

Improving care with social enterprises



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For more information on social enterprises please visit: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/Commissioning/Socialenterprise/index.htm>

Or for more information on Apnee Sehat: <http://www.apneesehat.net>

How can we better integrate health and social care and benefit the local community with a 'profitable' business? A social enterprise is an organisation which runs like a business but any profits are reinvested into service developments or into the community. A few examples of very well-known social enterprises are The Big Issue and Jamie Oliver's restaurant 15.

In the diabetes field an excellent social enterprise is Apnee Sehat (which means "Our Health" in Punjabi) in Coventry, which aims to educate people of South Asian origin about their health to try to prevent conditions like diabetes and to dispel some of the cultural prejudices regarding illness. The project works in partnership with local primary care trusts and is funded by a number of pharmaceutical companies. The main aims of Apnee Sehat are to:

- Identify cardiovascular and metabolic risk factors and inform the respective GP.
- Educate the community about lifestyle choices and risk factors for disease.
- Support new health promoting behaviours in the community.
- Deliver services including community specialist clinics which are culturally aware and present health information in an accessible way.

Jackie Webb discussed the development of an educational DVD by Apnee Sehat and the ways in which it is overcoming some of the cultural barriers she has encountered when treating South Asian people with diabetes in the previous issue of this journal (Webb, 2008). One short DVD (entitled "Zindagi Ka Saar" which means "The Essence of Life" in Punjabi) follows the story of a young South Asian woman whose diabetes is discovered when she has a miscarriage. She now has to cope with diabetes (and her fear of needles) along with her mother-in-law's search for a new healthy wife for her son, to bear a healthy baby boy. The DVD is available in Hindi, Sylheti and English and will be made in Urdu.

This type of education can challenge social and cultural barriers to good patient care in an approachable way, with real applicable solutions.

The Government is also encouraging the use of social enterprises to integrate health care and social care. The Health and Social Care Bill has called for a number of significant reforms. The regulatory bodies for health and social care will be integrated into one new body called the Care Quality Commission which will implement tough powers to ensure high quality care. Professional regulation will be reformed as part of the Government's response to the Shipman inquiry. The Bill contains new measures for public health to protect against the spread of infectious diseases. A new grant for pregnant women living in the UK will be available to help with maintaining a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy. These new measures should improve health and social care with an emphasis on the community.

Advantages of social enterprises in health care

Patients and healthcare staff are all involved in the development of social enterprises, and therefore the services are tailored to the needs of patients and service users making use of their expert knowledge.

Social enterprises not only benefit the people who use their services but also the whole community, because the profits go straight back into the community or service developments.

A social enterprise investment fund was set up by the Government and, in 2007/8, £10.6 million was made available to new and existing social enterprises who successfully applied for the funding. A further £17 million is available for funding in 2008/09.

This is an excellent opportunity to fund new care partnerships and make ideas for efficient (and profitable) multidisciplinary care a reality. ■

Webb (2008) NICE guidance on pre-conception care: Its impact in ethnic minorities. *Journal of Diabetes Nursing* 12: 271-7

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