West Yorkshire Air Quality and Health Strategy Project

Background

Public Health England has identified air quality as a key public health priority. Air pollution contributes to approximately 29,000 deaths annually in the UK and is estimated to account for 5-6% mortality in West Yorkshire (COMEAP, 2010). Poor air quality can also contribute to health inequalities since people living in deprived areas tend to experience the highest levels of road pollution and resulting negative health effects.

As a region, West Yorkshire has some of the worst air quality in the country. The West Yorkshire Air Quality and Health Strategy project is a collaborative research project which aims to address air pollution by encouraging behaviour change both at public and policy levels.

Some important points about the project:

- it is the result of collaborative work between the five West Yorkshire Local Authorities, Public Health England and METRO (within the Combined Authority portfolio)

- it has been funded by DEFRA’s Air Quality Grant scheme, the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan and Born in Bradford within the Bradford Institute for Health Research

- it will involve the collaboration of key stakeholder groups to translate health research outputs directly into policy making

- over two years the project will aim to develop strategies to:
  - encourage travel related behaviour change at a community level
  - promote the development, adoption and implementation of policies which aim to improve air quality by local authorities
Encouraging travel related behaviour change

In an attempt to tackle obvious peaks in car travel, the first part of the project will focus on promoting active transport for school journeys in urban areas. In addition to reducing the number of vehicles on the road, active travel has the added health benefit of increasing children’s daily physical activity – a major risk factor for obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Researchers will engage with schools, parents and children across the region and studies will explore school travel in detail. Researchers will look to identify why car travel is such a common choice and what barriers exist to more active forms of travel for school. They will also try to identify what sort of interventions might help to encourage more walking and cycling to school, and where these interventions might best be targeted.

Promoting policies which aim to improve air quality

The second part of the project will engage with key decision makers in the region and investigate the challenges faced in successfully developing and implementing strategies which aim to improve air quality. Lessons learned during this process will be used to develop approaches which can be adopted by local authorities to drive forward improvements in uptake of low emissions strategies.

This work will involve collaboration across a range of organisations and departments including Public Health, Transport, Environmental Health, Climate Change, and Planning.

The project will run from 1st December 2014 until 31st December 2016

For more information on the project please contact:
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