



Briefing 09/16 March 2009

Five year review of “Let's make Scotland more active” - A strategy for physical activity

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and Email Contacts (Scotland)

CC: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)

A report by NHS Health Scotland

Key issues

Report back of the twenty year plan previously implemented

Listing of the key developments since 2003

Essential strategy to influence Scotland's inactive population

1. Introduction

There are many ways in which people can be active through exercise, sport, play, dance as well as living active lives. Adults should accumulate or build up 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity on most days of the week and children should accumulate at least one hour daily.

However, physical inactivity remains one of Scotland's major public health issues. Despite strong scientific evidence that meeting these recommendations can protect against many of Scotland's leading chronic diseases and promote positive mental health and well being, two thirds of Scottish adults and one third of Scottish children are failing to meet the recommendations.

Let's make Scotland more active (LMSMA) was published in 2003. This strategy is a 20 year plan and set targets to achieve 50% of all adults aged over 16 and 80% of all children aged 16 and under meeting the minimum recommended levels of physical activity by 2022. As the Scottish Government has a separate strategy for sport, LMSMA focuses on all other components of physical activity.

The review group carried out a full overview of how LMSMA had been implemented in the past five years. A key strand of the review group was to engage with a huge number and variety of delivery agencies and also with the wider physical activity workforce, e.g. Active-Schools coordinators and health promotion workers and those who had a more indirect role. The purpose of the review's engagement was to gather and assess views on what has been successful, what have been the key challenges and what the future policies should be.

LMSMA remains an essential strategy to influence Scotland's inactive population. This review has found no evidence to suggest that the strategy should be substantially revised. In addition, Scotland remains in line with physical activity guidelines issued by WHO and the EU. The review highlighted a number of key areas where action can be strengthened to maximise the drive to get more of Scotland's population more active.

Interventions that enhance the built environment can impact on large sections of the population. There is good recent evidence linking environments to physical activity (e.g. Foresight report on obesity). The review group believes the creation and provision of environments that encourage and support physical activity offers the greatest potential to get the nation active. The review group believe that given the importance of physical activity across public health concerns, perhaps now there should be targets/outcomes within the National Performance Framework and/ or NHS HEAT targets.

APSE believes that the continued commitment to physical activity across a range of government policies has been positive especially within the first five years of LMSMA. The Government needs to ensure physical activity continues to be a vital component of its public health work and also continues to be integrated into all relevant and related policy, e.g. education, environment, sports and transport. LMSMA should be

underpinned by a research, monitoring and evaluation plan. This should help to strengthen the understanding of whether physical activity programmes are engaging with people who are inactive, and to identify more effective approaches that increase physical activity.

The Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and a variety of other national and local agencies fund a wide variety of programmes designed to promote and support physical activity. However, the commissioning process, performance management arrangements and support offered have not been consistent across these programmes. It was for this reason that the Scottish Government commissioned SPARColl (Scottish Physical Activity Research Collaboration) to develop separate frameworks to guide the planning/commissioning of physical activity programmes and the monitoring/evaluation of funded programmes.

2. Strategic Objectives

LMSMA strategic objectives and values include:

- To develop and maintain long lasting high quality physical environments to support inactive people to become more active
- To provide accurate and evidence based advice to staff who are involved in Government policy and service delivery and who work in the voluntary and private sectors
- To raise awareness and develop knowledge and understanding about the benefits of physical activity and provide access to information
- To carry out research, monitoring and evaluation

This strategy was underpinned by five core values:

- Long lasting structures and programmes of work
- Equal opportunities and access, regardless of age, sex, social class etc
- Working in partnership and sharing responsibilities
- High quality development influenced by evidence where it exists and experimentation and research where it does not
- Gives equal value to social and emotional outcomes as well as the physical health benefits

Other key findings in relation to national infrastructures have found good progress in:

- National infrastructure for physical activity has helped facilitate cross sector/partnership working
- Policy commitment remained high since LMSMA and there has been increased national funding allocated for physical activity
- Dedicated capacity in place to support LMSMA across a range of national organisations
- Good progress in Community Planning Partnerships with 24 authorities (out of 32 in Scotland) known to have a strategy for physical activity and the vast majority have been developed since LMSMA was published
- General thrust of the strategies on the vision of LMSMA have been developed in partnership

3. Conclusion and APSE comment

There is good evidence of positive action underway to address all the recommendations proposed in the LMSMA. The achievements so far have included progress with implementation, supporting policy, development of local physical activity strategies, increasing opportunities for physical activity and a national infrastructure to support implementation.

APSE would hope that there is a continuation of LMSMA which remains an essential strategy to influence Scotland's inactive population. Scotland also remains in line with physical activity guidelines issued by WHO and the EU.

Whilst APSE agrees with the ethos behind LMSMA, we also share the belief that the creation and adaptation of environments that encourage and support physical activity offers the greatest potential to get the nation active. Interventions that enhance the built environment can impact on large sections of the population. APSE accepts that there is good evidence linking environments to physical activity e.g. Foresight report on obesity and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE).

Given the importance of physical activity across public health concerns, APSE believes that explicit physical activity targets and outcomes should be included within the NPF and /or NHS HEAT targets. Performance targets are intended as drivers to stretch improvement in the system, in areas of high priority and to shift the investment of public resources.

APSE believes that local authorities should be recognised as the most important delivery agency for physical activity and should lead local coordination and delivery. Local authorities have responsibility for the key services that directly impact on physical activity and are the lead authority in community planning.

Whilst the commitment to physical activity across a range of policies have been positive in the first five years of LMSMA, APSE believes that the Government needs to ensure that physical activity continues to be a vital component of its public health work and also continues to be integrated into all relevant and related policy.

APSE would welcome any comments on this, which should be sent to ptaggart@apse.org.uk

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