

Target: Wellbeing Evaluation - Annual Report February 2010

Reporting period April – September 09

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Executive Summary



Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank staff at Groundwork Northwest for their support and advice, particularly Maggie Moody, Louise Robinson, Nancy Brown, Rhiannon Davies and Rob Squires. We also thank the members of the Target: Wellbeing Governance Group for their support, advice and direction on this work. Thanks also to all Programme Managers and Project Managers for their support of the evaluation.

Thanks are extended to Steve Timmis and Steve Rogers for their time and effort in developing the Target: Wellbeing registration database. We would also like to thank all those who have assisted with the production of this report, in particular Lynn Deacon, Rebecca Harrison and Jennifer Mason of the North West Public Health Observatory for proofreading, and Lee Tisdall of the Centre for Public Health for design.

Executive summary

This annual evaluation report of the Target: Wellbeing portfolio provides an account of activities completed by the North West Public Health Observatory (NWPHO) and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). The report also provides evidence of behaviour change to date.

The behaviour change evidenced within this report is accompanied with a warning regarding sample sizes at this early stage of the analysis but preliminary results indicate Target: Wellbeing (TWB) is working towards its stated outcome of improving healthy lifestyles across targeted areas in the North West.

Since the roll out of evaluation tools in January to March 2009 the following can be observed:

Targeting and improving health inequalities

Reach analysis of key demographic, health and lifestyle factors indicate that TWB is successfully reaching intended beneficiaries from targeted Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs)¹.

- Geodemographic classification analysis reveals that whilst the majority of TWB participants are recruited from targeted census output areas a significant minority are recruited from more affluent groups.
- Participants demonstrate rates of poor health status comparable with rates across the region and for some health problems (e.g. overweight and obese, asthma, diabetes, back problems and depression) show rates comparable with the most deprived fifth across the region.
- As many as 40% of registered participants self-reported experiencing some form of nervous trouble or depression in the last 12 months.
- Some disproportionate figures are reported e.g. more females than males are registered in TWB, but as yet not all projects have entered information onto the database so exact figures for reach analysis may be skewed at this early stage.

Projects are encouraged to continue registering all participants so that registration database analysis can be taken as a fair representation of TWB participation.

How behaviour change has been evidenced

Evidence of behaviour change in this annual report, across the three key themes under investigation (mental wellbeing, physical activity and healthy eating), is based on pre and post intervention scores. This analysis was conducted on 423 welcome questionnaires and 178 exit questionnaires received by NWPHO between April 2009 and September 2009.

Improved mental wellbeing

- Across the whole TWB portfolio direct beneficiaries report higher levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction following TWB intervention (12% increase on Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Survey (SWEMWBS); 24% increase on life satisfaction scale).
- Direct beneficiaries of mental health projects demonstrated a 29% increase in measured wellbeing (SWEMWBS) on average, bringing their subjective assessments of wellbeing more in line with the regional post intervention scores.

Improved self management

- The majority of TWB participants (86%), including those registered with mental health projects (88%), reported that TWB had helped them develop skills that would help them have more control over their life.
- Direct beneficiaries of mental health projects demonstrated a 12% increase in measured self efficacy on average.

Increased job control

- 30 people registered to job/employment projects reported that TWB had helped them find new employment (56% of respondents completing exit questions).

¹LSOAs are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics. The SOA layers are of consistent size across the country and will not be subjected to regular boundary change. The 34,378 Lower Layer SOAs in England (32,482) and Wales (1,896) were built from groups of Output Areas (typically 4 to 6) and constrained by the boundaries used for 2001 Census outputs. They have a minimum population of 1,000.

Increased sense of community belonging

- Over half of TWB participants self report that TWB had helped them meet new people and 27% self report that the project had helped them feel part of their community.
- Community belonging measures show slight improvement in community engagement outside of TWB and more regular meetings with friends and relatives. These findings begin to indicate the wider benefit TWB may have on social as well as personal wellbeing.
- Improvements in neighbourhood satisfaction were not observed and some participants reported being more dissatisfied post intervention. This warrants further investigation, which may reflect the inappropriateness of this measure as a TWB outcome, but might also be a product of increased health literacy.

Increased self esteem

- Direct beneficiaries of mental health projects demonstrated a 12% increase in measured self esteem on average.

Improved physical activity

Increased cycling and walking

- There has been an average increase of 74 minutes per week walking across all projects, indicating the general impact that the TWB portfolio is having in enabling its beneficiaries to live healthier lives.
- Across physical activity projects there has been an average increase of 145 minutes walking per week for beneficiaries.

Increased use of open space for physical activity

- 74% of physical activity project beneficiaries self report that they now make more use of the outdoors whilst doing physical activity.

More active in daily lifestyles

- Improvement in those achieving government guidelines for physical activity can be seen across the whole portfolio, as there is an increase of 13% in those achieving high/moderate levels of physical activity.
- Physical activity projects appear to engage participants who are already motivated to be physically active and report achieving high/moderate levels of physical activity already. This does increase post intervention so that 92% report high/moderate levels of physical activity post intervention. Some of these findings may be accounted for if participants have completed welcome questionnaires after they have already engaged with the project since their baseline measures would not be accurate.
- The proportion of adults sitting for 8 or more hours a day was higher for participants on physical activity projects pre intervention than is reported by the region's least affluent group. Encouragingly, participants on physical activity projects show lower levels of sedentary behaviour post intervention than the regional comparison.
- 64% of participants on physical activity projects agree that they are more active in their daily lifestyle as a direct result of their participation with TWB.
- The percentage of beneficiaries who report enjoying physical activity increased for participants on physical activity projects (12%) as well as for the participants across TWB portfolio (14%). This shows that after engaging with TWB people are enjoying and having a more positive attitude towards physical activity.
- 37% of physical activity project participants self reported that the project had encouraged them to take up other physical activity outside the project, demonstrating a displaced benefit.
- 93% of physical activity project participants self reported that they would continue to be more physically active in their daily life as a result of their engagement with TWB, demonstrating a perceived sustained benefit.

Improved healthy eating

Increased number of people involved in food growing

- Fewer participants on healthy eating projects reported being 'not confident' about food growing after participating in a TWB healthy eating project.

Increased availability of healthy food

- Pre and post intervention scores across the whole portfolio indicate that the average TWB beneficiary is eating at least one more portion of fruit/vegetables a day. This is similar for participants registered to healthy eating projects and the majority of these beneficiaries (74%) now report eating 5 or more a day post intervention. Fewer people report eating no fruit or vegetables a day post intervention again indicating the influence that TWB has on encouraging healthy eating amongst participants.

Improved levels of food preparation and cooking skills

- Many participants in healthy eating projects were seen to already eat fresh food fairly often on a weekly basis before entering a TWB project. However fewer participants report never eating fresh food on a weekly basis post intervention indicating some of the success TWB is having with the disengaged.
- As with some physical activity measures good pre intervention scores indicate that projects are engaging individuals who already demonstrate confidence around healthy eating. These figures do increase post intervention but what is also interesting is the lower proportion of respondents who score low/poorly post intervention. It may also be possible that the measures chosen do not accurately reflect the way the project works in bringing about positive change.

Process evaluation

The process evaluation presents emergent findings from the first round of interviews with Programme Managers, which were carried out between April 2009 and May 2009. The focus of the evaluation was limited to exploring the views and perceptions of programme leaders and other key staff.

- Programmes adopted several different methods of allocating funding to projects (e.g. competition to ensure the highest quality projects; collaboration to merge and strengthen similar projects), each having different strengths and appearing to be appropriate to the respective local area.
- The delay in the release of TWB funding to the projects impacted more on projects led by smaller organisations using funding to pay staff costs, as some lacked the cash flow to proceed with recruiting workers.
- The administrative load involved in relation to monitoring and evaluation has been experienced more negatively by smaller organisations involved in TWB, as larger and more established organisations were generally more used to this level of scrutiny.
- Wellbeing is understood as a holistic concept by the Programme Managers despite the specific focus of the three TWB themes.
- Relationships between Programme Managers and Project Managers appear to be generally positive. Programme Managers have also been forging links between organisations involved in TWB and other wellbeing projects that had previously not communicated or liaised on a regular basis.

Summary conclusions

- Throughout the analysis we consistently observed improvements in terms of average scores across the three outcomes, pre and post intervention, but we also witnessed far fewer negative responses from beneficiaries. Across the portfolio, despite limited data, it was possible to see areas where TWB worked particularly well by shifting thinking and behaviour of disengaged individuals, e.g. those who do not feel part of their community or who never eat fruit/vegetables.
- There were a small number of measures where it may be possible that the indicator does not reflect the way in which TWB exerts an influence, e.g. confidence around healthy eating, neighbourhood satisfaction. These measures will be closely re-examined in future evaluation reports.
- At this stage of the evaluation these findings are only indicative and in some instances indicate interesting and useful direction for further analysis when more data is available.

These early results suggest that TWB is working well towards its intended outcomes. Projects are encouraged to continue to support participants to complete welcome and exit questionnaires so that the nature of its working and the impact it is having on key groups can be examined further.

Target: Wellbeing is a programme of over 90 projects that increase exercise, encourage healthier eating and promote mental wellbeing. Funded by £8.9m from the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund, it's managed by Groundwork for the benefit of targeted disadvantaged communities across the Northwest.

Groundwork UK is the operating name of The Federation of Groundwork Trusts Ltd., a company limited by guarantee and registered in England. Company registration number: 1900511. Charity registration number: 291558.



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