The 'Big Society'
 - Health and social care markets “any qualified provider”
- Greater understanding (and legislation) on involvement of patients, service users and the public in commissioning and delivering services
- New statutory partnerships with VCS involvement
- Transfer of public health to local government



Local government and health

- Public health rooted in local government
- Greater understanding of social and economic determinants of health
- A population approach – sophisticated demographic analysis backed up by personal knowledge
- Increasing evidence base of “what works”
- Relevance to health of local government functions, eg
 - Education
 - Employment and regeneration
 - Environment
 - Transport
 - Planning
 - Housing
 - leisure
 - What else?





Adapted from
Dahlgren G and
Whitehead M
(1991) Policies and
strategies to
promote social
equity in health.
Stockholm, Institute
for Futures Studies



Some examples of local authority partnership initiatives

- Coventry breast feeding project
- Greenwich fuel poverty
- East Riding and Walsall - chlamydia testing and *Frisky? Risky!*
- Benefits advice in GP surgeries and other community venues
- Exercise on prescription
- Every contact counts (eg smoking interventions from housing officers/slippers etc from fire and rescue/handyperson schemes/village agents)
- Bristol Wellspring Healthy Living Centre



Bristol Wellspring Healthy Living Centre

- Founded in 2004 by local residents,
- A community-run charity serving one of the most vibrant but deprived communities in England
- Working with clients with mental health issues that GPs can't support
- Branching Out programme provides 1:1 support over 12 weeks (important aspect is referral to other services)
- Has cut GP repeat visits by programme participants by up to two thirds
- Reduction in depression and anxiety scores
- Reduction in referrals to secondary care
- Reduction in prescriptions for anti depressants against an increasing city wide trend
- Reduced costs – a doctor's time is more expensive than a community worker
- <http://www.wellspringhlc.org/what-is-new->



Challenges to involvement of community orgs

Marmot

“While the real and potential contribution of the third sector to reducing health inequalities is recognised, there remain concerns about how well the sector is supported, both to deliver its services and to effectively engage as a strategic partner...”

“There is increasing concern that the current commissioning environment disadvantages the third sector generally and may even threaten the survival of smaller voluntary organisations”



But ...

strong links between local government, community development and health

- Marmot approach “to create the conditions for people to take control of their own lives”
- Asset based community development to support social justice – eg Healthy Living Centres
- Concept of participatory democracy – “democracy is good for your health”
- Increasing emphasis on “engagement” rather than “consultation”
- Many CVS orgs set up to respond to particular local needs – eg alcohol abuse, mental health issues
- Cambridge example of joint portfolio.



Cambridge City Council

- Cambridge City Council has portfolio “Community Development and Health”
- “This portfolio is about building and empowering safe, strong and healthy communities of people in line with our demanding vision for Cambridge.”
- Key initiatives in 2012-13 will be:
 - public engagement in local decision making
 - the management of community facilities
 - a new strategy for our children and young people's service
 - securing community infrastructure in the city's growth areas
 - pioneering the Council's contribution to Restorative Justice
 - the building of a local health partnership.



Role of community and vol sector

- Helping understand and address health inequalities
- Ensuring local govt listens to the least heard
- Using specialist local knowledge to best effect
- Providing local feedback on what's working and where the gaps are
- Ensuring the social and environmental model is not subsumed by an individual and medical model of health and ill health



How to meet the challenges

Suggestions from local community and voluntary sector organisations include:

- CVS should develop consortia and partnerships between themselves in order to bid jointly for new contracts
- CVS will need to work across boundaries (geographical and issue) and share intelligence
- CVS will need a strong relationship with Healthwatch (the Patient and Client Council), the statutory board and GP commissioners (Local Commissioning Groups)
- CVS will need to speak in commissioners' language
- CVS will need to market what they do well and let GP commissioners (LCGs) know that they're there



Little task

- Think of one imaginative partnership with local government that your organisation could offer to support community health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities.

