

# Case Study - “Healthy Mitchelstown” 2012

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## Introduction

### **Mitchelstown; a Healthy Town - Background**

In 2005 a socio-economic plan was devised for Mitchelstown and its hinterland through a public consultation process commissioned by Ballyhoura Development Ltd. The purpose of this plan was to provide a robust, coherent and integrated action and implementation document, related specifically to Mitchelstown, its catchment area and its local environment; which would provide a framework for the physical, economic and social development of the town and its hinterland. One outcome of this plan was the development of an umbrella group representing the economic and social development of the area, formally known as the Mitchelstown Forum Ltd.

In 2009, this plan was revisited under the remit of the Mitchelstown Forum Ltd; Mitchelstown collaborated with Cork County Council and Cork County Development Board, placing the town on the agenda of the County Development Board as a priority area in its strategy to 2012. Subsequently, this decision led to ‘pilot’ priority status being assigned to the town which means that the implementation of the plan will be supported through inter-agency co-operation and local community support. This process led to the identification of four priority actions for the town and its hinterland, Included was Health Development and the exploration of Mitchelstown becoming a “Healthy Town”, simply meaning Mitchelstown has a plan for health Development.

## Activities

In 2010, in order to kick-start work on the ‘Health Development’ of the town and its hinterland, a consultation project with local community groups was conducted by Ballyhoura Development Ltd to explore the needs of Mitchelstown as a ‘healthy town’ and this initial research led to the current project.

Based on the Social Determinants of Health, a desk based community health profile for Mitchelstown was completed by the Health Service Executive in March 2011. The community health needs assessment is not a one-off activity but a developmental process that will be added to and amended over time. A central part of health needs assessment is gathering information on local people’s views of their health needs and resources. The expertise and knowledge of the local population, in particular on what assets exist, the factors that influence their health, what is most important, local health beliefs and solutions to problems have formed the basis of this community health needs assessment.

### **Community Training**

Involving local people living in Mitchelstown ensures that any action will be based on need and be more acceptable to the population. To complete the health profile thirteen community

representatives completed **Community Health Advocate Training** which was delivered by the Health Promotion Department of the HSE South in March 2011. The training was designed to build capacity within the community of Mitchelstown to increase awareness of the key determinants of health and to develop a resource within the community to address key areas of health for themselves. With the support of Ballyhoura Development and the HSE, those who attended the training (**Community Health Advocates**) then carried out health needs assessment (in line with the community health profile) with their local groups between March and July 2011. To support the Health Advocates, the HSE prepared a short presentation giving a snap shot of the Community of Mitchelstown relating to factors effecting health. Each group consulted outlined the Strengths, Weakness, Challenges and Threats to the community of Mitchelstown, which allowed for group discussion to take place and highlighted the needs in relation to health.

### **Consultation with the Community**

Fifteen consultations in total have been completed to date with a variety of groups from, women, heritage, youth, community, recreation and education

### **Action Planning**

Results of the needs assessment were analysed by the Community Health Advocates in July 2011. Initial action planning in July highlighted that two key areas of initial action in 2011 / 2012 to promote community health emerged for the residents of Mitchelstown:

1. A Community Allotment in Mitchelstown
2. The development of safe walking routes in the town

Following this focus, questionnaires to collect more information on potential allotment users and potential walkers were distributed at (a) a community open day, (b) a childcare facility, (c) the Living Health Centre, (d) St Fanahans Horticulture course, (e) Tesco Foyer and (f) advertised on Line through survey money-an online questionnaire facility.

### **Success**

#### **Structures**

A steering group focusing on health was set up under the structure of the Mitchelstown Forum to oversee the development of Healthy Mitchelstown include key stakeholders Ballyhoura Development, HSE Community Work Department, HSE Senior Health Promotion Officer, A GP representing the Living Health Centre, 2 Youth representatives, Mitchelstown Community Council, Mitchelstown Forum, Cork Sports Partnership, 2 community representatives, Tesco Community Champion, Mitchelstown GIY group, Community Guard, Mitchelstown Community Drugs Project, Home School Community Liaison, Special Friends, Cardiac Support Group and a Drama facilitator

The Allotments sub group has ben formed under the Mitchelstown Community Council Ltd The allotments sub group have secured a Licence agreement with Cork County Council for the development of Community Allotments, while the Walking sub group is operating under the Healthy Mitchelstown steering group. The Steering group will continue to oversee the implementation of actions identified from the consultation process.

The walking sub group are sending four local people to complete walk leadership training in early 2012 through Cork Sports Partnership, both places will be funded by "Healthy Mitchelstown" Project.

### **Funding**

An application for HSE Section 39/10 funding was made by the Mitchelstown Forum Ltd in 2011 and was successful in receiving a grant of 3,000.

In 2012 the Healthy Towns Initiative was nominated and won an award through Cork Sports Partnership Sporting awards under the category "Community Health through Sporting Activity"

### **Lessons Learned**

The Healthy Mitchelstown Model was presented at the Regional Primary Health Care conference in November 2011 as a model of good practice, this gave strength to the Healthy Town project due to direct promotion among the Medical sector. At the conference the project was promoted with Minister for Primary Care Roisin Shortall.

### **Conclusion**

There are a number of Healthy Cities established in Ireland to date including Belfast, Galway, Waterford and Cork City. It is hoped that Mitchelstown will become a Healthy Town recognised by the World Health Organisation. It is the community's vision to market Mitchelstown as a healthy town to visit giving recommendation on a two day packages for a healthy break in the area, this ties in with research conducted by the University of Michigan in 2011 which recommends the most viable sector for Mitchelstown to progress economically and social is though the health sector.