

Increasing the number of people in the east of England who follow the healthy lifestyle behaviours of:

- Not smoking
- Drinking alcohol within the recommended daily limits
- Being physically active
- Eating a healthy and balanced diet

The context in the east of England

- 19% of adults drink more than the recommended daily limits
- 19% of adults smoke
- 73% of adults don't eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- 25% of adults are obese
- 66% of adults do less than the recommended amount of physical activity
- Only 13% follow all four of the healthy lifestyle behaviours

Pilot: Delivering lifestyle advice to Health Check attendees

The pilot project took place across two locations within the region and used NHS Health Checks as the contact point to deliver brief lifestyle advice, and offer onward referral and signposting. In NHS Bedfordshire, brief advice was provided during the health check and referrals made directly to behaviour intervention services. An online directory of services, the 'Improve my Lifestyle' website, was produced as an information source for both healthcare professionals and patients. An outreach team in Bedfordshire (set up to deliver NHS Health Checks and other services in hard to reach communities with the aim of reducing health inequalities) was also involved in the improving healthy lifestyles pilot.

In NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney health professionals delivered brief advice and referred patients to a Health Trainer, who provided further lifestyle advice and discussed options with the patient.

Within both PCTs, smokers were referred directly to the local stop smoking service at the time of the health check.



Key Findings

- The health check is a good opportunity to deliver brief lifestyle behaviour advice to patients, with 72% of patients recalling that they were given brief advice about at least one of the healthy lifestyle behaviours three months afterwards
- Brief advice given to patients at the time of the Health Check appears to be effective in resulting in a (self reported) behaviour change. Over half of patients offered advice in changing a lifestyle behaviour, excluding those advised with regards to smoking, reported a positive impact as a result (17% reported to have given up smoking)
- Positive behaviour changes were also reported by the majority of patients who attended referral appointments following their health check. However, the number of patients attending referred services was low

"Well the Health Check has improved my lifestyle because since I stopped doing certain things I've felt a lot better, I'm more active, everything worked out fine for me."

Patient, NHS Bedfordshire

Conclusions & Future Working

Most frontline and management staff involved with the planning and delivery of the 'Improving Healthy Lifestyles' pilot believed that the programme should be continued, however, as expected, the pilot highlighted areas where improvements could be made:

Clear communication of the aims of the programme and the different pathways

It is vital that frontline staff see referrals as a key part of the Health Check process and understand the referral pathway. Some patients are unsure of what service they are being referred to and what it entails, potentially making some less likely to take up their referral.

Data and best practice sharing

Communicating outcomes is very important both for staff morale and for tracking patients through the system.

Recording data

A balance needs to be achieved to keep frontline staff engaged and motivated whilst still recording the essential information that will allow patients to be tracked through the system.

Increasing uptake

Uptake of follow-on services among patients tends to be low. It is worth considering whether there are any levers that can be pulled to increase uptake, as the results are clearly positive when patients attend. Clearer communication about the aims of the programme might help with this.

"They like the idea that they have been called for a check to see if they're all right rather than wait until there is something wrong. And they like the fact that they are having a very thorough check from our healthcare assistants and they do feel that it's quite worthwhile."

Staff, NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney

The Programme

As well as the Health Check pilot the Healthy Lifestyles QIPP work stream also includes work to:

- Deliver sustained messaging on tobacco control
- Provide co-ordination and leadership for local tobacco networks
- Review alcohol improvement funded programmes identifying and disseminating learning and good practice

For more information:

See the full summary report at:
www.qippeast.nhs.uk

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