

Portfolio Holder Briefing Note

Reference:	2024/25 priorities and pledges
Recipient:	Councillor Flint, Portfolio Holder, Health and Wellbeing
Date:	27/08/2024
Purpose of note	To provide an overview of the work of Public Health in the council, outlining the 2024/25 Public Health priorities for Walsall

Context

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The role of public health in local government has a focus on improving and protecting the health of our communities, and reducing avoidable differences in health outcomes.

Public health activity which addresses the above can be split into 4 key areas: strategy/programme work, commissioning, reactive/preparedness work and communications and engagement. All of this is underpinned by strong partnership work both internal and external to the council, and also by evidence and intelligence.

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Tackling the “causes of the causes” of poor health means that the Public Health team have a critical role in working closely with internal and external partners to consider how to maximise the positive impacts on health of housing, employment, licensing, planning, regulatory services, access to good quality green space and sustainability activities.

In addition to this, the public health team work through key commissioned services to make sure every child has the best start in life, and that we are tackling what are the four biggest preventable causes of premature disability and mortality: namely, tobacco, dietary risks, alcohol and physical inactivity. The four biggest areas of commissioned public health service activity are:

- 0-19 services
 - Health in pregnancy service, health visiting, school nursing and teenage pregnancy service – provided by Walsall Healthcare Trust
 - Children and families healthy eating service - provided by the Soil Association
 - Children’s weight management – currently being remodelled, however we currently run the HENRY programme provided through community organisations.
- Alcohol and drug services – provided by Change, Grow, Live (CGL)
- Sexual health services – provided by Walsall Healthcare Trust
- Lifestyle/Wellbeing services – wellbeing advice, adult weight management, stop smoking, NHS health checks – provided by Maximus UK (Be Well Walsall)

In addition to the above we commission oral health improvement services and a range of mental wellbeing services, recognising the importance of parity of esteem of mental and physical health.

The public health team also have a key statutory role in providing advice for the NHS and in health protection (communicable disease/environmental hazard prevention and response).

Key Cabinet pledges linked with Public Health agenda

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- **Improve Health Visitor Offer for 0-5 Year Olds:** continue improving the 0-5 health visitor service offer and explore options to address workforce shortages
- **Youth Health and Wellbeing Service Continuation:** secure the baseline budget for the successful health and wellbeing service currently delivered to 15-25 year olds, with a slightly revised offer to enhance its impact.
- **Continue the Walsall Together Alliance Success:** build on the success of the Walsall Together Alliance to achieve better care outcomes for all.
- **Develop an Integrated Early Intervention and Well-being Offer:** create and implement an integrated early intervention, prevention, and well-being offer.
- **Prioritise Frailty Prevention:** prioritise frailty prevention this year, focusing on upstream preventive work to ease pressure on Adult Social Care, keeping people in their communities and homes longer. We will seek funding and appoint an older person's champion to demonstrate our commitment to this agenda.

Recent highlights

Strategy/Programme/Reactive

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- Our infant feeding strategy was launched during World Breastfeeding week on Monday 5th August, with key contributions at the launch and within the steering group from the voluntary sector, private sector as well as Council and Healthcare Trust staff.
- Our alcohol and drug strategy launched in July 2023 is now in its implementation phase. We have been seeing significant increases in people coming forward for support, particularly since our recent alcohol and drugs communications campaign
- Our tobacco control plan is being implemented currently Walsall's Tobacco Control Plan 2023-2025 (signed off by Cabinet in Dec 2023) driven by a local tobacco control working group. The Local Government Tobacco Control Declaration was signed by relevant portfolio holders and Walsall Council Chief Executive in March 2024. Tobacco brief advice training is currently being delivered and our Tobacco Champions project is being developed with support from Regulatory Services. A school-based performance on dangers of tobacco/vaping was also recently been delivered to 3,300 year 8/9 students.
- Significant efforts were put in to increase immunisation uptake linked with our recent measles and pertussis outbreaks, which have now been controlled in the borough. We have seen a 4% rise in uptake of MMR from 81% having had 2 doses by age 5 in quarter 1 of 2023/24 and 85% in quarter 4. Our health protection team also managed 581 incidents and 1000 cases of infectious disease in 2023, with our care home infection control audit tool being adopted by other Black Country authority areas.
- We were granted national recognition as part of our Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health submission to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, linked with our mental wellbeing efforts.
- We continue to develop a food plan for the borough following the Food Summit held earlier in the year. Our Future Foodies course for 14 to 16 years olds has been delivered during July/ Aug in conjunction with Walsall College. It includes eco-friendly kitchen tips, nutrition, hands on experience of growing food, budgeting, and cooking skills. My Food Community Leadership programme (delivered by the Soil Association) is creating a network for good food champions across the borough.
- We are also being invited to bid for a significant amount of Sports England funding to support increasing physical activity in the borough, and have been successful in smaller partnership bids for physical activity work. Additionally, Public Health have

funded small grants issued through Crowdfund Walsall to deliver a range of Community and Voluntary Sector physical activity programmes.

- Finally, public health are leading on work through Walsall Together linked to the primary prevention of falls, and how physical activity can help, alongside working with adult social care and customer services on the wellbeing support offer linked to the adult social care front door.

Commissioning

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- Our 0-19 services have been focused on recovery post-pandemic and, in the wake of a significant health visitor workforce crisis, now have fully skill-mixed teams and we are seeing significantly improved performance with regard to the mandated visits undertaken to families by health visitors (2 of the 5 checks were paused during the pandemic).
- The Food for Life programme, which has now been reviewed and recommissioned as the Children and Families Healthy eating programme, provided by the Soil Association, saw 19,233 children benefit from food for life activities in their school/nursery over 5 years.
- Positive Outcome Project (POP) – Our Young Person's health and wellbeing service opened in October 2022. The POP service, delivered by Bloxwich community partnership, is now looking at expanding to a 4th hub in the west of the borough, with the current hubs based at Electric Palace in Bloxwich, the Saddler's Centre and co-located with Youth Connect in Palfrey.
- We continue with the redesign of our sexual health services, with a small in-house sexual health team working with the main clinical service, with a key focus on improving access for vulnerable groups. We have also brought management of our pharmacy chlamydia testing and emergency hormonal contraception services back in-house and are seeing larger numbers of pharmacies signing up to the scheme. Additionally, we have reviewed our GP contraception contracts, and redesigned the primary care offer, having rolled out a programme of training and accreditation in primary care to enable nurse practitioners to prescribe and administer complex methods of contraception.
- CGL, our alcohol and drug treatment service provider are now based in a busy town centre location, which has increased their visibility and they are actively involved in key town centre activities including the street drinking initiative.
- Maximus UK Ltd won the contract for our lifestyle/wellbeing (Be Well Walsall) services and in the first 8 months have received over 4000 referrals.

Communications and Engagement

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- Our key campaigns for 2023/24 related to children and young people, sexual health and tobacco, with our focus this year being on alcohol/drugs, air quality, and food.
- Last year's campaigns have recently been evaluated with key highlights being:
 - **Radio advertising** in January and March 2024 to promote the local smoking cessation support offer. On air delivery achieved a reach of 132k with an average OTH (opportunities to hear) of 17.48 across 1,164 spots. The advertising complemented local communications activity, which led to increased uptake in support services during these campaign periods.

Definitions:

- *Reach - the number of different people who hear a radio ad during a specific period.*
- *Opportunities to hear – the number of times a listener might hear an advertisement.*

- *Spots – the number of spots where our adverts were played.*
- **Collaboration** with Family Hubs, Black Country ICB, UKHSA and the voluntary and community sector to raise awareness of measles and the MMR vaccination as part of the children and young people's health campaign.
- **Developed marketing collateral** to promote the sexual health service with a strapline of get consent, get protected, get tested and in addition get free advice. Radio advertising has also been utilised to share sexual health messages to a wider audience across the borough.

Key priorities for 2024/25

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Public health key priorities for 2024/25 build on the above outlined programmes of work, as well as ensuring a focus on team development and development of Walsall Public Health as a training location for F2 doctors, GP registrars, and Public Health registrars. Additionally, we are finalising a refresh of our infant mortality and suicide prevention strategies and are building up our work programme linked to air quality. We are addressing all of the current Cabinet pledges, with a particular focus on older people and prevention, alongside the pledges linked to our children and young people's services.