

INTRODUCTION

To recap briefly on the Report of 2009, The Army Primary Healthcare Service was invited to join the second phase of the Skilled for Health (SfH) Project instigated by the Department of Health (DoH) in December 2007. This was specifically aimed at the families of serving Army personnel.

Two key areas that impact on the ability of the Army to deploy its troops are their health, and that of their families. This project would be used to widen the engagement of service families with the improving health agenda.

The SfH Army project officially ended in June 2009, and has now been reclassified as a Regional programme. Since September 2009 it has continued to run in the four garrisons of Tidworth, Larkhill, Bulford and Warminster, entering its third year in September 2010.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives set out for the year 2009-2010 by the SfH team were as follows:

- To embed the programme in the four garrisons so that it was accepted as part of the services provided for Army families at local Community Centres.
- To ensure that learners were encouraged to sign up for basic skills or other relevant courses to improve their education and job prospects
- To ensure that the initial target of 150 learners signed on to courses, with a minimum of 100 learners completing, was achieved.
- To secure external funding sources to supplement monies provided by local Primary Care Trust.
- To work towards the integration of the Army and civilian communities.
- To work in partnership with other local organisations to share resources and skills.

MODEL OF DELIVERY

An evaluation of the programme is carried out at the end of each term, using forms completed by the learners, and discussion with tutors and health professionals.

The core programme has remained basically the same since the beginning of SfH in 2008. However, with effect from January 2011 a session on Sexual Health will be included. Main areas to be covered will be Contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infections and health checks.

The Core programme will therefore cover:

Healthy Eating
Exercise
Substances
Well Being
Sexual Health
First Aid.

The continuation sessions now cover:

Healthy Lunchboxes
Positive Parenting/Early Learning
Personal Safety
Dental Care for the under 5's
Resuscitation
Safety in the Home.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The overall aim of SfH is to improve health literacy. This is achieved by combining health information with an improvement in educational attainment. Health is a significant “hook” into learning, providing the incentive for participation.

Our evaluation methods look both at the improvement in lifestyles of our learners with their desire to improve their education by accessing Basic Skills and/or other courses. This latter objective aims to improve their ability to access employment, and to increase their income.

We continue to have some difficulty with the completion of evaluation questionnaires completed by learners, mostly as a result of non attendance at either the first and/or last session. We have, wherever possible, rung the learners and completed them over the telephone. In completing the database we have only used information where both baseline and follow up questionnaires have been completed. The results are shown at Annexe 1.

We have requested feedback from health professionals who have referred learners to SfH or who know that one of their clients has attended the programme. The tutors also complete a learner assessment showing improvements and requests for Basic Skills courses. Results are at Annex 2.

Since the beginning of 2010 we have had two spectacular successes. One of our learners is now employed as Community Champion for the Tesco store at Tidworth, on the back of her SfH Certificate. This entails working with worthy causes in the community, promoting the organisation, and supporting with goods and merchandise.

In March 2010 four of our learners were interviewed by the Wiltshire NHS Primary Care Trust (PCT) for the post of part-time, employed, Health Trainers (HT). The criteria for their appointment was that they had attended a SfH programme. They studied for and passed a City and Guilds Level 3 course, and will work with both Army dependents and civilians in the Tidworth, Bulford and Larkhill areas.

They will provide six one to one free sessions with individuals who wish to make lifestyles changes, will provide support and encourage, and signpost clients to the relevant health professionals where appropriate (Smoking Cessation clinics etc).

The official launch was held at the Tidworth Leisure Centre on 10 November 2010.

The SfH and HT programmes will cross-refer clients, in an effort to improve information and support for lifestyle changes.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

As outlined in the final report last year, successful media and marketing has raised the profile of SfH.

Garrison FM runs ongoing separate interviews with the Project Manager and the tutors, extolling the benefits of the sessions and publicising dates of the next course.

Drumbeat places an advertisement each term with new dates.

In September this year the team had a stand in the main hall of the Army Families Federation (AFF) Conference in London. There was a great deal of interest shown by dependents and professionals for the programme to be brought to their garrison. As a result of this success an invitation has been extended for the team to attend the next Conference in Germany in June 2011. An article has been placed in the AFF Winter Journal, and information on SfH is now on their website.

The team were invited to attend the "Blue Light Day" in Tidworth in August for the second year running, and were invited by the Tesco Community Champion in Tidworth to have a stand at their Community Day in September.

We continue to attend Health Fairs, health visitor clinics, coffee mornings and health centres practice meetings

PARTNERSHIPS

The team continue to work closely with the Community Centres and other family focused organisations.

Earlier this year the team were approached by a representative from Project Inspire. This programme provides training and support for those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS) between the ages of 16 and 30. Their aim is support them into education, training or employment. We have been asked to run two sessions for up to eight young men on Lifestyle Skills. Subjects will include Healthy Eating, Sexual Health, Budgeting, Oral hygiene and mental well being.

In June 2010 SfH funded a crèche to enable 10 AEC to run a Basic Skills course in Larkhill. There had been difficulties in running such a course due to lack of facilities and funding for a crèche, and a number of our learners were eager to attend. Six attended, with five passing.

FUNDING

In the financial year 2010-2011 the main core of funding came from the Wiltshire PCT, with monies carried over from the DoH grant of 2008.

Three grants were applied for and approved; from Plain Action, the Wiltshire Area Grants Board and SSAFA. In addition a small grant towards equipment for the sessions has been approved from the Annington Trust.

In the financial year 2011-2012 some funding has been provided by the Wiltshire PCT, again with the expectation that further funds will be obtained from outside sources.

We will continue to approach other organisations for further funding, with the expectation that SfH will be embedded in the future.

FUTURE PLANS

The Project Manager attended a meeting with representatives from the DoH who are in the process of ensuring the accreditation of the SfH programme. Each subject would be a separate stand alone module. The points earned could be used to aid progression to a number of employment roles rather than just in healthcare. It is anticipated to be accredited by 2012.

We have approached Bovington, Blandford, South Cerney, Hullavington and Colerne with a view to commencing SfH sessions in April 2011. This is in the early stages, and will be dependent on funding. Units in other APHCS Regions have also expressed an interest such as the Light Dragoons in Swanton Morley.

Negotiations have already taken place with the Gloucester Primary Care Trust, who will be working with us to provide Innsworth Station and South Cerney with SfH sessions. We are also providing Innsworth with a stand alone programme, specifically dealing with learners' ability to access the NHS and the appropriate professionals where English is not the first language. This is in light of the number of non-UK personnel who have moved to Innsworth from Germany.

The team intend to work closely with other organisations to ensure that SfH is seen as a programme suitable both for Civilian and Army learners, working towards the integration of both civilian and Army communities, and providing employment for local people where possible.

We will continue to work towards ensuring SfH is embedded in all APHCS and BFG HS areas, so that families can access the programme when posted.

CONCLUSIONS

All who attend the SfH programme receive benefits relevant to their need at the present time. A substantial number who attended with low self esteem, a lack of confidence and low levels of mental health issues showed marked improvement.

SfH is seen as a route to employment and further educational attainment as well as improved family health.

Feedback from soldiers whose partners have attended SfH has been very positive. They have remarked on the difference it has made to them, and the improvements in their general well being. In some instances soldiers have been motivated to improve their basic skills levels as a result of their partner's attendance and passing of relevant courses.

Positive feedback from health professionals confirms the benefits to individuals, and their continued support is testament to the success of the programme.

With a constantly moving and changing population there will be a need for this programme. The benefits for all if this is embedded in the health and well being programme for Army personnel cannot be underestimated.