

Meeting of
Lanarkshire NHS Board
June 2010

Lanarkshire NHS Board
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SUBJECT: FIRST STEPS PROGRAMME

1. PURPOSE

This paper introduces to the NHS Board the South Lanarkshire Fairer Scotland funded First Steps Programme. This paper outlines this programme which contributes to the Early Intervention in the Early Years agenda.

2. CONTENT/SUMMARY KEY ISSUES

This programme is making an impact on health inequalities by providing intensive one-to-one support to mothers, most in need, in their own homes. This support enables mothers to provide lifestyles for their families that are nurturing, healthy, happy and stimulating. There's overwhelming evidence that intergenerational poverty can only be tackled by intervention in the most crucial early years of life. There are already signs that this programme is making a very positive impact with over 100 families participating who live in the most deprived datazones within the Blantyre, Larkhall, Rutherglen, Cambuslang and Hamilton areas. Many of the workers now have full caseloads and in some areas there is a waiting list demonstrating the high levels of demand for the service. The programme has already supported many women to achieve agreed goals, and 15 have completed their programme. A public health nurse reported that she could already see the benefits that the programme was having. "The First Steps worker has the time to commit to these families that they need to make a difference to how they parent " (Public Health Nurse, August 2009). The programme also has the potential to be replicated within other public health teams as it is acknowledged that many vulnerable families live outwith the most deprived datazones in South Lanarkshire.

At the antenatal stage the programme has been most successful at encouraging mothers to increase their intake of fruit and vegetables and increase the amount of physical activity they do. At the postnatal stage the programme is having the greatest impact on parenting skills, specifically improving mothers' confidence in interacting and supporting development, confidence to care for their baby and positive feelings

towards their baby. The programme has secured funding from the Fairer Scotland Fund until March 2011; therefore sustainability is a key issue.

3. ACTIONS

Key actions for the programme over this year are:

- To increase the number of antenatal referrals and engagement
- Review and fine tune data collection
- Review level of unmet need
- Review client assessment and action plan process
- Strengthen relationships with local services and community groups

For the wider partnership that has invested and supported the development of the programme, there has to be continued engagement and discussion to ensure the learning informs and supports the redesign of the delivery of services

4. CONCLUSIONS

The NHS Board is asked to note the progress to date of the First Steps Programme and the contribution it will make to the evidence base around what improves outcomes for vulnerable families in Lanarkshire. It is recognised that the current climate and workloads within Public Health Teams is challenging however in due course this programme may well inform the way in which services are delivered to first time mothers and their babies.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

If Members would wish any further information about the paper, please contact Shirley Mitchell, Programme Manager: First Steps Programme Telephone: 07812079072 or Maria Reid, Assistant Health Promotion Manager Telephone: 01698 377645

MR/SM