

# MOVING FORWARD

A participatory review into physical activity in North Edinburgh



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PCHP recently undertook a piece of participatory research to identify the real issues impacting on physical activity participation in Greater Pilton. Around 170 local people were involved in listening activities, interviews and focus groups to identify the common issues (themes) in the area. The information gathered was analysed and the following recurring themes were identified:

- **Perceptions of safety**
- **Under use of green-space**
- **Negative attitudes towards physical activity**  
(e.g. thinking of physical activity as a structured activity or as a prescription)
- **Reduced sense of community**
- **Lack of information**

A number of codes were developed that would explore the root causes and impact of each theme. A 'code' is a visual representation of the issue i.e. illustration, photo, video clip. Local people participated in workshops during which the codes were used as tools to explore the themes. Key questions were developed that seek to address the themes identified. These were as follows:

1. **How to reduce anxiety about safety?**
2. **How to make better use of green-spaces like West Pilton Park and the cycle paths?**
3. **How to stop people thinking of physical activity as structured activities?**
4. **How to improve media perception of the area?**
5. **How to change the perceptions that some professionals have about local people in the area?**
6. **How to get more people talking to each other?**

The process has reiterated the need to encourage, support and develop a community-led approach in order to increase physical activity participation. The project seeks to ensure that that the local community are involved in the decision making process and that they are supported to take the lead on new idea's. The physical activity project plans to work in partnership with local people and organizations; recognising, celebrating and building on what's already taking place. A number of exciting new potential activities have already been identified as a result of consulting with local people.

## INTRODUCTION

Our vision was to carry out a piece of participatory research with the North Edinburgh community in a way that empowered them and involved them in the shaping of a project that will affect their community and their health.

We are aware that there are many positive local initiatives already happening in the area and our aim is to support and build on these, working with local people to increase their opportunities and promote their own ideas and strengths.

We hope that this and the future of this project will be a transformative process for the community. We believe that this type of approach leads to a more cohesive and empowered community that are more likely to make healthy, active choices in their lives.

## BACKGROUND

PCHP's physical activity project started in 2002, funded through the Health Improvement Fund from NHS Lothian. The main aim of the project has been to increase the number of local people engaging in regular physical activity by addressing barriers to participation (e.g. cost, childcare, transport)

At the time the project began there was very little going on locally in terms of physical activity provision and since that time the project has delivered thousands of physical activity sessions; these sessions have encouraged and enabled hundreds of local people to be more active.

Ongoing evaluation has revealed that there has been a recent decline in the number of new participants to the projects activities. Although the programme is successful, some of the activities are attended by the same people week after week, month after month...

This resulted in us considering the question '**How do we engage with people not already accessing the project**' and thus, we decide that the time had arrived for us to carry out a project review; assessing our approach, looking at the bigger picture and investigating ways we can increase participation.

## AIMS OF REVIEW

- To identify current local opportunities through a physical activity mapping exercise. Information collected to be collated and used to develop an online interactive resource.
- To identify the real issues preventing people from leading a more active life.
- To identify the best approach to address the issues and increase local physical activity participation.
- To use a community development approach by working with and increasing involvement of local people in the project to develop an action plan.

## METHODOLOGY

Over a period of 6 months- February-August 2013, PCHP adopted a participatory style of consultation and research to involve local people in looking at the issues surrounding physical activity in its widest possible context (including environmental, social, political and personal issues) and identify with them, the best and most appropriate solutions to the problems at hand.

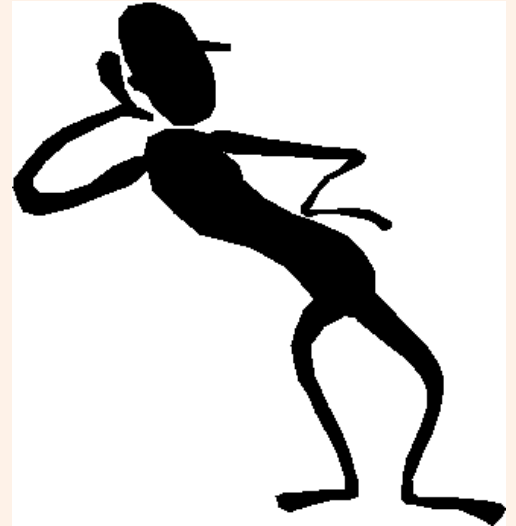
- We carried out *listening* activities with 170 people which involved visiting around 19 local groups of people who didn't already access our services. Their responses to our questions enabled us to identify the key themes.
- We carried out desk top research into these key themes, which helped to inform the next stage of developing the *codes*.
- We developed codes to help explore the issues in more depth (see later for explanation).
- We carried out 2 *workshops* each with 12 local people to look at the codes and explore the root causes and impacts of the themes and look at possible solutions.
- We carried out 6 *semi structured* interviews to look at certain issues in more depth.
- We collated and reflected on the findings and identified a number of *key questions* that would generate solutions to the issues.

## LISTENING ACTIVITIES

Over a period of several months we spent time in the community being attentive to what people were speaking about and what themes came up. For example visiting local cafes, shops and libraries and hearing what ‘generative’ themes arose from people’s unprompted conversations. The aim was to get a real feel for what issues were important to people without us leading the discussions or prompting ideas.

We also attended a number of existing groups in ‘listening’ mode; we arrived with an open mind and asked a number of thought provoking questions that identified recurring themes/issues important to the community.

This process involved approximately 170 people from a variety of population groups and geographical areas within the Greater Pilton area.



## QUESTIONS INCLUDED:

- What do they do to relax and enjoy themselves, how does this make them feel?
- What did they do as children to entertain themselves and how is that different from now?
- Who decides what goes where in the area?
- What services are available to people?
- How well do development programmes work?
- How have things changed over the years?
- What is it like to live in the area?

## DEVELOPING THE THEMES INTO CODES

The information people provided during the consultation was collated, analysed and researched in more depth by the review team.

The following recurring key themes occurred during the listening exercises;

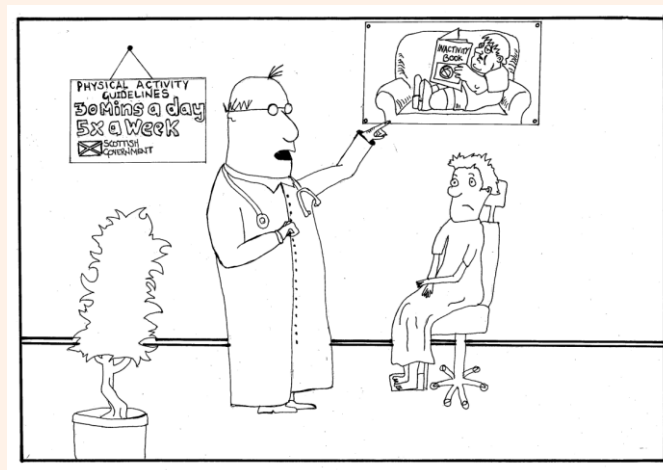
- **Perceptions of safety**
- **Under use of green-space**
- **Negative attitudes towards physical activity (e.g. thinking of physical activity as a structured activity or as a prescription)**
- **Sense of community**
- **Lack of information**

A number of codes were created for use in the workshops, the aim of these were to allow us to 'dig deeper under the issues'. Codes are visual images that encapsulate the main themes. The codes developed for this included two photos, a cartoon and a video clip of the Pilton gala in 1953.



**Above: Codes to explore perceptions of safety and use of green-spaces**

**Below: Code to explore attitudes towards physical activity**



## EXPLORING THE CODES



Twelve local people attended two workshops in which each code was analysed and discussed.

Each code was shown and the key questions were asked. This allowed the group to explore some of the root causes of problems.



**Above & above left: addressing issues at West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre**



**Left: The Issue Tree**

The aim of this analysis was to identify the impact and root causes relating to each theme.

## SUMMARY TABLE

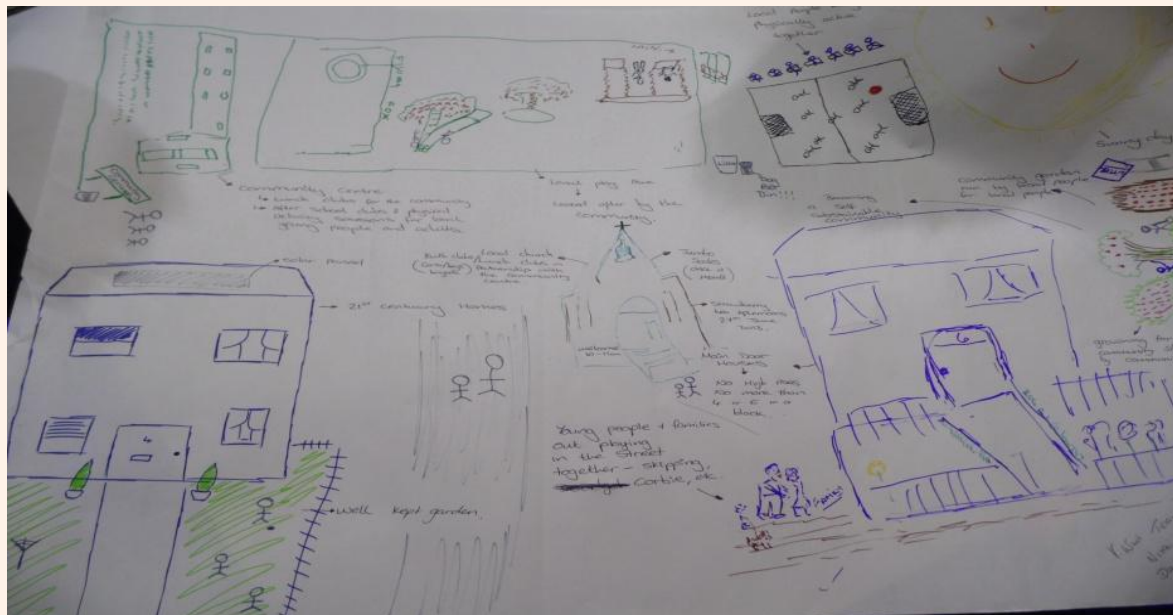
| Code/Theme   | Impact   | Root Causes  |
|--|--|--|
| <p><b>PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY/UNDER USE OF GREEN-SPACE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photo of Man/Woman on cycle path</li> <li>• Photo of Man at Play Park</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People feel unsafe walking alone</li> <li>• People more suspicious</li> <li>• Parents worry</li> <li>• Pass safety concerns onto children</li> <li>• Adults &amp; children less active</li> <li>• Less freedom for children</li> <li>• Impacts on the way people socialise</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in society, people not talking to each other as much</li> <li>• Hearing about things in the Media</li> <li>• Media creates concerns relating to safety of children</li> <li>• Government messages- teacher unable to touch children- even for re-assurance</li> <li>• Lack of consultation</li> <li>• Lack of integration in communities</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>ATTITUDES TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:</b></p> <p>Cartoon of person visiting doctor</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People feel patronised &amp; pre-judged</li> <li>• Some professionals can be hypocritical &amp; dictatorial</li> <li>• People feel demotivated &amp; rebellious</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messages driven by NHS targets not people</li> <li>• Money centred</li> <li>• Policy &amp; funding</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge</li> <li>• Lack of trust</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>REDUCED SENSE OF COMMUNITY:</b></p> <p>Video clip of 1950's Pilton gala</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People feel sense of community diminished</li> <li>• Lack of trust</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families dispersed</li> <li>• Media perceptions of the area</li> </ul>  |



## PARTICIPANTS VISION OF THE FUTURE

Thinking about the main themes identified, participants were asked to envisage what an ideal community might look like, some of the ideas included;

- A community hub- a safe place where people can get together and be active.
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century homes with main door and well kept gardens.
- Young people and families out playing in the street together.
- Community gardens run **by** local people **for** local people providing community shops with produce.
- A local adventure playground looked after by local people.
- People have more say and influence about what goes on in the community.
- No litter and no dog mess.
- Sunny weather!



Workshop participants vision of an 'ideal' community

## SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

We also carried out 6 semi structured interviews with local people to explore some of the issues in more depth. This helped develop a greater understanding about people's individual responses to certain issues.

Here are some quotes from the interviews:

**I keep myself to myself and only tell key friends when I am going away. I don't draw attention to myself**

**I think it's a safe area; Muirhouse is. If you look unhappy or shifty people react to that, if you look confident you are OK**

**The demolitions in Muirhouse have caused real hardships. Lots of shops have closed down due to lack of people passing by. It makes the place feel eerie and abandoned.**

**This area had a bad feeling that affected the feel of the whole place.**

**I was attacked when a child on a cycle path and it left a memory**

**It's a traditional society [North Edinburgh] anything different gets looked at and not accepted easily, so if you cycle through or run it's not normal, so you feel uncomfortable**

**There aren't many people from the scheme on the promenade, they don't go that far.**

## REFLECTING ON FINDINGS

The information collected was assessed by the review team and a number of key questions identified that would ultimately address the root causes and possible solutions.

- **How to reduce anxiety about safety?**
- **How to make better use of green-spaces like West Pilton Park and the cycle paths?**
- **How to stop people thinking of physical activity as structured activities?**
- **How to improve media perceptions of the area?**
- **How to change the perceptions that some professionals have about local people in the area?**
- **How do we get more people talking to each other?**

The question around ‘structured activities’ was added in by the review team to explore further people’s **own** attitudes towards physical activity.

The review has been successful in attracting local interest in the issues it identified. Furthermore, local people who attended the workshops came up with a variety of interesting and exciting ideas for ways to address the themes and respond to the questions above.

# ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

*Below are the key questions and possible solutions identified by the workshop participants; these aim to address the common themes highlighted during the consultation process*

## PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY

### 1. HOW DO WE REDUCE ANXIETY ABOUT SAFETY?

- Encourage the community to talk about their perceptions and fears in relation to safety and explore ways to overcome them.
- Run walking projects including ‘Walking With Us’ to familiarise people with the area and positively promote the area.
- Increase feelings of safety by encouraging more people to use and improve local cycle paths and green-spaces.
- Include and promote usage of green-spaces and cycle paths by including them on the local physical activity map.
- Include walking group visits to positive local projects e.g. the new community shop in Muirhouse and community gardens.
- Highlight problems with crime reporting and data associated with cycle paths and parks.

## GREEN-SPACES AND CYCLE PATHS;

### 2. HOW DO WE BETTER USE OUR LOCAL GREEN-SPACES SUCH AS, WEST PILTON PARK, THE CYCLE PATHS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS?

- Support and encourage Pilton Community Health Project volunteers and other community members to identify green-spaces that would benefit from being improved.
- Support the community to improve their local cycle path networks by identifying partnership opportunities with relevant agencies.
- Increasing community involvement in improving green-spaces and cycle paths will result in their increased usage and appeal.
- Include walking routes, cycle paths, green-spaces, community gardens and any other local recreational spaces on the online physical activity map.
- Work with the community and organisations in North Edinburgh to promote existing local initiatives.

- Create a ‘Friends of the Park’ run by local people to help improve West Pilton Park.



**West Pilton Park**

## **NORMALISING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

### **3. HOW DO WE STOP PEOPLE THINKING OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES AND HOW DO WE NORMALISE AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE?**

- Identify and promote walking, jogging and cycling routes in the local area. The aim of which is to increase the self-confidence of community members engaging in physical activity in public spaces.
- Encourage and support more local, community-led physical activities to take place such as, self led walking clubs, dance groups and other physical activity opportunities as identified by local people.
- Make better use of the local amenities by encouraging more informal and unstructured activities such as social walks/buggy walks, gardening, running, cycle rides between friends, kite flying and roller-blading on the beach promenade.
- Seek funding to work with and/or support local people and organisations to celebrate a more physically active community as part of the Commonwealth Games. This will involve recognising and building on existing physical activity events and initiatives.
- Identify and develop partnership opportunities with other local and national organisations.
- Be aware of the effects of language, for example; avoid using words like ‘exercise’ in our promotional materials.
- Keep messages simple, make physical activity fun and avoid confusing messages regarding physical activity recommendations.

## **NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE AREA**

### **4. HOW DO WE CHANGE NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS THAT SOME PROFESSIONALS HAVE ABOUT LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE AREA?**

- Promote local role models to liaise with professionals. The physical activity project volunteers are excellent role models for promoting volunteering and being more active.
- Invite professionals to community and volunteer led project activities to highlight positive local role models.
- Work with partners to deliver positive promotion opportunities at events with professionals; get local people speaking about their own positive experiences.
- Develop better relationships with local organisations and work with the volunteers to promote the community and its people in a positive way.

### **5. HOW DO WE GET BETTER MEDIA PERCEPTIONS OF THE AREA?**

- Promote current local events and initiatives in the local and citywide press.
- Provide positive press releases about the community-led activities and the impact this has on local people and the area.
- Plan walks in a way that they include appealing places and local projects, encourage volunteers to highlight these as they guide people on the walks.
- Invite media along to take part in guided walks to improve their perception and representation of the local area.
- Promote different aspects of the area in exciting and unusual formats such as, bus adventures and geo-caching (treasure hunt using GPS). This will also highlight how much there is going on and how much there is to discover in the area.
- Respond directly to exaggerated pieces of journalism to expose bias and counter negative portrayal of the area.

## IMPROVING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

### 6. HOW DO WE GET MORE PEOPLE TALKING TO EACH OTHER?

- PCHP to lead on the physical activity forum; bringing local people, volunteers and professionals together to encourage a more coordinated approach.
- Create and promote a community physical activity map and promote it at local events. The process of mapping local physical activities will provide opportunities to meet more people from the community.
- Create a 'physical activity' volunteer community to encourage increased community ownership and a greater sense of belonging.
- Increase opportunities for and support current local events that bring people together.
- Explore with local people the idea of 'Hubs' where people can meet, gather and socialise whilst being active.
- Increase access to information e.g. leaflets and programmes at local agencies for people who don't have Internet access.
- Explore the idea of a campaign to encourage kindness and increased trust between neighbours.

## CONCLUSION

The review findings demonstrate the wide variety of issues that affect the way people think about and take part in physical activity in the North Edinburgh area. The topic most prominent on people's minds that affected activity levels were their concerns regarding safety. However equally important were the more insidious, subtle effects of negative portrayals of the area and negative perceptions of the people, which have an effect on the way people perceive themselves and approach their health. The review and its findings have already made some impact. It has identified and attracted members of the community who are passionate about making a difference.

Carrying out the review has also confirmed that a community led approach is most likely to resolve some of the issues; they are big themes and local people need to be involved at all levels. This will mean the work will be reactive and will respond to local needs and opportunities, as well as the energy and resources within the community. In order to address the key questions laid out in the report, local resources need to be maximised through raising additional funds and continuing to develop and strengthen partnerships with local organisations and individuals in North Edinburgh.

This review will be a continuous process of community involvement and consultation; the mapping of physical activities is one example of an ongoing study. Also, a cyclical process of action, evaluation and change is important in order to maintain community involvement and review the impact of the work developed and carried out.



## THANK YOU...

We would like to thank the 170 people, 19 local groups and local organisations who took part in the initial consultation. In addition to this, we would like to give special thanks to local people who participated in the interviews and workshops whose contributions have been invaluable to this review process. Thank you also to the Health Improvement Fund of NHS Lothian and Paths for All who helped to fund this work.

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