

9th April 2014

Report of the Director of Public Health

Maximising the use made of Green and Other Space in Areas to Improve Health and Happiness

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Sunderland TPCT, now the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) released £100k to Area Committees (£20k per area) to support improvement to mental and physical wellness through a combination of approaches aimed at facilitating local people's access to, and use of, local greenspace.
- 1.2 This report seeks to provide background information to support members in considering the future use of that funding in line with determining its Area priorities for the year ahead.

2. Background

- 2.1 Through engagement with Public Health staff, Sunderland TPCT (subsequently CCG) released £100K to Area Committees to consider an approach to improving wellness, mental and physical through a combination of approaches aimed at facilitating local people's access to and use of local greenspace, whether for leisure, pleasure or enjoyment.
- 2.2 The intention was that if in any way elected members could use their local knowledge of areas to influence or commission activity which enabled the five ways to wellbeing for local people, this would have a positive impact on mental wellness and resilience which in turn, over time would contribute to physical wellness and resilience.
- 2.3 There is a huge range of actions which could be undertaken and this paper does not seek to give a complete list, as Area Committee will wish to hear from a range of officers but some examples are to improve amenity green space, enhance provision of facilities, commission surveys to investigate the barriers local people have to using the current facilities and identify what might feasibly attract more people to use current greenspace.

3. Supporting information

- 3.1 It has long been recognised that mental wellness is central to not only our physical wellbeing but also to quality of life, economic success and interdependent with success in improving education, training and employment outcomes. An approach that balances mental health and wellness promotion together with care and treatment is increasingly recognised as the way to maximise benefit to individuals and local communities.
- 3.2 Within and across Sunderland mental health care service delivery has been transformed over the last three years. A significant element of the approach to mental wellness, however, lies within the wider determinants of health and as such is within the remit of the Council and is being addressed through approaches to community resilience and through the influence of elected members as Community Leaders.
- 3.3 One way for Areas to accelerate their approach to improving mental wellness would be to seek more ways locally maximising the use of assets (e.g. green/blue/brown space) to deliver the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. In 2008, the New Economic Foundation developed these novel and evidence based messages which seek to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the entire population, with a happy by-product being improved health and

happiness. The Five Ways were developed to reflect kinds of *behaviour* that people can undertake, and as such, they differ from some traditional public health messages with a negative focus (i.e. messages telling people what *not* to do) and help make the point that mental health is determined in part, but not solely, by factors over which individuals have some control. Members are likely to have heard of the messages over the last three years, as we have been promoting them widely locally, but to refresh memories, we have attached them as **(Item 4 Annex 2)**.

- 3.4 At the same time, a separate but related growing body of evidence suggests that contact with Greenspace creates health (including mental health) benefits, albeit some evidence suggests that lower income urban and suburban areas may have a larger proportion of poor-quality greenspace, which is both inaccessible and aesthetically poor and doesn't create these benefits. Within lower income urban and suburban areas there is recognised poor use and utilisation of greenspace and leisure facilities by those who might most need improved health and wellbeing.
- 3.5 Locally, the key finding of a greenspace audit in 2012 suggests that overall we are well provided for in terms of greenspace provision but not all residents have access to a range of green spaces that would encourage using them and receiving subsequent mental health benefit. In some places there are green spaces that are poorly used due to design and/or location.
- 3.6 A national report looking at inactivity found levels in Sunderland to be very high (the City placing 144/152 local authorities with almost 37% of the population inactive) despite a significantly over average number of leisure facilities per 100,000 population and a comparatively high level of green space (given the index for multiple deprivation locally). We also know from NHS performance indicators that we have comparatively high numbers of adults diagnosed with depression and similarly high numbers of adolescent self harmers, both significant indicators of poor mental health.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 This paper asks Area Committee and its People and Place Boards to give consideration to how, as Community Leaders, they might enhance and facilitate local people engaging in the five ways to wellbeing and to commissioning action. Looking specifically at action around greenspace accessibility, availability, and amenity utilisation and using its £20k share of the £100k as 'seed money' to achieve this.

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Five Ways to Wellbeing

Connect...

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you