

Number: A16A

File Ref: PR/PL/7

Date: 4 December 2008

## **Networking Neighbourhoods continues to improve Health and Well-being of local people**

‘Networking Neighbourhoods’ is a programme of specially designed study visits organised by the Northern Neighbourhoods Health Action Zone (NNHAZ) and Supporting Communities NI. The aim of the programme is to highlight and showcase the work being undertaken within the 14 NNHAZ areas to improve the health and well-being of local people within the Northern Health and Social Services Board.

After the immense success of the first Networking Neighbourhoods project in June 2008 the second Study Visit took place this month and looked at best practice examples of community-based health programmes, projects and services in Ballymena, Magherafelt and Carrickfergus. Community, voluntary and statutory sector partners currently involved in implementing Community Action Plans in each of

the NNHAZ areas were invited to participate in the visit. A wide range of projects were selected for the visits in order to meet the needs of the diverse group of delegates.

The two day study visit incorporated an Environmental Regeneration scheme in the Parkview & Riverside estate in Castledawson; Childcare Services, Community Facilities and a Luncheon Club in the Ballee estate in Ballymena; along with a Good Morning project and a Community Nurse-led Clinic in the Glenfield estate in Carrickfergus. Delegates finished off their visit in style with a tour around Parliament Buildings and the Stormont Estate in Belfast where they were addressed by the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride.

Colette Rogers, NNHAZ Co-ordinator commented,

“I am delighted that so many NNHAZ neighbourhoods were represented on the Study Visit. Networking Neighbourhoods has provided representatives from the NNHAZ areas with a valuable opportunity to visit community led health and well-being initiatives that also have the potential to be delivered in their own neighbourhoods. The programme facilitates networking and allows the delegates to share learning with other volunteers and professionals who are familiar with the challenges of getting projects up and running and getting the wider community involved. The visits have helped them to appreciate that many neighbourhoods are facing similar challenges and that they are an important part of the solution.”

The Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael Mc Bride, who met the delegates on their visit to Parliament Buildings commented,

"I commend the work of the Northern Neighbourhoods Health Action Zone in bringing together representatives from each participating Neighbourhood to share information and exchange learning. It is vitally important that local communities are involved in the design and implementation of initiatives to improve health and tackle health inequalities since they are best placed both to identify needs and the ways in which these can be addressed."

Margaret McKeown from Ballee Community Association in Ballymena commented:

"This series of study visits has provided people in our community and in the other NNHAZ communities with an excellent opportunity to develop relationships with each other and it has inspired us to consider new projects for our own neighbourhoods that will help improve people's overall health and well-being."

**- ENDS -**

#### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

Since the introduction of the Health Action Zone initiative to the NHSSB area in 2001, the 14 participating communities have been involved in numerous programmes to tackle health inequalities and regenerate their neighbourhoods. They have co-ordinated this activity through the development and implementation of Community Action Plans, in conjunction with key voluntary and statutory stakeholders.

NNHAZ is a community led partnership initiative that aims to improve the health and social well-being of people and communities living within the Northern Health and Social Services Board area. NNHAZ currently operates in 14 neighbourhoods within the Northern Health and Social Services Board area.

The 14 NNHAZ areas include:

- Antiville (Larne Borough Council area)
- Armoy (Moyle District Council area)
- Ballee (Ballymena Borough Council area)
- Ballycastle (Moyle District Council area)
- Ballysally (Coleraine Borough Council area)
- Bawnmore (Newtownabbey Borough Council area)
- Craigyhill (Larne Borough Council area)
- Glebeside (Ballymoney Borough Council area)
- Glenfield (Carrickfergus Borough Council area)
- Longlands (Newtownabbey Borough Council area)
- New Mossley (Newtownabbey Borough Council area)
- Parkview & Riverside (Magherafelt District Council area)
- Rathen, Greenvale & Sullenboy (Cookstown Borough Council area)
- Rathenraw (Antrim Borough Council area)

The aims of Networking Neighbourhoods:

- Highlight and encourage good practice in tackling health inequalities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- Provide NNHAZ neighbourhoods with opportunities to network and learn from each other
- Encourage and facilitate effective communication between the NNHAZ communities which can be sustained after the networking visits
- Support communities to explore realistic and achievable projects, which improve health and social well-being, which could be replicated in their own areas eg; improving community facilities, relocation of health and social services

- To empower local people to take actions which will improve their own health and wellbeing and that of their families and friends

For further information, please contact Nataleen Surgenor/Elizabeth Owen/Clare Dolan

Public Relations Office, NHSSB,

County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena, Co Antrim BT42 1QB

Tel: (028) 2531 1015 Fax: (028) 2531 1013

Textphone: (028) 2531 1001 Pager: 07699 783371

Patient/Client Information Service: (08457) 626428

E-mail address:

nataleen.surgenor@nhssb.n-i.nhs.uk or elizabeth.owen@nhssb.n-i.nhs.uk or clare.dolan@nhssb.n-i.nhs.uk