

# Being Well in Worcestershire, the story so far...

## Worcestershire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy - Year 1 Update

In September 2022, Worcestershire's Health and Wellbeing Board launched its Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Being Well in Worcestershire. The Strategy sets out a vision and key priorities for our partnership work to help improve the health and wellbeing of our population and reduce inequalities over the next 10 years. We have made good headway since our strategy was launched. This document updates on some of the progress made in Year 1 and the fantastic work that has been happening. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed.



Work to improve health and wellbeing in Worcestershire is overseen by our Health and Wellbeing Board, a system-wide forum that brings together a range of health and care partners. Since the strategy's development, several other strategies and work programmes have identified mental health as a key priority and work continues around the system to improve this and understand further needs, this includes:

- Herefordshire & Worcestershire Integrated Care Strategy
- Worcestershire Learning Disability Strategy
- Carer Friendly Worcestershire - All Age Carers' Strategy
- Mental Health Needs Assessment

### OUR STRATEGY SAYS:

We will take a whole population approach to improving mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental ill health across Worcestershire.

## Reviewing the evidence

A Mental Health Needs Assessment (MHNA) has been carried out by reviewing national and local evidence, engagement, and research. The findings will help to shape services, more effectively allocate resources, and develop creative interventions to support people's mental health and wellbeing. Key findings include:

- **Mental health and wellbeing have been challenged in recent years**  
Across the country, the pandemic and ongoing cost of living pressures have contributed to lower levels of wellbeing and growing numbers of people experiencing mental health challenges. Encouragingly, there are some improvements in the most recent data.
- **Wide opportunities exist to support good mental health and wellbeing**  
Promoting good wellbeing can reach widely, including in schools and workplaces, and across communities. Recognising that some groups of people are more likely to experience poorer mental health can help target efforts to prevent mental ill health and provide early support where needed.
- **Physical and mental health are closely linked**  
In general, people who experience mental health challenges are more likely to also have worse physical health. As part of recovery from mental health conditions, there are opportunities to support people to make healthy lifestyle choices and access healthcare where needed.
- **Collaboration is key**  
No single group or organisation can address all the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing. Effective collaboration across health and social care, public health, the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, and with communities themselves is essential.

The needs assessment highlights a series of ten recommendations. These are being reviewed and considered by the Being Well Strategic Group for implementation. [Click here](#) to access the full report.



# Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing

## Signposting to mental health support

The Now We're Talking campaign is raising awareness of mental health support and how it can be accessed in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Now We're Talking resources for children, young people, and adults help people identify what they can access by themselves; including advice to maintain positive wellbeing, help if you're feeling stressed or anxious, and contact details for urgent and emergency services.



We Are One by Theresa Attard

## Local NHS encourage young people to 'Reach Out' for mental health support

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust teamed up with a local band 'Split Second' and the Artists Clubhouse, to promote mental health support for young people through a new song 'Reach Out', a series of busking events and 11 free family-friendly digital art posters. Levi Husbands, who wrote Reach Out and is a Guitarist in Split Second said:

*"Lockdown had a big impact on my own mental health which led me to the NHS and the writing of this song. We hope anyone who hears the track is encouraged to 'reach out'".*

## Preventing Suicide

Suicide prevention remains a national and local priority. The death of someone by suicide has a devastating effect on families, friends, workplaces, schools, and communities and every life lost to suicide is a tragedy. Worcestershire's Suicide Prevention Partnership Group oversees activity taken to prevent suicide. Over the past 6 months, there has been continued work in Worcestershire to raise the profile of suicide prevention and encourage health seeking behaviours among all ages.

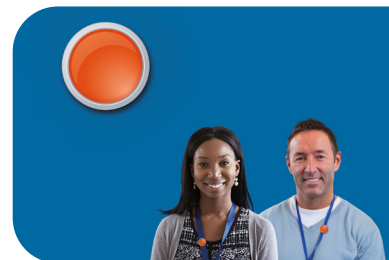


**NOW WE'RE TALKING**  
FOR HEALTHY MINDS

Training schemes, signposting and communications campaigns are providing more community-based prevention support for people across the County.

The Orange Button Scheme trains community members to support individuals who may be having thoughts of suicide.

Targeted prevention campaigns to address the inequalities in suicide rates among the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and middle-aged men. This includes the Hold out a Hand and Acting Together to Prevent Suicide campaigns.

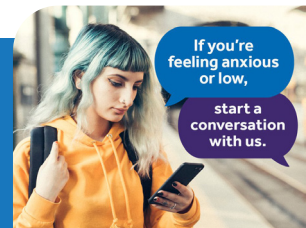


**255** Orange Button wearers across the county

**95** people trained in suicide prevention since November 2022

## The WOO text service for real time support

SHOUT is a free, confidential 24/7 text messaging service. In September 2022 a local key word was created, and residents are now able to text the word "WOO" to 85258 and have a text conversation with a trained volunteer. The volunteers offer real-time support to people who are anxious, stressed, depressed or suicidal.



Text 'WOO' to 85258  
Free, confidential support, 24/7

## Providing the Best Start in Life

Over a quarter (28.7%) of mental health conditions throughout life are attributable to adverse childhood experiences (MHNA 2023), of which poor parental mental health and substance misuse are recognised. The Best Start in Life programme provides support early on for parental mental health, infant feeding, maternal obesity, parenting and community support.

Since April 2022, the number of women who smoke when their baby is born has fallen in Herefordshire and Worcestershire from 10.8% to 8.8%, which is just below the England average of 8.9%. Increased Carbon Monoxide (CO) screening, service referral rates and a new postnatal support service are enabling healthier parents in Worcestershire!

### OUR STRATEGY SAYS

We will support people to start well, live well and age well so they can live a greater proportion of their lives in good health.



## New school challenge fund supports innovative health and wellbeing projects

We want good mental health and wellbeing to become embedded into the culture of every school. To this end, Worcestershire County Council has created a Public Health grant scheme for schools, which enables them to innovate and create new ways of improving physical or mental health within their communities. To date, this includes sensory and outdoor wellbeing spaces, therapy dogs to work with pupils, active play equipment, and emotional coaching.

## Dementia Centre at Worcestershire County Museum

The popular reminiscence dementia-friends' sessions at Worcester County Museum have been upgraded. Now, Age UK's weekly Dementia Centre is being held at the museum. The two organisations are providing support to those living with dementia and their families to adjust to the changes, help slow the progression of dementia and encourage a positive outlook. Participants said: "Mum comes back very happy" and "It makes life easier and helpful".



## New 'Your Health' bus is taking primary care to the community

A new mobile treatment bus is taking health care to our most vulnerable residents and communities with low uptake rates. Two outreach teams will be heading out across Worcestershire in the 'Your Health' buses to deliver health checks, screening to support early diagnosis of health conditions, vaccinations and some treatments. Teams will also be providing health education, lifestyle advice and signposting to wider services, ensuring residents can access the health and care they need.

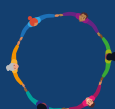
## Progress in reducing harm and drug-related deaths

Important substance misuse work, led by Cranstoun, is helping to reduce the harmful effects that substances may cause as well as the number of drug-related deaths across the county.

Working with peer groups, access to harm reduction services has increased. This includes further enhancing the needle and syringe programme and increasing the availability of naloxone (a medication which can reverse the effects of an overdose of opioids like Heroin).

Over **500 Naloxone packs** distributed to reduce opioid overdoses

Over **700 packs** distributed through the Needle & Syringe Programme





# New Wellbeing Support Available Through GP Practices



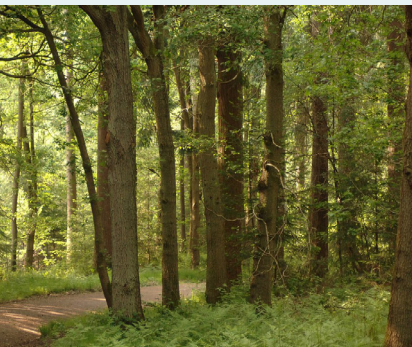
## New 'Circle Group' in Malvern is helping people to cope better and feel happier

The new 12-week group is aimed at anyone who is feeling isolated, anxious, lacking confidence or depressed. Malvern Town Primary Care Network (PCN) is working with local VCSE partners to provide the 'Circle Group'. With input from the group, each session is built around a different wellbeing activity like yoga, sound baths or gardening; with options to be signposted to similar longer term community activities. Participants make new connections within the group in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere while developing the tools to help them cope better and feel happier.

## Supporting Veterans and their families

The Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership helps service personnel, veterans and their families access a range of support including healthcare and mental health support, housing, employment, and transitions to civilian life.

Over 40 GP practices are now 'Veteran friendly', and both the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust are now 'Veteran Aware' organisations.



## Optimistic Living in Wyre Forest

Wyre Forest Health Partnership PCN is working with a local VCSE partner, Simply Limitless, to provide Optimistic Living, a 12-week programme of one to one support for those seeking support to improve their confidence and wellbeing.

Mental health support is wrapped up as part of the wider support offer, which is helping participants increase their confidence and improve their wellbeing. One participant said: "I feel less doom and gloom, more relaxed and I am better at putting things into perspective!"

## Working better together

### District Collaboratives

This is a new way of working and represents a shift in how communities and health and care providers work together to combine resources and drive local initiatives. So far, partners across the six District Collaboratives have worked together to support and deliver a range of programmes for Worcestershire residents, including:

- Wellbeing hubs in Droitwich and Evesham.
- Newsletters for GP patients signposting to wellbeing support.
- New roles including Family Coaches, Children's and Families Social Prescribers, Emotional Support Practitioner to provide more mental health and wellbeing support.

### OUR STRATEGY SAYS

We will continue to align and support local partnership strategies that contribute to improving mental health and wellbeing.



## Research begins to understand and strengthen the brilliant Worcestershire VCSE

With around 2700 organisations, the VCSE sector, with its strong links into communities, has a crucial role to play in keeping people connected and healthy! Starting in June 2023, 'Understanding and Strengthening the Worcestershire VCSE' is a research and evaluation project that will inform new community powered health and wellbeing projects for the people of Worcestershire. Find out more through the new [VCSE alliance page](#).

## Being Active

### Building strength, stability, and social connections

The Living Well for Longer programme is providing strength, balance, and flexibility sessions for over 50s in Worcestershire. Residents have more opportunities to build strength and attend social groups, with Strong and Steady Exercise Classes and free Resistance bands. [Click here](#) to find out more or pick up a resistance band at your local library.

**71 people** trained from over **27 organisations**, including the VCSE, church groups and sport and leisure facilities to deliver exercise classes.

Over **35,000** resistance bands have been **provided to the public**, either directly or through classes to help people get active at home.



**LIVING WELL  
FOR LONGER**  
IN WORCESTERSHIRE

#### OUR STRATEGY SAYS

We will enable people to improve and maintain their own health and wellbeing and make healthy lifestyle choices.

*“The programme has been especially beneficial for my legs. Prior to coming to the resistance band exercise classes, I couldn’t walk far without relying on my walking stick or holding onto my husband. I can now walk unaided and can walk 2km on a good day. My mental health and wellbeing has improved too”-*

Mary, referred to the 12-week resistance bands programme by her fall clinic instructor.



### Increasing physical activity opportunities for young people

Locally, physical activity levels in children have risen to be significantly higher than the national average. **Four of six** of the most active areas in the region being right here in Worcestershire! Even more new opportunities are on the way for **children and young people** to stay active:

Junior Park Run – A new, free, volunteer led park run for children aged 4-14 will be held at Diglis Playing Fields (Worcester) every Sunday morning. To find out more, please [visit junior parkrun](#).



With thanks to **Bromsgrove Junior parkrun**.

## Healthy Local Environments

**Over 4,200** volunteer work party hours at Countryside sites

Countryside Sites Volunteer **Work Parties** are running weekly or bi-monthly where members of the public can come along and work alongside Countryside Service staff on projects such as hedge laying, woodland management, and orchard restoration.

In the last year, many volunteers have had the opportunity to meet new people, get fresh air, exercise and learn new skills. Taking part provides moderate physical activity, improves muscle strength, relieves stress and can help combat depression.

#### OUR STRATEGY SAYS

We will continue to protect our environment and promote the positive benefits it has for our mental health and wellbeing.



**Being Well**  
IN WORCESTERSHIRE

# Communities

## Grants for community health initiatives

**Droitwich Wellbeing Hub** has received a community grant to enable partners and local residents to work together to develop activities and programmes that improve mental health, wellbeing, and isolation. A short film from the voice of the local residents is being produced to share community stories and positively promote the Westlands estate.

**The Hollywood and Wythall Stronger Together Mental Health Support Group** is a great example of a community led peer support group. The group was founded by a retired local resident with lived experience of mental health and a passion to increase social connectivity. The community grant will enable the group to support local residents to improve their mental wellbeing through inclusive activities such as yoga and gardening as well as training members of the community in low level mental health support.

**OUR STRATEGY SAYS**  
We will work to improve our communities and places, ensuring that good mental health and wellbeing is central to everything we do



## Increasing social connections through community builders

Community Builders are supporting local communities to recognise their strengths and develop activities, groups and social connections.

*“As a Community Builder I am able to go out and listen to the needs and passions of people living locally, connecting like-minded people to bring their ideas to life. By doing this we can reduce isolation and build confidence making a more resilient community”* - A Community Builder in Worcestershire.

A great example of community building in action is the creation of ‘Ruby Tuesday’s’, a successful letter-writing group based in Cutnall Green. With the support of a community builder, a local resident, with a passion for handwritten letters, developed the group to help people connect over a shared interest and put a smile on the faces of those who may appreciate a note dropping through their door.



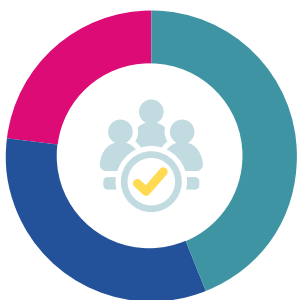
## New Worcestershire Health Champions newsletter received by over 1500 Champions!

All Worcestershire Health Champions are receiving a new look newsletter with information on local health campaigns, resources and training opportunities. Worcestershire Health Champions are people who want to make a difference in their communities by sharing health and wellbeing messages, either in their personal or professional lives. Anyone can be a Champion, [sign up here](#).



## Making new connections with Worcestershire Libraries

Connect groups and online bubbles, delivered by Worcestershire libraries are giving people the chance to develop local, community connections in a welcoming space or safe online environment. Activities are wide ranging and have continued to grow. To find out more, visit the [library events and activities page](#).



**50%** experienced an increase in self-confidence.

**72%** felt more connected to local community.

**96%** of participants reported an increase in social interaction.



# Developing Skills, Jobs and Opportunities

## Supporting Apprenticeships

In March 2023, **Worcestershire Apprenticeships** (WA) launched its new online portal to support young people, parents, and employers to apply online to multiple providers of apprenticeships at any one time instead of the current one provider at a time process, aiming to increase apprenticeship recruitment and the participation across the county through greater success of applications.

## Skills Bootcamp

Worcestershire has received a £1million skills boost! The county has been awarded additional funding from the Department for Education to expand its **Skills Bootcamp** programme. Skills Bootcamps offer free training to anyone in Worcestershire over the age of 19 with a guaranteed interview at a local employer at the end of the training. Bootcamps are available in bricklaying, plumbing, painting and decorating, air source heat pump installation and maintenance, nursing, social care, digital and more.

## 510 adults access Multiply maths support



**Multiply** has supported 510 residents aged 19 and older who do not have a maths GCSE at Grade C (or equivalent). Multiply courses are free to access and can help those looking to progress at work, who need help with daily tasks such as supporting a child with their home learning, or simply managing their money better to cope with cost-of-living situations.

### OUR STRATEGY SAYS

We will work to improve access to quality jobs, training, and volunteering opportunities.



**100 WA accounts created**



# Healthy and Inclusive Workplaces

## Community Wellbeing Role Network

Over 40 people attended the first meeting of the new Community Wellbeing Role Network, including Lifestyle Advisors, Social Prescribers, Community Health Connectors, and Mental Health Link Workers.

**Worcestershire VCSE Alliance** will be providing quarterly get togethers and monthly check-ins for informal peer support, giving people in community wellbeing roles across the county a chance to connect and learn with peers.

### OUR STRATEGY SAYS

We will work with businesses and organisations to promote inclusive, healthy, and productive workplaces.

## INclusive Worcestershire

INclusive Worcestershire, launched in 2023, supports those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to achieve their career outcomes. This year, it ran an inclusive employment conference to highlight Disability Confident opportunities, the breadth of support available to local businesses, and share 'best practice'. More events are planned for 2023.



## The Stay Connected pledge

The Tackling Loneliness Partnership has developed a new **Stay Connected pledge**, which aims to help put an end to loneliness by encouraging organisations to help people feel more connected, less isolated, and ultimately healthier. Since the 2023 relaunch, over 26 organisations have made the pledge. Any organisation can join Stay Connected and help their employees, customers and local communities make and maintain positive social connections.



## Workplace Health Programme

The new Workplace Health Programme will support employers across Worcestershire to improve the health and wellbeing of their employees. It will include a Workplace Wellbeing Network and further targeted support for businesses most impacted by health inequalities.



## Housing and Health

### Community Mental Health Link Workers

Community Mental Health Link Workers will help to improve the mental health and wellbeing of those experiencing homelessness or those at threat of homelessness. The new Link Workers will be hosted by VCSE organisations and will assist with care navigation, access to services and strategies to manage anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbance, and access to support networks within their communities.

#### OUR STRATEGY SAYS

We will continue to improve access to healthy, safe, affordable, and warm homes that support a better quality of life and good mental health and wellbeing.

### Housing and Mental Health Groups

Housing and Mental Health partnership groups are being established at a District level to understand services, resources and build relationships to support one another in meeting the needs of the local population, as well as understanding gaps in provision.

### Professionals Portal for Housing Providers

The Professionals Portal has been launched to help anyone working in Herefordshire and Worcestershire access basic information and tools around supporting those struggling with mental health or suicide. The portal provides access to free online training around mental health and wellbeing, aims to raise awareness of self-care and highlights useful resources for a range of issues, such as for those experiencing homelessness.

## Looking forward to 2024...

Alongside existing and emerging work, we will focus on:

### Shaping the Best Start in Life

The new Start for Life offer will be refreshing the current parenting and community offer, including preconception support and the development of Family Hubs across Worcestershire.

### Continuing to tackle loneliness and social isolation

Although less people in Worcestershire report feeling lonely 'often or always' than the **national average**, we are not being complacent. We know from talking to our communities that the pandemic increased loneliness and isolation across all age groups, but particularly in the elderly, young people and those living in rural areas. The Tackling Loneliness Partnership brings together representatives from District Councils, the NHS and the VCSE sector and aims to build local initiatives which help tackle the issue. A new action plan for the partnership will look to address this in 2024.

### Improving your health through creativity

Engaging with arts, creativity and culture can have hugely positive effects on mental health and wellbeing. Working with partners, new creative programmes will support people to talk about and access mental health support.

### Celebrating community stories

So much amazing work to encourage good mental health and wellbeing is happening across the County. To capture it all, working with District Councils and VCSE organisations, we'll be telling the stories of our brilliant communities.

★ *Created with thanks to Worcestershire partners and communities*

