

REACH INSIGHTS | Community Champions Evaluation

1 - WHAT WE EVALUATED

We evaluated the County Durham Together Community Champions programme, a programme where local people help share health and wellbeing information in their communities. We looked at how happy champions are with the programme, how many people it reaches, and whether it is making a difference.

We also looked at what works well and what could be better (the programme was relaunched in 2023, so the evaluation reviewed progress since then). We wanted to know if the programme is helping champions feel confident and informed, and if the information they share is reaching people who might not usually get health advice.

2 - WHY IT MATTERS

This programme helps share health information with people who might not normally receive it. Trusted local people can start helpful conversations and point others to support. This is important for reducing health differences across County Durham.

The programme also helps champions feel more confident and connected, which supports their own wellbeing. By listening to champions, public health services can work better with communities. Strong community links mean health messages go further and are more trusted, especially in areas facing the biggest challenges.

3 – METHODS

An online survey was sent to all community champions and we received 27 responses. We also spoke to champions in one-to-one interviews, by phone and in person. Some champions shared case studies to explain what they do and how the programme helped them.

We listened to comments made in meetings and read emails sent by champions. We also looked at sign-up data to see where champions live and how the programme reaches different areas. We included feedback from public health staff who work with the programme. Using different methods helped us get a fuller picture.

4 - KEY FINDINGS

The majority of community champions are happy with the programme. They like the easy sign-up, regular meetings, training, and being listened to. There are 141 champions across County Durham, helping share health messages in many ways, such as talking to people, social media, and posters.

Most champions say they feel more confident, informed, and connected. Many feel proud of helping their community. The biggest impact so far has been on the champions themselves, but there are early signs that communities benefit too. Some challenges were found, such as fewer young people joining, uneven coverage in some areas, and a need for clearer information at the start.

For more information contact:

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5 – RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recruit more champions in areas with lower volunteer numbers and higher numbers of 18-24-year-olds.
- Provide clearer onboarding information, flexible training, and shareable content aligned to champions' interests and health campaigns.
- Increase opportunities for champions to connect both online and in person.
- Establish clear mechanisms for champions to share local feedback with public health teams, supporting programme growth and impact.

Date of Evaluation: May 2025