

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Report to: Policy & Accountability Committee

Date: 30 March 2021

Subject: Community Champions – working together

Report of: Katharina Herrmann

Responsible Director: Lisa Redfern, Strategic Director Social Care

Summary

The community champion projects have been delivering in H&F since 2013, the maternity champion project started in 2017. Each project has a manager who is responsible for recruiting and training volunteers from the local area who can act as champions, delivering messages of support around healthy lifestyles; changing unhealthy behaviours and improving health and wellbeing of the population.

The Council is working with the champions depth of community experience to promote testing and vaccination, alongside their regular public health messaging.

There are currently six community and one maternity champion projects. Locations are listed in the analysis section.

Recommendations

That the Council continues to work with community champions as a successful method of supporting and communicating with residents in their communities to promote health and well-being.

Wards Affected: All, potentially, but particularly the wards where the projects operate.

H&F Values

| Our Values | Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Priorities |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building shared prosperity | A number of champions move on from volunteering into paid employment. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating a compassionate council | Projects address issues in areas of highest need and deprivation. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doing things with local residents, not to them | Local volunteers work with local people, helping to address health and well-being issues. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being ruthlessly financially efficient | Reduction of problems that can create high expenses for the council, such as children being taken into care. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking pride in H&F | Improves local engagement in deprived parts of the borough. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency | Raise awareness and address solutions such as alternative use of transport, improving health and reducing pollution. |

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DETAILED ANALYSIS

1. The role of community champions is to implement effective and sustainable community-led approaches, particularly in areas of greatest need. They engage with and invest in people to build and strengthen good health and wellbeing for their communities; they build confidence, knowledge, skills and capacity of local people. Community champions work in partnerships with local organisations and agencies to provide volunteering and employment opportunities.
2. The H&F Community Champions projects are based in six areas that experience the highest levels of deprivation, where peer led activities have been shown to have a significantly positive impact upon behaviour change. The six projects are:

- White City (managed by Urban Partnership Group (UPG), based at Parkview)
 - Edward Woods (managed by UPG, based at Edward Woods estate)
 - Addison Champions (managed by UPG)
 - Old Oak (based at Old Oak Centre, managed by Peabody Trust)
 - Bayonne and Field Road Estates (Laundry Rd, managed by H&F Volunteer Centre)
 - West Kensington and Gibbs Green (managed by Pinnacle Housing)
3. Through training, information sharing, signposting, events, consultations and campaigns, Community Champions had over 19,000 resident interactions in 2019 alone. Examples of key community benefits achieved are:
- Reduced impact of food poverty
 - Avoiding an A&E visit or hospital admission
 - Moving from Universal Credit to employment
 - Sustaining tenancies, avoiding eviction, other housing support and assistance
 - Extra support for people who speak no or little English
 - Help avoiding children to be placed in care of local authority
 - Help to avoid someone committing a criminal offence
 - Help to avoid school exclusions
 - Help to take medication correctly
 - Avoiding a mental health crisis
 - Supporting people with learning difficulties or physical disabilities
 - Engaging those who were previously isolated and/or lone
- Additional benefits of the maternity champions project are:
- Breastfeeding levels above national average
 - Improved health literacy about maternal health and baby development
 - Many parents are less isolated, less alienated, develop more social relationships/friendships avoid worse mental health and lower levels of wellbeing
 - Improved confidence and empowerment amongst parents around how to structure their parenting techniques, strategies, and decision-making
 - Increased opportunities for parents and residents in maternity volunteering and training
4. Throughout the Covid Crisis in 2020, projects responded speedily, flexibly, and creatively by moving many activities online – within 3-4 weeks most projects had initiated online activities. The regular sessions modified their content, for example finance and well-being sessions provided practical advice for the pandemic situation. Activities re-focussed on supporting food provision and distribution to low income households where necessary, eg White City.
5. Information on testing and later vaccination for Covid was circulated through the CC networks, council information and messages were distributed that way, but project managers also quickly took their own initiative to organise workshops and online question and answer sessions for their

communities with health care staff. Vaccination information is distributed consistently on a weekly basis, through social media channels - including specific WhatsApp groups for Champions and service users. Updates are also provided weekly during coffee morning sessions.

6. This happened despite some of the trained volunteers temporarily turning into service users, due to their changed circumstances. Recruitment of new volunteers slowed down in 2020, but will be a focus of the recovery.
7. Between 1st April and end of December 2020, the Community and Maternity Champions had approximately 6,430 supportive contacts with local people, many of these involved food provision and advice on how to stay safe. With the help of CCG colleagues, the priority is now shifting to intensive engagement with people who are reluctant to get vaccinated in a co-ordinated attempt to address their concerns. Apart from holding information sessions with experts and distributing the Council and NHS guidance, the community champions have collected and shared an extensive list of reasons why people are concerned through the regular events they hold. This is valuable information. Over 70 champions are currently active, although there are more, some still have to shield due to complications from the pandemic.
8. Council staff (Communications, Community Investment) have provided tools and information to improve the take up of tests and vaccinations, which the community champions are disseminating through their networks. This has resulted in valuable feedback on why parts of the population are reluctant to engage or comply with health advice, helping to identify and address systemic problems that put some groups at a disadvantage.
9. The Community and Maternity champions are networked into other programmes, e.g. PCN link workers, UPG Masbro Centre, Sheltered Housing, Parkview surgery, through their management structure, location, volunteers and contacts. This increases their reach into other communities.
10. Future planned activity: approval is currently being sought to renew and re-tender the Community Champions and Maternity Champions projects, streamlining their funding arrangements and time scales. The work on testing and vaccination promotion will continue until the pandemic abates. Council officers are working with the community and maternity champions on a review of priority outcomes and building upon learning from the pandemic.
11. Having an existing network of community champions put H&F at an advantage regarding messaging communities where English may not be the first language and where levels of hesitancy are high – we were able to quickly and routinely spread positive messages in a range of languages by peers to support the Council's pandemic response.

List of Appendices:

Community Champions outcomes on a page – taken from an independent report completed June 2020.

Link to the [video](#) is here.