



community
food and health
(scotland)



Knowing Me, Knowing You Lothian Visit



**A Learning Exchange Visit to
Lothian Community Health Initiatives Forum
24th March 2015**

This meeting took place within the LGBT health and wellbeing centre's premises in the centre of Edinburgh. As well as 13 representatives of the Lothian Forum's membership there were four civil servants who came to hear what members of the Forum did and the benefits of the Forum structure for individual member organisations.

The Forum members who were present were:

- Helena Richards – Carr Gomm, Community Compass
- Catriona Windle – Health All Round
- Arlene Astley - Advocard
- Jackie Hall - Broomhouse BHSG and TBC
- Fiona Cross - LUWSC
- Magda Czarnecka – Feniks
- Linda Arther – Wester Hailes Health Agency
- C Cumming - ELGT
- Maruska Greenwood - LGBT Health
- Sandra Wallingham – LWNE
- Iain Stewart - Edinburgh Community Food
- Lesley Blackmore – Lothian Community Health Initiatives Forum
- Diane Redpath – Lothian Community Health Initiatives Forum

The civil servants who attended were

- Isabell Donnelly, Social Justice and Regeneration, Scottish Government (Welfare Response Team)
- Frances Conlan, Policy and Implementation Team Leader, Scottish Government
- Christopher Russell, Policy Diet, Alcohol & Tobacco , Scottish Government
- Jill Walker, Marketing Manager, Scottish Government



Lauren Blair from Voluntary Health Scotland, VHS and Elspeth Gracey from Community Health Exchange, CHEX provided an overview of their organisations, and the role of national intermediaries including Community Food and Health Scotland who were unable to be represented at the meeting

but with whom they have worked collaboratively on this series of Learning Exchanges which included previous exchanges in Aberdeenshire, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Lauren informed the meeting of Voluntary Health Scotland's report *Living in the Gap – a voluntary health sector perspective on health inequalities in Scotland* and subsequently circulated copies to forum members. The report is available via this link: www.vhscotland.org.uk/living-in-the-gap

This particular event was seen as an opportunity for civil servants to get an opportunity to meet several organisations together and to understand the working of the Forum through which local health organisations come together to share practice and develop a collective voice.



Ian Stewart, chair of the Lothian Forum and manager of Edinburgh Community Food, welcomed the visitors and invited each of the members of the Forum to give a thumbnail sketch of their organisation and the services they provide. He then provided a summary of how the Forum works with its focus on community development approaches to tackling health inequalities. He spoke of Lesley Blackmore's role as the

Forum's employee in representing the Forum within the strategic Health Inequalities Sub Group (HISG). Ian then introduced informal presentations by some members of the forum to provide more in-depth information of community-led health activity in Lothian.

Catriona Windle of the Forum Executive and Manager of Health All Round explained how the Forum has worked to develop a unified means of measuring impact which has been negotiated with their core funders. This has been a challenging piece of work since some members of the Forum provide services based on thematic issues e.g. Mental Health while others are more generic geographically based organisations serving a particular locality. Work on increasing funding effectiveness and reporting on a unified structure to demonstrate impact is an ongoing process.

Linda Arthur from Wester Hailes Health Agency described how the integrated model of working at the Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre works with what she described as a "massive" increase in co-operation across the community and voluntary sector with statutory sector colleagues.



Magda Czarnecka from Feniks described meeting the needs of the minority ethnic community that her organisation supports and establishing ‘conversation cafes’ initially set up to encourage people to use English but now providing a variety of information regarding accessing of services. Magda spoke of the isolated nature of her work before becoming a member of the Lothian Forum and how the Forum has offered increased opportunities for collaborative and partnership working.

In general Forum members agreed that the strength of the Forum structure came from the shared learning opportunities and the collective voice it provided when working with funders and statutory sector partners.

Each of the Civil Servants gave an insight into their role within Government, Jill Walker spoke of the value of gaining insight into *“how best to engage with the third sector”* Christopher Russell re-enforced this by saying *“The hardest thing for us is to know what is happening in your particular area and how best to target it”*.

Frances Conlan spoke of Government trying to do more to work across port folios and the hope that other sectors might *“see more connectedness”* from Government in the future.



Isabell Donnelly spoke about work with NHS Lothian on health inequalities. She highlighted the potential of the new integration of health and social care services e.g. that GPs would make referrals in terms of welfare benefits more easily and that some practices have welfare rights staff within the practice.

The concluding discussion found general agreement that the exchange of information had been useful and that maintaining contact in the future would be useful if only on an annual basis. With a commitment to maintaining this contact the formal meeting closed. The busy conversations that ensued over the shared lunch that followed were evidence of how much interest people had in each other's work.

Civil servants Christopher Russell and Isabell Donnelly agreed to answer questions on the benefits of their experience on camera as did Maruska Greenwood of the LGBT Health and Wellbeing Centre.



Video footage of those inputs is available at the links below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQkIB6bwtqA>

Previous reports from earlier events are available on CHEX, VHS and Community Food and Health's websites, see last page.

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