

# Minutes of Health and Wellbeing Board

**Wednesday, 23 February 2022 at 5.00 pm  
at Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Hartwell (Chair)  
Councillors Ahmed, E M Giles and Shackleton.  
Dr Sykes (Vice-Chair), M Carolan, Dr Hallan [CCG]  
A Andrews [Healthwatch Sandwell]  
M Davis [Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations]  
R Bishop [Director of Adult Social Care]

**In attendance:** Ricky Byrnes (Physical Activity Project Manager); Paul Fisher (Deputy Director of Public Health); Christine Anne Guest (Divisional Manager, Adult Social Care); Stephanie Lacey (Public Health Registrar); Jayne Leeson (Manager – Changing Our Lives); Dr Lina Martino (Consultant in Public Health).

## **1/22** Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Crompton and Simms; Dr Sommiya Aslam (CCG), Alexia Farmer (Healthwatch Sandwell), Michael Jarrett (Director of Children's Services and Education), Lisa McNally (Director of Public Health), Richard Beeken (Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust) and Marsha Foster (Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust).

## **2/22** Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

## **3/22** Minutes



**Resolved** that minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2021 are confirmed as a correct record.

#### **4/22 Urgent Item of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

#### **5/22 Young People Physical Activity - Move More Sandwell Partnership**

The Physical Activity Project Manager provided an overview of the work undertaken by Move More Sandwell Partnership to increase physical activity levels among children and young people in Sandwell.

Move More Sandwell was a Partnership of local organisations - including the Council's Public Health Team, Voluntary Sector organisations like SCVO and the Albion Foundation, Active Black Country, Sandwell Leisure Trust, Places Leisure and the SHAPE Forum - working together to increase the number of local physical activity opportunities and promote those opportunities and get more people active. The key drivers for this were tackling inequalities by increasing choice, embedding physical activity into daily life and creating long term improvements in overall health and life expectancy.

Nationally, a significant proportion of children and young people (5-18 years) were not meeting the UK Chief Medical Officers' recommendation of being physically active for at least one hour per day. However, Sandwell was ranked the fourth best authority in England for physical activity levels, and top in West Midlands.

A mapping exercise of current provision had identified 106 physical activity opportunities in Sandwell to date, including Holiday Active and Food Provision project, free swimming for under 16s and the Public Health Development Officer school engagement work. The 'Stronger Sandwell Activity Finder', available on the Healthy Sandwell website, listed all activities under a single directory, with users able to specify parameters such as the town and activity type.

Future plans for physical activity initiatives were outlined, which included:-

- A partnership agreement with British Cycling for a Cycle Activator post in Sandwell for an initial two year period.
- An Adaptive Cycling project to offer cycling opportunities to those with disabilities and special schools.
- Projects with secondary schools, lead by Public Health Development Officers.
- STEPS school programme to offer sport club taster sessions to children and young people, but in particular to looked after children, linking to the 2022 Commonwealth Games.
- Use of Commonwealth Active Communities (CAC) funding for an array of activities across six of Sandwell's wards, activating green spaces with low levels of activity.
- Feasibility study with Bristol University and using the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAPSACC) model to identify links between nutrition and activity levels in nursery age children.
- Further investment in the free swimming offer to provide free swimming lessons to children and young people who would not be able to normally afford swimming lessons.

A partnership agreement had been concluded with British Cycling for a 2-year Cycle Activator Post in Sandwell, designed to ramp up the cycling training provision in Sandwell. This included drafting a service specification for adaptive bikes cycling project, which would help to open up cycling opportunities to children and young people with SEND and in special provision.

The following was noted in response to comments and questions:-

- As part of the CAC funded project, one green space had been identified in each town, based on the lowest levels of physical activity. The spaces identified all had good links to canal tow paths.
  - Brunswick Park (Wednesbury)
  - Langley and Barford parks (Oldbury)
  - Greets Green Park (West Bromwich)
  - Britannia Park (Rowley Regis)
  - Victoria Park (Tipton)

There was a rolling programme in Smethwick's parks.

- A voucher scheme was proposed to further enhance the free swimming offer, and schools would be asked to identify targeted families and distribute the vouchers.
- CAC funding was centred on activities for the whole family.
- A 'Weigh to Go' programme physical activity app was being developed so that families could access pre-recorded activity sessions on their electronic devices.
- The Council would work with a provider to deliver a programme of adaptive cycling over a three-year programme. Bikes would be taken to where the need was.
- Public Health Development Officers would continue to work across all directorates and bring all relevant partners together to identify and address gaps in provision.

**6/22**

### **Covid-19 - Current Position Update**

It was noted that while the number of Covid-19 cases in Sandwell was dropping, the virus was still a significant burden with a case rate of 219 per 100,000 population and 1724 cases recorded for the week commencing 14 February 2022.

The recent changes to Government Covid-19 restrictions and contact tracing programme would have repercussions on the local contact tracing system. During the period of the pandemic, 34,000 people had been contacted locally. The system was currently being evaluated. People were still advised to self-isolate if testing positive, although it was no longer a legal requirement. There was a risk of increased health inequalities though, as a result of free testing being stopped from 1 April 2022.

The Council had benefitted from additional funding, which had allowed for the continuation of Community Vaccination Champions Programme into 2022.

It was added that the number of people suffering from Covid-19 in critical care had reduced significantly. In January/February 2021, there had been 1,200 people in critical care in hospitals across the Black Country; the figure now stood at around 250.

**7/22**

### **Sandwell Good Mental Health Strategy Update**

Further to Minute No. 16/21 (of 30 June 2021), the Board received an update on progress on the development of a Better Mental Health Strategy for Sandwell.

The Board heard from a service user, who described her experience of accessing Early Help and mental health support. Action for Children had provided a consistent source of support and signposting to help the family deal with a range of issues including relationships and communication in both the immediate family and with neighbours, job loss and financial concerns, mental health support, living with ADHD and Asperger's, and practical support (for example sourcing a skip). The importance of having consistency of support was stressed.

In the absence of a Mental Health Commissioner at the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) activity on the strategy had been led by the Community Mental Health Task Force (CMHTF) and the State of Sandwell (SOS) Working Group.

The Mental Health Strategy Group had been re-launched and had agreed the timeframe for development of the final version and publication of Strategy. Feedback from residents and key stakeholders had highlighted the need to transform the language used in the original nine promises set out in the draft strategy, and to take a prevention focused approach, in line with the Government's Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health. Public Health had committed additional resource to fund a Mental Health Project Officer for a 12-month period, to support this further work.

Sandwell was a signatory to the Government's Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health. The project directly supported the development of the Sandwell Mental Health Strategy by taking a Public Health approach to mental health improvement, through local action to prevent mental health problems and promoting good mental health. Ten programmes were being undertaken across the borough on a range of topics including anti-bullying, parenting and men's mental health.

The outstanding milestones that remained before the Sandwell Mental Health Strategy was finalised were outlined:

- By April 2022 the nine Promises would be updated to reflect feedback from the Mental Health Strategy Group (MHSG), and governance aligned with the Mental Health transformation project.
- By June 2022 the Strategy would re-produced, and an Action Plan prepared that underpinned the nine promises, through

consultation with key stakeholders, and aligned to the Prevention Concordat process.

- By August 2022 community consultation on the strategy and final plans submitted for approval at the national level.
- October 2022 presentation of final Sandwell Mental Health Strategy to the Board and official launch on World Mental Health day on 10 October 2022.

**8/22**

## **Link Up Sandwell - Digital Inclusion for People with Learning Disabilities**

Changing Our Lives reported to the Board on how it was working with the Council to reduce the digital exclusion of people with learning disabilities in Sandwell.

In 2020 Changing Our Lives had conducted a Quality of Life review, which involved speaking to people with learning disabilities in supported living in Sandwell. It was found that many service users did not have their own device and had to rely on staff to use company technology or even staff's own personal smartphones. This situation was not limited to the early lockdown period but continued when Changing Our Lives undertook conversations with service users in October and November 2020 when online meetings were becoming increasingly commonplace.

To address this, Changing Our Lives had undertaken several projects:-

- Digital Lifelines - 36 tablets had been distributed to people with learning disabilities who did not have access to the internet or suitable device to connect online. This had allowed people to meet with their friends over Zoom, and many service users with learning disabilities found Zoom meetings very engaging.
- Speakeasies - a series of Zoom events were held for people with learning disabilities, and their families. This had contributed to the continued use of Zoom as social tool by people who took part in the projects, for example for informal social get-togethers.
- Active Project - 30 Fitbit devices had been distributed, aiming to encourage individuals to leave their homes, gain confidence and get moving.

Digital inclusion strategies for people with learning disabilities would be raised at the Place-Based Health Partnership Board to ensure it was included in the next Digital Strategy.

**9/22**

### **Integrated Care Systems / Integrated Care Partnerships - Update on Progress to Date**

The Board was informed that the formal launch of the Integrated Care System (ICS) had been postponed until 1 July 2022. The ICS would subsume the Clinical Commissioning Group from this date. The ICS model remained subject to parliamentary approval.

An Integrated Care Board would be established for the whole of the Black Country, led by Mark Axcell who had recently been announced as the Interim Chief Executive Designate for the ICS. The Board noted a number of other appointments made.

A further update would be reported to the next meeting.

**10/22**

### **Primary Care Access**

The Board noted an update on demand for and access to primary care.

Primary care was facing further pressure as the number of GPs was dropping. In 2016, the ratio of GPs to the population in England stood at 0.5 per 1,000, and this had now dropped to 0.46 per 1,000.

In December 2021, 61% of GP appointments were face-to-face. Primary care had been seeing 5% more people during the pandemic than before and more appointments were being offered now than before the pandemic began, despite the reduction in the number of GPs.

To meet the Government target of 80% of appointments face-to-face, significant investment was needed to meet the growing demand for more GPs.

The CCG was working on developing receptionist roles into health navigators, who would work with the patients to identify the root of their health concern and direct them to an appropriate specialist without the need for them to see a GP. Resources were also being directed for the creation of Social Prescribers for each

Primary Care Network and a mental health professional for each network, however it had been challenging to fill these roles.

The following was noted in response to questions and comments:

- In some cases, GPs were directing people to call 111 as they were unable to meet the demand. GP appointments were available through the 111 service if the patient could not wait for an appointment with their own GP.
- There was a new unit at Glebefields Health Centre specialising in respiratory illnesses.
- There were around 100,000 vacancies in the NHS, which contributed to the pressure on primary care.
- Not everyone needed to see a GP and so it was also important that patient expectations were managed.
- Some practices were offering email consultations.
- It was estimated that there was between 140,000 and 170,000 GP appointments offered in Sandwell surgeries per month.

**11/22**

### **CCG Representation and Thanks to Dr Ian Sykes**

The Chair reported that this was the last meeting for the Vice-Chair of the Board, Dr Ian Sykes, who would be retiring at the end of March. The Board thanked Dr Sykes for his invaluable contributions to its work and wished him a happy and fruitful retirement.

Dr Priyanand Hallan would take over the role of Vice-Chair of the Board from the next meeting and a new CCG representative on the Board would be confirmed before the next meeting on 13 April 2022.

Meeting ended at 6.53 pm

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