

# HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## 13 NOVEMBER 2023

### PUBLIC HEALTH AND PREVENTION

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#### Summary

1. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) will receive an update on the work of Public Health and other partners aimed at improving health and wellbeing. Attention to the wider determinants of health, such as education and social isolation, is a common theme throughout. The report includes a summary of progress in the last 12 months and an overview of plans for the next 12 months.
2. The Director of Public Health and the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Wellbeing have been invited to the meeting to respond to any questions the Committee may have.

#### Background

3. Public Health lead on a range of functions including Health Protection and Outbreak Response, Health Improvement, Child Health and Development (0-5), School Nursing, Substance Misuse, Sexual Health, Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Emergency Planning and Trading Standards.
4. In recent months, Worcestershire has further developed its 'community development' approach to Public Health. This approach seeks to do Public Health work with local people rather than doing it to them. The aim is to harness the expertise and energy of communities by enabling them to make their own ideas for health improvement a reality. This is achieved through local determination of priorities, joint projects with resident groups and resourcing through local grant schemes. The result is health improvement work that is fully 'owned' by local communities which, as such, is more sustainable over time.

#### Public Health 12-month review

5. In October 2022, HOSC received the new [Worcestershire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032](#). This Strategy outlines the Health and Wellbeing Board's commitment to improve mental health and wellbeing, supporting people to live well in good health for as long as possible, particularly those who have poorer health outcomes.
6. In this first year, health and care partners have made real strides in delivering against the Strategy's priority of good mental health and wellbeing. There are several achievements, with some outlined for members in the Year One Progress Report, attached at Appendix 1. This includes a summary of the detailed [Mental Health Needs Assessment](#) carried out by Public Health, the recommendations of which are being reviewed by the Being Well Strategic Group for implementation.

7. Despite this being an early stage in the life of the Strategy, some of the data begins to demonstrate progress (as shown in the Outcomes Framework at Appendix 2). This will continue to be monitored over the 10-year course of the Strategy.
8. In the latest edition of the national performance metrics (Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2023) Worcestershire now has more health improvement outcomes rated as '*significantly better than national average*' than any other Council in the West Midlands Region. In total, 23 performance indicators are awarded this top rating, almost double the overall West Midlands total of 12.
9. Some specific recent achievements include:
  - Worcestershire's Health Visiting Service currently scores well above national averages on all performance metrics. Key outcomes include rates of child development at 2½ years of age that are significantly better than the national average.
  - Worcestershire County Council's (the Council's) work with schools and youth services has contributed to a large rise in the proportion of young people meeting physical activity recommendations. Four of the six most active areas in the West Midlands region are now in Worcestershire.
  - The Public Health team's joint working with midwifery teams and patient groups has led to a significant drop in the number of pregnant women smoking.
  - Worcestershire's pioneering work on youth vaping has recently been featured in national news, including on BBC Breakfast. Over 12,000 illegal vapes have been seized by the Trading Standards team in the last year and Public Health continue to use local research to better understand youth vaping and inform preventative work in schools.
  - The local Prevent programme, aimed at preventing radicalisation and terrorism, has been rated by the Home Office as 'Strong' across all domains of work. Worcestershire is the only area in the region to achieve this.
  - Worcestershire's substance misuse service has a successful treatment rate that is higher than the national average and rates of hospital admissions because of drug or alcohol use have fallen below national averages.
  - Partnership work with prisons has delivered substantial improvements in the proportion of those leaving prison engaging in substance misuse treatment programmes, stopping them falling back into addiction and crime.
  - Recent community development programmes have led to Worcestershire having one of the lowest rates of loneliness in the country. The Council's work was featured in The Municipal Journal and on BBC TV.
  - Work with Primary Care and public facing promotion led to a significant rise in the uptake of bowel screening. This work featured on BBC radio.
10. In the last few months, the Council has won the regional Public Health Award for its health protection work and the national UKPHR Award for 'Best Social Media Campaign' for its work promoting better mental health and preventing suicide in men. This campaign has further been shortlisted in the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (winners to be announced late November), and finally, the team's research

work on Health and Social Care workforce wellbeing, post pandemic has been shortlisted for the national Market Research Awards.

## **Public Health overview for next 12 months**

11. The following is a breakdown of key priorities, divided up in relation to how they contribute to the four main priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan, which are Children and Families, Health and Wellbeing, Open for Business, and the Environment.

### Children and Families

12. The pandemic revealed how crucial schools and early years settings are to health. While Public Health practitioners were able to offer professional guidance on managing outbreaks, there was a heavy dependence on the ability of teachers and other staff to understand their school community and turn that guidance into action.
13. Over the next 12 months Public Health will invest in that understanding and ability to influence health more widely. In line with the 'community development' approach, a new small-grants programme has been launched which allows schools to make their ideas for health improvement a reality. Starting in July, the programme has already received near to 40 bids, with projects ranging from those aimed at increasing physical activity (such as running watches for classes to track their 'daily mile' or the development of sensory and forest play areas), promoting mental wellbeing (including therapy dog sessions with anxious children and healthy mind workshops) through to focusing on healthy eating (growing vegetables and teaching children to cook). Schools have built on links with their local communities, including a bid to purchase and share exercise and play equipment with the nearby care home.
14. Feedback from schools to the launch of the programme has been positive from both staff and parents. Many have fed back that they appreciate the Council's approach to supporting local 'home grown' ideas from within the school community rather than imposing new initiatives on them (quote provided below):  
  
*"We have a growing number of pupils struggling with anxiety. Introducing a therapy dog to our school community will benefit the ongoing mental health of our pupils and staff. Thank you so much for this opportunity to support our school community and the simplicity of the application & whole process." Sarah Roberts, Headteacher - Eckington CE First School*
15. In addition to investing in schools, Public Health will continue to work with the NHS to prevent illness. For example, on vaccination rates (e.g.MMR), which became challenging during the COVID pandemic. The aim is to ensure rates are high enough to achieve herd immunity (90-95%) keeping children and the wider population safe.
16. Finally, Public Health will work to improve the coordination of services and support for children and families across different agencies, including the NHS. To this aim, a Best Start in Life Partnership has been launched and will focus on the development of a systemwide, preventative approach during the early years (0-5) to improve outcomes for children and families.

### Health and Wellbeing

17. The Corporate Plan describes clearly the challenges faced by Worcestershire's ageing population and the ambition to support people to remain healthy and independent for

as long as possible. Therefore, in the next 12 months Public Health will be rolling out a new service that provides a holistic health improvement programme aimed at enabling adults to stay active, socially connected, and safe from crime as they get older.

18. The “Healthy Worcestershire” programme will be operated out of a range of community venues and be delivered via structured, professionally led sessions. These will be delivered weekly and include a range of supportive activities:
19. Firstly, sessions will incorporate an evidence-based physical activity programme targeted at improving strength and balance. The focus will be on preventing falls and maintaining participants’ mobility, health and confidence. The group-based sessions will be interactive, led by trained professionals and supplemented with lifestyle advice including support with weight management and for other positive health behaviours.
20. Secondly, the sessions will incorporate a strong focus on community safety, including advice and sessions on how to avoid fraud, doorstep crimes and internet-based scams. These sessions will be tailored to the local area based on up-to-date intelligence from the Police, Trading Standards and Community Safety Partnerships.
21. Thirdly, the emphasis within both the health and community safety elements of the programme will be on building social connections. This value of this was a clear theme among the many local people who participated in our community engagement surveys and focus groups:  
  
*“I joined a couple of groups to meet someone new twice a week. It motivated me to do more physical activity.” Local Resident, Public Health Focus Group*
22. The sessions themselves will be enjoyable, incorporating activities that provide a positive experience for attendees so that they will want to keep coming back, having created friends and social networks with other attendees. In addition, social prescribing techniques will be utilised which signposts participants to other local community activities and projects, such as walking groups, arts and music projects or volunteering opportunities.
23. In line with the overall approach to Public Health, the Healthy Worcestershire programme will supplement the professionally led activities with a community development approach. Grants will be made available by Public Health to help facilitate the local community build and enhance the choice of community activities available in each area where sessions take place.
24. The Healthy Worcestershire programme will blend the efficiency of a county-wide approach with significant tailoring and ownership at a local community level. This will be reflected in the branding and promotion of the programme as well as the content and focus of the sessions.
25. In addition to the Healthy Worcestershire programme, Public Health will be working on specific projects to encourage ‘entry level’ activities and programmes into popular sports and activities. This will serve to drive forward the aim in the Corporate Plan of getting more people living active lives. For example, already in the planning stage is a collaboration with the Wythall Community Organisation and the Bromsgrove & Redditch Athletics Club. The aim of the project is to break down the barriers between the established running community (e.g. clubs, events etc.) and the many people who, despite having an interest in running, feel anxious about joining in. Public Health will be

working with these organisations to establish a new 5km and 10km running event with a clear focus on getting new people into running. In the lead up to the event a range of 'Couch to 5k' training courses will be established, run by trained volunteers, which will use the Wythall 5km as their 'graduation event'. If successful, this model of working will be rolled out to other areas of Worcestershire.

26. In May 2023, a new prevention and early intervention service 'Your Health' commenced across the County in partnership with NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire. New bespoke, fit for purpose roving vans will offer communities easier access to registering with a GP Practice, health checks, vaccinations (also integrating with a newly formed infectious disease response services), wellbeing, mental health advice and more. This initiative will aim to bring health services to the most vulnerable populations, accessible without being registered with a GP and without an appointment.
27. Across Worcestershire there are approximately 870 Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs). Public Health is working to review and improve community access to these lifesaving devices, alongside vital CPR training. Work programmes focused on increasing access include:
  - undertaking an audit of AEDs in the county and directly contacting guardians of devices that are registered with the British Heart Foundation as being publicly available to ascertain validity of the information, ensuring that where possible these can be used in the event of an emergency;
  - the launch of a new Council dedicated webpage providing information and signposting to funding for AEDs, including backstop grant funding should an organisation or community group not be able to purchase via other routes;
  - proactively contacting community organisations to encourage provision;
  - grant funding wall-mounted publicly available AEDs on key Police stations across the county, where not already installed; and
  - promotion via Council communications regarding maintenance of AEDs, British Heart Foundation RevivR training, and national Restart a Heart Day.

### Open for Business

28. Over the next 12 months Public Health will be stepping up its support to local businesses with the aim of maintaining a healthy and productive workforce in Worcestershire. The Council's [Work Well Live Better](#) Programme will include a range of initiatives and resources that employers can take advantage of, all based on the latest evidence and guidance.
29. Public Health has established a Workplace Wellbeing Network. Once local businesses have joined the network they will have access to a range of resources, including a workplace health survey and needs assessment, a resource hub, training, and an events calendar (including showcasing events, breakfast networking meetings and lunchtime bitesize sessions). Public Health will also be encouraging businesses to become ambassadors, showcasing their work by offering peer support and the sharing of resources.
30. Targeted support for businesses will be available for those most impacted by health-related issues or inequality. The support and interventions available will be tailored to meet the key health and wellbeing needs of the business and its employees.
31. A key determinant of where people choose to relocate their employment or business is crime and community safety. Over the next 12 months the Council will deliver a range

of new programmes, in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner, aimed at making Worcestershire a safer place to live and work:

32. Firstly, work will take place with schools to design and deliver new projects aimed at preventing young people becoming involved in crime or substance misuse. Funding will be made available to deliver both direct crime prevention projects (e.g.: focused on knife crime or gang involvement) and projects aimed at promoting factors proven to reduce the risk of crime involvement (e.g.: sports activities and increased self-esteem).
33. Secondly, Public Health will enhance its work on crime and abuse in some of the most challenged areas of the County. For example, recently awarding a community development grant in Westlands, a more deprived housing estate in Droitwich which has higher than average crime rates. Over the next 12 months, a committee made up of residents, local voluntary sector groups, school staff and other local professionals will utilise this funding to develop the area, prevent substance misuse, deliver domestic abuse support, and otherwise make the housing estate a better and safer place to live.
34. Thirdly, and as discussed above, crime prevention will also be incorporated into the Council's health improvement work with older adults. As far as the Public Health team is aware, Worcestershire will be the first area in the UK to combine programmes delivering falls prevention classes and healthy living support with information and advice sessions on door-step crime, internet fraud and other community safety issues.
35. Finally, Public Health will also work to ensure Worcestershire maintains a good variety of high-profile events which benefit local businesses, tourism, and the national profile of the County. For example, Public Health are already in talks with Steve Cram and Paula Radcliffe about the future of the Worcester "City Run" Event that brings a large number of people into Worcester City Centre over a two-day period each year. Both famous athletes are part of the organising group behind the event and have agreed to work with Worcestershire Public Health in the promotion of the event and the accessibility of its "Families on Track" initiative.

### The Environment

36. Research indicates that spending time in open green space is crucial for good health and well-being. Therefore, a key priority for Public Health in the next 12 months will be to make sure that the Council's investment in the local environment benefits as many local people as possible. In line with the community development approach to Public Health, the Council will deliver on this priority in collaboration with local voluntary and community sector groups.
37. For example, Public Health has started a new partnership with the Worcester Environmental Group and has plans to support a range of their projects. This will include helping to promote the new Wild About Worcester Way, which makes use of some of the area's most accessible walking routes, including the new foot path between Diglis Bridge and Duck Brook. Public Health has produced an interactive 'Strava' map of the route aimed at increasing the use of the route, as well as a digital fly-through animation of the whole 12- mile circuit.
38. As already mentioned, Public Health is making grant funding available to schools for health and well-being projects. Over the next 12 months, these will include environmental projects such as school tree-planting initiatives and other work aimed to maintaining or enhancing the local environment.

39. Finally, Public Health will be working to increase the use of Worcestershire's parks for community events and health promoting activity. For example, already underway is the establishment of a new "Junior Parkrun" in Diglis, funded by Public Health and delivered in collaboration with the Global Parkrun Organisation and local community groups and volunteers. Aside from getting kids active, these events have a proven ability to increase the use of parks by adults and enhance community connections.

### **Public Health Ring Fenced Grant**

40. As part of HOSC's budget monitoring responsibility, the Committee receives information on the Public Health Ring Fenced Grant (PHRFG) twice a year. The Council receives this annual grant, for use on prescribed Public Health functions (details of which were shared with HOSC in July 2022 and are available under 'background papers').

41. For the financial 2023/24 the PHRFG totalled £32,236,000. This represented a real-term reduction from the 2022/23 value of £31,217,923.

42. Public Health is currently spending over and above the income from the PHRFG, in line with a planned use of reserves. However, these reserves will be largely depleted by the end of 2024/25. A summary position is provided at Appendix 3.

43. To offset any future financial pressures, efficiency plans have been put in place by the Director of Public Health. These include the cancellation of recruitment to several vacancies and the integration of various services into a single provider delivery model. Proposals for the co-funding of primary prevention work have also been submitted to the Integrated Care Board.

### **Purpose of the Meeting**

44. The HOSC is asked to:

- consider and comment on the information provided on Public Health's activity over the past 12-months, its priorities, and plans for the coming 12 months; and
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

### **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 – Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Year One Progress Report

Appendix 2 – Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy Outcomes Framework

Appendix 3 – Public Health Ring Fenced Grant Summary Position

### **Contact Points**

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

### **Agenda and Minutes of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

[Agendas and Minutes of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) on: 13 January 2023, 17 October, 8 July and 9 March 2022, 3 November, 21 September and 19 July 2021, 19 September 2018

All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.