

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Health & Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee** on Tuesday, 5 March 2024 at 1.00 p.m. at County Hall, Morpeth.

PRESENT

Councillor R. Dodd
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Bowman, L.	Hunter, I.
Chicken, E.	Richardson, M.
Hardy, C.	Seymour, C.
Hill, G.	

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, C.	Scrutiny Officer
Jones, V.	Cabinet Member
Nugent, D.	Healthwatch Northumberland
O'Neil, G.	Executive Director - Public Health, Inequalities, and Stronger Communities
Robertshaw, L.	Acting Consultant in Public Health
Todd, A.	Democratic Services Officer

1 member of the press was also in attendance.

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Humphrey and K. Nisbet.

41. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 9 January 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

42. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Health & Wellbeing Board held on 14 December 2023, 11 January 2024 and 8 February 2024 as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

43. DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2023 – AGEING WELL IN NORTHUMBERLAND

Councillor V. Jones, Cabinet Member for Improving Public Health and Wellbeing introduced the report which sought to present the independent Director of Public Health (DPH) Annual Report for 2023. The report focussed on ageing well in Northumberland and highlighted the ways to promote independence and function ability in older adults. (A copy of the annual report has been filed with the signed minutes).

G. O'Neil, Executive Director - Public Health, Inequalities, and Stronger Communities and L. Robertshaw, Acting Consultant in Public Health provided the committee with a powerpoint presentation (copy of which has been filed with the signed minutes) which highlighted the main aspects of the annual report. It was acknowledged that the report had been contributed to by a particularly wide range of people including many of the organisations represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board, other partners and importantly residents.

The presentation covered the following points:

- Directors of Public Health in England had a statutory duty to write an Annual Public Health Report on the health of the local population.
- The Local Authority had a duty to publish it.
- It was an independent report.
- The DPH Annual Report was 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.
- Slides detailing why ageing well was important.
- Northumberland had the highest proportion of over 55s across all other North East local authorities.
- The projected population sizes of age categories in Northumberland 2024-40.
- The average life expectancy and health life expectancy for males and females in the most and least deprived areas in Northumberland.
- Data from Northumberland revealed that health inequalities tended to become particularly visible in older ages.
- For men there was an 18-year gap between the least and most deprived areas of the county. There were also wide inequalities in the age that people get to in a good state of health (rather than with a disability or poor health).
- It had been decided to take a holistic view on aspects of supporting ageing well:
- The DPH report had been built around the World Health Organisation five functions that support wellbeing:

- Meeting Basic Needs
- Being Mobile
- Building and Maintaining relationships
- Learning, growing and making decisions
- Contributing to society
- It was hoped the report illustrated a positive, strengths-based narrative on ageing compared to historical negative narrative that focussed on deficits in ageing. The report acknowledged the significant variations in experiences of older adults. Strongly shaped by advantages and disadvantages through life.
- It was hoped the report was person centred and easy to relate to.
- The recommendations of the DPH report were to:
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Continue to support and promote the Ageing Well Network, which brings together organisations to share best practice and support one another.
 - Continue to monitor available data related to healthy ageing, such as those highlighted throughout the report.
 - 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.
 - We must continue to pursue our approach of Assed 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.
- It was noted that there were three areas of the report which stood out as requiring a stronger focus:
 - 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.
 - More could be done to increase awareness of the need for older adults to maintain strength and balance, which was crucial for staying mobile and reducing their risk of falls.
 - Older age groups were particularly prone to social isolation and addressing this will be a key part of enabling ageing well. Northumberland was particularly rural, which meant that the local authority must work with communities to combat social Isolation. This

would include promoting digital inclusion and improving transport connectivity to people, places, opportunities and services.

The following comments were made:-

- The lack of available, affordable and suitable housing for older people was a real concern. However, this concern was being tackled through the work being completed within the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy on healthy neighbourhoods.
- The differences between male and female physical activity across their life spans and how to break down the barriers for specific groups and ages to help with ageing well were discussed. It was reported that awareness of maintaining strength and balance was essential.
- Leisure facilities and how to ensure gender differences, ages and accessibility to activities help shape the future offer available to residents.
- The implications the cost of living crisis was having on ageing well.
- The Director of Public Health Annual Report could be presented to the Town and Parish Councils Liaison Working Group to further help the work taken place with communities.
- Northumberland County Council had adopted an Inequalities Plan. It outlined key goals that could be delivered at scale over the coming years to level off and start to reduce the gap in healthy life expectancy.
- The need to challenge age discrimination.
- There were many benefits of ageing well in Northumberland with lots of people choosing to retire in the county.
- Sex and intimate relationships continued to be an important part of ageing well. However, the figures on this subject within the annual report collated by the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing covered a vast age range which was believed to be too large to be meaningful data.
- The need to develop a sexual health strategy for Northumberland.
- A volunteer passport that allows individuals to switch easily between multiple volunteering opportunities was being looked into to help promote volunteering. It was reported that Thriving Together were working on a pilot project to provide a digital skills passport as a solution. It was suggested that this issue could be added to the committee's work programme.
- Carers played a vital role in supporting older adults in our communities. Without them, the health and care system would simply not be able to function and thousands of people with care needs would be left without support. However, there was an issue regarding respite for carers.
- It was noted that one of Healthwatch Northumberland's priorities for next year was respite care.
- Northumberland offered a carer assessment, which was a discussion between the carer and a social worker to establish the current and potential future need for support and to determine how sustainable their situation was. It was hoped that this assessment would focus on all possible solutions including support from family, the community, housing services, social security benefits, and education. However, a member reported that some charities had been raising concerns about carer assessments.

- It was suggested respite care and the issue of carers assessments be added to the committee’s work programme for future scrutiny.
- How to prevent older people from getting scammed was discussed.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the DPH Annual Report 2023 be received, and
- (b) the findings in the independent DPH Annual Report 2023 be noted.

44. REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

(a) Forward Plan

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (a copy of the Forward Plan has been filed with the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(b) Health and Wellbeing OSC Work Programme

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2023/24 council year (a copy of the work programme has been filed with the signed minutes).

Members suggested that the following issues could be areas for the committee to scrutinise in the future:

- Volunteering Passport.
- Respite Care.
- Carers assessments.
- Protecting people from scams.

The Chair reported on the positive Task and Finish Group that had taken place on defibrillators and hoped to bring to the committee a set of recommendations in due course.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme and comments made be noted.

45. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the date of the next meeting be scheduled for Tuesday, 2 April 2024 at 1.00 p.m.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____