HEALTH ACTION CAMPAIGN

because prevention is better than cure



ANNUAL REVIEW 2019-2020

Our vision

A country where people live longer, healthier lives - instead of our health often being a postcode lottery.

Our mission

To encourage everyone who can (including government, businesses, employers and the NHS) to make healthy choices the easy choices for people - and to encourage ordinary people to make healthy choices a personal and political priority.

Why this matters

Living in a less affluent area shouldn't mean you're likely to die younger and spend more years in poor health.

Whatever your background, you should have a reasonable chance of living a long and healthy life. Recognising that prevention is better than cure is key to achieving this.

This will also help free up potential - with more people able to contribute positively, more actively and for longer.

Who we are

We're a health charity, recognised by HMRC, launched in 2015, with expert volunteers from a range of backgrounds, in particular health and medical research.

Our guiding principle is that prevention is better than cure.

Partnership working

We are currently working in partnership with:

- King's College London, Ulster University and Greenwich University on research into student mental health.
- SMARTEN, the national student mental health research network.
- The Obesity Health Alliance, to encourage the government to give higher priority to tackling obesity.
- Our sister charity, Age Watch, to make evidence-based information available to people to increase their chances of living long and healthy lives.
- The Richmond Group of Charities, to move public health up the government's agenda.

Our Long Term Priorities

Make healthy choices the easy choices for people - by making healthier food and drink more widely available and affordable, by increasing opportunities for mental and physical exercise, by encouraging active communities, and by continued initiatives to make it easier to stop smoking and to keep alcohol consumption to reasonably safe levels.

More focus on child health - because what happens to us in the early years of life from conception onwards can influence our health and our weight for years to come.

Greater support for those at risk - to avoid health inequalities being carried forward from one generation to another.

A true National HEALTH Service, which gives higher priority to preventing people from falling ill, not simply treating them once they fall ill.

Current Projects

Health at Work

Initiatives here can be good for both employers and employees, potentially reducing sickness absence, boosting morale and productivity and improving staff retention.

Our Employers Guide to Health at Work was updated in 2020. It includes:

- The business case for health at work initiatives
- · A questionnaire to help employers identify where they are starting from
- · Managing the main physical and mental health risks as an employer
- · Quality of work and its effect on health
- · Case studies from different types of employer
- FAQs
- Useful resources



Student Mental Health

Half of young people in the UK now go to university. However, a significant increase in student mental health problems has been widely reported – suggesting a growing public health issue.

Our Student Mental Health team have therefore been researching what can be done to reduce the problem. We started by asking three key questions:

- WHEN in young people's lives do mental health problems start?
- WHO is typically most affected?
- WHY what has changed that might explain the increased risk?

Fresh Perspectives

For the vast majority of students who'll experience mental health problems there's growing evidence that symptoms first start BEFORE university.

Four factors may have combined to make today's students less prepared for the transition to university and more predisposed to mental health problems once there:

- · A safeguarding, 'spoon-feeding' culture in schools.
- Over protective or over indulgent parenting.
- The lure of social media.
- The medicalization of normal feelings and emotions.

Planned Research

In partnership with researchers at King's College London, Ulster University and Greenwich University we are now planning follow up research, to test this hypothesis, with a randomised sample of first year students at each of the three universities.

As COVID-19 means the transition from school to university this year will not be typical we aim to start with a pilot study in autumn 2020 and then the main study in autumn 2021.



Student mental health team (November 2019)



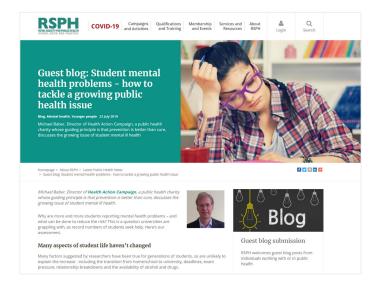
Social media team (July 2019)

Publishing some initial findings

We have also published some of our initial findings as blogs, including the following on the SMARTEN or RSPH websites:

- · What has changed that might increase student mental health problems?
- Student Mental Distress A Fresh Perspective
- Social Media
- Are there lessons we can learn from the Netherlands?
- Fear of Failure

Our thanks to Natasha Airey, William Bate, Annie Borland, Sophie Izzard, Ellen Ji, Nicola Revington, Nikita Sinclair, Elizabeth Walters and Daniela Wilks for their contributions to the research.





Tackling Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity is a major risk to public health in the UK. Obese children usually grow up to become obese adults - with an increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, cancer, osteoarthritis, back pain and depression.

As we've seen during COVID-19, obese adults are also at increased risk of death from the virus. This is because:

- Fat cells increase the risk of a potentially fatal 'cytokine storm.'
- Fat tissue upregulates an enzyme the virus can bind to.
- Obesity affects how well your lungs function, reducing the risk of survival in intensive care.

Obesity is a classic example of prevention being better than cure, which is why tackling childhood obesity is one of our current projects - seeking to influence the government and the food industry in particular.

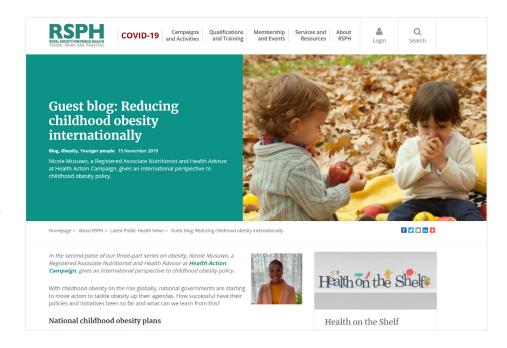
For example, in September 2019 we provided written evidence on childhood obesity to Parliament's Health and Social Care Committee.

In November 2019 our Director was invited to speak at *Food Matters Live* (a major food industry event) to explain childhood obesity policies internationally and their impact on obesity levels.

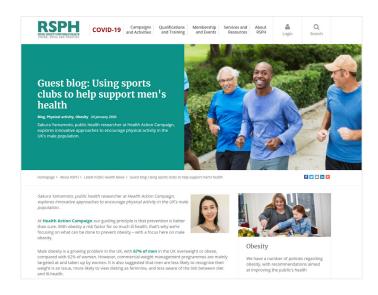
He was also invited to take part in a Food Matters Live podcast, on nutrition in the community during COVID-19, in May 2020.

Meanwhile the Royal Society for Public Health published several of our obesity related blogs on its website:

- Reducing childhood obesity internationally - from our Diet and Nutrition Adviser, Nicole Musuwo.
- An innovative approach to reducing male obesity - from our Public Health Researcher, Sakura Yamamoto.
- A weight loss health promotion case study - from our Health Promotion Adviser, Sally Leach.



Tackling Childhood Obesity





The Next Steps

We look forward to reporting further progress in our next Annual Review, in particular on our three current projects:

- Tackling Childhood Obesity
- Reducing the Risk of Student Mental III Health
- · Health at Work

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