



## Introduction

Equal People is an involvement group. South Tyneside Learning Disabilities Partnership Board asked the group to: -

- gather the views of adults with learning disabilities living in South Tyneside around staying healthy and well
- identify the barriers for people with learning disabilities on staying healthy and well
- use this information to make recommendations that would improve health outcomes for all adults with learning disabilities living in South Tyneside

Four group members (Paula Lawson, Peter Gardiner, David Taylor and Rochelle Stewart) supported by Carole Watson (Involvement Worker), designed a short questionnaire. This questionnaire was completed by 100 adults with learning disabilities from: -

South Shields Central Library (Day Opportunities)

Redesign 4 You

Activities Group

Young people at Keelman's School

Harton Action Stations and Remploy

MISTAS (Men in South Tyneside) - Self Advocacy Group

Equal People, Talk 2 Us and Ladybirds members

Tenants at Simonside Court

Jarrow Community Association

PRS

Ocean Road Community Association

Perth Green Base

People attending the Thursday evening group at Jarrow Community Centre



Pictures were used to promote discussion.

### What did we find out?



- Most people did not understand the meaning of “self care”. One person said it was about being happy – and one person said it was about helping others. The majority believed it was about hygiene.
- Only 5 out of 100 said they smoked .... and only 42 out of a 100 said they drank alcohol – mostly “on special occasions”.
- People had good access to dentists, opticians or an annual health check. 85 out of 100 said they attended regular check ups for these 3 services.
- People only accessed regular exercise (eg walking, swimming, cycling, zumba, gardening or attending a gym or sports centre) if they attended a day service.

- Most people said they only ate take away food once a week. 72 out of a 100 said this.
- People rely heavily on staff /carer support for the diet at home or putting together a lunchbox during the week.
- People largely spent time at weekends with family or catching up with household chores.
- People didn't see friends at weekends. One person said "I only see friends at weekends if they are at respite with me...."
- Most people said they sometimes felt down or depressed. 82 out of a hundred said this. 5 people out of 100 said they missed relatives who had passed away. One person said "When my husband is depressed, it affects me..."
- People said the barriers to staying healthy and well were: -
  - being bored or depressed at weekends ..... not having anywhere to go (or knowing what is available)
  - not enough support staff available to access sport facilities or go out at evenings and weekends – due to staff rotas, etc.
  - not having "easy read" information on diet and exercise

## Why is it important to stay healthy and well?



"It makes you feel better ...."

"You don't get depressed about life."

"So you don't hurt yourself ..."

"It makes you more independent ..... when you wash yourself and keep yourself clean."

"Keeping clean makes you smell nice."

"It helps my mam...."

"I like to change my clothes and decide what to wear .... it makes me feel confident, like I'm making a choice....."

"Exercise is important .... it stops you getting overweight"

"You can do more things if you're fit and well ..."

"You don't want to end up diabetic...."

"Everyone should look after themselves ..... some people might need support but some people could do more to help themselves."

"It's important that carers know if you're unwell .... and that they take you to the doctor."

## How could council services help you stay healthy and well?



“People need to go out MORE at weekends ..... the council should set up more activities at weekends. We need to know what’s on...”

“I’m frightened of swimming ..... I need more support to learn.”

“There’s not enough staff available to help people go out ....”

“I can’t travel independently ..... can the council help with that?”

“If there was a safe place for people to meet up with friends at weekends that would be good ..... somewhere that does art and craft, somewhere you can relax and have a laugh.”

“I get depressed when I’m bored at weekends.”

“The council should give us more Your Voice Counts groups .... it’s great to meet up with friends and get the support you need”

## How could health services help you stay healthy and well?



“We need more “easy read” information about health”

“Health staff should work with carers ..... so we eat more healthy food at home.”

“I needed support when my dad died .... I’m glad my mam was there to help but some people might not be that lucky.”

“We’ve been doing work on having a healthy lunchbox at the Health Focus Group. That’s REALLY important ..... I see a lot of people eating chocolate and crisps. Health needs to get this message out to more people .... and carers”

## Key Messages

- People would like more “easy read” health information
- People want parents and carers to be involved in diets – especially around making a healthy lunchbox
- People would like to go out more at weekends and evenings (our research shows young people go out more than older people)
- People want more travel training to promote independence
- People want more access to sport and leisure at these times
- People want more staff available to support this
- People want to have somewhere they can meet at weekends to relax with friends
- People want more support with bereavement
- People want more groups supported by Your Voice Counts staff



## **Recommendations**

### **1) Review all “easy read” health materials**

Ask the Health Focus Group and young people at Keelman’s to identify any gaps – what do people need to know?

### **2) Health staff need to work with staff and carers on creating healthy menus and packed lunch box menus.**

### **3) Council staff need to review support hours and staffing levels at weekends to ensure people with learning disabilities can access services outside the home.**

### **4) Council staff need to ensure travel training is available so all people with learning disabilities have the opportunity to travel independently.**

### **5) Create a resource so all people with learning disabilities know what is available at evenings and weekends (see Leisure and Culture Sub Group – Action Plan).**

### **6) Make sure people with learning disabilities have a health target on their annual review – and on their day opportunities programme.**

### **7) Create a “drop in” at weekends where people with learning disabilities can meet friends to chat and relax.**

### **8) Create a bereavement support group for people with learning disabilities.**

A Report by Equal People (with support from Carole Watson)  
November 5<sup>th</sup> 2015



## Update (December 2015)

- 1) Following the “100 Voices on Staying Healthy and Well”, there was a “Staying Healthy and Well” event at South Shields Central Library on 20th November 2015 (which was part of Self Care week). There were 85 people at the event (including self advocates, carers, council staff, health and leisure staff). One member of the Health Focus Group (Frank) gave a personal testimony about how he lost weight with good staff support. Amanda Healy (Director of Public Health) was the guest speaker. There was the opportunity to discuss the barriers to self care and consider the next steps.
- 2) It was agreed there was no need to set up a Health Sub Group; - there is already a Health Focus Group and Transformational Care Group, both supported by Your Voice Counts staff. The Health Focus Group (chaired by Pauline Henry) is attended by 13 self advocates. Group members have agreed to work on action points raised at the event over the coming year.
- 3) A key message from the event was lack of awareness around weight gain and diabetes. The Health Focus Group has already been focusing on healthy lunchboxes – and hope to involve A Better U and Change 4Life programmes in their diabetes prevention work.
- 4) Another key message from the event was the lack of opportunities to meet friends at weekends – and the effect this has on mental health. Helen Duffy (ST Council) has agreed to support the Saturday Club in South Tyneside starting on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2016.
- 5) There will be a “Celebration” event in June 2016 (during Learning Disabilities Week). This will be an opportunity for the Health Focus Group to showcase their progress to date.
- 6) For more information, contact; - [carole.watson@yvc.org.uk](mailto:carole.watson@yvc.org.uk)