

Response to Consultation on Making Edinburgh Healthier South Edinburgh Public and Patient Forum – July 2008

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this discussion paper, Making Edinburgh Healthier. We are a group interested in all aspects of health. We are from south Edinburgh and from varied backgrounds.

In general we welcome the approach to health matters suggested in this document but we found the paper itself quite convoluted and perhaps unnecessarily complex.

Turning to the detail of the paper:

Health Inequalities Standing Group

Para 1.4

The HISG does not contain any representation from the south Edinburgh PPF since the CHP “suspended” it last December. Any references to representation from PPFs throughout the paper means only the north Edinburgh PPF – so PPF views from half the city are missing.

Key questions

Through the consultation process we will be seeking views on key questions. The first of these are:

- Do you agree with the proposed vision of the plan? (paragraph 1.3 above)
- Do you agree with the proposal to focus joint action in 2008-2011 on a reduced number of themes? (paragraph 1.5 above)
- If you disagree, please say why.
- Do you agree that the 4 selected themes (food and health, physical activity, social capital, and health environments) are the right ones to focus on?
- If you disagree, which other themes would you recommend and why?

We agree with the proposed vision, but we saw its drawback as being that it may be too wide-ranging to be meaningful. On the 4 selected themes, whilst we agree that it is sensible to concentrate on fewer we found it difficult to grasp exactly what is meant by “social capital” and even more difficult to envisage how improvements would be measured and encouraged.

2. Health Improvement and Health inequalities in Edinburgh

3. Making a Difference in Edinburgh

Key questions:

- Do you agree with the food and health actions and outcomes proposed?
- If you disagree, what actions and outcomes would you recommend?

Broadly speaking we agree with the health actions and outcomes proposed, but we would add some specific actions. For example on obesity, we need to show that we “practise what we preach” to those who receive advice, by having staff of moderate weight dispense the advice. If NHS staff require help to control weight (like the rest of us!) then that must be offered to them. It might even encourage those staff who need support to know that many of us are in the same position and it is not all about being “bad” at choosing the correct diet. In the same way it would be helpful if the local authority could make sure that there are local shops which provide good quality fruit and vegetables and fish shops or vans which visit local districts at least once a week.

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Also on a practical note we suggest it would be beneficial to remove soft drinks machines from schools and to replace them with drinking water. If the JHIG has any influence on the franchises in hospitals, it would be helpful to restrict fast food outlets.

We noted that nowhere in the document did there seem to be any mention of “growing your own”. Providing more allotments throughout the city would be a healthy option, encouraging physical activity, getting children out into the open air and having good healthy produce at the end of it – to say nothing of the social benefits derived from mixing with all types of people.

We noted that there did not seem to be a section in this part of the paper to do with *education*. We suggest that there needs to be clear integrated messages in nurseries, schools, GP surgeries and in various community settings to show how healthier outcomes can be achieved for all sectors of the population.

We welcome the Scottish Government’s new legislation which will ensure healthier meals firstly for primary age children and soon for secondary children. It may also be helpful to restrict the movements of children at lunchtime from leaving school premises to seek fast food – although we recognize this is likely to prove difficult.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Why this theme is important

Key questions:

- Do you agree with the physical activity actions and outcomes proposed?
- If you disagree, what actions and outcomes would you recommend?

We agree with the thrust of the actions, but would suggest they may not always go far enough. We suggest:

- not downgrading the facilities at Meadowbank;
- reinstating cycling proficiency training in all primary schools;
- encouraging schools to do more than the minimum 2 hours of PE per week;
- promoting (appropriate) sport among all age groups.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Why this theme is important

Key questions:

- Do you agree with the social capital actions and outcomes proposed?
- If you disagree, what actions and outcomes would you recommend?

As previously mentioned we had some difficulty with understanding how the aspirations would be met. Information can be provided but actually making communities connect cannot be forced. We did think

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that if there is funding available to organizations to cover the aspirations then that needs to be made easily available.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS *Why this theme is important*

Key questions:

- Do you agree with the **healthy environment** actions and outcomes proposed?
- If you disagree, what actions and outcomes would you recommend?
- **Plan period 2008-2011** - Is the plan period realistic to make a difference in health inequalities?
- **Measuring performance** - Are the proposed targets and outcomes the right ones to measure a difference in health inequalities?

We noted that missing from the 6 areas for action was any specific mention of how to deal with hazardous chemicals and other toxic substances, including the way that plastics are used and how they should be properly and carefully disposed of.

On air quality, we suggest that there is a scientific advisor as well as (or instead of) a health professional on the Council's Air Quality Working Group.

We also suggest that it would be helpful to discourage or even prohibit any further building (commercial or residential) on flood plains in and around the city. It has also been observed that it would be extremely beneficial if there was a regular programme of cleaning of gulleys each year. It seems that quite a few areas in Edinburgh suffer flooding because of blocked storm drains.

We supported the suggestion that more solar energy schemes could be encouraged – with grant assistance if needed - and other alternative energy sources. The local authority can also encourage walking and cycling and perhaps a more aggressive public transport and less private transport policy within the city boundaries. This would help the general population be healthier.

In paragraph 3.58, we suggest adding one other strategic outcome along the lines of “to make careful assessments of environmental risks within the workplace”.

Pollution by manufacture and disposal of substances should be minimized – the whole eco-system may be affected by the policies we adopt now.

Our only comment on the measuring of performance was simply that climate change would be difficult to measure even by local carbon foot-printing. The whole methodology of measuring carbon foot-printing is still not well understood, nor does it seem to be widely agreed.

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