

<b>Institution:</b> University of Lincoln		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 24 – Sports and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Improving the Physical Wellbeing of the Police Force		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2009 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
ALLEN-COLLINSON Jacqueline	Professor	Oct 12 to date
CRUST Lee	Senior Lecturer	21 Sep 09 – 31 Aug 19
EVANS Adam	Senior Lecturer	14 Dec 09 - 31 Jul 15
EVANS Donna	Senior Lecturer	12 Nov 07 to date
HENDERSON Hannah	Senior Lecturer	1 Aug 06 to date
KEEGAN Richard	Senior Lecturer	Oct 07 – Dec 12
MIDDLETON Geoff	Associate Professor	7 Jan 08 to date
SIRIWARDENA Aloysius Niroshan	Professor of Primary and Pre-Hospital Health Care	23 Mar 07 to date
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> Sep 17 – Dec 20		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>University of Lincoln research has instigated significant changes to Police Force policy and practice, which has supported improvements in the physical wellbeing of Force employees. Original findings from our community-based health intervention research allowed us to generate a series of intervention development principles, which led to the co-production of the 'Fitness Mentors' physical activity initiative for inactive employees. The project received the 'Protecting the Workforce' award from the National Police Wellbeing Service and has been adopted by this Service as a model for training staff to become 'Physical Wellbeing Champions' in Police Forces across the UK.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The University of Lincoln's School of Sport and Exercise Science has conducted research and widely published on community-based interventions, focusing on key public health issues including obesity and physical activity. Communities are social units in which people share particular characteristics, which could include schools, workplaces or even villages. Delivering community-wide interventions can be a valuable yet challenging approach and we have identified a series of key principles for intervention development associated with successful delivery; understanding of context, population characteristics and stakeholder relations, all of which can substantially improve desired outcomes in a community.</p> <p>Our research exploring key stakeholders' experiences of a regional obesity prevention programme [3.1] identified that the consistency and quality of the intervention delivery is dependent on understanding the idiosyncratic contextual factors within a particular community. Furthermore, the importance of setting is highlighted in our evaluation of a 12-week weight management intervention in a workplace setting [3.2]. Employee attendance and weight loss highlighted that the workplace, as a setting, was a credible option for employers seeking to improve the wellbeing of their employees. Findings identified that participants favoured attending a workplace setting despite being offered an alternative in their local area.</p> <p>Use of workplace community as a setting for health-improving interventions is further supported by our interview research that audited work-aged adults' (31-59 years) motivations for physical activity [3.3]. We identified strong peer influences, whereby work colleagues were found to</p>		

greatly influence the physical activity behaviour of others. Importantly, physically active individuals positively influenced their peers' motivation to exercise.

Context and setting are not the only components to effectively deliver community-based health interventions. Our research in 2018 [3.4] was the first study of its kind to explore a community exercise referral scheme through a sociological lens. This county-wide scheme offered health professionals the opportunity to refer individuals with health conditions to a 12-week supervised exercise programme. Interviews with key stakeholders and patients revealed how the hierarchy of stakeholder relationships can influence success, specifically: the way individuals perceive how a scheme is delivered and received, and the need for stakeholders to collectively understand an intervention's aims to deliver a coherent message and avoid negative experiences for service users.

Similar exploration of stakeholder experiences of a regional obesity prevention programme [3.1] reinforced the importance of effective working partnerships within interventions, which are dependent on good leadership and coherent decision-making, all of which were recognised to take time to develop. Responses further highlighted the need for clear roles and responsibilities among delivery-level stakeholders, further endorsing the crucial role of these stakeholders for successful programme delivery.

The role of delivery-level stakeholders is crucial, particularly when delivering health improvement messages. Our research in 2019 [3.5] investigated the sociologically under-researched health trainer role. Health trainers are responsible for supporting clients in developing and sustaining healthier lifestyles, for example increasing physical activity and consuming healthier diets. Interviews with health trainers highlighted the importance of time-consuming 'soft skills' such as talking and listening, which formed a key component of their work. According the time to listen and talk meant that health trainers could delve deeper with clients, which enabled them to develop more individualised, tailored programmes of behaviour change that were more practically achievable for the client. Such engagement with clients' needs and personalised support were found to be key in successfully changing behaviour.

This body of research has addressed several gaps in the understanding of the successful design and implementation of physical health interventions within specific communities and identified the importance of delivery level relationships for intervention success. These insights have enabled the research team to develop a series of intervention development principles that can be applied to support a wide range of communities and the workplace in implementing physical health initiatives.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1 Middleton, G., Henderson, H. & Evans, D. (2014) Implementing a community-based obesity prevention programme: experiences of stakeholders in the north east of England. *Health Promotion International*, 29 (2). p. 201-211. ISSN 0957-4824  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro%2Fdas072>
- 3.2 Barber, J., Hillier, S.E., Middleton, G., Keegan, R., Henderson, H. & Lavin, J. (2015) Providing weight management via the workplace. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, 8 (3). p. 230-243. ISSN 1753-8351  
<https://doi.org/10.1159/000170983>  
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJWHM-10-2014-0040/full/html>
- 3.3 Keegan, R., Middleton, G., Henderson, H. & Girling, M. (2016) Auditing the socio-environmental determinants of motivation towards physical activity or sedentariness in work-aged adults: a qualitative study. *BMC Public Health*, 16 (438). ISSN 1471-2458  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-3098-6>  
<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles>

- 3.4 Henderson, H., Evans, A., Allen-Collinson, J. & Siriwardena, N. (2018). The 'wild and woolly' world of exercise referral schemes: contested interpretations of an exercise as medicine programme. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise & Health*, 10 (4). p. 505-523. ISSN: 2159-676X  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2017.1352018>
- 3.5 Allen-Collinson, J., Williams, R., Middleton, G., Henderson, H., Crust, L. & Evans, A. (2020). 'We have the time to listen': community Health Trainers, identity work and boundaries. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 12 (4). p. 597-611. ISSN 2159-676X  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1646317>

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The primary impact of our research arose through collaborative activities with Lincolnshire Police force (LPF), informed by key intervention development principles. LPF, led by Chief Constable Bill Skelly until December 2020, had a vision to improve the health and wellbeing of their employees, with the purpose of building a healthier, stronger workforce. Based on four staff pillars - happy, healthy, valued and engaged – this would, in turn, provide better policing and look after the public more effectively. LPF approached the School, according to Chief Constable Skelly, to 'assist in delivering this culture of wellbeing' [5.1] and provide evidence-based insights to develop more effective policies and practice for staff wellbeing.

LPF highlighted the physical wellbeing of staff as a priority area and wanted to encourage staff to become more physically active. There was an absence of any formalised national guidance, other than basic fitness requirements for police officers and LPF wished to develop an intervention to address this but were unclear how. Dr Henderson worked with the assigned senior officer, Inspector Rachel Harrison, and developed a business case [5.2] for the creation of a peer support initiative that would encourage staff to become more active, which became known as the 'Fitness Mentors' programme. The programme requires a 'mentor' to meet with the referred colleague and conduct a series of health measures (e.g. blood pressure). The mentors provide tailored support and advice on how to become more active and make recommendations for a 10-week programme. Mentors dedicated at least four hours a week to the role that included two hours from their duty time. The programme was approved by Chief Constable Skelly during Summer 2017 and the 'Fitness Mentors' programme was officially launched in local press, with recognition of Dr Henderson's contribution [5.3].

Informed by the research and key development principles for a successful community-based, health-enhancing initiative, Dr Henderson collaborated with Inspector Harrison to write a handbook for the 'Fitness Mentors' programme. The document detailed each stage of the process, from the point of referral, to the 10-week programme, and the post programme support. The handbook included all associated paperwork that the fitness mentors and participants would be required to complete [5.4]. As the post of a fitness mentor was an appointed voluntary role, Dr Henderson's expertise was leveraged to establish the skills and personal attributes required of candidates, and she collaborated with two other police staff for the recruitment and interview process.

Dr Henderson and her team continued their involvement with the project when they received funding from LPF to evaluate the programme; examining how many staff accessed the scheme, what improvements in health were observed, and how effective the overall process was. This was to be conducted at 6 and 12 months following the programme's launch. At the interim evaluation in October 2019, initial findings highlighted that participants viewed the scheme extremely positively and acknowledged the physical benefits of participating. Notably, participants also valued advice coming from colleagues who really understood the stresses of the job. Data indicated that in the first 6 months 41 members of staff accessed the programme. 20 participants were seen by the mentors which meant an increase in their physical activity levels, however the scheme was quickly oversubscribed with the remaining 21 staff on a waiting list. Improvements in health-related measures were also observed, specifically for body mass index (due to weight loss), peak flow and grip strength (see 5.5 for the full Interim Evaluation

Report). Participants reported the difference the Fitness Mentors' programme had made, for example:

*"My mentor was absolutely amazing; [name] is extremely knowledgeable and immediately made me feel at ease on my first session I have loved being mentored by [name] and feel I have learnt a lot about the different techniques used and different exercises. My sessions were structured, and I knew exactly what I was going to be doing. The scheme has greatly benefitted my health as I can honestly say I have never trained as hard during "legs sessions" than I did with [name]."* [5.5]

The benefits of the programme also went beyond 10 weeks, as one participant explained: *"I now regularly use the gym during my breaks at work... have confidence in going and have a better understanding of the equipment I am using."*

As recommended in the Interim Evaluation Report [5.5], and in recognition of the success of the initiative, Chief Constable Skelly approved the recruitment of five more fitness mentors. Alongside Inspector Colin Haigh (Wellbeing Lead). Dr Henderson assisted with the shortlisting and interview process of these new appointments. LPF also funded Dr Henderson to provide ongoing professional development for the existing mentors. The 12-month evaluation due in June 2020 (with data collection in April 2020) has been postponed owing to COVID19 and the substantial redirection in roles and responsibilities of the police staff.

The 'Fitness Mentors' programme received national recognition, when it was nominated and successfully awarded the 'Protecting the Workforce' award by The National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS), also known as Oscar Kilo, in March 2020. This was an incredible achievement for Lincolnshire Police, which in the press release it was noted that 'it would not have been possible without the support of Dr Hannah Henderson and her team from Lincoln University' [5.6]. This award generated further interest in the Fitness Mentors programme and led to more formal discussions between The National Police Wellbeing Service and Dr Henderson about how the programme could be shared more widely to support other police forces. Representatives from Lincolnshire Police confirmed that the NPWS have adopted the programme as a model for their own initiative known as 'Physical Wellbeing Champions' [see 5.6 and 5.7 for confirmation]. Police staff are being trained in police forces across the UK to offer guidance to their colleagues on how to become more physically active. Dr Henderson has been approached by the NPWS to look at the evaluation of this initiative when COVID-19 restrictions are eased.

The work of the School of Sport and Exercise Science's (SSES) research team, underpinned by their research in this area, accelerated and expanded cultural changes within the force by informing policy and changing practice at a regional level, as identified by Chief Constable Skelly; 'The work with the SSES has been pivotal in assisting us deliver our wellbeing strategy... the scheme has supported staff in feeling happier and healthier, which means I believe staff are able to deliver a better service' [see 5.1]. This same work is now informing national policy for police forces across the country.

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 Testimony from Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police
- 5.2 Fitness Mentors Business Case.
- 5.3 Fitness Mentors Press Release.
- 5.4 Fitness Mentors Programme Handbook
- 5.5 Fitness Mentors Interim Evaluation Report.
- 5.6 Fitness Mentors National Award Press Release.
- 5.7 Testimony from Lincolnshire Police Tactical Wellbeing Lead.