

'Health Checks on Tour' – Engaging with Dog Owners to Increase the Uptake of NHS Health Checks in Community Settings

Introduction:

The Health Improvement Service (HIS) has been a public health provider service since 2004 and is committed to extending the uptake of NHS Health Checks (NHSHCs) in community settings by testing innovative models of engagement, analysing the intervention and then refining community outreach and engagement models to reduce health inequalities related to cardiovascular disease.

Background:

This project was designed to explore whether an increase in the uptake of NHSHCs could be achieved within the dog owning population of Salford. The existing partnership with the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) was to be expanded, by further exploring the concept of using people's interest in their dog's wellbeing to engage with them regarding their own health, specifically, to encourage dog owners to take up the opportunity of a NHSHC whilst their dog was having a 'PetCheck'. The campaign was to be named 'Health Checks on Tour'

Setting:

Five parks in Salford, over one week in July 2018. HIS and PDSA each had their own bespoke health check vehicle and a selection of 'have a go agility' was provided by the Salford City Council Dog Warden Service, which in effect was used to 'link' both health check services and enhance engagement.

Methods:

A marketing campaign and networking with key stakeholders promoted 'Health Checks on Tour'. Booking was available, with 'walk ups' welcomed. Dog owners had NHSHCs while their dog was having the PDSA 'PetCheck'. In addition, the Salford Dog Warden Service were present on all days offering advice relating to behaviour and free microchipping. On completion of the NHSHC, people were asked 'Would you have accessed the NHSHC at your doctors?' and follow up interviews were undertaken eight weeks later

Results:

104 NHSHCs were undertaken (all people HIS had no previous engagement with).

- 48 signposted back to their GP surgery for clinical follow up
- 18 referred to community lifestyle interventions

78% stated that they would not have accessed the NHSHC at their GP surgery.

77 follow up interviews

- 32 made positive lifestyle changes
- 13 accessed community lifestyle interventions.
- 40 of those requiring clinical follow-up were interviewed, 26 were under investigation at their GPs.

Comments regarding the Health Checks on Tour:

"It's an amazing service – health checks for people and pets as well"

"Really good idea, accessible, my husband qualified, we both had the day off so we thought we'd come down, brilliant"

"Absolutely fantastic for humans and dogs. If it wasn't for the dog check I wouldn't have come"

Social Value:

The PDSA undertook 161 'PetChecks', with the dog wardens engaging with 250 people. This resulted in:-

- Salford residents saving an estimated total of £10,842 in vet bills, contributing to the city's anti-poverty agenda.
- Promoting the emotional health and holistic wellbeing of local dog owners, by keeping their loved companions safe and well.

Next Steps:

Expanding the service and partnership in 2019/20

- 2 PDSA 'PetCheck' vehicles to engage more dog owners and increase 'traffic' for further NHSHC
- Visiting different parks to this year, to access new people, with a particular focus on areas of higher deprivation
- Networking further, to promote to new audiences trading on last year's success

Conclusion:

The innovative approach to engage with and present an opportunity of having an NHSHC to people new to HIS (the majority of which stated they would not have accessed the NHSHC at their GPs), was a success. This was only possible through accessing networks via the dog wardens and the PDSA partnership to promote the campaign and the excellent engagement tool of PDSA 'PetChecks' in order to deliver a large number of opportunistic NHSHCs to dog owners.

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