



North East Lincolnshire  
LINK  
Health Trainers Report  
2012

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## Executive Summary

The North East Lincolnshire Health Trainer service started working in communities during April 2007, aiming to support people to live longer and improve their quality of life. The service is available to anyone in North East Lincolnshire over the age of 16 contemplating a health improvement. Health Trainers are North East Lincolnshire residents with good local knowledge and have undergone a full-time training programme. They are employed by the North East Lincolnshire Care Trust Plus and work out of community locations. They aim to reply within two working days.

### **Health Trainers will:**

- Work with individuals to make a health improvement of their choice
- Help an individual plan a programme to suit the individual's needs
- Support clients to stay on track and maintain changes
- Work on behaviour changes
- Provide information and support on:
  - Health Eating
  - Exercise/Fitness
  - Mental Health
  - Sexual Health
  - Reducing smoking/smoking cessation
  - Reducing alcohol/drugs use
  - Stress and anxiety reduction
  - Other health related areas

Greg Gilbert Health Trainer Manager had realised that there were no feedback systems in place to ascertain whether or not the Health Trainers were providing a reliable service. There was no way of knowing if all the people that made contact with the service received the same standard of service across the board so he approached the LINK to undertake a mystery shopper piece of work to ascertain people's views without affecting the service they received.

We did have a few questions raised regarding the ethics around utilising the 'Mystery Shoppers' technique. A small percentage of our volunteers were uncomfortable reporting back on their experience of the Health Trainer service. They only raised their concerns after completing their visits with the Health Trainers which meant we had been unable to either find a solution or even listen to their concerns as they arose. However, despite the issues raised, the volunteers still wanted to submit their responses.

Considering the information we were trying to gather to help improve the Health Trainer Service, this is just one of a number of ways we have gone about it and perhaps in retrospect we could have used other assessment methods. However sometimes the only way to understand a service is to experience it for yourself and the qualitative data obtained through this experiential method was invaluable. This also allows residents and service users the opportunity to comment on the public's behalf, especially as any adult wishing to become involved could do so if they lived in North East Lincolnshire.

The results of this work stream found a range of satisfaction levels with the service. Most respondents were pleased with their Health Trainer and one in particular had been very impressed. Most were contacted in a timely manner but one had been waiting a considerable time, one had still not been contacted two months later and LINK staff have heard a couple of verbal reports of contact taking six months or more.

Issues were also raised around working hours of the Health Trainers and the availability of the services they signpost to outside of 9am-5pm work pattern, one respondent said 'Those who work 9-5 seem to be discriminated against in provision of groups and the steps programme.'

However, on the whole the feedback given was positive and the Health Trainers were praised for their dedication and support in spite of the restrictions mentioned above. The service was delivered in a professional manner, friendly, well informed and backed up with a large range of relevant literature and covered personal issues as well as addressing the general lifestyle problems we see on a daily basis. The Health Trainer service has the potential to be the vehicle to deliver life changing improvements throughout North East Lincolnshire and ease the burden on the NHS without excessive expenditure.

## Recommendations

In the light of ongoing obesity and lifestyle issues we feel the health trainer service is a valuable tool in addressing the problems facing the people of North East Lincolnshire and should be expanded in order to promote healthier living strategies in all age groups.

We would recommend:

- Implementing a more effective monitoring system for following up client requests for contact
- Introducing processes for feedback including evaluation forms and a variety of ways to give anonymous suggestions (e.g. suggestions box, freepost address and anonymous comments section on the Health Trainer website)
- Using pro-active community groups, encouraged by the Health Trainers to help people change their habits and lifestyles across the area
- Offer a bespoke health trainer service for those who wish for privacy
- Find sponsorship to fund the initiative, possibly sportswear and equipment manufactures
- Give the service a higher profile, attend events, football, rugby, cricket matches to show what's available
- Create a healthy living day, week or month
- Having a 'Healthy Living' DVD made to show in waiting rooms and to community groups and plenty of literature aimed at all ages
- That the service has a perceptible longevity about it, not a quick fix but an ongoing lifestyle message

## Thank You!

The North East Lincolnshire LINK would like to thank all those volunteers who have dedicated their time and energy to this project and the LINK. It is their hard work that makes everything we do possible.

LINK would also like to thank all the Health Trainers who have unknowingly been involved in the project. Without your earnest hard work and commitment to helping improve people's lifestyles we would not have been able to carry out this piece of work in the first place!

## References

- 1 The above was found at <http://www.health-trainers.org/profile-greg-gilbert/>
- 2 For more information or electronic version of this report please go to [www.nellink.org.uk](http://www.nellink.org.uk)