

## Empowering Communities to Improve their Health and Well-Being

MAY 2010

Altogether Better: Working together to build our regions capacity to empower communities to improve their health and well-being and reduce health inequalities

Launched in 2008, Altogether Better is a five year programme designed to deliver innovative evidenced based models of engaging and empowering communities to improve their health and well-being.

The Programme, hosted by NHS Yorkshire and the Humber, is a regional-local collaborative partnership. There is a project within every Primary Care Trust locality across Yorkshire and the Humber with a mix of pct, local authority, voluntary and community organisations and regional bodies involved.

With £6.8m funding from the Big Lottery Well-Being Fund, 16 flagship projects aim to train and support 13,500 Community Health Champions in neighbourhoods with the highest risk of poor health in the region to improve the health of 70,000 individuals through peer to peer advice, support and community activities. Community Health Champions are working voluntarily with people and communities across the region, supporting them to eat better, be fitter, reduce smoking, and enjoy improved mental health and well-being. They are also influencing and shaping local services, initiating community learning opportunities and delivering activities tailored to meet the needs of their local area.

- » A region-wide programme that builds a systematic approach to community empowerment as a means of tackling health inequalities.
- » Making a difference locally with projects to improve healthy eating, physical activity and mental well-being which are delivering results.
- » 16 locally delivered flagship projects across the Yorkshire and Humber region, testing out different community health champion approaches in a range of settings.
- » 13,500 workplace and community health champions passing on their experience and enthusiasm to around 70,000 people.
- » Playing a role nationally, working with and the DH Health Inequalities Team and feeding into the Marmot review.

***“Our ultimate aim and shared ambition is to develop an evidence-based model of community empowerment based on a community health champion model that will have a significant and sustainable impact, not only in Yorkshire and the Humber but on a national level”***

Altogether Better

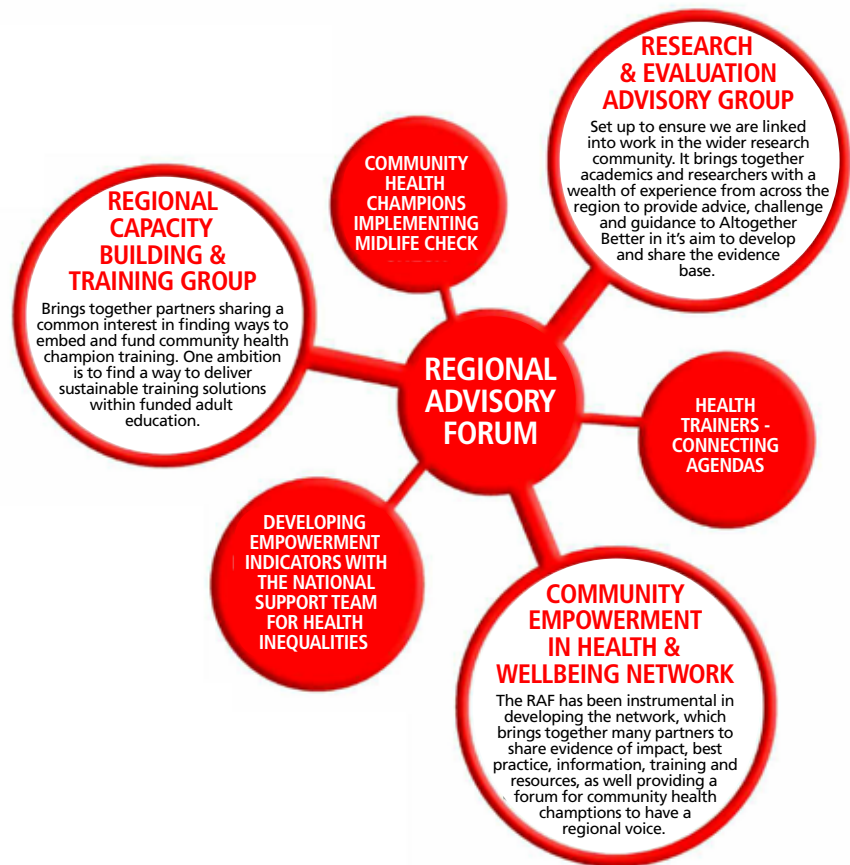


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The Altogether Better programme also includes two regional strategic elements which are contributing to our understanding, evidencing and communication of community empowerment in delivering health and well-being outcomes.

» A Regional Learning Network, facilitated by the Yorkshire and Humber Public Health Observatory, provides programme and project level support to robustly evaluate and evidence the programme and its projects. Projects are supported to evidence and evaluate their activities and outcomes, which encourages the sharing of learning and good practice and addresses the sustainability needs of the varied community health champion models.

» Altogether Better's Regional Advisory Forum (RAF) is playing an increasingly important role in raising the profile of the programme, gaining partnership support and in helping to embed community health champions across the region and beyond. The forum shares and develops evidenced based understanding on community engagement and community empowerment around health and well-being. The aim is to move towards systematically integrating this way of working across the board.



## Policy Background

### Community Empowerment in Health and Well-Being

We see three community empowerment as having three key ingredients:

1. Active citizens: people with the motivation, skills and confidence to speak up for their communities and say what improvements are needed.
2. Strengthened communities: community groups with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions.
3. Partnership with public bodies: public bodies willing and able to work as partners with local people.

**“Community Empowerment is about people and government, working together to make life better. It involves more people being able to influence decisions about their communities, and more people taking responsibility for tackling local problems, rather than expecting others to. The idea is that government can’t solve everything by itself, and nor can the community: it’s better when we work together.”**

Source; Empowerment White Paper ‘Communities in control: real people, real power’, 9 July 2008, Evidence Annex.

There is a large body of research evidence on the role of community empowerment in improving health and well-being which is summarised in a forthcoming evidence review commissioned by Altogether Better which supports the model which is being used. (Woodall, J., Raine, G., South, J. & Warwick-Booth, L. Empowerment and Health and Well-being - Evidence Summary produced for Altogether Better by Leeds Metropolitan University (forthcoming, 2010).

Community empowerment in Health and Well-Being would see active citizens encouraged and supported to speak up for health and well-being improvements and identify local needs. Communities skilled, trained and capable to work out and deliver shared health and well-being solutions and true active partnerships with the primary care trust, local authority, voluntary and community groups and local people.

## How are particular communities empowered to improve health and well-being?

### Enabling factors

In an Evidence Review\* produced for Altogether Better, a number of enabling factors which contributed to community empowerment and improved health and well-being were identified within the literature. These enabling factors included:

- » Empowerment strategies are more likely to be successful if incorporated within wider macro-economic and policy strategies aimed at creating greater equity
- » Any effort to promote community empowerment and local engagement needs to consider co-ordination with existing community forums or organisations through which local voices are already heard
- » Participation is more likely to occur when funding, support mechanisms and development opportunities are in place
- » It is imperative that the relationship between the professional and the community is equal in order to facilitate empowerment based approaches

\* Taken from: Woodall, J., Raine, G., South, J. & Warwick-Booth, L. Empowerment and Health and Well-being - Evidence Review produced for Altogether Better by Leeds Metropolitan University (forthcoming, 2010).

### Pointers for practice:

1. Practitioners should encourage group participation and involvement as this enhances people's consciousness and enables supportive environments and a deeper sense of community to develop
2. Involving people and communities in various aspects of decision-making, including the planning, implementation and evaluation of interventions is important for heightening levels of empowerment
3. Practitioners should be supported and encouraged to develop evaluation skills so that they themselves can begin to measure the effectiveness of their work.

The inconsistency in the use of the term 'empowerment' can cause a number of problems for practice. Certainly, a more transparent and mutually agreed definition is needed that disentangles empowerment as an individually oriented approach and community based approach.

Taken from: Woodall, J., Raine, G., South, J. & Warwick-Booth, L. Empowerment and Health and Well-being - Evidence Review produced for Altogether Better by Leeds Metropolitan University (forthcoming, 2010).

# Empowering Communities to Improve their Health and Well-Being

## The Marmot Review

***“This Review puts empowerment of individuals and communities at the centre of action to reduce health inequalities. But achieving individual empowerment requires social action. Our vision is of creating conditions for individuals to take control of their own lives. For some communities this will mean removing structural barriers to participation, for others developing capacity through personal and community development.”***

Sir Michael Marmot, “Fair Society, Healthy Lives, The Marmot Review”, February 2010, [www.ucl.ac.uk/marmotreview](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/marmotreview)

‘Community empowerment’ is a key theme within the Marmot Review. Could Community Health Champions be one of the missing tools to reduce health inequalities?

## The Community Health Champion Approach

### What is a community health champion?

Community health champions are people who voluntarily bring their life experience and their ability to relate to people to promote health in different communities.

Within their families, communities and workplaces they empower people to have healthier lives by raising awareness of health and healthy choices, sharing health messages, removing barriers and creating supportive networks and environments.

Community health champions are volunteers whose role is to empower people, especially those from marginalised groups to take control of their own, their families’ and the communities’ health.

This may mean supporting people in their community or workplace to make positive changes to their lifestyle, to take more exercise, cook healthy food on a budget or simply to have more fun. There are currently community health champions working across the region organising activities such as walking groups; healthy eating activities;

group activities such as dancing or swimming for older people, families and other groups identified by the champions themselves in their communities.

This model is proving to be an effective way of reaching people and is making a real difference within the target communities and backed by a solid body of evidence on the benefits of engaging community members in promoting health. The evidence base for the community health champions approach is summarised in an evidence briefing produced for *Altogether Better* by Leeds Metropolitan University. (South, J. & Raine, G. *Community Health Champions - Evidence Briefing* produced for *Altogether Better* by Leeds Metropolitan University (forthcoming, 2010).



**Our approach:**

- » Recruit people from communities suffering poorest health
- » Build capacity and capability through personal and community development
- » Enable volunteer community health champions to define the problem and come up with solution



At the heart of Altogether Better's Empowerment model is the concept that community health champions can be equipped with the knowledge, confidence and skills to make a difference in their communities. Community health champions, from a range of different communities and target groups, receive training and support from the local Altogether Better projects to enable them to carry out voluntary activities in workplaces and neighbourhoods. From this, community health champions are gaining personal benefits from involvement which are ultimately leading many of them to inspire and support others.

In real terms when we asked some of the community health champions what "Empowerment" meant to them the responses were;

***"Doing something"***  
***"Helping myself and other people"***  
***"Getting more confident"***  
***"Feeling better about myself"***

***"Seeing a difference"***  
***"Getting paid work"***  
***"Starting groups for people in my area"***  
***"Changing my life"***

# Empowering Communities to Improve their Health and Well-Being

***“I can do much more than I ever thought I could.”***

Michelle Smedley Sheffield

Michelle Smedley, 31, lives in the Southey area of Sheffield. She struggled through school and work, experienced broken relationships, and brought her children up on her own. Michelle couldn't wait to leave school at 16.

***“I didn't do very well, mainly because I played truant a lot!”***

Michelle became a Sheffield community health champion, at Healthy Cross Community Project, in March 2009 when she decided to get fit and healthy. Michelle was offered a place on the Introduction to Community Development and Health Course and began training to become a champion. Michelle completed over 100 hours volunteering for Healthy Cross progressing to lead the Wednesday Health Walk Group pictured below.



**Michelle Smedley (far right) and the Wednesday Health Walk Group**

***“Being a health champion has really helped me and my family. We are more outgoing, and we do more activities together. I have learned a lot about the community and a lot about myself in the process. I can do much more than I ever thought I could. I have had access to training and this has built up my confidence, made me calmer and me and my family healthier, fitter and happier.”***

On 10th November 2009, the Altogether Better Programme worked in conjunction with the Department of Health on a national community health champions event which focused on a range of aspects surrounding community participation and empowerment. Michelle led a workshop at the event answering questions about the Sheffield Community Health Champions project and discussing her involvement and experience.

12 months after she began her work as a volunteer, Michelle is handing out her contact details to colleagues at a celebration event and leading a discussion with other health champions and BIG Lottery staff on health issues in local communities and their ideas for ways to engage more young people in physical activity and the access issues for older people in Sheffield. She is now employed at Healthy Cross but has her sights set on the Volunteer Coordinator role. ***“That's my next step”***, she grins as she describes her own personal journey and the impact it has had on the health and well-being not only on her immediate family but her wider circle of family, friends, neighbours and the local community. “I used to think I might be a child minder one day”, she says, “but I'm good at this and it's making a difference.”

***“Having an influencing effect on others has been very empowering.”***

Community Health Champion, Calderdale

Calderdale Community Health Champions are saying similar things. A 30 year old Indian woman now living in Halifax joined the project and said of her experience.

***“An increase in my understanding and knowledge after attending and taking part in training and learning activities has meant that my confidence has developed leading to a vast improvement in***

***my communication skills. I've been given more exposure to information and activities which has developed my awareness and confidence allowing me to pass positive messages on to others. Having an influencing effect on others has been very empowering.”***

The direct health benefits she reported as a result of increased exercise and activity included:

- » Increased stamina
- » More calm and relaxed
- » Increased confidence leading to teaching yoga to groups
- » Weight loss and improved muscle tone

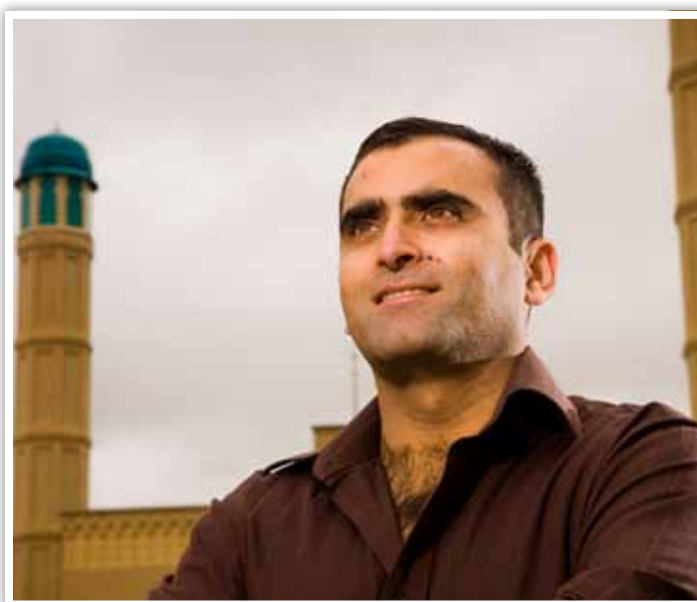
***“My family has also benefited from my involvement, e.g. we walk more, I’ve taken my daughter swimming and even got my husband and his friends to play badminton. In addition to my confidence growing, I also feel that I have grown as a person.”***

***“Over the six months I have not only made a difference within the community but also within myself”***

Waqas Khawaja Hameed

Waqas Khawaja Hameed volunteered for the Sheffield Community Health Champions through Sharrow Ship Shape Shop to create awareness about smoking cessation at mosques. He signed up to a number of health and well-being courses and went on to help significantly more than his target of 10 people to stop smoking and improve their lifestyle by encouraging and promoting healthy eating and increased physical activity.

Waqas was finding it difficult to find a career path and struggling with his identity as a Pakistani in Britain. ***“Over the six months I have not only made a difference within the community but also within myself.”*** he said. ***“Being at the mosque dramatically built my confidence. I built an identity within the community and individuals felt comfortable approaching me.”*** Waqas is now working part time as an accredited NHS Health Trainer in Sheffield.



**Waqas outside the Mosque on Wolsley Road, Sharrow, Sheffield**

***“There is a thirst for knowledge and learning.”***

Healthwise Hull



**Healthwise Hull Health Champion Graduation Ceremony**

Cheryl Oakshott, HealthWise Hull Manager at Goodwin Trust talks of the enthusiasm and engagement of community members to become Community Health Champions in Hull.

***“People are asking if they can complete level 2 and level 3 courses in health and well-being and we are putting 16 Champions through the Training the Community Trainers course who will then be able to deliver the Level 1 course in their own communities. We hadn’t anticipated this level of involvement when we started the project but we are doing our best to meet their needs and to support individuals to progress as far as they want to.”***

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One of the champions Ray Dove has become the chair of the Health Champions Support Group and is an Ambassador for NHS Membership. Other community health champions

are contributing to Expert Patient groups and NHS panels and a small number of Champions are now getting involved from the local gypsy and travelers communities.

## Seniors Show the Way - Empowering older people to promote positive health messages within their communities

Every 6 weeks community health champions from Seniors Show the Way meet up at St Georges Concert Hall in Bradford to share their experiences. The network meetings are a great opportunity for champions to learn from one another and to share the ways that they have been getting messages of good health out into their communities. It's also an opportunity to hear updates from those 'Super Champions' whose health activities such as art walks, reminiscence sessions and swimming buddies, have really taken off.

Marilyn Rogerson, a health champion who has recently returned to work after retirement says,

***“I feel strongly that older people have so much to offer society in terms of experience and stability and Seniors Show the Way gives us the support and opportunity to continue adding to our experience and passing it on.”***

Combining the original area meetings into one regular Bradford network means that community health champions can see that they are part of something bigger and that collectively, as well as individually, they are making a difference to health in Bradford.



**Bradford “Seniors Show the Way” Community Health Champions (from Left to Right): Beverley Kelly, Richard Brown, Brenda Watts, Sue Boerrigter and Debbie Jessop**

In their first year Seniors Show the Way have recruited over 400 Community Health Champions who have reached a further 927 individuals in their communities and workplaces.

## Regional Links

### Connecting the networks and listening to the voices

One of the challenges of a regional programme is how to capture all the amazing stories, how to evidence the result of all this work and how to join networks together to share learning and experiences from this programme of work and all the other similar health champion type activities across the region.

At the 2008 'Champions of Participation' event organised by COGS and the Yorkshire and Humberside Empowerment Partnership there was enthusiasm and a willingness to explore the possibility of forming a

Community Empowerment in Health and Well-being Network that would aim to;

- » Build the regions capacity to empower communities to improve their own health and well-being
- » Build relationships across the region and provide a platform for sharing knowledge
- » Promote a systematic approach to raise the understanding and value of the potential of community empowerment to improve health and well-being, civic participation and economic activity



## Yorkshire and Humber Community Empowerment in Health and Well-Being Network

***“The Community Empowerment in Health and Well-Being Network brings together many partners to share evidence of impact, best practice, information, training and resources, as well providing a forum for community health champions to have a regional voice.”***

### Background and Purpose

The Yorkshire and Humber Community Empowerment in Health and Well-Being Network is an emerging network, established in mid 2009. Its purpose and priorities are to build capacity of colleagues in local authorities, local NHS organisations, the third sector and other partners to work together to empower communities to improve their health and well-being.

This regional collaborative network model is being led by the Yorkshire and Humber Altogether Better Programme, with partners and stakeholders including the Regional Forum.

The network will contribute to the delivery of the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Empowerment action plan, which is a delivery arm of the National Empowerment Partnership. Its priorities will shape the activities to be delivered which fit directly with NI4. It will operate as a sub-network of the Regional Empowerment Partnership.

It will also provide a forum to share learning, best practice, evidence and information, helping to build relationships across commissioners and providers across the region.

### Five priorities have been agreed by the network

Priorities	Potential Outcomes
<b>Priority Activity 1:</b> Building a network of networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Easier access to the wealth of activities we have in this region</li> <li>» More efficient and effective approach across networks</li> </ul>
<b>Priority Activity 2:</b> Sharing and articulating evidence of impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Improved commissioning and delivery of empowerment activities</li> <li>» A stronger rationale for resourcing and sustaining empowerment activities</li> </ul>
<b>Priority Activity 3:</b> Sharing best practice, information, training and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Improved commissioning and delivery of empowerment activities</li> <li>» Save cost and time resources</li> </ul>
<b>Priority Activity 4:</b> Providing a forum for community health champions/activists to have a regional voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Improved services and activities</li> <li>» Improved civic participation</li> </ul>
<b>Priority Activity 5:</b> Building linkages and understanding across commissioning and empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Improved and more systematic commissioning and delivery of empowerment activities</li> </ul>

The Community Empowerment in Health and Well-Being Network is currently made up of 48 individuals representing local authorities, primary care trusts, voluntary and community organisations, community activists and freelance consultants. All members have an involvement in health and well-being activities and an interest in improving partnership working across the region and empowering individuals and communities to contribute to planning and decision making about health

and well-being activities and services across Yorkshire and the Humber.

#### Next steps for the network to take forward:

- » **Membership** – extending the reach of the network and ensuring all areas are represented and supported to contribute and get involved
- » **Network of networks event** – Minding the Gap have offered to organise an event to bring together all the

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networks working in health and well-being across the region

- » **Communication** – developing improved methods to communicate to members and wider audiences between meetings and to ensure that information is accessible and in appropriate formats
- » **Content** – using the meetings to explore and discuss common themes and local priorities such as the development of Community Empowerment Strategies, Local Area Indicators, Co-Production and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments from

individual, community, organisation and commissioner perspectives

- » **Sharing Good Practice** – finding out what is working well and learning from other regions
- » **Evidence** – supporting the development of a regional evidence base

Individuals interested in joining the network should contact **Sarah Janicwicz** at the Yorkshire & Humber Regional Forum. Fax: **0113 3942301** or email: [sarah.janicwicz@regionalforum.org.uk](mailto:sarah.janicwicz@regionalforum.org.uk).

## National Links

Altogether Better has been asked by the Department of Health to take a lead on developing a national Community Health Champion network.

### Community Health Champion National Event 10 November 2009

The aim of the event held on the 10 November 2009 was to bring together for the first time, partners from across the country with an interest in community health, to set a framework for developing a more systematic approach to supporting community health champions at a local, regional and national level.

Community health champions, delivery organisations, commissioners, policy makers and academics from across sectors were invited to participate. This resulted in a diverse group of almost 300 delegates, including

community health champions, representatives from local and central government, the NHS, the third sector and learning institutions based throughout the country.

The event was designed to highlight the wider policy context, showcase some of the existing examples of community health champions, and enable delegates to consider and debate the challenges and opportunities facing them. A full report of this event is available online at: [www.altogetherbetter.org.uk](http://www.altogetherbetter.org.uk).

### National Online Debate

Altogether Better coordinated an online debate in 2009, delivered in partnership with the IDeA, the national local government improvement agency, and designed to reach out to anyone with a contribution to make, including community health champions, delivery organisations, commissioners and policy makers. The debate was held on the IDeA Healthier Communities 'Communities of Practice' on-line forum. There were 57 contributions made by 26 individuals and in addition to the on-line contribution, Altogether Better were also contacted directly by a further 20 partners.

Two of the key points to emerge from discussions around the benefits of a community participation, engagement

and empowerment in health and well-being will influence some of our work this year:

1. Given the rising numbers of people with long term conditions and the potential of volunteers as peer support to improve self management, the full value of this community resource needs to be recognised within our health system.
2. Need to enable community health champions' voice to be heard, they are a great source of intelligence and knowledge which could help improve services and policymaking.

## **A Ten Point Manifesto for the Future of Community Health Champions**

based on the recommendations from the Altogether Better 2009 National Community Health Champion Event

10 Steps to mobilise and support communities to provide a sustainable solution to the reduction of health inequalities

### **STEP 1: Local partnership and strategy**

Community Health Champions need to be integrated into the wider local civic participation strategy. As active citizens working within deprived communities, health champions play a valuable role in contributing to building and improving social capital, cohesion, enterprise, economic and other quality of life outcomes in addition to improving health and well-being.

### **STEP 2: Regional leadership**

Regional infrastructures provide an opportunity to support and promote the systematic integration of community health champions at a local and regional level, through leadership, strategic development and improvement support.

### **STEP 3: National/regional collaborative network**

There is a need to work together across regions and nationally to share experience, evidence, best practice and resources and to continue to develop policy and practice relating to community health champions and their role in coproducing health and health care..

### **STEP 4: Identify and highlight the links with key local, regional and national policy**

During the last year there has been much discussion regarding the contribution and potential that the community health champions approach has to make to wider local, regional and national policy. This needs to be clearly articulated and specifically highlighted in order to fully engage decision-makers.

### **STEP 5: Build the economic and impact business case**

In a context where there is an increasing focus on how we can make the best use of limited resources and increasing challenges relating to inequalities, it is essential that a robust business case is built to provide a strong rationale for systematically integrating community health champions and mobilising communities to be active participants in improving their health and the health of their communities.

### **STEP 6: Uphold the values of empowerment**

In this country we have a history and wealth of knowledge and experience of community empowerment and community

development. Community health champions need to be 'home grown', and supporting activities need to be tailored to and owned by the communities on which they are focused.

### **STEP 7: Develop a quality assurance framework**

Quality assurance should be developed through a range of mechanisms, such as sharing best practice, developmental support, and contract management and through the development of performance measures.

### **STEP 8: Incorporate and understanding of community empowerment into training and development for health professionals and managers**

Working with community health champions to coproduce health and well being will reshape health services. This means challenging and changing the existing behaviours and processes within the system. This will require the development of an understanding of the values and potential of community empowerment into training and development for health professionals and managers..

### **STEP 9: Identify champions of champions**

In order to influence across a range of sectors and roles to achieve the systematic integration of community health champions, it is important to identify and engage the champions of champions, whether this be Chief Executives, politicians or individuals who can influence *their peers*..

### **STEP 10: Building an integrated community resource into the health system**

Across this country we have Community Health Champions, Health Trainers, Communities for Health, Local Involvement Networks, Healthy Living Centres and many other community led activities which are all currently supported and delivered in a disjointed, short term initiative, postcode lottery approach.

This wealth of community activities have been developed in different ways according to national and local drivers and contexts, however there is merit in local commissioners/ decision makers considering the potential of the 'community resource' as a key part of local health system planning.

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## Next Steps

- » Altogether Better will lead the development and production of a national e-newsletter for community health champions which will be produced and distributed quarterly from May 2010-September 2011
- » Community health champions will be invited to help plan and deliver the next national community health champion event scheduled sometime late 2010/early spring 2011
- » The Yorkshire and Humber Community Empowerment in Health and Well-Being Network will meet quarterly from June 2010
- » More work needs to be done on enabling the voice of the community health champion to be heard. Anyone interested in contributing to this work should contact Rhian Harding at Altogether Better
- » Amazing Stories will document the personal journeys and qualitative impact on individuals health and well-being as a result of their participation in community health champion activities
- » The Altogether Better Regional Learning Network has commissioned research into evidencing the impact of community empowerment on the health and well-being of individuals and communities. This will be shared when the research is completed.
- » Training is being provided to Altogether Better projects on the Social Return on Investment
- » Evidence and evaluation from individual community projects collated regionally and shared with partners
- » Projects and communities will be supported to look at sustainable health champion models and develop activities to reflect bottom-up learning

For further information regarding **Altogether Better** please contact:  
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For the Regional Empowerment Partnership contact COGS, **0114 268 7070**, [mail@cogs.uk.net](mailto:mail@cogs.uk.net). More VOICES are available on the regional empowerment website [www.yhep.org.uk](http://www.yhep.org.uk)

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