

CATEGORY | Outstanding Environmental Health Team

WINNER | Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough

Council Health & Wellbeing Team



“Working with a local rural community on a co-production pilot to improve health and wellbeing”

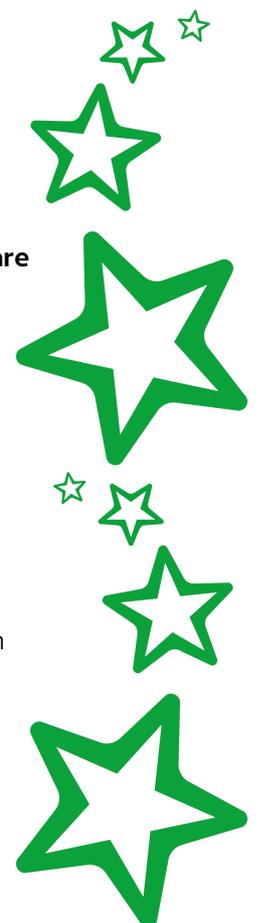
INTRODUCTION

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council has developed an innovative Health and Wellbeing team to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. The team is dedicated, person centred and through a pilot with a local community has been successful in embedding use of the principles of Co-Production at individual, community and strategic level. The team is focused on creating and influencing positive change to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. Underpinning this work are a number of Regional Strategic Plans including the Draft Programme for Government, Making Life Better and Health and Wellbeing 2026- Delivering Together.

The Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Health & Wellbeing Team of 11 members is one of three teams within Environmental Health and was established in the newly formed Council following Local Government Reform in April 2015 which also brought about a new Community Planning role for Councils in Northern Ireland. The area of control for the team is to tackle the complex determinants of health which impact on people’s health and wellbeing within the Borough, and they are responsible for the delivery of a number of externally funded projects for Energy Efficiency, Home Accident Prevention and Affordable Warmth. The team also has the only Public Health Nutritionist in Local Government in Northern Ireland, which has allowed the development of evidence based public health nutrition initiatives. Other areas of work include smoking cessation, workplace health and the Council’s Oil Stamp Saving Scheme.

Strategy and approach

The challenge was throughout an intensive period of change to establish a new team which would “Make a Difference” to the lives of the people who utilize its services by piloting an innovative co-production approach with a local community and embedding it as an approach in the Council’s community plan while continuing to meet targets for externally funded projects. Prior to starting the pilot research included reviewing New Economics Foundation guidance and meetings with experts on the use of the approach.



In October 2015 with funding provided by the Public Health Agency the Council started working with a local rural community on a Co-production pilot to improve health and wellbeing. Initially working with an external facilitator twenty nine health champions from both the community and the Health and Wellbeing team were trained. Throughout, the six principles of Co-Production were adhered to with the emphasis being placed on a community 'assets' based approach and on connecting existing services. Building on the training an asset map and a catalogue for health and wellbeing was produced.

In March 2016 the champions organised a Community Spirit Day to showcase the many assets in their local area. The champions formed themselves into a unique non hierarchical Community Collective and developed a logo and vision statement. An action plan to tackle mental health and wellbeing was developed after identifying this as a major issue affecting their community.

In March 2018 the Collective worked with local health professionals to organise a Tree of Hope planting ceremony to promote the importance of good emotional and mental wellbeing. Working with Community Evaluation Northern Ireland an outcomes framework was developed for the pilot, the first of its kind within a Council in Northern Ireland.

Recent achievements

A number of positive outcomes were recorded both at individual level, at group level and in the relationships between individuals, groups and in the relationship between the community group, Council staff and other statutory partners.

Comments from some of the participants include "the community as an entity has become stronger", "this approach is different", "the Council have come here to meet us", "I feel my voice counts". A report on the pilot initiative was published and launched regionally at a conference hosted by the Council in January 2017 which had 200 participants from the community, voluntary and statutory sectors in attendance.

The annual budget of £36,000 covered the evaluation, facilitation, events, report and staff costs. Throughout the establishment of the new Health and Wellbeing Team, members have committed to continuous learning and supporting the development of each other. Team members have embraced the principles of co-production as an approach and embedded it at every level of their work whether working with an individual or community or at a strategic level. This has resulted in a 'work with' rather than 'deliver onto' approach. To further develop team members and build resilience the team held an externally facilitated Away Day in February 2018. All team members completed a SWOT analysis of the team prior to the day. From this an action plan has been developed and agreed by all team members. One of the agreed actions is to include cascade training as a standing item on the monthly team agenda. The team has been established and has become competent in the co-production approach embedding it as an approach at individual, community and strategic level.

Its work is considered to be very successful and the work with the local community has been recognized in the Chief Medical Officer's 2016/17 Annual Report: https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/CMO%20Annual%20Report%202016-17_0.pdf

In 2017 the team represented Local Government in Northern Ireland on the Department of Health's Transformation Implementation Group developing Regional Co-production guidance. This allowed the team to demonstrate at a strategic level that health is not solely the responsibility of health and social care services.

In February 2018 the team also presented on behalf of Local Government at a regional Community Development Symposium, highlighting the links between community development, Co-Production, health outcomes and the contribution of local Councils to health and wellbeing.

In October 2018 the team will also present on the approach at the International Healthy Cities Conference to be held in Belfast. The team has been successful in getting co-production embedded at a strategic level in the Council's "Love Living Here" Community Plan.

In December 2017 the team was confirmed as the Action Lead for the development of an Age Friendly Strategy for the Borough using a co-production approach.

The team has also been successful in not only meeting but exceeding the targets for the externally funded projects. In 2017/18 targets for Energy Efficiency referrals were exceeded by 89% and household visits exceeded by 31%. Home Accident Prevention targets were also exceeded by 34.4%. In addition, the Council's Oil Stamp Saving Scheme sold £140,620 worth of oil stamps.

Ultimately the team is delivering a service which is "Making a Difference" to the lives of local people by utilizing the knowledge and experience held within the team and finding ways in which the public can move from being passive recipients of service delivery to being part of the decisions that affect them.