



REPORT on the 1ST FYLDE COAST HEALTH MELA BLACKPOOL Saturday 5th October 2013

A summary

The Rotary Club of Blackpool Palatine supported by other Rotary Clubs from the Fylde Coast, working in close co-operation with the National Forum for Health and Wellbeing (NFHW), held its first Health Mela on Saturday 5th. October in Blackpool. The event took place in the resort's world famous Winter Gardens, and was opened by Col. Alan Jolley OBE TD DL, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire.

The event, a celebration of healthy living, involved a wide range of local organisations and its central feature was an invitation to members of the public, together with their families and friends, to receive a free comprehensive health check, popularly known as a 'Health MOT'. Many visitors took the opportunity to have cholesterol and blood glucose levels measured, sight, hearing and dental health checked and everyone tested was offered professional health and life-style counselling.

The initial breakfast meeting focusing on the theme 'Why community engagement?' set the tone for what was to be a unique and exciting new approach to health promotion on the Fylde coast.

In his opening address, Col. Jolley congratulated the NFHW, the Rotary Club of Blackpool Palatine and the other Rotary clubs involved for their initiative in bringing Health Melas to the community. He praised the commitment of the very many organisations actively involved in supporting the event.

Also taking part in the opening of the Mela was Rtn. Kevin Walsh, District 1190 Governor of Rotary International who expressed his wish to encourage the development of similar Health Melas across the whole of Lancashire and Cumbria.

Rtn. Nan McCreadie, President of Rotary International Great Britain & Ireland sent her good wishes making the point that, 'health and wellbeing [in the community] is a top priority for Rotarians'.

Some of the other dignitaries attending to support the event were: The Chair of Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group, Mr Roy Fisher, the Chair of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Mr Ian Johnson, and its Chief Executive Mr Gary Doherty, the Chair and Chief Clinical Officer of The Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group, Drs Adam Janjua and Tony Naughton.

Blackpool Council was represented by Cllr. David Owen, Deputy Mayor, Chief Executive Neil Jack and the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board, Cllr Ivan Taylor. Also attending to represent Wyre Council were the Deputy Mayor, Cllr. Julia Anderson and her consort Mr Philip Anderson.

Officers of Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan and Healthwatch Blackpool, who provided administrative support for the event, also joined the celebrations.

The Health Mela movement is supported by NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups, Local Authorities, Universities, the Fylde Coast Hindu Society, the Gujarat

Hindu Society as well as health-related companies and voluntary organisations.

Introduction and background to the Health Mela

In the Indian sub-continent the Mela is a festive get together involving the population of entire villages or wider areas. It has long had a role in promoting community well-being.

This is a model that found traction in the north of England some twelve years ago under the leadership of Professor Romesh Gupta and Ishwer Tailor then President of the Gujarat Hindu Society. They planned an event in Preston to promote healthy living which used the Mela format to mobilise the community to take an active and enjoyable part in securing its own health and well-being.





The immediate success of the first Health Mela provided a solid foundation for what was to become a popular, multi-cultural, annual fixture in the city and it soon became a model for similar events in other communities.

With support from the Preston Steering Group, health melas have been organised in venues as far apart as Bolton, Bradford, London and Cardiff and interest in the objectives of the Health Mela movement continues to grow.

A recent development has seen the involvement of members of local Rotary Clubs, working in collaboration with NFWH to promote health melas in their own areas. This raises the exciting prospect that Rotary International might act as a conductor, transmitting the ideals of the Health Mela throughout the North West and beyond.

The health checks which took place in Blackpool were conducted by the Health Olympics Team from the University of Manchester partnered with the Blood Drop Team from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals and staff from the Biochemistry Department

of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust. They conducted tests for cholesterol, blood glucose levels, height, weight and body mass index. In addition, more than 70 stalls provided a wealth of information on all aspects of health and wellbeing, traditional and alternative.

Venue

The Health Mela was held in the Winter Gardens Blackpool by courtesy of Blackpool Council. The organisers record their gratitude to the Chief Executive of Blackpool Council Mr Neil Jack and his staff for allowing us to utilise their excellent facilities.

The Spanish Hall provided space for around 70 exhibitors together with areas to accommodate the wide range of health checks already referred to. Appropriate catering facilities allowed for the provision of refreshments to visitors and exhibitors.

Free car-parking facilities were kindly provided by Blackpool Council, near to the site.

Opening ceremony and theme

The opening ceremony was performed by the Chief Guest, Col. Alan Jolley Vice Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire. The overall theme of the event was 'Community Health and Well-being'. Within this theme there was a planned focus on the extensive range of health checks and counselling opportunities which were on offer.

Acknowledgement of support received in planning and staging the event

Partnership is at the heart of the Health Mela concept. The Rotary Club of Blackpool Palatine and NFWH gratefully acknowledge the substantial assistance in planning and resourcing the event which was provided by the organisations listed below. Also gratefully acknowledged is the enthusiastic support of the volunteers from other local Rotary Clubs, the Fylde Coast Hindu Society, UCLAN, the Health Olympics team from the University of Manchester Medical School and the Blood Drop Team from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals. Without this help the Health Mela could not have taken place

The organisers hope and believe that, in return for the invaluable support provided by our foundation partners, the Health Mela provided them with an opportunity for public engagement and networking in a unique and supporting community based environment.

Publicity

As this was the first event of its kind to take place in Fylde Coast effective publicity was seen to be very important to secure its success. An extensive campaign was

THE MAJOR ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN ORGANISING AND SUPPORTING THE FYLDE COAST HEALTH MELA ARE LISTED BELOW:

- The Rotary Club of Blackpool Palatine
- Blackpool Borough Council
- Wyre and Fylde District Councils
- Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust
- Blackpool CCG, Fylde and Wyre CCG
- Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
- Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan
- Roche, MSD and the scientific staff of the pathology departments of Blackpool Victoria and Royal Preston hospitals
- The Health Olympics Team, University of Manchester
- Fylde Coast Hindu Society
- Volunteers from the Gujarat Hindu Society, Preston and UCLAN
- The University of Bolton
- Healthwatch Blackpool





conducted in the weeks preceding the event. *This included:*

- Word of mouth and personal canvassing;
- A broadcast interview with the organisers on Radio Lancashire;
- Targeted press releases sent out before and after the event which resulted in a full page article in the Blackpool Gazette together with coverage on the web-site of Radio Wave;
- Widespread distribution of handbills in the weeks preceding the event and on the day itself;
- Items published in the newsletters and on the web-sites of Wyre Council, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the Council for Voluntary Services.

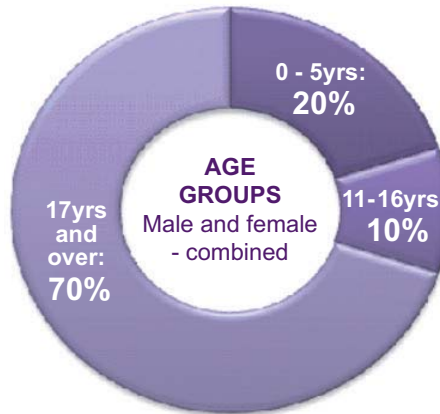
In terms of the attendance at the event which is recorded below, the publicity strategy is judged to have been successful.

Exhibitors and supporters

Over 70 exhibitors attended or provided material support for the event. As a result of the interest shown all the space available in the venue was utilised. Those involved represented local voluntary organisations, local government, health trusts, pharmaceutical and medical diagnostic companies and a major food retailer. Participants offered information, advice, support and a comprehensive range of health checks. The organisers gratefully acknowledge the support of all the organisations taking part.

Attendance

Some 1100 members of the public were registered as visitors to the Health Mela. The actual attendance was significantly higher as some visitors managed to overlook the registration process!



Comments from visitors

Visitors were invited to provide comments on the event and 100 completed feedback forms were received.

Visitors were almost unanimous in judging the Health Mela to be informative (99%), well organised (97%) and representing time well-spent (99%).

There were many positive Individual comments made with particular reference to the friendly atmosphere, good venue and the extensive, helpful information available.

Constructive suggestions for improvement included: the need for more space for wheelchairs; wider advertising; more activities for children. There were requests for information and practical sessions on reflexology and Yoga at future Events.

Feedback from exhibitors

50 completed feedback forms were received from exhibitors. Of those responding:

- 49 (98%) rated the venue as excellent.
- 49 (98%) stated that the number of visitors to their stand made attendance at the Health Mela worthwhile.
- 50 (100%) indicated their intention to participate in the 2014 Health Mela.

Positive comments included:

- a good venue and parking;

- an excellent networking opportunity;
- well organised and friendly staff;
- a good steady stream of visitors.

Suggestions to consider for future events included:

- making improvements to sound and lighting;
- providing more comprehensive internal signage and a floor plan;
- providing more extensive advertising outside the venue;
- the need to provide more space for wheelchairs.

The organisers are very grateful to visitors and exhibitors for their helpful feedback. All the points raised will be taken into account in planning future events.

FREE COMMENTS: *I found the event inspiring and inspired, a splendid idea which was clearly well received by the public who attended. As one who cannot remember when he last saw a GP, it was attractive to turn up and receive a check-over and reassurance. For others they will surely have been urged to attend for further investigation at their panel doctor's surgery; and potential medical difficulties will certainly have been caught at a stage where treatment will be advantageous. An excellently organised occasion and one in which so many people will have been delighted to take part - as volunteers, doctors and the folk you all served.*
From an appreciative and grateful visitor.

Health checks and counselling

Of the 1100 or so visitors to the event, 149 chose to have checks on cholesterol and blood glucose levels. As a result of these checks

- 24 individuals were found to have blood glucose levels between 7.0 and 11.0 mmol (high).
- 6 individuals had blood glucose levels greater than 11.0 mmol (very high).



- 33 individuals had a cholesterol level greater than 6 mmol (high).
 - 19 presented with high blood pressure.
- All participants were offered appropriate professional counselling and advice. As a result of these tests 63 individuals were referred to their GP for further investigation.

Comments from the organisers



Professor Romesh Gupta, OBE, FRCP, MBA.
Chair: National Forum for Health & Wellbeing

Rtn. Romesh Gupta said that he was delighted to notch up another milestone in extending the influence of the Health Mela movement across Lancashire in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Leyland, part of Rotary International. This is an organisation which has a world-wide reputation for promoting community health and wellbeing. He said that partnership is the essence of the Health Mela. Organisers, exhibitors, visitors and sponsors engage together to celebrate and promote the health of their community. He expressed his thanks to all involved in ensuring the success of the event.



Cllr Ramesh Gandhi, OBE, JP, DL, FRCS

Rtn Ramesh Gandhi expressed his thanks to Professor Gupta for persevering for some years and finally making the Fylde Coast Health Mela happen. He thanked all the partners especially Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group, local councils, NHS Trusts and Rotary Clubs for their support, pointing out the great value of helping local communities with access to free health checks in an atmosphere that is friendly, supportive and fun.

Cllr Gandhi noted that planning is already underway to extend the Health Mela to other areas of the Fylde coast in rotation.

Comments from honoured guests



CHIEF GUEST: Col. Alan Jolley
Vice Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire

'I am so pleased that the Mela was such a success for it certainly deserved to be, given the effort that had gone into the planning and execution. What I especially liked was the vast array of stands covering all aspects of community health needs, coupled with the concern and enthusiasm of those delivering such vital services and support.'



Rtn. Gail Williams
President: The Rotary Club of Blackpool Palatine

President Gail Williams expressed her delight that the Rotary club of Blackpool Palatine was able to host its first Fylde Coast Health Mela with the support of the National Forum for Health and Wellbeing and other partner organisations. She said, 'I believe this is a positive way to serve the local community' 'the success of this year's Mela will encourage the Rotary Clubs of the Fylde area to make this an annual event and so help Rotary fulfil its primary objective of providing Service in the Community.'



Rtn. Kevin Walsh,
Governor of District 1190 Lancashire and Cumbria, Rotary International

Rotary District Governor Rtn. Kevin Walsh said: 'Health and wellbeing are key areas of focus that Rotary has throughout the world. By engaging with our communities in this way we are really saving lives.' He expressed his wish to encourage the development of similar Health Melas in the whole of Lancashire and Cumbria and passed on the good wishes of Rtn. Nan McCreadie, President of Rotary International Great Britain & Ireland who said that, 'the promotion of health and wellbeing in the community are top priorities for Rotarians.'



Mr Roy Fisher, Chairman, Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group

'This was an incredibly well organised event that combined education with entertainment. The atmosphere was extremely positive with people of all ages keen to undertake health checks and gather as much information as they could. The Health Mela was a first for Blackpool but one I hope to see on the calendar every year from now on.'



Mr Gary Doherty, Chief Executive, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

'I think the event was a great success - particularly the winning combination of health information, friendly faces and good fun. Well done to all and I look forward to the event going from strength to strength.'



Dr Tony Naughton, Clinical Chief Officer, Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group

'I was impressed by the range of contributors and their obvious enthusiasm, the good work that the voluntary sector continues to do in these cash-strapped times, and also how well it was attended.'

Future plans

As noted above, it is intended that the Fylde Coast Health Mela will continue as an annual event. **Further Health Melas are being arranged for 2014 as follows:**

BOLTON.....Saturday, March 15
PRESTON.....Saturday, May 3
LEYLAND.....Saturday, Sept 13
BRADFORD.....Date to be confirmed
FYLDE COAST.....Date to be confirmed

Volunteers from the National Forum for Health & Wellbeing have provided advice and support to organisers of similar events in places as far apart as London, Cardiff, Manchester, Chorley, Blackpool, Bolton and Bradford.

The Forum is happy to help any group thinking of developing their own version of this event.

Please ask the contacts below for further information:

Mrs Sarifa Kabir, Secretary, NFHW
Gujarat Hindu Society Centre,
South Meadow Lane, Preston, PR1 8JN
email: sarifa.kabir@btinternet.com

Rotarian Gary Pretty
Immediate Past President
Rotary Club of Blackpool Palatine
email: heskethotel@hotmail.com

FYLDE COAST HEALTH MELA, BLACKPOOL. 5th October 2013



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