

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

A Super League partnership - Integrating professional sport and the NHS to tackle health inequalities. Widnes Vikings and NHS Halton CCG

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Introduction: The NHS CCG for Halton, one of Britain's most deprived boroughs, has developed an unparalleled platform to tackle its health challenges through partnership working with the Super League rugby club, Widnes Vikings.

Description: This is Britain's most innovative and ambitious partnership between health and sporting organisations.

Stakeholders: Integrated team of Halton CCG, Halton Borough Council and Widnes Vikings.

Public Health

Voluntary sector

Social care providers

Thousands of fans.

Population: Halton is a borough in England with a 126,000 population. NHS data identifies that it has a 'hidden 40%' that does not engage with traditional GP-based care. This creates premature mortality and significant health inequalities.

Aim and Theory of Change: In response, NHS Halton CCG developed a pioneering commissioning strategy. This not only includes traditional health services, but also community-based approaches that promote wellbeing and social connection. At the core of this is a partnership with Widnes Vikings, the hometown club that is the beating heart of the Halton community.

The team plays in the Super League, elite competition. More than 1/10 of the local people support the club – it is an aspirational brand and the players are heroes.

Through using the club's specialist skills and brand, the CCG deploys the Vikings to meet its biggest challenges. This includes childhood obesity, social isolation, an aging population and poor NHS access.

Timeline: Launched early 2015 - delivered daily. It has continually grown in scope.

Highlights – Innovation, Impact and Outcomes: Widnes Vikings deliver an incredible 36 community projects in Halton. These include:

Childhood Obesity: 36% of 10-12 year olds are obese. Halton has England's highest rate of obese adults.

To break this cycle they developed GameChanger- a programme to make 'Halton's school children the most healthy and active in England'.

The club works with 3000 children, encouraging 80 minutes of daily exercise and healthy diets.

Wellbeing approaches have been firmly embedded into school curriculum.

Older People and Dementia: Widnes Vikings were one of the most successful rugby league clubs of the last century. As such, they are a unifier of its older people. The partnership created:

Weekly events for older fans that blends nostalgic, social experiences and exercise.

A programme of reminiscence, activity and chair based exercise in all care homes. These help to reduce falls, inspire person-centered support and provide stimulation.

A free monthly dementia café. 100% of attendees say it helps them live well.

Other programmes include: Mental health outreach, accessible sports sessions, health checks, and support for new parents.

Widnes Vikings became the first ever sports organisation recognised at the National Dementia Care Awards and 3rd Sector Care Awards

Sustainability: This programme is inherently sustainable, as it supports immediate and long-term cost-savings. By reducing falls in care homes or improving diagnosis rates, it is able to prevent the escalation of injury and illness. The GameChanger programme is projected to improve children's health and reduce future adult obesity / diabetes.

The CCG has renewed the programme for three years.

Transferability: Widnes Vikings and Halton CCG have created the Rugby League Vanguard with the Super League and Public Health England, seeing all clubs commit to adopting similar approaches.

Conclusions: This partnership stands as an international example of excellence in the integration of statutory, cultural and community bodies.

Discussions: This presentation will discuss how integration can promote generational change and overcome inequalities.

Lessons Learned: Integrating public bodies with community assets and engaging the public can create social change and promote wellbeing

Interventions that promote closer communities can be more effective than traditional health approaches