

**Building Community
Assets – Community
health champions**

**Sheffield City Council/
NHS Sheffield**

Background Facts:

Sheffield has a population of over 550,000 and about a fifth of the population lives in the most deprived quintile of neighbourhoods. It faces problems such as low life expectancy, high smoking rates and child obesity, and lower breastfeeding levels.

What are you proud of and how has this benefited patients?

Community health champions (CHCs) are volunteers engaged with a variety of services to improve their own health and the health of others in their community through a diverse range of activities. The champions, many of whom recruited from disadvantaged communities or with personal experience of ill-health, draw on their own local knowledge and life experience to motivate people to take part in healthy social activities, establish groups to meet local needs or signpost people to relevant services.

The community health champions are an example of a sustainable programme that is having an impact in some of the city's most disadvantaged communities. Since 2008, 600 voluntary champions have been recruited who are working in 22 voluntary and community organisations and reaching over 10,000 people. The champions are achieving positive results for their own health and wellbeing and for others in their neighbourhoods and networks. The model has seen great success in Sheffield with evaluation reports showing improved outcomes overall, such as:

- Increased confidence,
- Improved self-esteem and self-belief,
- Improvements in health and lifestyle such as people eating healthily, losing weight and becoming more active,
- Better awareness and knowledge of health issues, and
- Improved mental health and wellbeing.

Evaluation of the CHC programme has shown that many individuals move along pathways to education, paid employment and enterprise. A Social Return on Investment assessment has indicated savings of £2.07 for every £1 spent on the programme (without measuring the impact on the people that the champions support).

The evidence from the Sheffield champions programme summarised in the NICE Shared Learning database can be found at <http://bit.ly/1mpcWxL>

To see how the programme has made a difference in Sheffield,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2FOfJNhmos&list=PL490267FA680680C0&index=5>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqUEdbUrFi4&index=10&list=PL490267FA680680C0>

How did you do this?

The Sheffield Community Health Champions Programme started in 2008 with funding from the Big Lottery (Altogether Better). It aimed to promote physical activity, healthy eating and general health and wellbeing, especially in communities with the greatest health inequalities.

At the end of the lottery grant period, Sheffield City Council (SCC) and NHS Sheffield took over the funding of this programme. Since April 2014, funding has come through the SCC as part of the public health grant.

With the help of the initial funding, a voluntary sector consortium was commissioned to run the programme. They contracted with voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, who recruited and hosted the volunteers to become Community Health Champions. Training, supervision and support was provided and each champion undertook to provide 70 to 100 hours of their time over 6 months. The skills and experience that the champions acquired have given many of them the confidence and ability to move into paid employment. This has been particularly notable in the recruitment of Health Trainers in Sheffield.

For more information, please contact Gareth Johnstone, Commissioning Manager at Gareth.Johnstone@sheffield.gcsx.gov.uk

Must do's/top tips

- Work in partnership with organisations rooted in their communities
- Recruit from the communities where you hope to see an impact
- Provide first-class training at the outset and supplement this to meet identified needs throughout the time that CHCs spend with the programme
- Integrate with other staff and volunteers to provide joined-up services
- Monitor and evaluate throughout using recognised and credible agencies such as universities
- Value the volunteers and recognise their potential to be agents of change within their communities