



Overview of the Healthy City Programme in Swansea

This paper aims to give an outline of developments and work that have been implemented under Swansea's Healthy City Programme. It focuses on the background of the WHO initiative and outlines how Swansea has taken the Programme forward and what the priorities are going forward...

Background

The World Health Organisation's European network of Healthy Cities has been in place for over 25 years and is now in its sixth phase with approximately 100 member cities across Europe.

The European network is founded on the principles of fair health for all and has had health equity at its heart since its inception. There is a clear recognition that the health of the population is largely determined by policies and actions beyond the health sector. The social determinants of health (including education, housing, transport, economic policies, the environment and urban development) have different effects on health at different stages of the life course and can cause disadvantage which starts before birth and accumulates throughout life.

The World Health Commission on the Social Determinants of Health concluded that '*social injustice is killing on a grand scale*', The Marmot Review '*Fair Society Healthy Lives*' showed that people in poorer areas not only die sooner but will also spend more of their shorter lives with a disability. It is clear that what is needed to succeed in improving health and reducing unfair health inequalities is a whole government, systemic action to tackle the social determinants.

Swansea originally received designation from WHO as a member city of the World Health Organisation Healthy City network in September 2010 when it entered Phase V of the Healthy City Programme. In May 2014 Swansea applied for and was successful in being awarded designation to enter Phase VI (2014-2018). The overarching goals of Phase VI are: *'Improving health for all, reducing health inequalities'* and *'Improving leadership and participatory governance for health'*. These goals are underpinned by the core themes: *'life course and empowering people'*, *'tackling the major public health challenges'*, *'strengthening people centred health systems and public health capacity'* and *'creating resilient communities and supportive environments'*.

The Challenges in Swansea

In common with Wales and other parts of the UK life expectancy is increasing together with the overall number of years that people can expect to be in good health. However, this masks an inequality within the Swansea Population that is widening. The *'Measuring Inequalities Report'* showed a 12 year gap in life expectancy for males and a 7 year gap in life expectancy for females between the least and most deprived areas. The gaps for healthy life expectancy and disability free life expectancy were greater at 22.9 years and 17 years respectively for males and 14 years and 13 years for females. Unfortunately these gaps are among the worst in Wales. The gap is well evidenced in the death rates for respiratory and circulatory disease. Two and a half times more people die from smoking attributed causes in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived.

With regard to the Early Years, the Marmot Report highlights the critical importance of investing in the early years and states that *'the foundations for virtually every aspect of human development...are laid in early childhood'*. Locally, in Swansea, data collected in 2012 showed that out of 1,200 primary school children under 3, 75% are not achieving the expected developmental milestones (10-18 month gap) with the majority coming from areas that are not targeted or funded. A local primary school in the East Side of Swansea reported that over 40% of Reception children aged 4-5 had limited speech and 20% were dependent on dummies. Furthermore 25-30% are not toilet trained and 36% are unable to use a toothbrush.

Progress to Date

Swansea has developed a robust governance mechanism to monitor and progress work undertaken by the established Healthy City Work Streams. Each Work Stream reports into the Healthy City Board on a regular rotational and ongoing basis and outlines how each action plan is progressing. Sound working partnerships have been developed between Health, Social Services, the Local Authority and the Third Sector.

Existing Work Streams include:

- Creating an Active and Healthy Swansea Forum
- Tobacco Control Forum
- Swansea Environmental Forum
- Readiness for School Strategy Group
- Older People/Age Friendly/Dementia Friendly Communities
- Community Voices
- Integration Board
- Healthy University Steering Group
- Primary and Community Networks

Key Programmes of work have been successfully progressed under the Healthy City Programme. Information outlining these achievements will follow in due course...

As part of the Healthy City Programme, Bulletins are produced by the Healthy City Communications Group and regularly circulated to partners outlining developments in Swansea and work currently being undertaken. The two most recent newsletters are attached for your information.