



# **Exeter CVS Volunteer Health Trainer Champion Initiative**

**Report of a one year pilot 2009 -2010**

## Preface

In 2009 Health Promotion Devon secured a years funding via the South West Health Trainer Hub to develop a Volunteer Health Trainer Champion Pilot Project in Exeter. NHS Devon funded Exeter CVS to develop local volunteering roles to train and engage Volunteer Health Trainer Champions to support paid NHS Health Trainers to work with individuals in communities to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

### **Written by:**

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## Introduction

..' The Department of Health will: roll out Health Trainers to every community, and extend their reach with an additional network of health champions (potentially volunteers) who will operate as an outreach team, facilitating uptake of Health Trainer services and other interventions, as appropriate...' (1)

Health inequalities refer to the unfair nature of health differences between social groups, as generated by social conditions. Inequalities link to poverty has a significant impact on the health of both the individual and the community. The Strategic Review of Health inequalities indicated that health inequality still exists and that for people in the most disadvantaged communities being the worse off. People from these areas are more likely to develop life-affecting disability and more likely to be put in prison (2)

The 2004 Department of Health White Paper, 'Choosing Health: Making Healthy choices easier proposed the development of a new role for improving health and reducing health inequalities. Health Trainers, supported by Volunteer Champions, are to be drawn from local communities and trained to reach those who want to adopt healthier lifestyles, but who have little contact with services.

The national vision of reducing health inequalities through community empowerment highlighted the opportunity to develop a local scheme: by recruiting Volunteer Health Champions to empower individuals and communities to make small positive health changes. We believed that barriers to improved health and well being amongst our most marginalised communities would be reduced.

## Context

Nationally, there have been improvements in public health. However, the overall picture tends to mask geographical variations and health inequalities. Of Exeter's 18 wards 6 wards fall below average and are therefore deemed areas of deprivation. In order of most deprived in Exeter; Priory, Alphington, Whipton Barton, St David's, Newton and St James.

(1) The Inequalities in Health: Progress and next steps 2008 White Paper

(2) The Marmot Review, 2010, Fair Society, Healthy Lives, UCL, London

## Marketing

Marketing of the Volunteer Health Champions Project took several directions;

Launch of the project was achieved through contacting the Express and Echo who came and took several pictures, with Anne Byrne interviewing the Co-ordinator. It was published in half page colour spread in the paper in June 2009. A follow up was published in September 2009 to coincide with RSPH training in October.

Exeter CVS also launched the project through two website including;

- [www.exetercvs.org.uk](http://www.exetercvs.org.uk)
- [www.volunteerdevon.net](http://www.volunteerdevon.net)

In order to recruit volunteers Exeter CVS wrote a volunteering opportunity (Annex 6) and placed it on the National Volunteering database at;

- [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)

Exeter CVS has a weekly column in the Express and Echo on a Thursday where the advert to recruit volunteers was placed on four separate occasions throughout the duration of the project.

Exeter CVS has a weekly radio show at the Community Based station situated at the Phoenix Arts Centres. The Co-ordinator completed two 2-hours shows promoting not only the project but the whole subject of health inequalities and healthier lifestyles.

A leaflet was created (Annex 10), which was placed at strategic places around the city, such as the Health Centres, Libraries, Local cafes and community centres

An article was written for Exeter CVS bi-monthly newsletter Exe-change which reaches 246 voluntary and community organisations within Exeter.

The co-ordinator presented to five strategically placed groups around the city with follow up email blasts to over 350 charities within Exeter

## Objectives

To provide management support for Volunteer Health Champions

To establish systems and protocols, identifying training needs of volunteers, offers agreed training and seek useful deployment pathways and volunteer engagement within the Exeter area

To recruit a minimum of 5 volunteers from the local community

To work with partner organisation to promote the pilot and seek opportunities to include new partners

To agree referral procedures between NHS Devon and Exeter CVS

To monitor and evaluate the pilot from the volunteer and the third sector prospective

## Challenges

The initial stages of the project were a learning experience in understanding how NHS Devon operates in relation to the third sector and how to incorporate volunteers into a statutory service.

The project itself was delayed three months due to exchange of contracts which impacted on recruiting volunteers during the summer months which is notoriously slow within the third sector.

Throughout the projects duration health trainer posts diminished which inevitable impacted on opportunities for volunteers to shadow, and also to be supported before going into communities. Having fewer health trainers also reduced possibilities for volunteers to gain knowledge of how the health trainer service worked and what's available from a range of practitioners. To set up and allow a project to embed and make a real difference in one year is and has been immensely challenging.

The Volunteers were not allowed to start volunteering until they had completed the RSPH Level 2 qualification Understanding Health Improvement, which ran in October 2009 and January 2010 respectively, which gave very little time for volunteers to actively promote healthy lifestyles in their communities and work alongside paid Health Trainers.

## Selection and Screening of Volunteers

Potential volunteer contacts Exeter Volunteer Centre about possible volunteering opportunities on the Health Champion Pilot project

Volunteer Co-ordinator arranges a suitable time for a face to face interview/informal chat

At interview Volunteer Co-ordinator explains project in more detail passing over a role description and an enrolment form. At the end of this process if the volunteer is still interested a CRB form will be filled and references taken up

Once CRB and references secured, the volunteer will be booked onto RSPH Level 2 training Understanding Health Improvement

When training is completed the Volunteer Co-ordinator will either match the volunteer to an appropriate volunteering opportunity relating to health or offer a session shadowing the paid Health Trainer, as well as inviting the volunteer to the volunteer forum to help steer the project

On going support and supervision will be offered on a monthly basis as well as email support on needs must basis.

At all times though this process the Volunteer Co-ordinator would adhere to best practice when working alongside volunteers

From start to finish and depending when the training has been arranged, this process can take up to 3 months. Through this period it is very important to keep the volunteers engaged.

## Summary of Demographic

16 Volunteer Health Champions were recruited:-

### Gender

Male	Female
2	14

### Age

19-25	26-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
3	2	3	1	4	3

### Ethnicity

White British/English
16

### Disability

Disabled	Non-Disabled	Self Classified
0	16	0

### Employment

Employed	Unemployed	Part time employed	Student	Volunteer
11	1	2	1	1

### Location

Alphington	Exton	Exmouth	Pinhoe	Priory	St James	St Thomas	Whimple	Whipton
1	1	1	2	4	1	4	1	1

### Volunteers linked to voluntary and community sector organisations

6
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## Volunteer Training and Evaluation

Part of the requirement to becoming a Volunteer Health Champion was to undertake the RSPH (Royal Society for Public Health Training) Level 2 Understanding Health Improvement, 2-day course. All 16 volunteers passed the qualification with a Credit. 8 volunteers undertook the training at Exeter CVS whilst the remaining volunteers attended the course held at Newton Abbot Hospital.

Other courses and training were offered to all the volunteers, but due to work commitments only a few volunteers were able to take up the offer of further training.

Four volunteers completed the Cook4Life training. Two volunteers completed Exeter CVS Understanding Mental Health while a further two volunteer's completed Mental Health First Aid training. One volunteer completed the City & Guilds 7300 Introduction to Training Skills and is booked on the NOCN Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS). The latter course will enable the volunteer to gain the minimum requirement needed to start the process of becoming a licensed teacher/trainer in adult education.

## Feedback from Volunteers

### **RSPH Level 2 Understanding Health Improvement**

'...I thoroughly enjoyed the training, especially hearing from a Health Trainer and what the role entails, would like to progress onto similar courses'

'...even though I enjoyed the course the level was too low and the majority of it was general knowledge...'

'...not very challenging and the two trainers did not seem to have a good rapport with each other...'

'...please do not just read from your PowerPoint without having more interaction with your audience...I did enjoy the course and the chance of networking with other like minded people. I will take the information back to my organisation and get something started'

'...it stirred an interest to research at a higher level...'

### **Mental Health First Aid**

'Thank you so much for letting me go on that MHFA course last week, it was fantastic, one of the most useful courses I've done. Feel very privileged to have done it cos I think it's only going to get bigger and more important, employers should take it just as seriously as sending people on basic first aid courses if not more. So thank you!'

### **Cook4Life Training**

'...absolutely brilliant, would like to start cookery classes in my own organisation and the course has given me some good hints and tips...'

'...gave me the confidence and realisation that I could deliver something similar in my organisation...'

### **Understanding Mental Health**

'...it made me think much more deeply about mental health issues. I feel now that I have a greater understanding and will hopefully be more patient when dealing with people with mental health issues..'

'...got me to challenge my own perceptions of mental health illness relating this to my work but also to siblings who suffer mental health issues'

### **City & Guilds 7300 Introduction to Training Skills and is booked on the NOCN Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS)**

'...it has given me the skills needed to be able to plan a training session. This planning in itself was a challenge because it was new to me but it was possible'

## Outcomes

- Volunteer Health Champions have an increased knowledge, and skills about healthier lifestyle choices
- Volunteer Health Champions have an improved knowledge and understanding around mental health and mental health first aid
- Volunteer Health Champions are taking up more opportunities to be more active in their community
- More volunteering opportunities around health have been increased
- Volunteer Health Champions are cascading positive health messages around healthy eating, daily exercise and general healthier lifestyle choices
- Volunteer Co-ordinators from Voluntary and Community Organisations around the city have set up healthy cooking courses for their service users
- Volunteer Health Champions, through a volunteers forum, have had a direct link with shaping the Pilot Project
- Volunteer Health Champions supporting the Health Trainer in the more deprived wards of Exeter
- One Volunteer Health Champions found full time employment within a healthy living environment
- One Volunteer Health Champion took the first stage on a teacher trainer qualification and will be progressing on to stage two – paid for through the project
- Health Champion Project Co-ordinator gave five presentations (Annex 9) to the Volunteer Organiser's Forum, Volunteer Centre's Devon, Exeter University x 2 and Exeter Complex Care Team Voluntary Sector Representatives.

## Outputs and Impact

- Developed systems & protocols for Volunteer Health Champions to engage with project and NHS Devon, alongside a clear induction programme
  - Annex 1 – Best Practice when working alongside volunteers
  - Annex 2 – Volunteer Health Champions Enrolment Form
  - Annex 3 - Volunteer Health Champions Role Description
  - Annex 4 - Volunteer Health Champions Reference
  - Annex 5 – Volunteer Health Champions Reference Letter
  - Annex 6 – Volunteer Health Champions Volunteering Opportunity
  - Annex 7 - Health Champions Confidentiality Agreement
  - Annex 8 – Health Champions Travel Expense Form
- Sixteen Volunteer Health Champions recruited, completed the induction programme including the RSPH Level 2 Award Understanding Health Improvement. All volunteer passed with a Credit
- Four volunteers completed the Cook4Life training. Two volunteers completed Exeter CVS Understanding Mental Health while a further two volunteer's completed Mental Health First Aid training. One volunteer completed the City & Guilds 7300 Introduction to Training Skills and is booked on the NOCN Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS). The latter course will enable the volunteer to gain the minimum requirement needed to start the process of becoming a licensed teacher/trainer in adult education
- Three Volunteer Forum meetings held between NHS Devon, Exeter CVS and the Volunteer Health Champions to ensure the volunteers had a direct link with shaping the project
- Marketed the role of Volunteer Health Champion throughout the city regarding opportunities available to improve awareness, skills & knowledge. Various formats were used; Leaflet (Annex 10), The National Volunteering database, [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk), Exeter CVS website, Volunteer Centre's Devon Website, bi-monthly newsletter, Exchange, Email blast to the wider Voluntary and Community organisations in Exeter, a half page spread in the Express and Echo and word of mouth.
- Signposted Volunteer Health Champions to Voluntary and Community Organisations that link health improvement into their main aims and objectives, such as Westbank, League of Friends – attached to local practices, Headway Devon, EDP Drug and Alcohol Services and Magic Carpet to name but a few

- Supported one volunteer to apply for a grant to Awards for All to buy sports equipment for Priory Ward, particularly Wonford – the volunteer is waiting to hear from the grants body.
- Six volunteers have taken their learning back to their organisations to influence the services they offer to their customers and to improve knowledge and understanding of their staff and volunteers

## Next Steps

What has become increasingly clear, whilst running the Exeter Health Champions Projects, is that locally, regionally and nationally, there are many differing models being used to develop projects around Health Inequalities. Even though I am aware that one model does suit all but a generalised framework and evaluation system to work towards would be extremely beneficial on how to tackle health inequalities in the most deprived wards around the country.

The key component to the future of the project in Exeter is funding which has, unfortunately, not been secured. I highlight this as the project was at a crucial stage of volunteers going out into the community and building up a picture of services that the Health Trainers could link in to. However, solid foundations have been built during the pilot stage which will allow the project to successfully develop and train future Volunteer Health Champions who can address health inequalities in the 6 most deprived wards of Exeter. The Pilot has provided a sound foundation from which Volunteer Health Trainer Champions, if they so wish, are well prepared to move into NHS Health Trainer posts and undertake the full health trainer qualifications.

Exeter CVS will still link and work in partnership with NHS Devon and continue to put forward volunteers wishing to undertake the RSPH Level 2 Award Understanding Health Improvement and will continue to support the Health Trainer initiative.

## Recommendations

To ensure more thorough research of the areas of deprivation, to identify and liaise with existing appropriate services.

To further develop the RSPH Level 2 Award - Understanding Health Improvement training offered to volunteers and to recruit and train appropriately qualified trainers.

For Health Trainers to liaise more closely with the 28 clusters of Complex Care Teams around Devon

Identified NHS staff to be supported to understand the complexities of working with and alongside volunteers.

Volunteer placements to be identified and confirmed prior to volunteer recruitment and training.

RSPH training to be provided to volunteers at shorter intervals, otherwise the enthusiasm, motivation and interest of volunteers will be lost.

Any protocols need to be agreed and put in place prior to the start of any programme

For a project of this type more time needs to be available for the implementation of the project outcomes, specifically, recruitment, training and deployment of volunteers.