

CITY'S BATTLE AGAINST HEART DISEASE PRAISED BY HEALTH SECRETARY

Sheffield's success in tackling heart disease in deprived parts of the city was hailed a 'stunning achievement' by Health Secretary John Reid, MP, at a national public health conference this week.

Mr Reid praised the city's award-winning CIRC (City-wide Initiative for Reducing Circulatory Disease) programme which has been highly successful in its contribution to cutting early deaths (before the age of 75) from heart attacks and strokes in targeted areas of the city.

He was speaking about tackling health inequalities at the 'Choosing Health?' conference held at the QE2 Conference Centre in London.

Mr Reid acknowledged that thanks to targeted work undertaken in areas of the city with high levels of the disease, early deaths from heart and related circulatory disease is now falling more rapidly in the city's more deprived areas than in the city as a whole. This is an encouraging sign suggesting that inequalities in the disease are beginning to close.

More than 30,000 Sheffield residents have established heart and related circulatory diseases and last year 528 city residents died from heart attacks or related illnesses before they reached 75 – 170 fewer than in 1999 when the current programme started.

Over the past three years specialist teams working in each of the four Primary Care Trusts have been working with GP practices across the city and focusing on those areas with high levels of heart disease. They have ensured patients are identified, assessed and offered the full range of treatments and advice that are known to be effective in reducing their risks. In addition programmes have been put in place to help people to stop smoking, become more physically active and to eat more healthily.

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Dr Charles Price, Director of Public Health for Sheffield West PCT added: “We are delighted that CIRC is proving effective in helping reduce health inequalities in the city. Sheffield is on track to meet government targets for cutting the number of deaths from heart disease four years early. We are thrilled that the city’s hard work has been recognised by the Health Secretary and we look forward to continuing our good work in this area.”

CIRC was also praised by Public Health Minister, Melanie Johnson, MP, at the conference. She went on to highlight Sheffield as an excellent example of effective partnership work. She said Sheffield First for Health was instrumental in co-ordinating multi-agency working to tackle health inequalities in the city.

Melanie Johnson visited Sheffield’s Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe Healthy Living Centre and the Sheffield Wildlife Trust Breast Feeding Café at Norfolk Park in February when she met staff working on projects to tackle health inequalities in the city.

Andy Buck, Chair of Sheffield First for Health said: “I am delighted that work in Sheffield has been highlighted as an example of good practice on a national platform. However, we will not get complacent, there is still work to be done and we are committed to continuing to reduce the health inequalities gap in the city.”

The Choosing Health? conference forms part of the consultation process for the forthcoming Government White Paper on public health due to be published in the summer.

Notes to Editors

Sheffield First For Health

- Sheffield First for Health is a branch of the local strategic partnership, Sheffield First Partnership. SFfH is made up of representatives from agencies across the city including the Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Sheffield Care Trust, the four city Primary Care Trusts, South Yorkshire Strategic Health Authority voluntary and community groups and the city’s universities.
- The health of Sheffield’s residents is an important part of Sheffield First Partnership’s Strategy for the regeneration of the city. SFfH aims to improve health for all the city’s residents and tackle health inequalities.

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