



Report on the 12th Annual Preston Health Mela Saturday 20th April 2013



Foreword from Professor Romesh Gupta, OBE FRCP MBA Chair: National Forum for Health and Wellbeing

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this report on the 12th. Annual Health Mela held in Preston on Saturday, April, 20th.

Thanks to the enthusiastic support of the Mayor of Preston, Cllr. Carl Crompton, and his colleagues on the City Council, we were able for a second time to hold our festival in the Guild Hall. The opportunity to use this prestigious city centre venue contributed greatly to the success of the event.

The year that has elapsed since the last report has seen a number of significant developments. We have successfully extended the Health Mela format with a first well-attended event in Leyland which is to be repeated this year. We supported a first Mela in Bradford, a third in Bolton and an

event is planned for Blackpool and the Fylde. To reflect this increasing reach we have changed our name to the National Forum for Health and Wellbeing.

In each of these developments it has been possible to extend and develop our links with local Rotary Clubs and Rotary International and we look forward to building upon this fruitful partnership as the Health Mela movement grows

The success of the Health Mela is built upon the close support and collaboration we receive from our partners in the NHS and wider community. My thanks go to these and all the other individuals and organisations who have contributed so much to promoting the health and wellbeing of the people of Preston.

Finally can I thank Paul Buckley, Director of Education at the General Medical Council, for kindly agreeing to be our Chief Guest and to open the event and Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, for accepting the invitation to be our Guest of Honour

Romesh Gupta OBE

Introduction

The history of the annual Preston Health Mela dates back to 2001 when a group of health care professionals and executive members of the Preston Gujarat Hindu Society led by Professor Romesh Gupta and President Ishwer Tailor respectively, set up a steering group to create



awareness of health inequalities amongst local ethnic and social groups. They planned an event to promote healthy living. Designated a Mela – a gathering or festival – this was to be an opportunity to mobilise the community to take an active and enjoyable part in securing its own health and well-being.

Over the years the scope of the Health Mela has expanded to take in all sections of the community and it has become an annual fixture in the Preston calendar. The 2013 Health Mela which is reported on below is twelfth in the series. It drew together large numbers of health professionals, voluntary organisations and committed individuals working together to promote healthy living in their own community.

It was noted in the report on last year's Health Mela that the Preston model provided a valuable reference point of national significance for those committed to community involvement in the promotion of health and well-being. In the past year, with support from the Forum Steering Group, similar events have been organised in venues across the UK and interest in the ideals of the 'Health Mela' movement continues to grow apace. The Preston event is increasingly used by community leaders as a flagship on which to model their own engagement programmes.

A Theme for 2013

Within the overall theme of community health and well-being, the programme on this occasion was designed to develop last year's emphasis on the Health Mela's systematic role in health education. This year the focus moved from working with children of school age to the educational opportunities it offers to young health professionals. These are realised by the opportunity to practise skills in a community led setting. Here it is possible to develop appropriate strategies for the provision of health checks and advice and counselling to visitors of a wide range of ages and from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Particularly noteworthy in this context is the work of the Health Olympics team, a group of volunteer medical students from the University of Manchester who, under supervision, took responsibility for the Health MOT programme. Also noteworthy is the contribution made to the event by Paul Buckley, Director of Education and Standards at the General Medical Council, who as Chief Guest, addressed the breakfast meeting and took part in a discussion on the broader educational implications of the day's programme, before formally opening the Health Mela

Partners in the Health Mela

Partnership is the essence of the Health Mela, whether between organisations and

organisers, communities and health professionals, young and old or amongst ethnic groups. The organisers acknowledge the support received from the partners listed below, The success of the Health Mela is a vibrant testimony to the energy released when so many diverse groups join to move towards a common goal.

The major partners associated with the Health Mela in 2013 were:

- ❖ The Gujarat Hindu Society and their volunteers
- ❖ Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust
- ❖ NHS Central Lancashire
- ❖ Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- ❖ Preston City Council
- ❖ The Rotary Club of Leyland
- ❖ Roche
- ❖ MSD
- ❖ Volunteers from the University of Central Lancashire
- ❖ The 'Blood Drop' team from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals
- ❖ Medical students from the University of Manchester Health Olympics Team
- ❖ The University of Bolton
- ❖ Lancashire One TV

Useful contacts were also formed with the newly established local Clinical Commissioning Groups

Entertainment at the event was provided by the GHS Dance Group and the Fylde Coast Hindu Society.

Publicity

Word of mouth provides probably the most effective publicity for local events of this nature and it was good to see a significant number of repeat visitors attending the Mela. To augment personal recommendations, a more systematic publicity programme was provided utilising a number of strategies including:

- Use of the media; because of the high cost and unpredictable impact, a decision was taken not to use commercial press advertising. In its place a carefully timed, pre-event, press notice was sent to local press, radio and television outlets. This resulted in very useful advance coverage



for the occasion in the press and on local radio including articles in the Lancashire Evening Post.

- Posters and flyers; these were extensively distributed via pharmacies, surgeries etc. and circulated to Parish Councils by courtesy of the Lancashire Association of Local Councils.
- Local radio; interviews with the organisers were arranged and broadcast on Radio Lancashire.
- Banners and posters; these were displayed at strategic positions in the town and on the Guild Hall.
- Collaboration with partners; very significant help in ensuring publicity for the event was provided by our partners and in particular the Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust and the Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. The work undertaken by them in cascading publicity material, including the use of the hospital radio station, provided an invaluable boost to the publicity campaign.
- A post event press release; sent to all contacts immediately after the event, summarising the day's achievements.
- A video presentation by the local channel 'Lancashire One' has been prepared, and can be used for future publicity.

On the basis of the attendance figures noted below, the publicity strategy is judged to have been successful.

Exhibitors

As a result of problems associated with the lack of circulation space at the 2012 Health Mela the organisers took the decision to limit the number of exhibitors' stalls to not more than 90. This limit was largely achieved by allocating space on a first come first served basis and the overall effect was to provide a much more comfortable visitor experience.

Those taking part in the event represented local health related organisations, local government, health trusts, voluntary bodies, pharmaceutical and medical diagnostic companies, commercial organisations etc.

Exhibitors provided information, advice and support to visitors. Health MOT's were on offer allowing visitors to take a health check including height, weight, BMI, blood pressure, cholesterol level and blood glucose. Hearing and vision checks



were also available. The results of these health checks are included later in this report. Some exhibitors provided an opportunity for direct experience, for example of Reiki, Ayurvedic medicine and head massage.

The organisers gratefully acknowledge the support of all the exhibitors who were involved in the event and who provided such a wide range of interesting experiences for visitors to the festival.

Attendance

1781 visitors completed the registration form on entry to the Health Mela. This figure is a very significantly less than the actual number of visitors who attended the event. The organisers are aware that substantial under-recording occurred because, at many times during the day, the registration desks were overwhelmed by the number of guests arriving and the volunteers were unable to record a large proportion of visitors entering the Guild Hall. The importance of establishing accurate attendance figures is recognised and it is intended that more effective registration procedures will be provided at future events

Even at the figure recorded, the number of visitors once again reflects well on the attractiveness of the city centre location and the effectiveness of the publicity.

The majority of visitors who provided information at registration were from the districts of Central Preston, with a significant proportion from other towns in the North West. A sprinkling of visitors were from further afield some coming from as far away as, for example, Bradford, London, Lincoln and Wrexham.

Health checks

The Health Mela provided an opportunity to undergo a comprehensive range of health checks performed in a friendly, non-threatening environment and in all 247 visitors took advantage of this facility.

The results of the screening tests are summarised below:

- ❖ **Vision** – 19 tests completed, 2 referrals for further investigation
- ❖ **Hearing** – 62 tests completed, over 2/3 of individuals tested advised to seek further help
- ❖ **General screening** including lipid profile and blood glucose – 166 tests, 22 referrals

In all cases counselling was provided to the individuals concerned and their GPs informed when this was appropriate.

Health checks on this scale are only possible thanks to the help of the student



volunteers; the Health Olympics Team from the University of Manchester and the Blood Drop Team from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals. Essential support in the form of materials and equipment was also provided by Roche and MSD. These contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

The Health Mela and Older People

A dedicated section of the exhibition focussed on health issues associated with older people and in particular, health assessment and medicine management. This element of the Mela proved to be a great success as it encouraged patients, carers and members of the public to engage with relevant health topics including the Falls Prevention Pathway, Osteoporosis, Dementia and the role of the voluntary sector including Age Concern.

The Health Mela enabled on-going discussion about topics specific to Older Person's health and well being. Within the Health Mela in 2014 it is planned to build on this and to offer Bone Health Assessment and a more detailed focus on Medicine Management.

Feedback from exhibitors and visitors

76 organisations were represented at the event and a completed feed-back form was received from every participant. The results from the survey were remarkably consistent with 100% of respondents expressing satisfaction with the venue, number of visitors to their stand and the display area provided. All exhibitors present indicated their intention to participate in the 2014 Health Mela.

In more detailed responses exhibitors commented positively on:

- ❖ the networking opportunities provided by the event
- ❖ the valuable feature of the adjacent free car park
- ❖ the helpfulness and enthusiasm of the friendly staff and volunteers
- ❖ the space available for circulation

Suggestions for possible improvements included:

- ❖ making tables available for set up earlier on Friday afternoon
- ❖ providing space to eat lunch away from the stands
- ❖ ensuring that the food provided was hot!

Completed comment forms were also received from 450 visitors. In response to the two specific questions posed, 99.5%



Asked for general comments visitors typically remarked that:

- ❖ the event was well organised
- ❖ the additional space for circulation was a big improvement on previous Melas
- ❖ there were lots of interesting people to talk to
- ❖ the 'older peoples' area was a good development
- ❖ the venue was excellent and its central location appreciated.

The general comments also included a number of suggestions for improvements. Most significant amongst these were the desirability of:

- ❖ reducing waiting times for health checks
- ❖ increasing the amount of healthy food available on sale
- ❖ providing longer opening times including an evening session
- ❖ encouraging stalls to avoid packing up before the official closing time

reported the Health Mela to be 'well organised' and 97.5% that the exhibitors were 'informative and the time spent with them was valuable.'

Information from exhibitors and visitors about their experience of the event is an invaluable resource for the organisers in planning improvements for future Health Melas. Members of the Mela Steering Group really appreciate the feedback and suggestions provided.



Follow-up study

This year, for the first time, the feedback form invited visitors to volunteer to take part in a follow-up study to record aspects of the longer term effects of taking part in the event. 160 of the 450 respondents agreed to participate and provided contact details.

Comments from this year's guests

**Chief Guest, Paul Buckley,
Director of Education and Standards,
General Medical Council**

"The energy and commitment of everyone involved in the Mela was plain to see. I was particularly pleased to have the chance to talk to the Manchester medical students about the health checks they were doing (under appropriate supervision!) and they were hugely impressive. Raising awareness about how we can take control of our health and well being is a really important issue in the UK today - the Mela manages to do this, while being fun and relaxed too".

**Honoured Guest, Shami Chakrabarti,
Director of the Human Rights
organisation, 'Liberty'**

"Human rights are all about dignity, equal treatment and fairness, not unlike the best traditions of the National Health Service. So it was a real honour and joy to attend the Preston Health Mela and have the opportunity to talk about the importance of respecting patients' fundamental rights and freedoms in the context of looking after them. As human rights protect us from abuses of power, these values become especially important in the clinical setting where people can be so vulnerable, disorientated and alone. . . . The Mela itself is an extremely positive event in making the sometimes mystical world of medicine more accessible to the whole community and to demonstrate and celebrate humanity in healthcare."

The National Forum for Health and Wellbeing and the Health Mela movement

The National Forum for Health and Wellbeing was established in the belief that the 'Health Mela' movement provides a realistic structure capable of involving communities in a meaningful



Plans for future Health Melas

Since the Preston Health Mela, a successful inaugural event has taken place in:

❖ **BRADFORD** Saturday, 18th May at the University

Future Health Melas are arranged to take place in:

❖ **LEYLAND** Saturday, 14th September in the Civic Centre

❖ **BLACKPOOL** Saturday, 5th October in the Winter Gardens

Events for 2014 are in planning to take place in:

❖ **BOLTON** 15th March

❖ **PRESTON** 3rd May

❖ **BRADFORD** to be announced

way in the promotion of their own health and well-being.

The Forum and its predecessor the Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum have already provided advice to organisers of similar events in places as far apart as London, Cardiff, Manchester, Chorley Bolton, Leyland and Bradford.

Working in an ever developing partnership with local Rotary Clubs, NFHW members are happy to provide help and support to any group thinking of developing their own version of this

event. Please contact the Secretary at the address given below for further details.

For further information please contact:

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Please visit our website at: www.nfhw.org.uk

Chief officers of



Chairman Romesh Gupta OBE

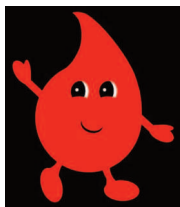
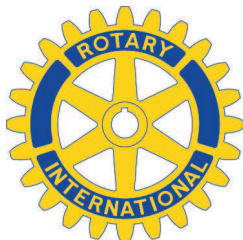
Secretary Sarifa Kabir

Treasurer Ishwer Tailor MBE JP DL

Events organiser Ravi Shah

Publicity officer Derek Ormerod

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