

# THE NET

Welcome to the North East Teaching Public Health Network's (NETPHN's) third newsletter  
News, views & updates for those in public health education, learning & capacity building

## Local developments & initiatives

### Spreading the Feel Good Factor in Hartlepool

The Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government has given the green light to a pilot programme that will enable Hartlepool Council to train 100 Adult and Community Services staff in a range of subjects including benefit take up/awareness; diabetes awareness; reducing the risk of cardio vascular disease; smoking cessation & weight management. Trained staff will use their newfound knowledge to advise & guide clients, if wanted, in the right direction for help.

### Social Capital Seminar – Inequalities in health: Is social capital the missing link?

Professor Chris Drinkwater will make a presentation & lead a discussion about the new regional strategy on health & well being in 'Better Health, Fairer Health' for the North East & its relevance to social capital. The seminar is on 2 April 2008 at 4.30pm at the UNN City East Campus, in Lecture Theatre 401, 4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR of The Business School Building. To book a place contact Jennifer Crawford at [jc@communityfoundation.org.uk](mailto:jc@communityfoundation.org.uk)

## Higher Education Academy Subject Network

The Higher Education Academy is owned by the HE sector (UUK & GuildHE). It is highly active across the UK, informing policy, supporting institutions, research & evaluation, supporting learning, professional development & recognition, disciplines & networks. It has 24 Subject Centres to support disciplines & networks, hosted by UK institutions, providing discipline-based professional development for staff, funding educational research & development, sharing good practice etc. The Subject Centres for Health Sciences & Practice (hosted by King's College London) & Medicine, Dentistry & Veterinary Medicine (hosted by Newcastle University) are working together in relation to assessment, interprofessional education, supporting practice educators & new academic staff, & work closely with cognate centres such as Social Policy & Social Work (hosted by University of Southampton). The Academy is represented on the TPHN advisory group to assist TPHNs with external dissemination & uptake of their work elsewhere. For further information please see the list of Subject Centres at [www.heacademy.ac.uk/](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/) or contact Megan Quentin-Baxter at [megan@medev.ac.uk](mailto:megan@medev.ac.uk)

The NETPHN key objectives are to

- increase the profile of public health across the region
- embed public health in curricula
- develop and enhance public health teaching capacity and capability
- co-ordinate the sharing of existing good practice with regard to public health teaching and learning.

## News

NETPHN's Inaugural Conference 'NETPHN: Helping Bridge the Health Inequalities Gap' in January 2008 was a great success. Your ideas generated from the workshops are being used to inform the development of our future strategic plan. We hope that you find our interactive website, launched at the conference a useful networking tool to continue sharing your ideas, interests and knowledge with other NETPHN members.

At the conference, Alyson Learmonth announced that she was stepping down as Chair of NETPHN, as she has been appointed Head of the new School for Public Health, based within the Northern Deanery. Many thanks to Alyson for all the work she has done for NETPHN and we wish her well in her new position. NETPHN will now be chaired by Prof. Vivien Hollyoak, previously Vice Chair of NETPHN.

To become a NETPHN member go to [www.tphn.org.uk](http://www.tphn.org.uk) and fill in the registration form. Some people have experienced problems accessing the website due to IT systems 'blocking' access. If you have a problem accessing our website, contact your IT department in the first instance to remove the block.



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## This month's spotlight - Durham University

The next five issues of the newsletter will include a spotlight area giving the five universities in the region an opportunity to showcase public health developments within their institution.

### Durham University's Medical Student Community Placement Scheme: non-clinical dimensions of health and healthcare

Durham University commenced its MBBS Phase I medicine programme (a joint venture with the University of Newcastle) at Queen's Campus in 2001. We decided to introduce students to the concept of non-clinical health and social care in a concrete and practical way, through the provision of a community placement scheme.

#### How it works

During their first term, students are introduced to the wide range of health and social care providers operating in the local community of Teesside. Each student is placed with one of a range of community-based voluntary and statutory organisations, who they work with on a regular basis (around 60 hours in total) for a year. The aim of the placement is for students to gain an insight into the work of their assigned agency, its client group(s) and community through doing work that is of benefit to the organisation concerned. The scheme also gives students the chance to apply and develop 'campus-based' skills (such as communication, ethical awareness, cultural competency, personal organisation, time management) in community settings.

#### Watch out – there's an anthropologist about!

The approach students are encouraged to adopt for their placement is modelled on the participant-observation research method, intimately associated with the discipline of social anthropology. It is characterised by long-term, in-depth fieldwork involving careful observations of life in what are often challenging situations. At the end of their placement, our students write up their experiences in a 3,000 word, ethnographic study (a form of writing giving the chance to display detailed observational skills and an appreciation of the richness and vitality of everyday, 'real life' experience).

#### Public health education in the broadest sense?

Our intention is that through experiencing health and social care issues at the grass roots, community level,

students will be better doctors in whatever branch of medicine they go into - 'mini anthropologists' with an in-depth knowledge of the communities they are working in, able to recommend and refer patients to suitable non-clinical agencies where appropriate. Students can also develop confidence and consideration in dealing with people from different backgrounds, having worked with, for example, prisoners, substance abusers, sex workers, refugees, asylum seekers, and children in local authority care. We feel that giving students these experiences early on in their medical education fosters professionalism by preventing the development of the arrogant, dismissive attitudes (often based on fear and insecurity) too frequently associated with donning a white coat and stethoscope (the doctor's mask or protective shell) in later, hospital settings. It also serves to increase students' appreciation of the destructive effects of the many inequalities in health and health care faced by supposedly 'hard to reach' groups, and to enable tomorrow's doctors to serve them better.

#### The future

We plan to evaluate whether our intentions in running the scheme match the reality, at least as far as our student's future careers are concerned. Whatever else, the scheme opens up public health issues to medical students in ways that are vital and often surprising. It certainly establishes 'community-based medical education' as about a lot more than what goes on in GP clinics!

#### For further details contact

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### Meet the NETPHN team

Prof. Ann Crosland – University of Sunderland

Hilary Snowdon – Director: Curriculum Development

Ceri Mather – Director: Partnership Working

Annie Wallace – Lead for Mapping & Phase 2 Research

April Dickens – Project Officer

Jean Craister – Administrator

To contact a member of the team

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