

Promoting Active Lifestyles: Integrating Health and Transport (Scotland-Government)

<http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/introduction.aspx>

Section I: Summary

The Scottish government is working to promote active, healthy lifestyles by encouraging collaboration and coordination between the transport sector and health practitioners. The government has implemented a Physical Activity Strategy with a goal that 50% of adults and 80% of children meet minimum recommendations for exercise by 2022. A number of collaborative programs have been implemented throughout the country as part of this initiative to encourage citizens to incorporate physical activity into everyday travel. A broader Action Plan for Improving Health in Scotland also promotes strategies to improve overall health in the population.

Section II: Statement of Purpose

NHSScotland is responsible for health provision and promotion in Scotland, along with 32 local authorities. The transport sector is also comprised of 32 local transport authorities. The notion of collaboration between the two policy areas is a relatively new idea that has taken hold in Scotland, beginning with a 'Transport White Paper' in 2004 that laid out the foundation through the funding of cycling and walking projects and other programs geared toward travel to school. The Scottish government also funded Regional Transport Partnerships to encourage employers in the private sector to create sustainable alternatives to car travel and commuting. Regional Transport Partnerships also help develop overall transport strategies for each region. Statistics from the health and transport sectors indicate a clear need to address both issues. For example, one in five 12-year olds in Scotland is clinically obese, and car transport is used in approximately two-thirds of short commutes (1-2 km) that could be done on foot or by bicycle.

A number of initiatives throughout the country have brought together the transport and health sectors to take an integrated approach to these issues. Some of these programs are outlined below, along with key elements that help make these types of programs successful.

Glasgow Healthy City Partnership

The Glasgow City Council and Greater Glasgow NHS Board collaborated on a Physical Activity Forum to promote health improvement through community projects, training, and policy. As a result, a Physical Activity Strategy emerged for the Glasgow area, with programs such as leisure walking through the city, gentle exercise programs for persons with cardiac problems, and training and educational materials.

Fife Physical Activity Strategy Group

Fife is Scotland's third largest local authority area by population. Several departments involved in transport and community services, education, and health promotion teamed up to form the Physical Activity Strategy Group to promote healthy lifestyles through walking and biking initiatives. Programs/initiatives include developing road design standards to encourage more walking and cycling, developing a network of walking groups with over 200 trained walk leaders who lead 21 walks a week, and funding for a Physical Activity Coordinator. Over 300 miles of cycling paths were created, along with maps and a regular newsletter with information on routes and activities.

Highland Health Promotion and School Travel

The Highlands regions of Scotland set up a partnership between the Highland Council, NHS Highland and two health organizations to promote health improvement and sustainable travel to school. Programs implemented include an active referral program for healthcare staff to introduce walking into patients' daily lives, creation of a healthy living center, educational materials for the schools, development of a Highland cycling strategy, and confidence building walking initiatives.

Active Referral in Linlithgow

An 18-month health promotion project was set up in the Linlithgow Group Medical Practice, funded by a larger European program called 'Step by Step,' which promotes links between transport and health. The Linlithgow project was designed to see if health-related travel awareness information was more effectively transmitted to patients through a trusted third party such as a doctor rather than through the transport sector. Doctors were trained and then passed on information to patients through leaflets, special appointments for high-risk patients to help them identify healthy behaviors in their everyday lives, and promote incremental changes in travel behaviors as a way to improve health.

Several other communities/regions developed initiatives to promote alternative transport for both business and leisure and encourage physical activity in general through programs in schools, educational materials, advertising/media, and training for general practitioners.

Section III: Outcomes

A number of key factors can play a role in achieving success in programs that promote healthy lifestyles through an integrated approach across different sectors. The Scottish initiative identified several success factors from the various programs implemented throughout the country. These include:

- Engaging senior staff from the start to ensure buy-in and dedication to the programs.
- Establishing a policy framework or strategy so organizations across

- sectors can be focused on a common goal.
- Producing good quality publicity and marketing material with well targeted messages.
 - Establishing a brand, slogan, etc. for easy recognition and association.
 - Involving enthusiastic individuals who can serve as role models.
 - Setting up forums and groups to bring the different sectors together for dialogue and exchange.
 - Encouraging word of mouth dissemination of program information and knowledge.
 - Ensuring strong local political support.
 - Understanding the benefits of small-scale projects that don't need high-level policy input or funding.
 - Looking for innovative ways to get the message out (free stickers, buttons, t-shirts, maximizing local media, etc).
 - Being flexible – tailoring programs to meet local needs.

Section IV: Additional Resources

Scottish Executive, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Home>

Scottish Executive, Promoting Active Lifestyles: Good Ideas for Transport and Health Practitioners, November 2006,
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/153349/0041189.pdf>