

Housing & Health Working in Partnership **Example One: SEASHORE in Blackpool Case Study**

At a glance

SEASHORE stands for Seeking to Ensure A Safer Healthier Older Residents Environment. The programme operates in areas of Blackpool where falls and accidents in the homes of people over 60s are most prevalent. These areas also have some of the poorest housing conditions in the borough, with high levels of deprivation in terms of low incomes and fuel poverty.

Older householders in these areas are offered free environmental inspections to assess their homes for potential risks to their health and safety. Where a risk is identified, householders are eligible to take up the home improvement measures that are recommended and offered. In the majority of cases these are free of charge.

SEASHORE is a joint initiative involving Blackpool Council, Blackpool Primary Care Trust and Blackpool Care & Repair¹. The primary objective of this partnership is to reduce the number of deaths and severe injuries that occur due to accident. The service is funded (over three years) by the following:

- the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, finances the inspections and some of the materials for improvements and adaptations;
- Blackpool Primary Care Trust funds the majority of the practical interventions.

The programme is delivered by Blackpool Care & Repair.

What SEASHORE demonstrates

SEASHORE and the LSP

By 2008 the Blackpool Local Strategic Partnership aims to have reduced the number of deaths and severe injuries that occur due to accident by 21%. By 2020 they hope to have an accident mortality rate that is either equal to, or lower than, the national average².

As a core service in the “shopping basket” of services that intends to achieve these aims, SEASHORE has the following objectives:

- to carry out 800 environmental inspections per annum;
- to accomplish 3,000³ interventions during the 3-year period of the programme, thereby reducing the risk of an accident before an event occurs.

Using an innovative approach to address wider health objectives through housing interventions, SEASHORE demonstrates how a local authority's housing strategy can dovetail with the aims of the Primary Care Trust and the Local Strategic Partnership.

It also illustrates the potential use of the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme to meet wider health objectives. Even though the project to date has not formally applied the HHSRS, it is very closely aligned and plans are in place to establish these connections.

Most importantly of all, the project illustrates how private sector housing resources can be spent effectively to improve the housing stock in a targeted manner, based upon health and safety considerations.

Background

For several years, Christine Garritty the manager of Blackpool Care & Repair and Ross Fielding, a colleague in Blackpool Council's Private Sector Housing Department, had wanted to provide home environmental inspections, in order to make homeowners aware of the services and grants that are there to help them maintain safe and healthy homes. Their proposed inspection adopted a comprehensive and holistic approach to housing assessment, thereby anticipating the Housing Health & Safety Rating System.

To deliver the quality of service that Garritty & Fielding wanted, substantial funding would be required. Care & Repair needed to increase their capacity in order to be able to provide suitably thorough and, therefore, time-consuming inspections, as well as the practical measures themselves. Bids went in to potential funders, and although well received they were up against stiff competition so the idea went onto the backburner waiting for the right opportunity to arise.

When Dr. Andy Howe joined Blackpool Primary Care Trust as Director of Public Health in 2004, bringing with him wide vision and a creative approach to accident prevention and early intervention, Garritty & Ross saw their chance and took their ideas to him.

The timing was right. Blackpool PCT had already provided a small pot of money for Blackpool Care & Repair to work with Lancashire Fire & Rescue on a free electric blanket exchange throughout Blackpool, in order to tackle higher than average electric blanket fire incidents in the town. The SEASHORE concept offers a similar solution for those wards in Blackpool where the number of accidents that take place in the home are far higher than the national average.

In March 2004 the Blackpool PCT provided funding to pilot SEASHORE for one year and in March 2005 they joined Blackpool Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) to support the programme for a further three years.

Joint funding has enabled Blackpool Care & Repair to both develop a thorough assessment system and provide a comprehensive range of practical

1. See Appendix
2. Figures from the Acute Trust
3. Blackpool Care & Repair estimated that 2,400 inspections would lead to around 3000 interventions because some households require more than 1 measure.

remedial measures. Grants from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund are available for private sector households, but the initial environmental inspections are for any tenure.

Critical to the success of the project was its inclusion in the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy. Blackpool Council's decision to use its powers under the Regulatory Reform Order to allocate minor grants for health-related measures⁴ means that householders can have essential home improvements where they might otherwise have found them almost impossible to fund. By doing this, the local authority has, to some extent, anticipated the introduction of the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme, which takes a broad and preventative approach to achieving decent homes standards.

How SEASHORE works

The area covered by SEASHORE was chosen because a higher than average number of older people attends both doctors' surgeries and the hospital's Accident & Emergency department as a result of falls, accidents in the home and preventable fires. It is also an area of high deprivation with a disproportionate number of older residents.

The **Programme** has 3 main activities:

- training to enable health, social services and fire service front line staff to identify potential hazards and refer householders to SEASHORE;
- the Home Safety Check, which in most cases leads to;
- installation of small aids & adaptations/home safety repairs, education on fire risks, smoke detectors, and in many instances application for grants to remedy housing defects which present potential health hazards

Training for referrals

Front line health and social care professionals, and fire services visiting officers are the key link between homeowners and the services offered by SEASHORE.

The regular briefing and training sessions that raise awareness of the issues and facilitate the referral process are planned to fit around the schedules of a disparate range of professionals, which has included District Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Older Persons' Teams, Social

Workers, Health Visitors, Fire & Rescue; and will soon include Twilight Nurses, Community Sisters, Staff Nurses & Practice Managers.

Some sessions are held at small internal events and briefings, such as the regular Occupational Therapist team meetings. Larger sessions involve up to 50 people at a time and bring together staff from a variety of backgrounds, providing the opportunity to compare experiences, and engage in the kind of networking that can help to break down barriers to joint working.

4. Minor home improvement grants and the Winter Warmth Scheme exemplify how SEASHORE has pointed the way to financial strategies centred on health and safety, bringing tangible benefits throughout Blackpool.

To date upwards of 300 front line staff have attended briefings and/or training sessions. Training has also been delivered to a similar number of people from voluntary organisations and community groups.

The sessions are inter-active and are based upon the Healthy Homes, Healthier Lives model training kit, which was developed by Care & Repair England to be adapted to individual settings. The session ends with a guide to the local services that are available, and information about how to refer householders for the Home Safety check and other home improvement measures.

“We need to assure these busy people that they don’t have to take ownership of their patient’s housing problems. That’s what we are here for”, observes Anne McDowall, who delivers the training sessions.

This is a key element of programme management, and is essential if the front line staff who regularly visit their patients at home are going to feel equipped to acknowledge and then do something about the links between housing conditions and poor health.

The Home Safety Check and intervention

Intervention and practical measures:

- handrails
- minor adaptations
- security and falls prevention measures
- draught proofing
- smoke alarms
- replacing old or defective blankets
- exchanging chip pans for deep fat fryers
- clear and tidy gardens & paths fryers

Clients are also helped to apply for the Warmfront grant if they are eligible.

On referral to SEASHORE a caseworker visits the client's home to carry out the environmental inspection, which involves a comprehensive assessment of both inside and outside the home. The caseworker writes up an individual report for each householder, outlining the hazards and the measures to remedy them. If the client consents, Blackpool Care & Repair goes on to provide the relevant intervention/measure.

The choice of measures on offer is defined by demography and accident statistics, and in most cases they are free of charge. If the assessment shows that the client needs something that SEASHORE can't provide, Blackpool Care & Repair has the Legal Services Quality Mark⁵ and is an active member of the Blackpool Advice Link so they can refer them on to the right agency.

Case Study

Mr W was referred to SEASHORE by his Social Worker. His environmental inspection revealed that there was only a working supply of electricity to the living room, where he used a defective electric fire. Mr. W's poor health meant that he was unable to climb the stairs to use his bedroom and bathroom. Care & Repair put together a creative funding package that included SEASHORE money to:

- re-wire the house;
- move essential services to the ground floor;
- provide safe, temporary heaters until the Government's Warmfront grant installed a permanent heating system.

Outcomes To Date

Everything that happens in SEASHORE is closely monitored and to date this has shown:

- positive feedback from front line staff in health and social services about the training;
- the rate of referrals from health and social services partners mean that the programme is set to achieve its target of 800 Home Safety Checks in the current year;
- inspections in the first year converted to 1,200 interventions, with virtually all eligible householders receiving at least one measure;
- positive feedback from SEASHORE clients;
- Private Sector Housing has adopted Healthy Homes as the working title for its Local Strategic Plan, of which it is a key component

Programme monitoring is carried out by Care & Repair and the results are reported regularly to the Local Strategic Partnership. Evaluation to assess the

global impact of the programme will be carried out by the PCT, based upon comparisons with the Acute Trust figures for hospital admissions and general practitioner referrals due to accidents in the home/falls/road traffic accidents.

In the meantime, the “feel good” factor is high. The SEASHORE partnership is working well, and the Care & Repair team has files full of glowing letters from clients. Their comments add an important dimension to programme development.

5. The Quality Mark is part of the Community Legal Service (CLS), launched in April 2000 to improve access to quality information, advice and legal services through local network members with a Quality Mark for the level of service they provide.

“Like all home improvement agencies, we try to be client-led,” says Christine Garritty, “we listen and respond to what older householders really want. Evaluating the views of SEASHORE clients has fed into the way we continually monitor and develop both our wider services as well as the programme itself”.

In this spirit, SEASHORE service users themselves have become an integral part of the partnership, which is now broadening into new areas and initiatives.

Recent developments and joint ventures planned for the future include:

- Medication Reviews
- Winter Warmth Campaign
- Environmental Assessment to any older home owner where a need has been established during the Single Assessment Process (SAP)⁶

Broadening the programme: Winter Warmth Campaign

Blackpool PCT funds Blackpool Care & Repair to offer clients in **all** deprived wards:

- replacement of old, unchecked heaters with temporary ones whilst arrangements are made for central heating;
- electric blankets to people who do not already have them - a major step up from exchange
- draught proofing work throughout the property.

The Housing Capital Fund pays for central heating measures in cases where clients can't receive Warmfront even though they are technically eligible for the grant.

An Effective Partnership

A key measure of a successful partnership lies in its ability not only to sustain the status quo, but also in its willingness to meet new challenges. By those standards, the partnership that has been forged around SEASHORE between Blackpool Primary Care Trust, Blackpool Council, Lancashire Fire & Rescue, and Blackpool Care & Repair is progressing very well.

Increasingly seen as fundamental to solving many social and economic inequities, cross sector partnership is a complex concept. It requires an equal investment and commitment from all, based upon shared aims, respect for each other's culture and areas of expertise, and true collaboration. So how has SEASHORE achieved this?

6. The Single Assessment Process was introduced into the National Service Framework for Older People in 2002. Its purpose is to ensure that older people receive appropriate, effective and timely responses to their health and social care needs, and that professional resources are used effectively.

Recognised mutual aims

The partners share the same drivers; falls and accident prevention and an improvement in the health and well-being of Blackpool's older residents.

Blackpool PCT aims to see a reduction in:

- admissions to hospital,
- visits to GP following a fall or accident in the home
- deaths due to accident amongst older people.

Blackpool Council and Care & Repair believe that housing inspections leading to practical intervention through repairs, adaptations or other modifications will make this happen.

Working together

- Regular meetings to monitor the programme, keep everyone clear about progress and involved with development;
- Commitment from the top has meant that all the front line staff involved in the referral process are equally committed;
- Training and briefings which take into account heavy workloads and busy schedules prevent staff from feeling that their workloads are being added to, and reassures them that they are being offered an extra resource which, with minimal effort on their part, will bring about improvements to the lives of the people that they are working with.

Blackpool Care & Repair sits within Blackpool Council, and there was already a close working relationship between Housing, Social Services and Care & Repair. This provided a firm foundation for strengthening ties with Blackpool PCT. All three organisations are based at the same address.

Simple as it may sound, being in the same building has helped effective partnership working too. Expertise is just down the corridor, and this reinforces positive professional relationships.

Meeting new challenges

Broadening the programme: Medication Reviews

- training for Blackpool Care & Repair staff to use the PCT assessment tool to take medication into account when assessing falls risks.
- SEASHORE case workers now refer at-risk clients directly to the Community Pharmacist for a free medication review
- partnership with pharmacists has meant that many Blackpool chemists are keen to join the referral network and advertise/promote the scheme through their outlets.

If respect for each other's area of expertise has been fundamental to SEASHORE's success, it is now leading the partnership in exciting new directions. Strategies to implement the Housing Health & Safety Rating system, and the Medication Review programme are already underway, **whilst collaboration to develop the Single Assessment Process (SAP) is in progress. Indeed the Local Area Agreement aims to use SAP to cascade environment inspections throughout the town, meaning that all of Blackpool's older residents could experience the same benefits as those in the SEASHORE area.**

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Information & Resources

More information about SEASHORE is available from:

Kevin Garritty (Head of Environmental Services) at Blackpool Council on 01253 478300 or on

http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/services/care_and_repair/faqs/home_safety/what_is_the_care_and_repair_home_safety_scheme_seashore.htm

Judith Mills (Blackpool PCT on 01253 651200 or on

j.mills@blackpoolpct.nhs.uk

Anne McDowall at Blackpool Care & Repair on 01253 651555 or

anne.mcdowall@blackpool.gov.uk

Other information/resources

Free copies of the Healthy Homes, Healthier Lives training resources used by SEASHORE are available at www.careandrepair-england.org.uk

More details about the Single Assessment Process are available at

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/SocialCare/SingleAssessmentProcess/fs/en>

For information about Decent Homes go to

www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/191/ADecenthomeThedefinitionandguidanceforimplementationPDF262Kb_id1152191.pdf

Draft operating guidelines for the Housing Health & Safety Rating System are available on www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161785

Examples to support the Housing Health & Safety Rating System are on

www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/844/HousingHealthandSafetyRatingSystemHHSRSWorkedexamplesVersion2PDF6551Kb_id1152844.pdf

Appendix 1.

Blackpool Care & Repair was established in 1997 and is a member of the countrywide network of home improvement agencies.

Originally employing 3 people, there is now a team of 25, offering the following services:

- various small works handyperson schemes;
- minor adaptations;
- organising funding packages e.g. loans & grants
- co-ordinating and monitoring contractors as they carry out maintenance works and larger repairs.

The services they offer are representative of the kind of programmes that agencies generally offer. However, these vary at local level and further information about the network of home improvement agencies is available from Foundations, who are the national co-ordinating body for the movement.

www.foundations.uk.com