

**DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2019**

**Report of the Director of Public Health, Sunderland City Council**

**1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Director of Public Health's Annual Report to members of the scrutiny coordinating committee.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Health and Social Care Act, 2012 states that "The director of public health for a local authority must prepare an annual report on the health of the people in the area of the local authority." In addition, "The local authority must publish the report."
- 2.2 The Director of Public Health's Annual Report is also the core document that is built upon to produce the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

**3.0 Production of the 2019 Report**

- 3.1 The report presents the findings of a series of engagement and learning activities that have taken place during the Autumn of 2019, including a residents' survey, a series of workshops and two conferences, all under the banner of "Working together to improve our health".
- 3.2 This report is the result of a wide range of engagement activities through which we have gained the views of as many residents and stakeholders as possible. Given the scale of some of the inequalities experienced by the population, it's of key importance that local people are aware of these issues and can be involved in developing ways to influence them.
- 3.3 We started by producing a survey asking people how they feel about their own health, what helps or hinders them in keeping healthy and seeking their views on what they have done, or would like to do, to improve health. Around 600 people responded, ranging from age 13 to 86, with the average age of 49. 74% were residents, with the remainder working or volunteering in the city. Key information from the survey is used throughout this report.
- 3.4 Alongside the survey, a series of five workshops took place with one in each of the following localities:
- Coalfield
  - East
  - North
  - Washington
  - West
- 3.5 Key public health data for each locality was presented, with workshop discussions about ways to improve health and engage effectively with communities about health. In total, 12 focus groups took place involving a

total of 53 participants, 77% were resident in Sunderland. Information from these sessions has been thematically analysed and used to inform the content of the report.

- 3.6 Following this, a conference of the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance took place on 16 October 2019 with 77 attendees from 46 businesses and organisations. Workshops were used to gain views on how to improve health at work, with outputs included in the report. We also engaged with the Health and Wellbeing Board through a development session and the council's corporate strategic management team.
- 3.7 Finally, the Sunderland Health Summit entitled *Working together to improve our health* took place on 04 November 2019. 170 delegates attended, ranging from residents, senior public sector and business leaders, representatives of the voluntary and community sector and elected members. Presentations covered Sunderland's City Plan; Population Health in Sunderland; Involving Children and Young People; Workplace Health; Helping Children and Young People Achieve Their Potential; and Making Good Food Affordable, Accessible and Appealing. Again, the output from this event has been used throughout this report.

#### **4.0 Overview of the 2019 Report**

- 4.1 The report provides an overview of the health of people in Sunderland and discusses the influences on population health. It also identifies the key themes that have been identified from the engagement activities described above.
- 4.2 An inequalities and prevention framework has been developed for the city in response to the stark inequalities in health outcomes both between Sunderland and the rest of the country and within the city itself. The causes vary in how immediately they impact on health and can be thought of as having either an "upstream" or "downstream" effect. Intervening "upstream" means that we are preventing poor health developing, whereas when we focus "downstream" we are less likely to impact on peoples' health in the long term. The framework consists of a number of domains including social inequalities, the role of "anchor institutions", people's living conditions, their mental wellbeing and resilience, unhealthy behaviours and poor health. This was a key focus of the Health and Wellbeing Board development session and will be taken forward through the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 4.3 The issue of mental wellbeing came up in a number of our engagement activities. Residents who completed our survey predominantly felt that they take care of their own health. However, those that didn't indicated that there are often many pressures on their mental wellbeing. For example, one resident said that the thing which would help most to improve their health was, "Less stress at work and at home, lots of demands on my time. No solution to that." (East Area Resident). The five ways to wellbeing are highlighted as a practical approach to improve mental wellbeing for individuals and communities.
- 4.4 Another key theme was good employment and healthy workplaces. Key to this is not employment alone, but also the quality of employment. Good quality employment should enable people to have greater choice about how they live their lives and support them to be healthy. Participants consistently

identified that for Sunderland to be a really healthy place, it must offer good quality employment. They also noted that having a good job provides many tools that are needed to help them live healthy lives like social connections, a sense of purpose and resources. Again, this was highlighted in the responses to the survey with one person responding to the question on what would be good for their health as follows. "Being happier at work - miserable job and bullying encourages me to drink, smoke, stay up late, sleeplessness, and lack of motivation to exercise. I know this because my lifestyle was much healthier when I had a nicer job." (East Area Resident). Some of our engagement activities also identified how we can work together to address these issues and these are detailed in the report.

- 4.5 The importance of making good food affordable, accessible and appealing was also highlighted as an important issue to tackle to improve health in the city. Poor diet is no longer commonly characterised by a lack of food, but access to food that leads to excess weight and a wide range of health problems that result from it. That said, there is an issue of food poverty nationally with food banks are now a common and enduring presence throughout England and in Sunderland we have a network of food banks to help those that need them. A range of solutions to some of the issues relating to a healthy diet were identified through our engagement activities ranging from education, community initiatives and broader policies such as those relating to hot food takeaways.
- 4.6 The core purpose of this report has been to involve communities in Sunderland in thinking about how the health of the local population can be improved. To prepare it, a range of different methods were used to reach people and actively listen to them. In doing so, we have also learned a great deal about the importance of involvement and engagement in reducing health inequalities. We know that some communities are not receiving and responding to health messages, and we see prevalence of some unhealthy behaviours varying dramatically from area to area in the city. In some cases, people told us they may want to be involved, but feel excluded: "[you can] feel a bit outside looking in when you are from another country or feel isolated. [You need to be] inspired by others – meet people through people – need an introduction." (East Area Resident). Commonly, people recognised the need to make involvement meaningful for children and young people, for example via co-design activities. Attendees at the Health Summit were asked to consider how the children and young people can best be involved: "Bringing young people together. Listening to their voices and being involved [in] the systems [so they are part of decision making]." (Table 7- Health Summit). *Let's Talk Sunderland* is an opportunity for individuals, communities and anchor institutions to come together to improve health in the City.

## **5.0 Next steps**

- 5.1 The 2019 report will be published on the council website and will be circulated to key partners in the City.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the committee notes the findings of the Director of Public Health's Annual Report.