

Prevention Policy Statement

1. Introduction

As a local authority, we can have a positive influence through how we organise our operations and services; the regulations and policies we set; the goods and services we buy; the investments we make; and the example we set to others.

Taking a borough-wide approach to prevention presents major opportunities for the Council, with its partners, to practise, demonstrate and live by its commitment to improve quality of life, health and well-being of its local community through helping to identify and address needs at the earliest possible time. By prevention we mean literally “preventing” things that can have real life, long term impact on both current and future generations. More than this, it is about promoting the best outcomes and life experiences for Wirral residents, to achieve equity for people and place and opportunity for all.

2. Policy Context

Tackling inequality through prevention is at the core of key National legislation, policy and strategic plans. This Policy Statement outlines Wirral Council’s commitment to actively and demonstrably deliver key priorities set out within:

- The Care Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children Act 2004
- The NHS Long-Term Plan
- The Five Year Forward Plan for Mental Health, Primary Care and the NHS
- The Public Health England Strategy 2020-2025
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

This Policy Statement is informed by the Marmot report, titled 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives', which emphasises the need to address the social determinants of health, the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and which can lead to health inequalities. The detailed report contains many important findings, key to a preventative approach are:

- People living in the poorest neighbourhoods in England will on average die seven years earlier than people living in the richest neighbourhoods.
- People living in poorer areas not only die sooner but spend more of their lives with disability - an average total difference of 17 years.
- Health inequalities arise from a complex interaction of many factors - housing, income, education, social isolation, disability - all of which are strongly affected by one's economic and social status.

- Health inequalities are largely preventable. Not only is there a strong social justice case for addressing health inequalities, but there is also a pressing economic case. It is estimated that the annual cost of health inequalities is between £36 billion to £40 billion through lost taxes, welfare payments and costs to the NHS.
- Action on health inequalities requires action across all the social determinants of health, including education, occupation, income, home, and community.

Marmot highlights that, traditionally, government policies have focused resources only on some segments of society. To improve health for all of us and to reduce unfair and unjust inequalities in health, action is needed across the social gradient. For Wirral, this means a borough wide approach to prevention that does not simply focus on the bottom ten percent but takes action across the borough seeking to promote prevention for all, but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage.

3. Defining Prevention

Prevention can mean different things to different people. In essence it is about helping people stay healthy, happy and independent for as long as possible. It means stopping problems from arising in the first place; focusing on keeping people healthy and thriving, not just treating them when they become ill or run into problems. If they do need help, it means supporting them to manage their health and wellbeing earlier and more effectively. This means giving people the knowledge, skills, and confidence to take full control of their lives, their health and social care and making better choices as easy as possible.

Wirral Council adopts the Public Health approach to prevention through a tiered model with three distinct levels:

- Primary prevention: all of the help, support, activities, and opportunities that are available to all of us, at any time.
- Secondary prevention: targeted interventions and specific projects and programmes, delivered at a local level by partnerships and communities.
- Tertiary prevention: interventions provided by statutory organisations, such as Councils and Health Boards.

4. The Benefits of Prevention

There is growing awareness and acceptance of the importance of taking a “prevention is better than cure” approach to policy making and the planning of services.

The benefits of a preventative approach are far reaching and can enable the following positive outcomes to be achieved.

Outcomes improving for the individual:

- improved wellbeing
- reduced offending
- reduced substance and alcohol misuse
- better physical and mental health
- secure housing
- increased financial security
- increased levels of education, employment, and training
- increased safety
- experiencing purpose, belonging and security
- improved experience of services through co-production

Outcomes improving for professionals and services:

- person-centred focus
- greater integration
- greater collaboration
- more effective delivery of service
- reduce demand on reactive services
- improved information sharing
- improved experience of work through co-production

Outcomes improving for organisations and systems:

- stronger multi-agency partnerships
- improved governance
- data shapes commissioning
- achieving common goals
- better value for money
- joint commissioning approaches
- improved system of practice through co-production

5. Wirral Council's Approach

In taking a preventative approach to policy making and planning, Wirral Council commits to improving, for its residents and businesses, quality of life, health, wellbeing, and the economy. Wirral Council is committing to acting to:

- Support partners and communities to work together, as equals, to tackle the biggest issues and risk factors that have a negative impact on health and wellbeing across Wirral.
- Build connections and strong communication across partner agencies and services, driving and enhancing collaboration.
- Support the coordination and creation of a positive eco-system within which individuals and families can thrive.
- Creating a Wirral which is flourishing, active and green.
- Embedding its approach to prevention through a co-productive approach with local communities-only by coming together will we create solutions that will truly help people in Wirral to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Wirral Council will do this by ensuring that policy, strategy, and decision-making across the Council promotes and enables a preventative approach.