

Public Debates and a Public Conversation – a proposal

Introduction

1. Staffordshire is facing some key challenges in relation to excess weight and obesity. Whilst national trends in obesity have been flattening out over recent years, the problem remains significant and Staffordshire is performing poorly on both a national scale and in relation to other comparators.
2. Areas of concern include:
 - a. Excess weight in 4-5 year olds (especially in East Staffordshire and Staffordshire Moorlands).
 - b. Excess weight in adults (in all districts except Lichfield and Staffordshire Moorlands).
 - c. Obesity in adults
 - d. Physically inactive adults (especially in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Cannock Chase).
3. Evidence suggests that the best way to approach excess weight and obesity is through a whole-system / societal approach
4. A whole system approach will include addressing the obesogenic environment and understanding and optimising public attitudes
5. Support from a wide range of partners, including local people and communities, is critical.

Proposal

6. The Health and Wellbeing Board informs and develops strategic leadership around the obesity agenda, by engaging with the public.
7. An obesity conversation will inform this strategic leadership
8. The conversation will be framed in the context of promoting individual responsibility and exploring how the public sector can support a shift toward increased public responsibility, by recognising structural and attitudinal barriers to change, the opportunity to support self-help (e.g. people helping people, Information, Advice and Guidance) and to optimise the use of existing resource across sectors.
9. **Aim:** To engage in a wider debate with public on the issue of obesity.
10. **Objectives:**
 - a. To raise awareness of the key messages around obesity with regard to individual responsibility for health
 - b. To create dialogue around tough or controversial questions relating to the obesity agenda

- c. To further inform the wider strategic agenda and coordination of activity to tackle obesity

Process

11. A '6 month conversation' with the public between January to June 2017
12. The conversation will include:
 - a. Ongoing Media and Social Media contact with the Public
 - b. A public debate event in February 2017
 - c. A stakeholder event to follow the Public Debate
13. The conversation will explore:
 - a. Public perceptions and attitudes
 - b. What individuals can do
 - c. What support the public needs to tackle obesity
 - d. Ongoing Media and Social Media contact with the Public
 - e. A public debate event in February 2017
 - f. A stakeholder event to follow the Public Debate
14. We will run the first public debate in the new year with a focus on Obesity
15. An information pack will be provided on the day to help inform the debate
16. The Public Debates will be in a debate style, with a speaker for and against a discussion topic that is designed to generate debate. A suggestion for first discussion topic is "Obese people should not receive Healthcare". Each speaker will have 5 minutes to put their case, then 5 minutes each for each other to come back to the other. This will then be put to the floor in a Question Time format. It is proposed that the debates will last 60 minutes.
17. The debates would be run in a theatre type venue, e.g. Stafford Gatehouse, the Brewhouse in Burton but will also need to maximise engagement with the public, via media and social media.
18. The purpose would be to open up the discussion about health and wellbeing and personal responsibility.
19. Outputs from public debate and the public interactions will inform a multi-agency stakeholder event. The purpose of which, would be to:
 - a. Be the culmination of the 'conversation'.
 - b. Share key messages derived from the public
 - c. Identify key priorities for Staffordshire to take forward
 - d. Seek organisational commitment to tackle Obesity through strategy, policy, commissioning or front line support

Dependencies

20. Communications support

- a. Awareness raising using traditional media (including local radio) around the key messages (post Xmas)
- b. Creating dialogue via social media, (Face book Twitter) and traditional media to lead in to and inform the event(s).

21. All Partners

- a. a commitment from all HWBB partners to support this initiative actively

22. Healthwatch

- a. to engage and support direct Public interaction - A conversation with the public around the Stoke and Staffordshire STP and potential impacts on Health and care services is already in train:

<http://healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk/convostaffs-stoke/>

Summary

23. The Board is asked to endorse this approach

24. The Board is asked to support actively the development of the Public Conversation and Debate format

25. The Board is asked to comment on this proposal.