



City and Hackney Health Inequalities Programme consultation 2005

Response by London Cycling Campaign in Hackney

London Cycling Campaign in Hackney
GOOD FOR HACKNEY...GOOD FOR YOU!

London Cycling Campaign in Hackney is the local group of the London Cycling Campaign
There are more than 800 LCC members in the borough, and more than 9000 in London as a whole.

www.hackney-cyclists.org.uk

www.lcc.org.uk

Q1: How much do you agree with the following general statements about the draft Health Inequalities Programme?

The document does a good job of summarising the long-recognised inequalities in health between different groups in the local population. Physical inactivity crosscuts objectives in 4 categories: cardiovascular health (beneficial effects on obesity, hyperlipidaemia, hypertension), mental health (beneficial effects in depression, anxiety, and substance misuse), diabetes mellitus (beneficial effects on hyperglycaemia and obesity) and, overall life expectancy (increased life expectancy (of up to 10 years!) in those who exercise regularly).

As these conditions are among the commonest causes of death and disability reversing the modern trend towards sedentaryness has the greatest potential not only to achieve the health authority's target objectives but to increase well-being, reduce air pollution and congestion.

The document's current organisation by clinical topic misses an important opportunity to recognise the centrality of inactivity to the major killers in our society today, and promote effective community action to address this.

In "What works" exercise promotion should be specifically identified, and schemes that use modes of exercise promotion of proven efficacy should be encouraged. The benefits of exercise are only seen when it is regular, which means building it into patients' lifestyles. In essence, this means that walking and cycling are the only sustainable forms of exercise for the vast majority of people. (See: Hillsden M et al. Randomised controlled trials of physical activity promotion in free living populations: a review. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 1995; 49: 448-453)

Q2: Are there any important health inequalities in City and Hackney not identified in the document? If so, please describe below.

Road injuries and deaths disproportionately affect those in the lower social groups, with poorer children several times more likely to be killed or injured than their better-off peers.

Meanwhile, the contemporary street environment, dominated by motor traffic, reduces the potential for children and young people to take exercise as part of play, with predictable consequences

We would urge the authority to examine the work of Dr Ian Roberts, director of the Child Health Monitoring Unit at University College London. According to Dr Roberts, "transport is the single biggest issue in preventative child health. Never before have children's horizons been so limited, their freedom so curtailed, their environment so circumscribed".

See <http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/prospectus/profiles/roberts.html>

Q3: Are there any important actions that would help reduce health inequalities in City and Hackney that are not currently included in the document?

Although the need for greater physical activity is generally recognised by the health professions, and the document alludes to it at some points as it considers effective interventions in each target group, an awareness of effective strategies to promote is conspicuous by its absence.

The health authority should use its influence:

- to recognise the centrality of enhancing physical activity to many of its key objectives;
- to reach out to local organisations that can deliver a safer, more pleasant environment in which this activity can take place, for example, by pressing for the police to make road traffic speed reduction a priority in order to reduce the risk of trauma to pedestrians and cyclists.
- to fund local activities designed to provide sustainable active lifestyles: e.g. training, promotion and support for local people to cycle regularly.

***Douglas Carnall and Trevor Parsons on behalf of the London Cycling Campaign in Hackney
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