



Northumberland County Council

Health and Well-being Board

Thursday, 14 March 2024

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023 – Ageing Well in Northumberland

Report of Councillor(s) Veronica Jones, Cabinet Member for Improving Public Health and Wellbeing

Responsible Officer(s): Gill O'Neill, Executive Director for Public Health (DPH), Inequalities & Stronger Communities

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

The Northumberland Corporate Plan 2023-26 sets out a vision of our County being a Land of Great Opportunities for current and future generations, building on the assets and strengths that we already have among our people and places. This DPH Report recognises that older people are one of our valued assets and bring a key contribution to achieving our corporate vision.

One of our corporate plan's priorities is 'Tackling Inequalities'. The DPH report highlights the significant health inequalities experienced in ageing, which are illustrated by the 18-year gap in average life expectancy between our most and least deprived wards. Moreover, people in the most deprived areas live a greater proportion of their lives in poor health. The differences in health between people and groups is driven by our opportunities, experiences, behaviours, as well as our social, economic, and environmental conditions during earlier life. The report encourages us to look at ageing well through lens of reducing inequalities, prioritising resources to support the most disadvantaged people and building on community assets and resilience by taking a strengths-based approach.

The Corporate Plan also puts a priority on Driving Economic Growth. Improving the health and wellbeing of our ageing population can contribute to reducing sickness absence and support economic activity among our working age populations.

2. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to present the independent Director of Public Health (DPH) Annual Report for 2023. The report focusses on ageing well in Northumberland and highlights the ways we can promote independence and functional ability in older adults

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Considers the content of the DPH Annual Report 2023;
- b) Comments on the contribution that Health and Wellbeing Board partners can make to promoting healthy ageing across Northumberland;
- c) Accept and endorse the findings in the independent DPH Annual Report 2023 attached as appendix 1 to this report.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

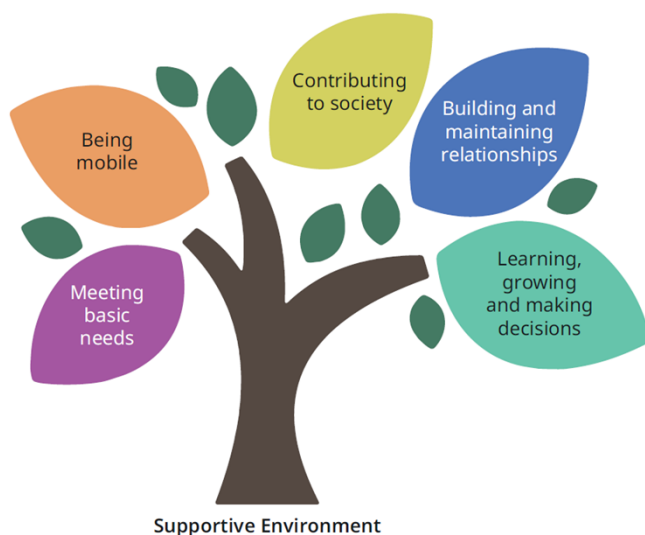
Added to forward plan 02/02/2024

5. Key Issues

Northumberland is changing. Over the coming decade we expect to see a year-by-year shift towards a much older population. We must be prepared to face this transition and ready to adapt to the changing needs.

Inequalities in Northumberland become even more visible in older ages and we see significant differences in life expectancies and healthy life expectancies (HLE) between the most and least deprived communities across our county.

The report focuses on promoting 5 key areas of function, which are shown in the diagram below. These are key aspects in promoting health and wellbeing among older adults.



Now more than ever we must have a resolute focus on boosting older people's health and wellbeing and preventing ill health. This will mean enabling older people to live healthier and more fulfilled lives, valuing their important contributions to society, and challenging harmful ageist attitudes. It will also mean working with our communities and building on existing strengths and assets to support older residents to age well.

The recommendations of the report for those of us working together to promote ageing well across the county are:

1. Promote a **strengths based narrative** on ageing well, with a focus on promoting our human functions of mobility, relationship building, personal growth, and seeing the great contribution we can make in our later years.
2. Consider ways to **embed ageing well in all our areas of work**, taking a ‘whole systems’ approach. This could include ensuring that the needs of older adults are considered in all policies, strategies, plans, programmes and projects using tools such as Integrated Impact Assessments.
3. Continue to **support and promote the Ageing Well Network**, which brings together over 200 organisations to share best practice and support one another.
4. Continue to **monitor available data** related to healthy ageing, such as those highlighted throughout this report.
5. Identify opportunities to **hear the voices of older adults** in our diverse communities. People’s experiences and wisdom will help guide the way services need to adapt to meet people’s changing needs, support their independence and allow them to continue to participate in their communities. Voices may be heard through methods such as residents’ surveys and the place standard tool.
6. We must continue to pursue our approach of **Asset Based Community Development**. There are solid foundations to build on in Northumberland. The report has highlighted many brilliant initiatives already going on across the county, and this only touches on the huge amount of ongoing work. Professional and voluntary stakeholders are already starting to work together more closely to empower communities to identify and address their needs.
7. Three areas of this report stand out as requiring a stronger focus:
 - a. Ensure that **ageist attitudes and behaviours are challenged and stamped out** across our institutions and communities. We should be no more tolerant of this than other types of discrimination such as racism, sexism and homophobia.
 - b. More could be done to **increase awareness of the need for older adults to maintain strength and balance**, which is crucial for staying mobile and reducing their risk of falls.
 - c. Older age groups are particularly prone to social isolation and addressing this will be a key part of enabling ageing well. Our county is particularly rural, which means **we must work with our communities to combat social isolation**. This will include improving transport connectivity to people, places, opportunities and services.

6. Background

Directors of Public Health in England have a statutory duty to write an Annual Public Health Report on the health of the local population; the Local Authority has a duty to publish it. It is an independent report. The DPH Annual Report is a vehicle for informing local people about the health of their community, as well as providing necessary

information for commissioners and providers of services on health and wellbeing issues and priorities that need to be addressed.

This year's report is about ageing well. The report opens with an introduction to the concept of 'ageing well', its importance for Northumberland, and the sets out the core themes covered in the rest of the report.

The report includes a profile of age distribution across Northumberland and how we compare to other areas in the North East. It describes how age influences health and wellbeing and the highlights the unfair health inequalities we see between communities, which become more visible in older ages.

The main body of the report is themed around the 5 functions of ageing well:

- Meeting basic needs
- Being mobile
- Building and maintaining relationships
- Learning, growing and making decisions
- Contributing to society

Each section includes key contributors that influence older adults' functional ability, describing why these are important, key facts, examples of local initiatives that are happening to promote health and wellbeing, and areas for potential future action.

The report concludes with a small number of recommendations on how the Northumberland system can support people to age well, setting the foundations for a healthier population that is expected to age considerably in the next decade.

7. Implications

Policy	Recommendations from the report will be directed to relevant policy areas and integrated into existing workstreams or action plans
Finance and value for money	The report has no direct financial implications, but if the recommendations are carried out, it is expected to benefit the economy of Northumberland
Legal	The report meets the statutory requirement of the DPH to produce an annual report on a health issue relevant to the local population.
Procurement	N/A
Human resources	N/A
Property	N/A
The Equalities Act: is a full impact	No - not required at this point

assessment required and attached?	The report highlights the ways that promoting ageing well can contribute to reducing health inequalities. It also includes a section on age discrimination and stigma and recommends that this is addressed by institutions and in wider society.
Risk assessment	None undertaken
Crime and disorder	N/A
Customer considerations	An easy-read print version of the report is being designed and will be published alongside the report
Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and wellbeing	The report thoroughly explores the contribution that ageing well can make to improving health and reducing health inequalities.
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

DPH Report 2023: Ageing Well in Northumberland

9. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable

10. Author and Contact Details

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