

Public Health Programmes of Work – Levelling up.

Introduction

Levelling Up aims to reduce local disparities and promote equality in economic, social, and health outcomes across the nation. Public health interventions are critical for achieving these goals, as they address the root causes of health inequalities and contribute to overall societal well-being.

Detailed below will be key areas in which public health will contribute to the Levelling Up agenda.

Areas addressed will be:

Programme area		February 2024: Progression	February 2024: Outcome.
Life expectancy:	Anticipatory care	Programme delivered between July 2023 and March 2024 – currently being evaluated	Evaluation due. If successful expansion and recommission will be expected.
	Healthy aging app	Soft launch of first version of the app, and mass sign up of users. Next stage of promoting and integrating the App with primary care.	Information available to all on support for long term conditions and self-care. Evaluation as to the impact to be undertaken shortly.
Infant mortality	Healthy pregnancy	Initial plan to create a team in the hospital was not possible. Two midwives to be recruited to the public Health team	Once in place they will work with at risk cohort of women to support them to reduce premature birth and infant mortality
	Infant mortality needs assessment	Procured in January 2024. Report due March/April 2024	Following the insight, we can target the main causes of infant mortality. This is of interest regionally and nationally as services have never been able to compare birth rates of premature birth and death rates by week of prematurity. Also rates of congenital abnormalities.
Obesity	Weight loss programme for families.	Friar park levelling up health programme is about to start its engagement phase with the community to sign a community pledge and programme of activity in May/June 2024	The hope is the community engage and start a healthy work programme.

Economic wellbeing	Preventing and tackling economic inactivity	A Work Well bid was submitted in January 2024. Should the black Country bid be successful we will have an offer in Sandwell to support people into work and prevent worklessness	Not Yet Started.
	Sandwell Language network	The programme has run for another year, we are gathering the final data for 23/24 and will report back	To be confirmed.
Mental wellbeing of children	Wellbeing in vulnerable groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Black Boys (linking in with the Youth Justice), ▪ 16-25-year olds ▪ Family support 	Programme delivered between July 2023 and March 2024 – currently being evaluated	Evaluation due. If successful expansion and recommission will be expected.
	Wellbeing in children with SEND	Programme delivered between July 2023 and March 2024 – currently being evaluated	Evaluation due. If successful expansion and recommission will be expected.
Levelling up strategy	Public Health wish to integrate regeneration programmes with Public health programmes to fully enhance the teams.	New programme Director for Levelling up recruited and started work on the 1 st February.	Strategy due Sept/Oct 2024

Life expectancy:

In 2021, the life expectancy in Sandwell was lower than the national average. For men, the life expectancy was 75.5 years in Sandwell, compared to 78.7 years in England. For women, the life expectancy was 80.4 years in Sandwell, compared to 82.8 years in England. This represents a gap of 3.2 years for men and 2.4 years for women in 2021.

1) Anticipatory care programme:

SCVO has worked with local partners to create an environment where residents have the confidence, capability and support for their health needs within the community this will include:

Holistic Programmes: Wellness programs, Nutritional support, Community-building and cultural activities, Respite care and caregiver support, Mental health services,

Skilled Voluntary sector: Technology training and support and Advocacy and information services

February 2024 update: a programme ran from Summer 2023 and is coming to an end March 2024 following funding from the Place based partnership. The Programme is being evaluated as to the impact and an update will be presented imminently.

2) Healthy aging App

Health fabric and Sandwell Public health put forward a bid for the Innovate UK fund to build a new platform which is AI enabled self-management app to address health inequalities. This is a multilingual self-management platform, that supports BAME communities as well as the wider Sandwell population to self-manage multiple long-term conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. It is fully accredited by the NHS and was available on the NHS apps library.

The programme had a soft launch in May 2023 and was co-created between Sandwell Public health and GP Practices, tested with members of the community from different ethnicities, with support from their families. Initial outcomes included an increase in patient activation measures with 50 patients managing Hypertension, Asthma, Diabetes, COPD, depression, and anxiety. The programme scaled up across more than 1000 patients with an additional focus on wellness themes such as stopping smoking, mental health, ageing well and run alongside health check.

February 2024 update: App is now complete and being integrated with primary care, wider advertising with GPs. The team have already had feedback that that seldom heard groups are forming communities on the app, grouping health information specific to their needs. we are building up the user based and adapting the App into year 2 of the programme.

Infant mortality

Infant mortality (Infant deaths under 1 year of age per 1000 live births) is significantly higher for Sandwell than England. Sandwell death are 5.7 per 1,000 live births; England 3.9; West Midlands 5.6. Deaths during the neonatal period (first 28 days) are the largest contributors to the infant mortality rate.

Healthy Pregnancy service

The overarching aim of this service is to improve the health and wellbeing of women who are pregnant, helping them enter into and maintain healthier pregnancies and give their children the best possible start in life (note that Healthy Start Vitamins are already being distributed universally in sandwell).

The overarching objectives for this services are to;

- Increase the number of women having a smokefree pregnancy
- Increase women being supported by alcohol and substance misuse services.
- Increase initiation of breastfeeding and the number of babies breastfed at 6-8 weeks
- Support women to gain only the appropriate amount of weight during pregnancy
- Increase uptake of Healthy Start Vitamins
- Embed public health and prevention across the maternity pathway – including enhanced support for maternal heart conditions, preeclampsia, diabetes and high risk placental issues.
- Reduction in low birth weight babies, preterm, still births and infant mortality.
- Reduce the burden of perinatal mental illness

February 2024 update: After trying for 18months to agree with the trust to have a stop smoking team, we were unable to get them to recruit to a post. The public health team have now advertised two posts which will work with the trusts to embed this offer.

Infant mortality deep dive for Sandwell:

In Sandwell, we want to develop an Infant Mortality Reduction Strategy which will explore patterns of need, services available and any gaps/opportunities to do more, the best evidence for programmes for our populations and system-wide recommendations for action.

The first part of this work will be to explore patterns of need and service use, drawing on comparable Hospital Episode Data to review where the most need is, and mapping the demographics of when Infant mortality is highest in Sandwell.

This work is being commissioned with the Health Economics Unit and will support our understanding of needs in Sandwell.

February 2024 update: The work was commissioned in January 2024, this is due to be delivered in March/April 2024 which will be an insight into infant deaths in Sandwell and drive action. This report has had interest regionally and nationally as it will be the first time that survival rates by prematurity and rate of congenital abnormality will be available to any area.

Obesity

Sandwell has the worst childhood obesity in the country at 34% compared to a national average of 23.4. This means we need to bring the number of children who are obesity down by 10%. Children who are obese having a tenfold risk of being an obese adult, there is national concern about the rise of childhood obesity. The risk of obesity in adulthood increases with age, an obese child at 13 is more likely to become an obese adult than an obese 5 year old. The health consequences of childhood obesity include; glucose intolerance, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, exacerbation of conditions such as asthma and psychological problems such as social isolation, low self-esteem, teasing and bullying.

Weight loss programme for families.

There are also a number of funded activity programmes across schools encouraging healthy lifestyles including healthy food choices, increasing physical activities such as free swimming and many sporting events to encourage children and young people into sports and activities.

We will embark on a pilot a small programme similar to that of the Better Health pilot programme in Wolverhampton, where by families will be financially incentivised to cook healthy meals, eat healthy meals, take exercise as a family. the small trial will evaluate what type of nudges families need to remain healthy and what types of incentivisation works.

February 2024 update: Friar park levelling up health programme is about to start its engagement phase with the community to understand the appetite to sign up to a community pledge and programme of activity in May/June 2024

Economic wellbeing

There are a number of benefits to supporting people with long-term conditions and carers responsibilities to work. These benefits include:

- Increased financial security for individuals and families
- Improved health and well-being for individuals and families
- Reduced social isolation
- Increased productivity in the workplace
- Reduced costs for the healthcare system

There are several challenges to supporting people with long-term conditions and carers responsibilities to work. These challenges include:

- Lack of awareness of the challenges that these people face
- Lack of access to flexible working arrangements
- Unable to flex their universal credit or work and improve their circumstances

- Lack of training and support
- Lack of an inclusive workplace culture

Despite these challenges, there are a number of things that can be done to support people with long-term conditions and carers responsibilities to work. By supporting them to access flexible working arrangements, training and support, and an inclusive workplace culture, we can help these people to achieve their full potential

February 2024 update: A Work Well bid was submitted in January 2024. Should the black Country bid be successful we will have an offer in Sandwell to support people into work and prevent worklessness

Barriers to work

Sandwell is home to vibrant, diverse communities and offers a place of welcome for new migrants. In the 2021 Census, almost one in four (23.6%) Sandwell residents were born outside the UK, compared with 1 in 6 nationally. The 2021 Census identified the challenges facing our new migrant communities and established ethnic minority communities with 88% of Sandwell residents who speak English as their main language compared to 92.3% nationally. Of those residents who do not have English as their main language, 24.8% cannot speak English well and 5.5% cannot speak English at all. In 5 wards of Sandwell less than 70% of residents speak English as their main language.

Sandwell Language Network:

The need to improve health literacy within our ethnic minority communities and the demand for community language learning is increasing. To prevent a gap in this provision Public Health Commission the Sandwell Language Network (SLN).

SLN aims to tackle health and economic inequalities, reduce isolation, and promote community cohesion through language learning. SLN contributes to achieving our strategic outcomes, building resilient communities in which people live well and children have the best start to life. SLN works in partnership with our community and wider health system to build resilience in our ethnic minority communities and deliver a positive impact on health outcomes.

The current 2022-23 programme has seen great achievement and we look to increase these as the programme grows.

- 524 learners on the programme, representing 19 ethnicities, 53 nationalities and 39 different main languages
- 75 local volunteers recruited and trained
- 64% of participants in receipt of benefits, unemployed, or from low socio-economic backgrounds
- 88% of learners achieved progression and/or take up of additional support services
- 92 learners into formal education
- 184 moved into other informal learning such as digital
- 26 SLN learners into work

February 2024 update: The programme has run for another year, we are gathering the final data for 23/24 and will report back

Mental wellbeing of children

The mental health of children and young people has been an area of focus for some time, however since the COVID pandemic, there have been numerous studies and reports of the general mental health of most children and young people further declining and numbers of

children missing school, needing intensive support or reaching crisis is the highest it has ever been^{1, 2, 3}.

Children being mentally unwell in childhood, will likely impact school attainment and has the potential to impact their life trajectory, affecting wellbeing and productivity of the resident population of Sandwell as a whole. Anxious and mentally unwell children will become the anxious and mentally unwell adult population; our anxious and unwell parents and workforce.

Grants to support Mental wellbeing of children with highest need.

The aim is to target groups not covered in wider CYP mental health programmes. in Sandwell to access support that enables them to address challenges with their emotional well-being and mental health which develop personal strategies that build confidence and resilience. To target those children and young people who are identified as requiring the additional support or access to specialist services where such support is currently not provided

This is in four areas;

- Black Boys (linking in with the Youth Justice),
- 16-25-year olds
- Family support – supporting and understanding emotional wellbeing and Mental health (Pilot)
- Children with SEND Needs

This programme, led by SCVO, on behalf of the wider Early Help Partnership (EHP), Public Health and the ICB, focused on engagement with children, young people and families targeted primarily through education settings, however, this also included those who are not within education such as on roll, home educated or access alternative provision or the Justice system.

For special schools - grants have been awarded for supporting children in these settings and to create training packages. These are being launched in Westminster school in 2022/23.

February 2024 update: Programme delivered between July 2023 and March 2024 – currently being evaluated

¹ <https://www.childrengsociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/well-being/mental-health-statistics>

² <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/mental-health-statistics/>

³ <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics/children-and-young-people-s-mental-health>