

PEOPLE IN PUBLIC HEALTH – PRESS RELEASE

A study of involving lay people in public health roles

The Centre for Health Promotion Research at Leeds Metropolitan University has won a substantial award from the National Institute for Health Research's Service Delivery and Organisation programme to carry out a study of approaches to develop and support lay people in public health roles.

Using the experience and skills of lay people helps fulfil the government's health policy agenda to 'fully engage' communities and individuals in improving public health. To do so effectively we need to understand the different approaches and types of roles so that services can better identify, develop and support people willing to make a contribution to health improvement in local communities.

This exciting and high profile study will use innovative research methods to capture, examine and categorise public health practice in this field of work. The findings of the study will help public health practitioners in the NHS enhance the experiences of lay people taking on public health roles and improve the outcomes for individuals and families who are receiving health information, advice or support in this way.

The research is being carried out in partnership with Bradford and Airedale Teaching Primary Care Trust (tPCT) which supports a range of models of involving lay people in public health roles, from community walking teams to health trainers.

Principal investigator Jane South said "People in their communities and workplaces have a lot to offer by working with the NHS to improve the nation's health. In this study we will look at how people can be best supported when they take on public health roles."

Judy White, Senior Public Health Manager at Bradford and Airedale tPCT said "Many lay people already play an active role in improving the health of their communities. Bradford and Airedale Teaching Primary Care Trust would like to encourage and support this activity and are delighted to be involved in research which will help us find the best way to do this."

Mark Gamsu (Associate Director, Regional Public Health Group) said "This is an important and timely piece of work, the Government is increasingly

concerned to develop ways to improve health services through making services more accountable and accessible to local people – this programme will make an important contribution to this.”

In the first year of the study we will review the literature for the range of roles and types of approaches in current use. We will explore some of the issues further in expert hearings, where we will be able to question a breadth of people experienced in these methods. Phase one will end with site visits to different types of projects in England.

Phase two will involve a small number of case studies of projects involving lay people. We will interview professionals, community members active in the projects and service users.

Notes to editor section:

The National Institute for Health Research provides the framework through which the research staff and research infrastructure of the NHS in England is positioned, maintained and managed as a national research facility.

The NIHR provides the NHS with the support and infrastructure it needs to conduct first-class research funded by the Government and its partners alongside high-quality patient care, education and training. Its aim is to support outstanding individuals (both leaders and collaborators), working in world class facilities (both NHS and university), conducting leading edge research focused on the needs of patients." www.nihr.ac.uk

This press release presents independent research commissioned by the National Institute for Health Research Service Delivery and Organisation Programme. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health.