Fact Finding Visit: Keep Well in Glasgow – 22 June 2012
Members attending: Mary Scanlon MSP and Humza Yousaf MSP

Note of visit

This visit focussed on the Scottish Government’s Keep well programme which aims to increase the rate of health improvement in 40-64 year olds who are registered with participating GP practices from the most deprived areas across Scotland. The aim is to identify those people who are at particular risk of preventable, serious ill health, and offer health checks, screening and advice. The focus is on cardiovascular disease (CVD) and its main risk factors, especially blood pressure, cholesterol, smoking and diabetes.

During the visit members heard that from an initial 20 practices participating in the Keep Well programme there were now 100 practices participating across Glasgow. The programme has two important roles:
- outreach in the community
- working with practices.

The programme staff worked with front line staff in general practices identifying those on GP patient lists at most risk of preventable serious ill-health and inviting them in for a health check using telephone calls and letters. An outreach worker then visited the patient once contact was made. This had an initial success rate of 25% of patients contacted then attending a health check but more recently the success rate was approximately 15%.

South Asian Anticipatory Care (SAAC) Pilot

Under this pilot, people from the South Asian Community in South Glasgow, aged from 35-64, were invited to attend a keep well health check by local pharmacists. Staff also contacted South Asian patients through practices by targeting hot spots such as Pollack. In the last twelve months 2000 people had been targeted of which 900 had received a health check.

Keep Well in Drumchapel

A GP practice based approach was used given GPs often see patients on at least an annual basis. Patients in deprived areas needed more time with GPs (such as a double appointment) in order to have time to discuss the issues affecting them. Staff training was important in building skills and capacity in the practice to deliver keep well. The practice also linked to a range of other resources in the community such as literacy and numeracy programmes and money advice centres as part of addressing the issues arising from the health checks.
Key messages identified by MSPs:

- there is a need to address the fatalistic attitude that prevails in deprived communities and in the South Asian community that poor health is expected.

- because of issues such as chaotic lifestyles, poverty, housing, literacy and financial issues, health checks can be seen by people living in deprived communities as being of a low priority. In some cases people may wait until they suffer from a heart attack or other cardiac condition before addressing their health. It was important that all these issues were addressed rather than just the health issues and therefore connections between the GP surgery and local organisations providing services such as housing support, literacy and numeracy support and advice through money advice centres were important in addressing poor health.

- Within the South Asian community the approach of a health professional, who spoke the language and understood the culture, contacting people at their home was especially valued and was more likely to result people attending a health check. Whereas those from deprived communities felt that a longer term personal relationship with a medical professional such as a nurse, providing time to talk about their issues was a valued approach which was more likely to succeed.

- South Asian pharmacists have been successful in providing keep well health checks in South Glasgow because they could provide the time (40-45 mins) to discuss patients concerns (whereas doctors are very busy and it can be difficult to get an appointment). Pharmacists also more likely have a pre-existing relationship with the South Asian community (because of the higher prevalence of some conditions such as diabetes which require regular prescription medication).

- If lifestyle changes are to be successful, it is important that:
  - healthy food is cheap and is available in the community;
  - appropriate exercise classes are available (such as women only gym sessions).

- cookery classes are highly valued especially where they recognised cultural differences (such as what low fat ingredients can be used to replace high fat ones in South Asian cooking) or provided cooking skills and education in how to understand food labelling. Also important was raising awareness of the potential dangers of eating unhealthily.

- Healthy ingredients for cooking need to be easily available in the local communities.

- Mental health is vital to tackling health issues – it was important to tackle the causes of stress and depression and to provide people with coping strategies before then addressing unhealthy food choices.
• Men are less likely to seek a health check, waiting instead until they have a heart attack. One way Keep Well seeks to address this by empowering family members to encourage men to attend health checks (especially in the South Asian community where women can play a crucial role).

• People who have attended the keep well health check and then improved their health through lifestyle changes act as ambassadors in their local community encouraging their family and others to attend health checks and to make health improvements.