

PICTURE DESK ADVISORY**ZIMMERS LINE UP FOR MULTI-MILLION 'REGENERATION'**Photos available: http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/well-being_photoshoot_zimmers**0207 211 1888 – for further details**

PASSIONATE PLANS FOR HEALTH IN THE NORTH EAST

Babies across the North East are set to enjoy a healthier start in life as the Big Lottery Fund pledges £4 million to health-related projects in the region through its Well-being programme, announced today.

A hearty £126 million is being rolled out across England with the aim to bring communities into good mental and physical health by promoting exercise and healthy eating.

Statistics show the North East suffers high levels of heart disease, cancer and mental illness, and some of the lowest life expectancy levels. Obesity levels among children and adults are also high and physical activity in the region is below average.

Passionate about Health and Well-being is a portfolio of **32** projects across the region that aims to reverse those statistics. The project will be lead by the **North East Strategic Health Authority (NESHA)** in partnership with specialist providers.

Over 40,000 people will benefit from the projects, which range from getting children and families more active and eating more healthily to improving people's mental health through better employment opportunities. All have been commissioned in line with the national Well-being programme's aims – to improve mental well-being, to make people more physically active, and to encourage children, parents and the wider community to eat more healthily.

James Turner, BIG Lottery Fund's Head of Region for the North East, said: "The excellent range of projects in the North East will support people to make key changes to their lifestyles, helping them to become fitter, healthier and happier as a result. The initiatives stretch right across the region and many are being delivered by voluntary groups, allowing communities to be closely involved in their planning and delivery."

A free three-week **Weaning** course will teach new parents how to prepare healthy, homemade foods for their babies. As well as offering advice on nutrition and practical cooking skills, it will provide participants with cooking equipment so that they can easily prepare the recipes at home.

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Another project in the portfolio, **New Opportunities in Sport and Physical Activity for Looked after Children in Northumberland**, will give Looked after Children (LAC) the opportunity to take part in a range of different sports and physical activities outside of school. They will also have the chance to develop coaching and leadership skills, helping to open up opportunities in volunteering and paid employment.

Many of the projects focus on improving mental health in the North East, which currently suffers a high rate of mental illness and above average rates of suicide.

NESHA expects more than 25,000 people to have a better understanding of mental health and its implications for well-being thanks to 19 projects dedicated to improving mental health across the region. One such project is a social enterprise **Community Café** based in **Newcastle**, which will offer training and work placements to people who have experienced a period of unemployment due to mental ill health.

The café itself will be used to promote good mental health, and will supply information to help break down some of the social stigma surrounding the condition. It will also run social activities for older people, including a luncheon club and meal delivery service to people that are housebound.

Tracey Sharp, Regional Project Board Chair, said: "This is great news for the North East, which has some of the worst physical and mental health in the country. The sooner we can begin to turn this money into tangible health benefits, the better."

NESHA is working with a range of partners in developing the portfolio, including representatives from Public Health North East, Mental Health North East, Government Office for the North East, Voluntary Organisations Network North East, Association of North East Councils, Care Services Improvement Partnership and Sport England.

Well-being is part of the Big Lottery Fund's £2.6bn UK-wide portfolio of programmes which are running till 2009. Regularly updated information on the Big Lottery Fund's new programmes is available at www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/publications.htm.

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Full details of the Big Lottery Fund programmes and grant awards are available on the website:
www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Notes to Editors

- **The Well-being programme**, launched in April 2006, is providing funding to support the development of healthier lifestyles and to improve well-being. The programme will focus on three strands: mental health – to help people and communities to improve mental well-being; physical activity – to help people to become more physically active in their daily lives and in their communities; and healthy eating - for children, parents and the wider community to eat more healthily.

- The Big Lottery Fund rolls out close to £2 million in Lottery good cause money every 24 hours, which together with other Lottery distributors means that across the UK most people are within a few miles of a Lottery-funded project.
- The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004.
- On 1 December 2006 the Big Lottery Fund was officially established by Parliament and at the same time assumed the residual responsibilities of the dissolved National Lottery Charities Board (Community Fund) the New Opportunities Fund, and the Millennium Commission. The Fund is building on the experience and best practice of the merged bodies to simplify funding in those areas where they overlap and to ensure Lottery funding provides the best possible value for money.
- Since the National Lottery began in 1994, 28p from every pound spent by the public has gone to Good Causes. As a result, over £19.5 billion has now been raised and more than 250,000 grants given out to the arts, sport, heritage, charities, health, education and the environment.
- The statistics come from Health and Lifestyle in the North East, a presentation by David Walker, then Acting Regional Director of Public Health.

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Issued: 18 July 2007
PN WB 07-07-15