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Argyll & Bute Health & Social Care Partnership

Review of Health & Wellbeing Networks in Argyll and Bute

Summary Report

Public Health Department
February 2020

Introduction

In 2019, in line with the HSCP Engagement Framework, a review was undertaken of the Health and Wellbeing Networks (HWNs). The aims of this review were:



1. To summarise the current status of HWNs across Argyll and Bute; to outline their structure, organisation, and the opinion of their members.
2. To compare Argyll and Bute's HWNs to other wellbeing networks and similar structures throughout Scotland.
3. To review public opinion and understanding of the HWNs and assess their success in improving delivery of health improvement and protection work across the region.
4. To develop recommendations for future development of the HWNs and their place in the wider communications and engagement structure of the HSCP.

The review was undertaken using the methods below:

1. Semi-structured interviews with Coordinators of locality HWNs
2. A survey sent out to all members of HWNs, collecting their opinions
3. A consultation day with the HWN Coordinators and the Health Improvement team
4. A survey sent out to twelve senior managers and stakeholders

This paper summarises the current status of the HWNs, the public understanding of the HWNs, and the advantages and limitations of this model.

Key Findings and Recommendations

In general, there was a positive feeling that the HWNs are an important asset, valuable for providing an opportunity for networking to help create partnerships and collaborative working in the local areas to effect change. The HWNs are seen as an effective platform for information sharing, not only at their meetings, but also through their email distribution list. The HWNs provide a gateway to creating strong links with the Third Sector and public. The flexibility in the operation of each HWN means they work well, stimulating imaginative thinking and problem solving in a co-productive way.

However, there appears to be a lack of strategic direction, especially since the Health and Wellbeing Partnership meetings ceased.

Successes

The overall response was extremely positive, with a feeling that HWNs provided a crucial service, connecting the public to organisations, and supporting local projects and priorities.

The review identified the following key advantages of the HWNs:

- Provides a point of connection for local groups and community organisations
- Supports, funds, and increases awareness of small, local projects and groups
- Provides a framework to discuss health and wellbeing and highlight priorities
- Effective for information sharing, networking, sharing case studies and good practice
- Established groups have been extremely successful
- The flexibility in the operation of each HWN means they work well
- Create partnerships in local areas to effect change
- Coproduction and collaborative working
- Can stimulate imaginative thinking and problem solving

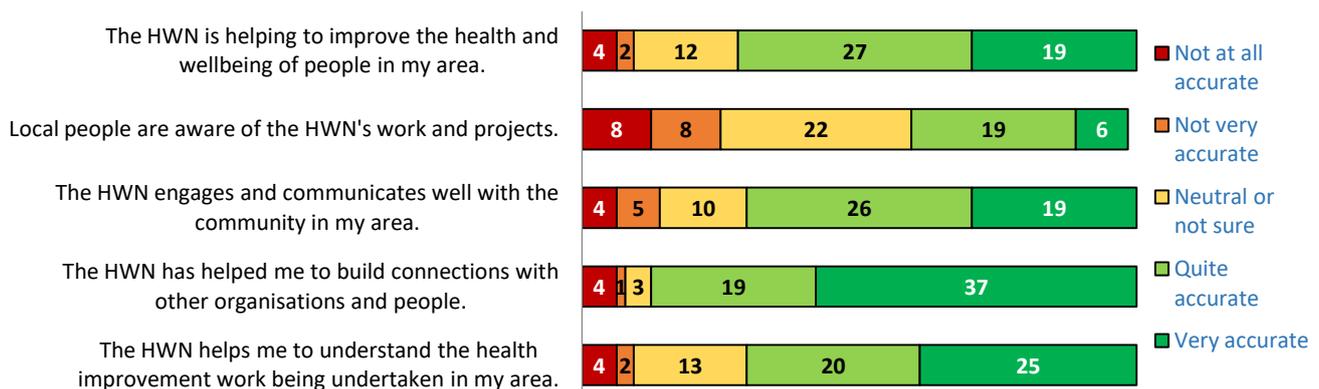


Fig. 1: Results from our survey showed strong positive views of the HWNs, but with uncertainty about public knowledge.

Limitations

The review identified some areas for improvement:

- Lack of training available for coordinators and funding scorers
- Limited capacity of HWN Coordinators
- There is little region-wide coordination and poor inter-locality awareness
- Inconsistency across localities makes it hard to unify information and processes
- Lack of strategic direction since HWN partnership meetings ceased
- Communication with HWNs, the PH team and HSCP's Locality Planning Groups (LPGs) needs to be improved
- Intermittent engagement from organisations once funding is allocated
- Work plan/action plan misnomer – no resources to back that

Challenges

The findings explored the following challenges:

- Geographical limitations, which make meeting difficult and reduce available services
- Challenges around future funding from the HSCP and sustainability
- Community resistance to change, and the difficulty of reaching some populations
- Maintaining engagement with the public and partner organisations
- Direct loss of representation on the LPG since new four locality LPG structure
- Keeping Facebook pages and website pages up to date

Areas Identified for Improvement

You Said:

Support: The work level and expectations of coordinators are very high. HWN Coordinators lack time and capacity for the high level of work expected. Individual Coordinators have very little support. It was suggested that a dedicated HWN Coordinator or group working across Argyll and Bute, reflecting the need for cross-locality communication, information, and organisation, could help with this.

Training: There is a lack of training offered for coordinators and scorers, whose roles and remits require a lot of skill. The success of the HWN is largely dependent on individual experience and previous work. Therefore improved training and development opportunities need to be identified.

Communication: Communication between the LPG and HWN is not effective. Mapping and clarity on the position of the HWNs within the greater structures of the HSCP is required. There needs to be a standard communication method to share information from the Health Improvement team and the HSCP.

Leadership: It can be unclear where the balance of leadership is between co-ordinators and health improvement representatives. This needs to be clarified.

Profile: The profile of the HWN needed to be raised, in general, and particularly among the general public. There needs to be better promotion of the excellent work being undertaken by the HWNs through the use of social media and the HWN website.

Recommendations

We are Doing:

1. A local network approach is maintained to support the delivery of Argyll and Bute's Public Health priorities

The value of networks has been clearly demonstrated in this review, and a local network approach should be maintained. However, the profile needs to be raised, in particular in communities, with promotion of the work through social media and the HWN website.

2. Rebranding with the Living Well logo to tie in with Living Well Strategy

Embed 'Living Well' in to the remit and rebrand the networks with the Living Well logo to tie in with the Living Well Strategy. This would offer an opportunity to re-launch to help increase the visibility and profile of the HWNs within the HSCP and the local communities.

3. Closer communication between LPGs and network coordinators

Standardise information-sharing between the Health Improvement team, LPGs and the HWNs. Network coordinators should be added to regular HSCP Communications contact lists.

4. A working group to be set up with a view to investigating future sustainable funding models

The small grant fund using the Health Improvement Funding (HIF) has been an integral part of the HWNs and recognised as a valuable asset. However, it is uncertain if this funding can continue in the current financial climate. It is proposed that a working group is set up to investigate future sustainable models and identify other potential funding sources for grants.

5. Design and provision of written guidance for coordinators and members

Written guidance on the aims, remit, and responsibilities of networks should be easily available on the Healthy Argyll & Bute website, including: a code of conduct, terms of membership, and description of all relevant HSCP pathways and structures. It should be available in print form.

6. Delivery programme designed and delivered for network coordinators

Training is needed on: social media delivery, chairing meetings and identifying local structures and support. This could be delivered initially through a HWN development day; crucially, newly appointed network coordinators should be able to access this training within six months of taking up the post, perhaps through shadowing another coordinator.

7. Link local networks with Public Health Department Communication Plan

To improve the public profile of the HWNs, a unified one-year publicity plan should be written in coordination between the Health Improvement team, Communications team, and HWN coordinators, taking into account both local and central actions to raise the networks' profile. Each coordinator should be encouraged to post updates to the website.