

HEALTHY PORTSEA PROJECT

Background

Portsea has been identified as one of the most deprived areas in the City with life expectancy and annual household income well below the city average. The Charles Dickens ward (including Portsea) has the highest proportion of residents suffering from long-term illness (19%) in the city which is likely to be a preventative factor in residents participating in healthy activities. However, this lack of healthy activity obviously is a major contribution to the occurrence of long-term illness. Charles Dickens also has the highest proportion of purpose built flats, no-car households, lone pensioner households and lone parent households. All these factors could contribute to a lack of confidence, time, motivation and space to exercise at home.

In 2004 The University of Portsmouth were commissioned by Portsmouth City Council to conduct a study, the aim of which was to inform the new John Pounds Centre of levels of physical activity in Portsea (including all age groups) and to help identify possible ways of increasing physical activity in Portsea. They had 383 responses to their questionnaire and found that 31.1% had a long-term illness and 22.2% said they had a disability which prevented them from participating in exercise. These figures are slightly different to the ones obtained through the census (above), this could be due to several factors including time differences and the different contexts of the questionnaires. 56% of respondents did not want to make any improvements on their health and fitness.

A questionnaire was distributed in a Portsea Post special edition in March to ask residents what healthy activities they were currently involved in and which activities they would most like to try. The questionnaire was sent out to every household in Portsea, there were 55 responses. The most popular activities for the 50-65's were bowling and dancing and these were the two that respondents also said they would like to be involved in the future. Exercise classes were also a popular choice as something people would like to try.

Project Aims

The aim of the Healthy Portsea Project is to introduce a programme to encourage older people, particularly on the 50-65 year old age group to understand the benefits and health gains of and to participate in regular exercise and activities.

We are aware that people's lifestyle can have a very significant effect upon illness, such as CHD, Diabetes, Stroke, Falls and overall life expectancy and that early intervention can avoid more costly acute interventions at a later stage.

We recognise that these age groups are particularly difficult to engage and that many of the traditional health care messages are not impacting upon them. We intend therefore to employ more innovative and fun ways to engage them and we will engage the support of the local 'champions'. The pilot period will be for three weeks and there will be a written evaluation at the end. We would hope to continue with any of the activities that prove successful, although they will need to become self-sustaining.

Objectives

- To encourage lifestyle change in the target age group towards a healthier way of living.
- To identify which activities are popular/successful and what makes them popular/successful.
- To provide recommendations for development of those activities which are popular/successful.
- To conduct a post-project survey to ascertain whether participants have continued with healthy activities.

Contributory agencies/companies/volunteers

- Portsea residents (in consultation)
- John Pounds Community Trust
- John Pounds Centre staff
- Walk leaders
- Instructors
- Corporate Initiative Community Housing
- Sean Sweeney (Gun Wharf)
- Wheel 2 Wheel Cycles
- La Tasca, Glaxo Smith Kline, Eastney Road Fruit n Flower shop, Nike (prize donators)
- Portsea Action group
- Councillor Margaret Foster
- Tessa Sandall PCT
- Age Concern
- Leisure Service
- Health Development and Improvement Team

The project in action

- A range of activities were arranged at the John Pounds Centre and it was arranged that participants could attend free sessions at St Lukes Leisure Centre.
- The project was publicised through, Portsea Post, Angel Radio, The News.
- There were stands and leaflets available at the John Pounds Centre, the Medical Centre and the local shops.
- The Portsea Action Group had agreed to promote via word of mouth.

Successes

- Line Dancing, Tai Chi and Walks were all successful possibly because they were all established groups and familiar activities.

Line Dancing - is fun, social, requires short bursts of activity with breaks and entertainment in between. It is ideal activity to promote co-ordination, balance and concentration.

Tai Chi – is taught by an established and well respected tutor. The exercise is peaceful, calming and slow and as a result of these characteristics is already popular with this age group. It is also ideal exercise for improving balance, bone density and muscle strength. Its' meditative qualities mean it also has mental health benefits.

Walks – not perceived as exercise and very social as there is a lot of scope for conversation especially if the walk has a theme which can be discussed along the way. The fact that the Healthy Walks project is already established ensured more participants.

Less successful sessions

- Yoga (no attendance) – early evening does not appear to be a popular time. There could also be stigma attached to Yoga and the perception that it requires great flexibility.
- Morning Stretch (1 attendee) – possibly an unfamiliar activity.
- Health Check (6 attendees) – people could be put off by finding out personal health information outside of a medical environment. Also the drop-in set up can be unpopular.
- Table Tennis (2 people booked in but instructor not willing to teach small numbers) - this session suffered a change of time due to the instructor which meant that it was straight after the popular Tai Chi session. People are not willing to do two activities in a row.
- Green Bowls (no attendance) – people not willing to commit to booking.

All activities suffered from a lack of promotion and publicity due to the project changing hands and the time restrictions this created. Also Media and Communications responded to the request for publicity very late on in the project. Please see appendix 1 for attendance tables.

Outcomes

- Successful activities to be continued and publicised in the Portsea Post and other appropriate publications.
- Line dancing will be subsidised, dancers will pay £1.50.
- Tai Chi will be carried on as before. A further session was discussed but this is not possible due to the instructors schedule.
- 30K bid for project to rolled out in other areas of the city.
- 20K bid for information officer to set up website and promote activities in the city.

Recommendations

- To continue publicising activities which are being carried on through Portsea Post and other local media.
- To advertise further for a walk leader in Portsea and to continue advertising existing walks.
- To involve over 50's development worker (will be employed at the John Pounds Centre October 2005) in future meetings/consultation regarding healthy activity in Portsea.

- To consult with Nottingham 'Get Moving Nottingham' scheme who are running a similar project for all residents in Nottingham with special provision for over 50's.

Appendix 1 Attendance tables

Tai Chi	
Date	Number attending
6/6	6
10/6	5
13/6	17
17/6	12
20/6	23
24/6	10
Average number	12.16

Line Dancing	
Date	Number attending
9/6	12
16/6	15
23/6	15
Average number	14

Healthy Walks	
Date	Number attending
10/6	5
17/6	15
24/6	15
26/6	11
Average number	11.5

Health Check	
Date	Number attending
8/6	5
15/6	0
22/6	1
Average number	2

The remaining sessions were either attended by only one or two people or not attended at all.