

“That’s the first time that someone’s actually told me what my blood pressure actually is”: Tackling high blood pressure in Cheshire and Merseyside through community blood pressure checks & lifestyle advice

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Background

Current local estimates suggest that in excess of 650,000 adults in Cheshire and Merseyside may have undiagnosed high blood pressure, 275,000 of whom are not aware of it placing them at risk of serious medical consequences.

Around half of adults do not understand their blood pressure numbers or the risks associated with high blood pressure. Poor health outcomes related to high blood pressure are worse for those who live in disadvantaged communities.

Most high blood pressure is detected opportunistically through primary care visits. As part of a system wide response to tackling high blood pressure in the region, ‘Saving lives: Reducing the pressure’ was launched in 2016. The initiative aims to develop innovative approaches to testing and treatment for high blood pressure.

Evaluation methods

Working with the Champs Public Health Collaborative, researchers at the Public Health Institute at Liverpool John Moores University carried out a qualitative evaluation of the delivery of community-based blood pressure checks and lifestyle advice delivered in four settings.

Across the settings, this involved observations, interviews with members of the public who had had their blood pressure checked, and interviews with the staff carrying out the checks (Table).

	Observation days	General public interviews	Staff interviews
Health Trainers	3	13	5
Pharmacy	2	12	5
FRS	3	4	5
Kiosk	3	10	n/a

+ Interviews with 11 wider stakeholders



Offering blood pressure checks outside of general practice is acceptable to the public. Important features include convenience, ease of access and the preference for a familiar, non-medical setting.

Settings



Health Trainers

Blood pressure checks carried out in shopping centres, workplaces and other community locations.



Wellpoint Kiosk

Self-service kiosk based at various community locations in and around Warrington.



Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

Blood pressure checks offered in people’s homes as part of Safe & Well visits.



Community pharmacy

Blood pressure checks offered to customers at Healthy Living pharmacies.

Key findings



Convenient & familiar setting

Many members of the public who we interviewed said that they would not otherwise have gone to their GP to have their blood pressure checked.



Empowerment

Having more control over when and where to have a blood pressure check was identified as an important factor.



An ‘inclusive’ initiative

The initiative was able to reach members of the public who stated they would not want to ‘trouble the doctor’ for a blood pressure check.



Reaching the ‘hard to reach’

The kiosk and Health Trainer strands of the initiative included a workplace-based element, and this had an important role in facilitating access to a large number of people, especially men.



Supporting behaviour & lifestyle changes

Several members of the public that we interviewed reported an improved awareness of what their blood pressure readings meant and that they either had been, or would go to their GP because of their community blood pressure check.



Acceptable to the public

Offering blood pressure checks outside of general practice was acceptable to the public. The initiative was also found to be acceptable to the staff delivering the checks.



Working together

Stakeholders and members of staff delivering the blood pressure checks felt that excellent partnership working between a wide range of different agencies had been one of the key drivers to successful implementation of the initiative.



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