

## **Holistic Health and Wellbeing**

### ***Working with the Community, in the Community***

#### **Holistic Health Centre: Mental health and Worklessness Action Plan**

##### **Background**

The office of the deputy prime minister<sup>1</sup> identifies the North East as the least healthy area in England overall with higher levels of mortality and significant localisation of particularly poor health in disadvantaged urban and rural areas. The index of multiple deprivation indicate that nearly half the population of Gateshead fall within the top 20% most deprived areas, showing it as among the 88 most deprived local authority areas in England.

Government neighborhood figures for economic deprivation in Gateshead<sup>2</sup> show that 21% of people of working age are claiming key benefits compared to 14% across England. Of the people claiming, 13% of people of working age are claiming incapacity benefit compared to England's average of 7%. This 13% can be further broken down to reveal claimants suffer 41% mental disorders, 5% diseases of the nervous system, 7% diseases of the circulatory system, 20% musculoskeletal diseases, 6% injury or poisoning and 21% for other reasons.

Concentrating on the South of Gateshead, the 'Best Value Services to Neighbourhoods South Implementation Plan' have identified issues and concerns through a baseline assessment of the area and a self assessment covering key neighbourhood issues. The resulting baseline information highlighted that worklessness is a particular issue for the area; where a high proportion of people are shown to be suffering a limiting long term illness and recent benefit claims are significantly higher than the overall Gateshead rate.

The priorities highlighted by the Implementation Plan incorporate, the development of targeted interventions to support residents with complex needs, addressing alcohol, drug and mental health issues in the area; increased provision of health services/facilities in the area to meet local demand and provision of support and training for people receiving benefits to return to work. There are no health facilities on Springwell Estate, Beacon Lough East Estate and Seven Stars Estate resulting in a lot of 'poor health'. This poor health links to worklessness with high numbers of incapacity benefit and disability living allowance. The diverse needs of all people in Gateshead's more deprived communities must be met if the Sustainable Communities Strategy objectives<sup>3</sup> of local people reaching their full potential and enjoying the best quality of life are to be realized. With mental health disorders closely related to worklessness it is evident that tackling this problem holistically is of utmost importance.

These figures and issues give indication of the economic burden associated with health problems facing residents in Gateshead and show the need for appropriate coping strategies to be in place to enable better health management within deprived communities.

In 2005 the Prince of Wales commissioned the Smallwood Report looking at the contribution complementary therapies can potentially make to the delivery of healthcare in the UK. This report

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the deputy prime minister (2003) sustainable communities in the North East – building for the future

<sup>2</sup> [www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk) Gateshead district

<sup>3</sup> Roger Kelly Chief Executive – vision 2030 Gateshead's Sustainable Community Strategy

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examined evidence relating to the effectiveness and associated costs of complementary therapies to assess their ability to meet effectiveness gaps in current provision of health-care by the NHS.

Overall the report identified a large number of patients who saw their general health and wellbeing improve after the introduction of CAM into the package of treatments available. Significant long term benefits of CAM to people with low income and poor health were more marked, with emotional and psychological problems improving along with patient's approaches to lifestyle and looking after their own health. Case studies within the report identified the potential for significant cost savings to the NHS and Department of Health associated to the prevention of illness and the burden of complex and chronic diseases.

In 2003 Newcastle PCT together with Health Action Zone set up a CAM service funded by the NHS in West Newcastle to address local health needs. Although funding was reallocated to other services in 2004 the findings of CAM provision alone show valuable savings in primary and secondary care in conventional medicine "overall GP consultations fell by 31%. Extrapolating this percentage to all patients in the trials would represent a reduction in consultations of 666 per year, with an associated cost saving of £10,000 for the 650 patients in the pilot" (Smallwood 2005<sup>4</sup>).

This assessment of potential savings was also found through research of the Getwell UK project carried out at Laurels Healthy Living Centre in Haringey. GP's involved with the project reported that in cases where progress through conventional medicine had proven difficult or ineffective, CAM intervention had reduced demand on their time. Patients participating in the project reported highly significant improvement in their perceptions of health and wellbeing after CAM treatment, with three quarters experiencing an overall improvement in their symptoms.

Centers such as West End Health Resource<sup>5</sup> and the Search Project<sup>6</sup>, working in the East and West of Newcastle, provide health promoting activities and services for the elderly and people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These centers give residents the opportunity to meet with advisors and discuss many aspects of daily living which may be of concern to them; however the provision of specific holistic health mentoring is not offered as a primary resource for community health education, development and renewal.

Women's Health in South Tyneside (WHIST) has been host to a homeopathic drop-in clinic since 26<sup>th</sup> June 2004. Registered members of WHIST are able to consult qualified homeopaths regarding any personal health concerns and are treated using individualised homeopathic medicine and holistic health advice. Individualised homeopathic medicine uses low-dose/ultra-molecular doses of specially prepared substances. These doses (administered in both tablet and liquid form) are individually prescribed according to the principle of 'like cures like'.

Research since 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007<sup>7</sup> has been routinely auditing the homeopathic work at WHIST using a validated outcome measure<sup>8</sup>. The results of MYMOP<sup>2</sup> research show that patients are reporting clinically significant improvements across a wide range of primary and secondary symptoms. The percentage of patients who experienced improvement is consistently high across symptoms, activities and profile scores; however percentage improvement for wellbeing recorded as much less. This finding indicates that a greater sense of wellbeing is not determined solely by an improvement in symptoms and the ability to engage in important activities. Indicating from a holistic perspective

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<sup>4</sup> Smallwood C. (2005) The role of Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the NHS

<sup>5</sup> [www.westend-health.co.uk](http://www.westend-health.co.uk)

<sup>6</sup> [www.searchproject.co.uk](http://www.searchproject.co.uk)

<sup>7</sup> Wayt S. (2008) WHIST Effectiveness Report – Homeopathic Drop-in Clinic

<sup>8</sup> Paterson C, Britten N. In pursuit of patient-centred outcomes: a qualitative evaluation of MYMOP, Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile. *Journal of Health Services Research & policy* 2000;5:27-36

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that patient's wellbeing is influenced not only by physical, emotional and mental factors, but also by environmental and socio-cultural factors.

The office of the deputy Prime Minister<sup>9</sup> has highlighted a national strategy action plan to narrow the gap between the most deprived areas and the rest, so that within 10-20 years, no one is seriously disadvantaged by where they live. The plan emphasises the importance of integrating health inequalities into the mainstream of service delivery, with a focus on disadvantaged areas and groups.

## **Delivery**

The Holistic Health Centre (HHC) intends to address the mental health priorities and identified worklessness issues within the South of Gateshead by providing a health and wellbeing clinic initially at the Springwell Learning Centre. Individual holistic assessment takes into account the effects of lifestyle, environment and emotional wellbeing on mental health. Patients are given help, advice and complementary therapies to promote engagement with their problem and increase their feeling of wellbeing.

During a consultation at the health and wellbeing clinic, problem areas within the individuals' environment may be identified as maintaining causes and as such are highlighted for further discussion. Through discussion the patient is able to identify their own need which leads to engaging actively with the healing process by setting personally achievable goals. These goals form agreements with the patient as to the appropriate steps needed to aid in rectifying problem areas. This may involve liaising with other health professionals who may prove useful to the case.

Patients are then encouraged to meet at the Learning Centre in educational 'health and wellbeing' groups with others identified as experiencing the same or similar symptoms. Patients will be able to explore their illness safely with their peers to better understand their condition and the trigger factors that could have made them unwell. This education promotes discovery and integration of the knowledge and well tried practices of others suffering with similar long term chronic illness alongside holistic understanding and treatments

No health organisation within the North East offers patients the opportunity to engage in peer group health education alongside CAM therapeutic treatments; indicating that HHC fills a unique niche in creating community cohesion through patient centered health management.

Finding better ways for patients to prevent and manage illness gives the means and hope of contributing to their own healing, not only improving the lives of sufferers but also creating significant social and economic benefit. Being active participants in health care is important to patients where the need is to regain some sense of control over the quality of their care. Thus the Holistic Health Centre promotes the human element which can be difficult to achieve in modern conventional medicine, where it is the disease rather than the patient that is treated.

HHC believes, in line with Community Action on Health (CAH) and Gateshead Strategic Partnership (GSP) that the service it proposes offers a valuable contribution to achieving this aim by working from the grass roots to bring a new sense of community health and ownership among residents in Gateshead's deprived neighbourhoods. This view encompasses some of the key themes set out in the GSP Community Strategy 2004<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 2003 Office of the deputy prime minister – fact sheet 3 health and neighbourhood renewal

<sup>10</sup> Gateshead local area agreement

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- Local people living longer and healthier lives
- Local people who learn throughout their lives and have the life skills to realise their full potential as individuals and active citizens
- Local people supported by a network of care service appropriate to their needs and wishes

HHC's belief in community engagement and development as a vision for the future is congruent with GSP<sup>11</sup> vision as it puts community health interests' first, enabling disadvantage to be overcome and health improved by ensuring that local needs and ideas are paramount in achieving better outcomes for people and places

The Department of Health, Health Inequalities Unit<sup>12</sup> place communities at the heart of improving health if challenges faced are to be tackled effectively'; and, Local Strategic Partnerships<sup>13</sup> highlight that any move toward equal opportunities, promotion of personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion must be sustainable if a strong healthy community is to be ensured.

The Holistic Health Centre provides a vehicle for considering and deciding how to address difficult cross cutting health issues by building community vision in an integrated way as the heart of creating sustainable development at the local level

## **Experience**

In my 8 years experience of providing varying types of social support I have found that the interaction of carefully thought out coping behaviours, within confiding relationships, promotes social solidarity and helps bolster self esteem, giving a sense of certainty and purpose to an individuals' social identity.

I began exploring the term 'healthy', and the different ways of helping others achieve their own optimal quality of life, in 1998. The courses I attended, while continually reinforcing anatomy and physiology training also highlighted the importance of environmental factors which serve as further obstacles towards an individual achieving balanced health.

It became obvious to me over time that regardless of an individual's disease; if their ability to cope within their environment is compromised then a healthy physiological or psychological response is often limited. As the central importance of my training moved ever closer to embracing individual cases holistically; I could see that a successful consultation with another about their health incorporated not only the therapeutic effect of having someone to confide in, but also the encouragement to practice new ways of living within ones environment.

I feel that my experience of this type of social support will inform, enhance and develop my participation in the Holistic Health Centre; as it brings the effectiveness of the therapeutic setting into the more immediately meaningful aspects of peoples' lives.

Whilst attending Durham University I had the opportunity to better understand the effects of social support within educational settings. My final year research confirmed that social support networks are fundamental to an individuals' ability to function within society. And that such support helps redress the balance between needs and resources, thereby altering the consequences of an individuals' failure to meet environmental demand.

As a mentor and a coordinator of Durham University's Human Sciences Mentoring Scheme, I had the opportunity to be part of the continual feedback occurring between what Helman (2001<sup>14</sup>)

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<sup>11</sup> Newsletter for Gateshead strategic partnership Jan 06 – Local strategic partnerships – shaping their future

<sup>12</sup> feb 2007 DH/Health Inequalities Unit – Communities for health: learning from the pilots

<sup>13</sup> communities and local government – planning together – local strategic partnerships (LSPs) and spatial planning: a practical guide January 2007

<sup>14</sup> Helman C. (2001) Culture Health and Illness, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. London:Arnold

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classes as the 'social body' of the person and their environment. This continual feedback provided a framework for perceiving and interpreting physical and psychological experiences thus alleviating the affects of what Durkheim classes 'Anomie Theory' which "refers to that feeling of isolation which is caused by inability to believe in, or live up to, the values of society" (Eriksen, 2001:62<sup>15</sup>).

My learning experiences with individual clients continue to shown me that alleviation of physiological and psychological illness is inextricably linked to environmental factors. Holistically a therapy such as homeopathy realises that along with a well chosen remedy, the assessment of possible environmental maintaining causes within individual cases must be made if healthy functioning is to be reached.

My consultation style is fluid and in a constantly adaptable state to reflect the dynamic nature of the patient-therapist relationship. Flexibility is necessary to incorporate re-evaluation and reflection with each patient on perceived successes and failures and also in order to assess patients presenting with a new set of circumstance surrounding an often common disease. This broadens my understanding and confirms diagnosis that the idiosyncrasies present in each case are integral to the help that is required.

## **Outcome**

The focus of consultation is on the long term goal of having clients function independently of the therapist. This is achieved through the integration of agreed problem solving techniques into patients' lives which continue to apply when the therapist is no longer present.

The Holistic Health Centre focuses on education by forming social support networks that enable individuals to concentrate on what they are able to achieve regardless of illness rather than on what they are not. It is a diverse discipline which can be utilised in mental health issues through each case being individually assessed according to their own environmental demands.

Uppermost in the Health and Wellbeing Centre's practice is patients' education towards independent functional performance. This enables a patient's confidence to grow as they explore new manageable ways of getting the most from their lives. The realisation of independent function involves a client centred perspective taking into account physical, emotional/mental and spiritual needs to promote wellbeing and quality of life within an individuals' environment.

The Holistic Health Centre involves assessment and review of practices as an ongoing part of treatment therefore ensuring its effectiveness. This assessment may take place in any setting relevant to the clients needs and may involve any age group.

It is hoped that the Holistic Health Centre will be an important link in a network of social support put in place to aid the patient in responding to their environment. The motivation is to identify areas of weakness and to assess with patients the best way to alleviate that weakness. This may incorporate areas of reduced function associated with domestic activities, personal care, leisure, work etc. and may involve other professionals with the case management.

The main reward for the Holistic Health Centre is to see patients able to cope with any disease they may have by responding independently to their environmental demands using techniques which promote a more holistic understanding of health.

Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning the Holistic Health Centre, which aims to deliver a sustainable, innovative and productive service promoting social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal wellbeing in a way that enhances the social and economic environment.

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<sup>15</sup> Eriksen T.H. (2001) *Small Places, Large Issues*, an introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, London:Stirling

**Personal Note**

My blossoming understanding of health has brought me into contact with many patients whom I have thoroughly enjoyed working with. I have come to realise over time that each patient has brought me a little further along a path of understanding my own as well as their health. The reward of helping another towards a better quality of life fills me with great desire to share my knowledge with others who may need it.

In my quest for better health for myself and my children I have encountered many challenges which have served to open my mind to how intricately the human spirit and the human body are linked to the environment in which they reside. The ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle is not dependant upon remaining free from disease but is ultimately linked to the ability to function independently regardless of that disease.

I see the Holistic Health Centre as a way to develop my own belief about what can be achieved within society as well as a way to develop that of my patients', as "seeing through the illusion created by fantasy triggers processes of self-expression and transformation, and allows the imaginative power to unlock new ways of being" (Raff 2000:51<sup>16</sup>).

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<sup>16</sup> Raff J. (2000) *Jung and the Alchemical Imagination* USA:Hayes