

Birmingham Strategic Partnership, 23rd February 2007 Board Meeting

Living Well in the West Midlands : bWell Birmingham

The Health and Well-being Partnership has given its support to the Living Well in the West Midlands : bWell Birmingham Lottery fund proposal and now seeks the BSP's support. This will be combined with 13 other LA areas by the West Midlands Regional Assembly and submitted to the big lottery fund by 8th March.

BWell Birmingham will promote positive mental health and wellbeing in Birmingham through a two-pronged approach:

- **bWell Employers:** Offering a programme of training, support and guidance for private, public and voluntary sector employers which will help them promote positive mental health, change the workplace practices that cause stress and anxiety, recognise poor mental health issues and handle these sympathetically and constructively, and address the stigma experienced by many who return to, or enter, work after periods of mental ill health.
- **bWell Communities:** Promoting healthy and therapeutic physical activity, especially in Birmingham's most deprived neighbourhoods, thus addressing the common causes of poor mental health – physical inactivity, isolation, stress and depression;

bWell Employers

bWell Employers draws on established initiatives such as Devon Partnership NHS Trust's *Mindful Employer* model and Worcestershire's *Skills for Health* programme. Working with employers that are currently members of the Birmingham Strategic Partnership – some of the largest employers in the city, including Birmingham City Council and the police, fire, education and health services – as well as voluntary and community and private sector employers, we will offer:

- a) Access to customised information, guidance and other resources for employers through a single, centralised website
- b) A 'sign-up' Charter for bWell Employers
- c) A good practice bWell Birmingham network meeting quarterly
- d) Training, support and guidance to enable employers to recognise mental health issues in the workplace and reduce the factors – such as poor work-life balance, stress and anxiety – that contribute to poor mental health
- e) Specialist support for HR staff, including model policies, procedures and practices to improve the workplace environment, support positive mental in the workplace and improve employee retention
- f) Access to healthy, therapeutic activities in and out of the workplace

This will complement existing publicly funded initiatives such as Pathways to Work and we anticipate bWell Birmingham working closely with the principal Pathways to work provider in Birmingham, once this organisation has been selected. We also anticipate that bWell Employers will appeal especially to employers who are seeking to integrate the new Health & Wellbeing at Work Framework into the Investors in People Standard or wish to extend other quality systems to include health and wellbeing.

<http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/Standard/Developingthestandard/health/Pages/Home.aspx>

Part of the 'sign-up' process will require employers to collate and declare absence levels, especially those attributable to stress- and anxiety-related illness, and monitor improvements in the workplace against these measures as key indicators.

The commissioning will emphasise partnerships which bring together public sector providers and voluntary and community sector organisations. By commissioning voluntary sector organisations to provide services and support we will be building the capacity of the sector.

bWell Communities

bWell Communities will be aligned with Birmingham's Local Area Agreement and target its 11 priority Wards, focusing on promoting healthy and therapeutic physical exercise, especially where this can also have a socialising role or deliver wider community benefits. This will deliver the following:

- a) Initial research to better understand (and remove) the barriers preventing greater numbers of residents in Birmingham's most deprived wards – and especially those from BME groups – taking up healthy activities and physical exercise opportunities;
- b) 4 x programmes of sessional therapeutic physical activity and exercise will be commissioned from primarily VCS providers. These may be community-based, or delivered in the workplace, as appropriate. Our initial research will inform our final choices of activity but these could include:
 - Dance
 - Keep fit
 - Volunteer-led group walks
 - Therapeutic horticulture and conservation activities
 - Martial arts
 - Tai Chi
- c) A programme of 'Volunteering for health' opportunities, building on Birmingham's excellent track record in promoting socially useful volunteering activities. These will combine fitness, new skills, social benefits and socialising for maximum benefit;
- d) 4 x programmes of community-based preventative and self-help initiatives, such as self-help treatments for common causes of poor mental health and community-based counselling

BSP support

The BSP is asked to;

- i) give the proposal its support in principle.
- ii) note that there are several national lottery funding opportunities (see also item 7i) and as these are not in competition the BSP can give support to both.
- iii) support the proposal for a BSP extended session on well-being.
- iv) note that support in principle does not commit to joint funding but does represent a desire to link local efforts that encourage well-being.

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19th February 2007