Altogether Better
Patient voice and power in the new NHS
5th November 2013
The King’s Fund, London
Alyson McGregor
Altogether Better have developed an award winning, evidenced based approach to engaging communities – Community Health Champions

Our ambition is to unlock the potential within communities to improve health and wellbeing

And........using a whole system approach we create the conditions for a new relationship between citizens and services
Altogether Better have worked with more than 18,000 volunteer community health champions who have supported more than 100,000 people in their communities to live better.

And the numbers continue to grow........
“Community Health Champions are people who voluntarily bring their life experience and their ability to relate to people to promote health in different communities.”
COMMUNITY HEALTH CHAMPIONS

THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CHAMPION APPROACH

TRAINING
Building knowledge, awareness and confidence

PATHWAYS
To education, employment and enterprise

ENGAGING AND RECRUITING
Individuals and employers

VOLUNTEERING
Supporting CHCs to influence their families, friends and neighbours

altogther better

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The National Lottery
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South West Yorkshire Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

With all of us in mind
EMPOWERMENT MODEL

Empowerment = Healthier Choices = Healthier Outcomes
What's special about Altogether Better?

• Gives a VOICE to CHCs – a national platform to tell their stories
• Strength in numbers
• Building and sharing the evidence base
• Making the case
• Connecting politicians, policy makers, decision makers with people in communities
What have we learnt about citizen voice and power?

- Empowering citizens gives people VOICE

- Strength in numbers

- Voice means little if no one is LISTENING

- We want to be in RELATIONSHIP with people

- We need to create the conditions to change the relationship between citizens and services

FACTFILE

NAME
Lisa Cox

ALTOGETHER BETTER PROJECT
Sheffield Community Health Champions Network

WHAT SHE DID
Overcame self-harming and depression, triggered by traumatic memories of being abused as a child. Formed the TGJ Friday support group for women and began volunteering on various health projects for older people. Trained as a Community Health Champion for Sheffield. Well-being consultant, gained accredited group leader qualifications. Gained a part-time job with Gleadless Valley Community Forum, represented health champions by presenting at national conferences, leading workshops and contributing to advisory groups.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DID SHE MAKE?
Lisa recruited and supported 4 other Health Champions at Gleadless Valley as well as volunteering herself. The Champions worked with over 700 people, many of them elderly, for over 1,500 hours of volunteering - Lisa herself contributing over 1,000 hours.

ABOUT THE PROJECT
Sheffield Community Health Champions Network recruits and supports local volunteers to use their knowledge and experience to improve the health and well-being of their communities. Delivered by 29 host organisations, the project is empowering Community Health Champions to share their skills where they are needed most. Gleadless Valley Community Forum was set up by local people to give a voice to their community. It aims to build the capacity of the community working with local people to overcome barriers to social and economic exclusion and to take the lead in local regeneration.

“IT’S BEEN AN AMAZING FEW YEARS. THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CHAMPIONS, THE FORUM, MY GP - I OWE THEM MY LIFE”
Better co-design/co-production involving local people and communities and service providers, is essential if we want to create an enabling environment for active citizen engagement.
Champions’ passion makes Practice perfect

Singing workshops for people with dementia and social groups for mums might not be the kind of thing most people would associate with the family doctor.

But thanks to a joint initiative with Alotgether Better, three GP practices in Leeds are going well beyond their traditional role of providing hospital referrals and prescriptions.

All three surgeries are training Practice-based Health Champions to support staff to develop services, information and opportunities that meet the wider health needs of local people and patients.

At the Robin Lane Medical Centre in Pudsey, the project launched last year, as part of a ‘re-imaging’ of services.

Practice manager, Sam Forbes, explained: “General Practice is still seen as an urgent care service. But if you change the focus from health to well-being, it has the potential to be so much more.”

Impact on health

Well-being, he says, encompasses the large number of physical, mental, social, financial and community factors that have an impact on health.

“It’s about looking at the wider determinants of health,” he said. “If you haven’t got any reason to get out of bed, where’s the motivation to take your medication? By getting patients and the wider community involved as Champions, we can tap into their ideas and experience much more.”

The practice’s champions project is based around its new Well-being Centre and is open to everyone in the local community, whether they are registered at the surgery or not. It has already brought new, much-needed services previously lacking in the area.

A ‘Singing for the Brain Group’, launched in conjunction with the Alzheimer’s Society, uses singing to bring people with dementia together with their carers in a friendly and stimulating social environment.

Responding to a need

Pudsey has one of the highest rates of dementia in Leeds,” said Sam. “The group was set up in response to that need by the Champions together with the practice matron. One of the volunteers had seen a similar group in another part of the region and wanted to do something here.

“The way singing activates the brain and provides a social activity is amazing. It shows that there’s still something for these patients in their lives. It’s very moving.”

A Mum’s group has also been set up in response to local need.

“There was a need for a group where mums could just come along, support each other and build friendships,” said Sam. “The Champions set it up and now around 30 mums and their kids come every Tuesday.”

40 volunteers trained

With 40 volunteers already trained and another 60 waiting to take part, the Champions project has far exceeded its initial remit.

“It’s changed the face of the Well-being Centre and the Medical Centre,” said Sam.

“Of the reasons it’s been so successful is that it has become a whole movement. Friendships have been made and the passion and drive the volunteers have for their community is quite extraordinary.”

With Champions now sitting on the project’s steering group, they are taking more and more control of activities, such as the Practice’s Christmas Fair.

“They came up with the idea and got local businesses to support it,” said Sam. “Seven hundred people came through the doors in four hours.

“It shows that the project no longer needs the practice to keep pushing it. And we’re only at the beginning. The potential is huge.”

Play time: The mums’ group have fun at the Robin Lane medical centre

‘It’s about looking at the wider determinants of health’
ED Champions
Leeds Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust