



Circulation list: **Professor John Ashton**
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Allan Buckley
Peter Clarke
Doug Scott
Judith Deft
LINK Governing Body members
Dr Joliffe

16th April 2009

Dear Colleague

Re: Cumbria LINK -Barrow street survey report

The Cumbria LINK was involved in carrying out a street survey in Barrow, asking the local people how they get their health information.

The actual survey, with comments, is attached for your information, and the following proposed recommendations and key points for your consideration were drawn from those findings.

Key points and suggestions from the report

- Generally it was thought that GP's were not there to give out general health information, they were there to deal with the immediate problem and that was all. People appreciated that GP's were very busy people, but seemed uncomfortable with asking for advice as to how to improve their general health. It would seem helpful to have prominent health information stands visible and accessible in GP's surgeries, possibly with promotional information about local health related events. Front line surgery staff should be encouraged to find out what information is available and where to find it, so that patients can be informed correctly.
- The impression was given that people are referred to one of the gyms in Barrow for exercise following a health related incident such as a heart attack etc. It seems that there is a waiting list at this gym so people got fed up waiting to go, and their enthusiasm dwindles. It would be useful if this was investigated, and questions were asked as to why there was a waiting list, and how this could be rectified.
- A couple of ladies pointed out to us that they loved walking but felt afraid to do so on their own. Their health was being affected because they were feeling isolated and frustrated. They felt they could not see some of the lovely countryside around Barrow, or even do some of the lovely walks within the town itself. As 'Walking for Health' already exists at Cumbria CVS, Barrow, it would seem useful to raise this issue with them and look at ways of finding and supporting those local people who would benefit from organised walking with others.
- It was obvious that there were a lot of very young Mums pushing their young children about in pushchairs. When they were asked about

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general health information, their responses were clear. They wanted free exercise in gyms etc. It would seem that, not surprisingly, finance is a problem for these young mums. They felt that exercise in one of the local gyms was a luxury that they would like to be able to afford. Some were put off because they couldn't afford the 'right attire' to be accepted at one of the gyms. One young Mum actually taught dance classes herself, but wanted something she could afford for herself, but couldn't find it in Barrow. There is a need to encourage young mums, who in turn will encourage their youngsters, to lead a more active life. They thought there was a lack of information about any activities that were accessible to young families on a very tight budget.

- Most of the young people spoke about eating unhealthily, and knowing it, but they didn't have any information about what eating unhealthily meant for the long term for themselves or their children. If it was available and affordable, they said they would use a 'healthy café' rather than Macdonald's. It would seem that it is the convenience, the speed and the affordability that attracts them to Macdonald's. There is a need to provide affordable, accessible healthy fast food in Barrow.
- It would seem that generally people in Barrow do not feel that they have useful health information available locally. It was strongly felt that during transfer from Morecambe Bay PCT to NHS Cumbria, Barrow seems to have fallen through the net. They look for information in magazines, the internet and outside their area. Good local health information including where to join in healthy activities locally should be easily accessible to all. Barrow needs a promotional campaign, raising local awareness of how and where to get basic information
- There seems to be a misconception about contraception advice being generally available or easy to access by those who may need it. A couple of young people commented that they had found getting the advice they needed very difficult, and actually getting prescribed contraception even more difficult. Service providers like GPs and pharmacists could look at what information they provide. Also find out what is being delivered in local schools, and consider working together in this area.

As these were key issues raised by people who live in Barrow and who use the present health services, it is felt that their opinions should be taken into account when planning future services. Your comments and thoughts on these issues would be welcomed by the Cumbria LINK.

Yours sincerely

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