



Cabinet

Date: Monday, 29 June 2015
Time: 4.30 pm

Venue: Committee Room 1
Wallasey Town Hall

Contact Officer: Patrick Sebastian
Tel: 0151 691 8424
e-mail: patricksebastian@wirral.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Cabinet are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting have been printed and published. Any matters called in will be reported at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: That the minutes be approved and adopted.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

3. LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE SCHEME (Pages 1 - 44)

4. NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES EXTENSION OF TRANSITIONAL RELIEF POLICY FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM PROPERTIES AND ADOPTION OF A LIVING WAGE DISCOUNT POLICY (Pages 45 - 72)

GOVERNANCE, COMMISSIONING AND IMPROVEMENT

- 5. CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT
(Pages 73 - 82)**

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

- 6. PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT
(Pages 83 - 156)**

NEIGHBOURHOODS, HOUSING AND ENGAGEMENT

- 7. APPROVAL FOR COUNCIL NOMINATED OFFICER TO VOTE AT
AGM ON PROPOSAL FOR BBCHA TO MERGE WITH LIVERPOOL
HOUSING TRUST**

Report to follow.

- 8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR
(PART 1)**

To consider any other business that the Chair accepts as being urgent.

- 9. EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND
PUBLIC**

The following items contain exempt information.

RECOMMENDATION: That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

- 10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR
(PART 2)**

To consider any other business that the Chair accepts as being urgent.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

29 JUNE 2015

SUBJECT:	LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE SCHEME
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	HEAD OF BUSINESS PROCESSES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER	COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES
KEY DECISION?	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report requests Cabinet agree to the future Local Welfare Assistance scheme after consideration of the report of the Local Welfare Assistance Scrutiny Review which is referred to this Cabinet for further consideration.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was up until March 2015 directly funded by central government grant which has now been withdrawn with the recommendation that local authorities should consider funding future schemes from their general fund.

- 2.2 On 10th February 2015, Cabinet agreed as part of its budget resolutions that £900,000 would be held in a reserve for this fund following the Government's decision to withdraw direct funding effective from April 1st 2015. The following minute was recorded.

"This fund provides financial assistance to people in dire need. The government transferred responsibility for administering this from DWP to the Council together with a grant of £1.1m. The government announced that this grant was being cut with effect from March 2015. The Council has £600,000 in a reserve for this fund. Cabinet intends to make this available together with the anticipated underspend in 2014/15 of £300,000 to create a fund totalling £900,000 available for 2015/16. This will provide a local scheme to fill the gap left by the government's unwillingness to assist the most vulnerable in our communities. It is proposed that the 2014/15 policy be continued until the end of July 2015. In the interim, Cabinet asks the Scrutiny Review Group which has been set up to look at this fund to meet in order to make recommendations as to how this resource should be allocated."

The current scheme is in place until 31st July 2015 and a Task & Finish Scrutiny Review Panel have reviewed the position and their findings and recommendations are set out in Appendix 1 of this report and includes how the scheme should be taken forward from 1st August 2015.

- 2.3. A Task & Finish Review Panel consisting of six Members was established, including Councillors Janette Williams, Tom Anderson, Phil Gilchrist, Paul Doughty, Mathew Patrick and Joe Walsh. At the scoping meeting for the review, it was agreed by the Review Panel that Councillor Janette Williams would be the Chair of the Review Panel.
- 2.4 To avoid an additional Transformation and Resources Policy & Performance Committee meeting being scheduled for the purpose of approving the final report, it was agreed by the Committee to delegate authority to the Review Panel to refer the final agreed report to Cabinet.
- 2.5. An evidence day was conducted on 9th April 2015 as the approach to carry out the scrutiny review and the Review Panel met with a range of witnesses, including Council officers and representatives from a number of third sector organisations. Appropriate information was also requested by the Review Panel to help develop the recommendations made in the final report which is referred as agreed directly to Cabinet and is shown at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.6. The outcome of the review was that six recommendations were made and are set out below;

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel recommends that Wirral Council continues to administer and maintain the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme with the remaining budget available in line with the officer proposal but with consideration to:

- i) Reviewing and redefining what items constitute an essential need with a view to excluding them from the scheme or reducing the circumstances in which they are provided;*
- ii) Excluding washing machines as an award provided from the scheme directly, except in exceptional circumstances, and referring these applications to Energy Projects Plus; and*
- iii) Referring applications for white goods which have been assessed as not meeting the Council's criteria and where a potential fuel debt issue has been identified to Energy Projects Plus.*

Recommendation 2

The Emergency Utility Credit which is available to British Gas customers who have fallen into debt and are on prepayment meters should be effectively promoted by the Council. Applicants identified through the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as being eligible should be signposted to Energy Projects Plus for an assessment and application to be made.

The evidence day included discussions with Trustees from Wirral Foodbank, a charity providing emergency food for people in crisis. It was proposed that Wirral Council could reduce the maximum number of days' award for essential food from seven to four and refer applicants to Wirral Foodbank for the remaining three days. As the Council would be increasing the number of referrals for essential food, the Review Panel considered that a small donation to Wirral Foodbank could be made from the scheme's budget to help cover its operational expenses.

Recommendation 3

Officers should explore the feasibility of referring successful applications for essential food to Wirral Foodbank, or any identified food bank that can service all of Wirral, with an appropriate donation being made from the remaining budget to help cover some operational costs. The Review Panel suggest that how this is achieved should be determined by officers to ensure that actual benefits can be identified and delivered and to ensure that the Council's Contract Procedure Rules are complied with.

The Review Panel did not have any significant concerns regarding take up of the scheme but did acknowledge comments made by the Operations Manager for the Citizens Advice Bureau that some of their clients' awareness of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was by 'word of mouth'. Additionally, the Review Panel acknowledged comments made that there may be some confusion conveyed by the DWP in relation to the number of awards that can be made from the scheme. As such, the Review Panel recognised that it would now be beneficial to review how the scheme can be effectively publicised from August 1st 2015 should the scheme be extended and amendments made.

Recommendation 4

Publicity and communication plans should be reviewed to ensure there is take up and understanding of the scheme from all those who need it. This should include a broadcast to partner agencies to provide an update on the key aspects of the scheme from 1st August 2015.

If the existing scheme is maintained and is consistent with the office proposal, the Council is faced with the prospect of not having any direct funding for local welfare assistance from 1st April 2017. The Review Panel considered that it would be beneficial to undertake a further Task & Finish Scrutiny Review of the scheme in 2016. This review could consider making recommendations to amend the scheme to enhance the lifetime of the budget, consider potential options to continue the provision of local welfare assistance in the longer-term and identify any additional funding or grants that are accessible.

Recommendation 5

Cabinet is requested to support a further review of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as part of the Transformation and Resources Policy & Performance Committee's work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year. The objective of the review would be to identify any strategies for providing local welfare assistance once the budget set aside for local welfare assistance has been depleted.

The Review Panel considers that funding for local welfare schemes is vital in providing crucial support to communities, specifically to those people who are most vulnerable and are suffering through crisis. The Review Panel is opposed to the Government's decision to withdraw direct funding to provide support for those who need it.

Recommendation 6

That Cabinet lobbies Central Government against the withdrawal of Local Welfare Assistance Funding from April 2015 and the impact that this has on local communities.

- 2.7. The revised scheme taking account of these recommendations is shown at Appendix 2 of this report and is recommended to be approved to be the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme for the authority from 1st August 2015.
- 2.8. A further report will be submitted later in this financial year to detail how the new scheme is being used and allow Cabinet to decide on whether any further funding is applied to this or when the scheme will end. The current situation is that without any change this scheme will end with the available budget and this will require formal approval of scheme cessation closer to that time if that is the future decision.
- 3.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**
- 3.1 The authority will continue to engage with partner organisations to provide a scheme that responds to immediate crises and helps address underlying issues identified.
- 4.0 **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**
- 4.1. **FINANCIAL:** The government transferred responsibility for administering this from DWP to the Council together with a grant of £1.1m. The government announced that this grant was being cut with effect from March 2015. The Council has £600,000 in a reserve for this fund. Cabinet has made this available together with the under spend in 2014/15 of £300,000 to create a fund totalling £900,000 available for 2015/16. In the first two months of 2015/16, 1,237 awards have been made to a value of £65,211. It is expected that the projected underspend of 2014/15 grant at 31st July 2015 will be about £300,000, although the precise figure will only be known in late July. It is projected that the full £900,000 will be available for this scheme.
- 4.2. **STAFFING:** To ensure this scheme is properly and fully administered the Benefits service initially had two experienced team leaders manage the scheme, one undertaking reviews under the appeals process, and the other addressing day to day operational arrangements. The Benefits Operational Manager also gave considerable time to ensure the new scheme worked effectively. This has now reduced to one team leader overseeing the process. Supporting this there are two full time assessors undertaking assessment and award functions along with liaising with suppliers, customers and partners. As scheme applications continue to increase this has required additional support which has been by utilising benefit staff. The ongoing resource implications of any ongoing scheme will be kept under review.
- 4.3. There are a number of practical issues for staff to contend with, spending considerable time in contact with many applicants, supporting them through their crises and helping explore alternative options for support. Our one stop shop staff report an increase in customers who are upset, angry or worried

and they face increasing hostility from customers who are struggling to meet escalating financial commitments or who are refused an LWA award. It is anticipated that this trend is likely to continue as staff contend with an increasingly difficult role as the adverse impacts of welfare reform are seen.

4.4. ASSETS & IT : There are none arising out of this report.

5.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There is no specific duty on local authorities as to how or if they meet this provision as government views authorities need to be able to be flexible to provide this support in a way that is suitable and appropriate to meet the needs of local communities.

6.0 **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 A specific Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken as part of Wirral's scheme development and design, and is at the following link; <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/finance>

6.2 A national EIA for Welfare Reform can be assessed at the following link: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/legislation-and-key-documents/welfare-reform-act-2012/impact-assessments-and-equality/>

7.0 **CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are none arising out of this report.

8.0 **PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are none arising out of this report.

9.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1. That Cabinet is requested to support the contents and recommendations of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Task & Finish Scrutiny Review at Appendix1 of this report

9.2. Cabinet approve the policy as outlined in Appendix 2 as the authority's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme for 2015/16 effective from 1st August 2015 which has the following amendments over the scheme in place to 31st July 2015;

i) Items of essential need will now exclude washing machines as an award provided from the scheme directly, except in exceptional circumstances, and referring these applications to Energy Projects Plus; and

ii) Referring applications for white goods which have been assessed as not meeting the Council's criteria and where a potential fuel debt issue has been identified to Energy Projects Plus

- iii) The Emergency Utility Credit which is available to British Gas customers who have fallen into debt and are on prepayment meters should be effectively promoted by the Council. Applicants identified through the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as being eligible should be signposted to Energy Projects Plus for an assessment and application to be made.
- 9.3. That further consideration is given to amending the scheme by reviewing and redefining other items that currently constitute an essential need with a view to excluding them from the scheme or reducing the circumstances in which they are provided
- 9.4. Officers will explore the feasibility of referring successful applications for essential food to Wirral Foodbank, or any identified food bank that can service all of Wirral, with an appropriate donation being made from the remaining budget to help cover some operational costs. Officers will determine how this is achieved to ensure that actual benefits can be identified and delivered and to ensure that the Council's Contract Procedure Rules are complied with.
- 9.5. Publicity and communication plans will be reviewed to ensure there is take up and understanding of the scheme from all those who need it. This should include a broadcast to partner agencies to provide an update on the key aspects of the scheme from 1st August 2015.
- 9.6. Cabinet supports a further review of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as part of the Transformation and Resources Policy & Performance Committee's work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year. The objective of the review will be to identify any strategies for providing local welfare assistance once the budget set aside for local welfare assistance has been depleted.
- 9.7. Cabinet agrees to lobby Central Government against the withdrawal of Local Welfare Assistance Funding that occurred from April 2015 and the impact that this has on local communities.

10.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Members can view and approve the changes to the policy that considers applications for a wide range of support needs and be aware that additional areas can be reviewed.

REPORT AUTHOR: Malcolm Flanagan
Head of Business Processes
0151 666 3260
Malcolmflanagan@wirral.gov.uk

- APPENDICES**
1. Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Scrutiny Review Report
 2. Local Welfare Assistance Scheme for 2015/16
(from 1st August 2015)

REFERENCE MATERIAL: None

SUBJECT HISTORY:

Council Meeting	Date
Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny (min 36)	14/04/14
Cabinet (min 164)	13/03/14
Cabinet (min 168)	24/01/13
Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny (min 42)	27/11/12
Cabinet (min 51)	19/07/12
Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny (min 98)	26/03/12
Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny (min 138)	17/11/11
Cabinet (min 118)	22/09/11

This page is intentionally left blank



**LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE SCHEME
SCRUTINY REVIEW**

A report produced by
**THE TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES
POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

*June 2015
FINAL REPORT*

WIRRAL COUNCIL
LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE SCHEME
SCRUTINY REVIEW
FINAL REPORT

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	4
3.	MEMBERS OF THE TASK & FINISH GROUP	7
4.	BACKGROUND AND ORIGINAL BRIEF	8
5.	METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW	9
6.	FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	10
7.	APPENDICES	
	Appendix 1: SCOPE DOCUMENT.....	21

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the Transformation and Resources Policy & Performance Committee's work programme, Members agreed to undertake a Task & Finish Scrutiny Review of the Council's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme following news that there would be no further funding from central government from 1st April 2015. As the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme provides awards to people who are in severe need, this contributes to meeting the corporate priority of protecting the vulnerable in Wirral.

On 10th February 2015, Cabinet agreed as part of its budget resolutions that £900,000 would be held in a reserve to determine how this should be allocated after the current scheme expires at the end of July 2015. A scoping meeting for the review was convened on 25th February with an evidence day held on 9th April to inform recommendations to Cabinet.

An Executive Summary of the findings follows, together with the recommendations arising from this Review. The Report then sets out the background to the original brief, as well as the methodology adopted for gathering the evidence. This is followed by the main body of the Report which details the key findings and recommendations of the Task & Finish Panel Members.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Local authorities no longer receive direct central government funding for local welfare assistance, effective from 1st April 2015. In February 2015, Cabinet agreed that the £600K underspend from 2013/14 and the anticipated £300K underspend from 2014/15 would be held in a reserve for this Task and Finish Review Panel to make recommendations on how the resource should be allocated for 2015/16.

This review is a good example of pre-decision scrutiny which was undertaken through an evidence day. The Review Panel not only engaged with relevant Council officers but with representatives from WIRED, Energy Projects Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau and Wirral Foodbank to help inform the recommendations made in this report. The Review Panel took the opportunity to learn how Wirral Council administered the scheme, including the determination and provision of awards made, and analysed a number of information sources presented during the evidence day.

As Members considered all the evidence and findings, it became evident that the most appropriate option would be for Wirral Council to continue to administer the scheme. The Review Panel was complimentary of how Wirral Council has been delivering the scheme since 2013, and in particular, the thoroughness of the application assessment process with access to Benefit and Council Tax records which only the Council has access to. It was generally felt that if the scheme was to be made more stringent, the Council would be best placed to administer it and to ensure that there was no significant service disruption to the scheme, impacting the immediate provision of awards to people who are in crisis.

A proposal by officers to continue to administer the scheme - potentially up to April 2017 - was endorsed by the Review Panel. This proposal allows food and fuel, considered as the priority areas, to be provided for whilst decreasing what is spent on white goods. The British Gas Energy Trust has funding for people in crisis and access to this fund is through Energy Projects Plus as an organisation who delivers the Trust's scheme. The Trust can help clear fuel debts as well as provide financial assistance for white goods. To reduce the Council's expenditure on white goods, it was proposed that referrals for washing machines could be made to Energy Projects Plus to access funding from the British Gas Energy Trust. The rationale for this is that awards for washing machines account for the biggest expenditure in terms of item and overall cost.

The Review Panel was also keen to refer applicants who have been identified as having a fuel debt along with any other application for white goods that did not meet the Council's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme criteria. Additionally, the Review Panel learned that emergency utility credit awards are also available to British Gas customers. Referrals are made by Energy Projects Plus and other organisations to customers of British Gas who have a financial crisis and specific health needs.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel recommends that Wirral Council continues to administer and maintain the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme with the remaining budget available in line with the officer proposal but with consideration to:

- i) Reviewing and redefining what items constitute an essential need with a view to excluding them from the scheme or reducing the circumstances in which they are provided;*
- ii) Excluding washing machines as an award provided from the scheme directly, except in exceptional circumstances, and referring these applications to Energy Projects Plus; and*
- iii) Referring applications for white goods which have been assessed as not meeting the Council's criteria and where a potential fuel debt issue has been identified to Energy Projects Plus.*

Recommendation 2

The Emergency Utility Credit which is available to British Gas customers who have fallen into debt and are on prepayment meters should be effectively promoted by the Council. Applicants identified through the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as being eligible should be signposted to Energy Projects Plus for an assessment and application to be made.

The evidence day included discussions with Trustees from Wirral Foodbank, a charity providing emergency food for people in crisis. It was proposed that Wirral Council could reduce the maximum number of days' award for essential food from seven to four and refer applicants to Wirral Foodbank for the remaining three days. As the Council would be increasing the number of referrals for essential food, the Review Panel considered that a small donation to Wirral Foodbank could be made from the scheme's budget to help cover its operational expenses.

Recommendation 3

Officers should explore the feasibility of referring successful applications for essential food to Wirral Foodbank, or any identified food bank that can service all of Wirral, with an appropriate donation being made from the remaining budget to help cover some operational costs. The Review Panel suggest that how this is achieved should be determined by officers to ensure that actual benefits can be identified and delivered and to ensure that the Council's Contract Procedure Rules are complied with.

The Review Panel did not have any significant concerns regarding take up of the scheme but did acknowledge comments made by the Operations Manager for the Citizens Advice Bureau that some of their clients' awareness of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was by 'word of mouth'. Additionally, the Review Panel acknowledged comments made that there may be some confusion conveyed by the DWP in relation to the number of awards that can be made from the scheme. As such, the Review Panel recognised that it would now be beneficial to review how the scheme can be effectively publicised from August 1st 2015 should the scheme be extended and amendments made.

Recommendation 4

Publicity and communication plans should be reviewed to ensure there is take up and understanding of the scheme from all those who need it. This should include a broadcast to partner agencies to provide an update on the key aspects of the scheme from 1st August 2015.

If the existing scheme is maintained and is consistent with the office proposal, the Council is faced with the prospect of not having any direct funding for local welfare assistance from 1st

April 2017. The Review Panel considered that it would be beneficial to undertake a further Task & Finish Scrutiny Review of the scheme in 2016. This review could consider making recommendations to amend the scheme to enhance the lifetime of the budget, consider potential options to continue the provision of local welfare assistance in the longer-term and identify any additional funding or grants that are accessible.

Recommendation 5

Cabinet is requested to support a further review of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as part of the Transformation and Resources Policy & Performance Committee's work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year. The objective of the review would be to identify any strategies for providing local welfare assistance once the budget set aside for local welfare assistance has been depleted.

The Review Panel considers that funding for local welfare schemes is vital in providing crucial support to communities, specifically to those people who are most vulnerable and are suffering through crisis. The Review Panel is opposed to the Government's decision to withdraw direct funding to provide support for those who need it.

Recommendation 6

That Cabinet lobbies Central Government against the withdrawal of Local Welfare Assistance Funding from April 2015 and the impact that this has on local communities.

3. MEMBERS OF THE TASK & FINISH GROUP

Councillor Janette Williamson (Chair)



CHAIR'S PERSONAL STATEMENT

I would like to thank the members of the Review Panel who participated in this Task and Finish Scrutiny Review. I felt this was a really important piece of work to undertake, especially as the funding for the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme has now ceased. I feel that the Review Panel has identified a number of ways of maximizing what funding is left in order to help as many vulnerable residents as possible.

I would like to thank the representatives from Citizens Advice Bureau, Wirral Foodbank, WIRED and Energy Projects Plus for their attendance and expert knowledge. I would also like to thank Council officers involved in the Scrutiny Review including Malcolm Flanagan, Head of Business Processes, Trish Hughes, Operational Manager and Wendy Neil, Team Leader, for all their hard work in making this an informative and valuable piece of scrutiny work.

Other Panel Members were:

Councillor Tom Anderson



Councillor Phil Gilchrist



Councillor Mathew Patrick



Councillor Paul Doughty



Councillor Joe Walsh



4. BACKGROUND AND ORIGINAL BRIEF

The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme has been in place for two years since 1st April 2013 following the abolition of the Social Fund. The Department for Work and Pensions had previous responsibility for administering the Social Fund. From April 2013, the discretionary Crisis Loans for Living Expenses and Community Care Grant elements of the Social Fund administered by the Department for Work and Pensions were abolished. All local authorities were subsequently given funding to develop and administer their own schemes for Local Welfare Assistance.

Direct funding has now been withdrawn by central government effective from 1st April 2015 with the recommendation that local authorities should consider funding schemes from their general fund. Additionally, the government has informed Wirral Council that its indicative sum for the provision of local welfare support expenditure is £1.1M.

On 10th February 2015, Cabinet agreed as part of its budget resolutions that £900,000 would be held in a reserve.

“This fund provides financial assistance to people in dire need. The government transferred responsibility for administering this from DWP to the Council together with a grant of £1.1m. The government announced that this grant was being cut with effect from March 2015. The Council has £600,000 in a reserve for this fund. Cabinet intends to make this available together with the anticipated underspend in 2014/15 of £300,000 to create a fund totalling £900,000 available for 2015/16. This will provide a local scheme to fill the gap left by the government’s unwillingness to assist the most vulnerable in our communities. It is proposed that the 2014/15 policy be continued until the end of July 2015. In the interim, Cabinet asks the Scrutiny Review Group which has been set up to look at this fund to meet in order to make recommendations as to how this resource should be allocated.”

The Scope Document for the Scrutiny Review is attached as **Appendix 1** to this Report.

5. METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW

An evidence day was conducted on 9th April 2015 as the approach to carry out the scrutiny review and a number of methods were used to gather evidence. This included a question and answers session with key officers from the Council, including the Head of Business Processes, The Housing Benefit Operational Manager and the Processing Group Team Leader. The emphasis was on understanding the context of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme and to discuss potential options on how the £900k fund could be used to deliver local welfare assistance from August 1st 2015 when the current scheme expires.

To facilitate this, a number of information sources were provided to the Review Panel which included a breakdown of applications to the scheme, a breakdown of awards made against specific categories, details of award expenditure and the costs to administer the scheme.

A number of representatives from key third sector organisations were also invited to the session to help inform the Review Panel to make recommendations moving forward. These organisations work directly with people who are vulnerable or suffer through crisis and were considered by the Review Panel to be able to contribute to this review.

These organisations were:

- Citizens Advice Bureau (Operation's Manager)
- WIRED (Executive Officer)
- Energy Projects Plus (Chief Executive)
- Wirral Foodbank (Project Manager and Trustee)

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Scheme Overview

Wirral Council's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was introduced in April 2013 and its aim is to provide emergency support to people in short term need resulting from an emergency or a crisis. It also supports people to become established or remain in the community after leaving care.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) made available a grant of £1,345,925 per annum for both 2013/14 and 2014/15. This is significantly less than the previous DWP full year expenditure against Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants.

The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Policy, revised and approved by Cabinet for 2014/15, stipulates all the criteria to be met in order to be eligible to access the scheme.

The criteria are:

- Aged 16 or over
- Be a Wirral resident or, in the case of those who are homeless or leaving an institutional establishment, have established links with Wirral.
- Support is required to address essential needs of the individual and/or their dependents
- It is demonstrated that there are no other resources or other ways of meeting this need which are considered reasonable.

The table below gives a summary of applications made for 2013/14 and 2014/15

	2013/14	2014/15
Total Applications made*	8222	8349
Successful Awards	8345	12718
Unsuccessful Awards	3328	23267

**Each application can contain several different types of claim*

Access to the scheme increased in year 2 (2014/15) as more people became aware of it compared to year 1 (2013/14) in which there was an approximate underspend of 40% of the budget. Officers believe that if the scheme was to continue, it is projected that access to the scheme would increase further if the scheme provides the same level and range of support.

6.2 Scheme Administration

Application and Assessment

The scheme is administered by the Housing Benefits Team and all applications are completed online through Wirral's website. Most One Stop Shops provide self-access kiosks for anyone without computer or internet access and some assistance can be provided by front-line staff to complete the application correctly.

The Review Panel was informed that applications are normally dealt with on the day they are received and prioritised by a team leader before being assessed by a team of 6-7 assessment officers. These assessment officers also process housing benefit and council tax support applications.

Generally, awards are made for essential food, fuel payments where applicants have a pre-paid utility meter, clothing, furniture, white goods and some household items such as bedding. There are different levels of access to the scheme and each applicant is assessed against the criteria, with household composition and income being considered holistically (e.g. checking why benefit payments have not been made). Verification of all details supplied within the applications is made using Housing Benefit / Council Tax records, DWP records and through speaking with the applicant if necessary before making a final assessment. As the team deal with Housing Benefit and Council Tax, they would also have access to all other benefits that could be claimed by the applicant to maximise benefits, such as free school meals and Council Tax benefits. This was welcomed by the Review Panel for the thoroughness taken through the assessment process.

As part of the scrutiny review, Members requested a breakdown of awards given against assistance type for the 2014/15 financial year. These are detailed below.

Assistance type	Awards	% of total awards	Total sum
Clothing/Bedding	990	7.8%	£48,748.47
Expenses	10	0.1%	£359.20
Food	2723	21.4%	£131,144.46
Furniture	2259	17.8%	£193,003.88
Other Assistance	67	0.5%	£1,486.58
Utilities	3599	28.3%	£59,173.97
White Goods	3070	24.1%	£427,074.38
Grand Total	12718		£860,990.94

The analysis shows that nearly 50% of all awards are for assistance with food and utilities but this makes up only 22% of the total expenditure. Officers stated that food and fuel are considered the priority areas to ensure those who do not have the financial means do not needlessly go without and these applications are prioritised ahead of other requests. This view was shared by the Review Panel which considered that these should remain as the key priority areas moving forward with any proposals.

The Review Panel learned that for both essential food and fuel awards, the maximum award provided is for up to seven days. Essential food awards are made with a range of £6 per day for a single person to £17 per day for a family with three or more children. Fuel payments are based on a rate of £5 per day but these are to be subject to a fresh review by officers who will look at all national organisations that monitor fuel costs to determine the rates. In relation to white goods, officers explained that single people will generally only get microwaves and not cookers because they are considered more transient and families will normally receive a cooker to ensure that children can be provided for. Additionally, washing machines are also not provided to single people unless there were mobility issues identified in using a laundrette.

The breakdown of awards made in 2014/15 against white goods is provided below.

Item	Awards made	Total value	Average cost per item
Washing machines	656	£146,125.06	£222
Fridge Freezers	947	£128,489.47	£135
Cookers	570	£114,714.08	£201

Members noted that washing machines are the highest item of expenditure out of white goods provided and this also constitutes the highest cost per item.

Officers stated that awards would not be simply awarded for general wear and tear. The team receive many applications with no underlying crisis being stated or items that are not essential and these are refused. However, Council officers have now built up considerable experience in determining the appropriateness of making awarding against the stated needs.

In respect of applications made for food awards, referrals to food banks would be made if an applicant doesn't meet the Council's criteria or has had a maximum amount of award. These referrals are dealt with at One Stop Shops who issue the appropriate vouchers for food items to be provided.

The Review Panel raised an issue regarding the administrative resource dealing with serial applicants making repeated false or unsubstantiated applications. However, Members agreed with the approach taken by officers that the Council shouldn't stop these applications coming in, but to use the knowledge and experience gained to determine if there is a crisis or an essential need that should be assessed against.

Although the policy states that only one claim can be made in a two year period, it is understood that some flexibility has been applied operationally as the policy was written without an understanding of what the demand would be and the impact of welfare reform changes since April 2013.

Provision of awards / items

Wirral Council uses two contracted suppliers who provide, deliver and install items at low cost. Awards for household white goods, such as refrigerators are procured through Furniture Resource Centre and they normally deliver within seven days. David Philips Furniture is used for all other furniture items such as beds and mattresses. Members learned that the Council has been able to develop strong relationships with the contractors and this has allowed any discrepancies or issues to be resolved promptly. However, if there is an intention for the Council to continue to deliver the scheme, it is understood that new tenders will have to be issued for 1st August 2015.

The Council works with a payment service company to allow awards for food, fuel and small household goods to be made on pre-loaded cards with a PIN to make payments. Text messages are sent to successful applicants to say they are successful and to pick up their card from a specific One Stop Shop at a certain time. The Review Panel had concerns that these cards could be used inappropriately, such as in gambling premises or Off Licenses. However, it was explained by officers that these cards can only be used at pre-approved merchants and at PayPoints for utilities.

It was explained that opportunities for cards to be used on inappropriate items are identified on an ongoing basis, including through meetings with the card provider. The team is able to review card redemption records through the merchant codes provided by the card provider. Applicants are required to sign a document to declare that the award is only to be used for what was claimed for and that non-compliance may affect future awards. Members were positive about these processes but acknowledged that in some establishments where you can buy food, you can also buy alcohol so there is a limit on policing. Members also welcomed the approach to not limit access to certain supermarkets, which some other local authorities have implemented, as this limits the availability of local options.

The Review Panel clarified that the team does signpost people to the Department for Work and Pensions Budgeting Loans as a potential avenue for financial support if they meet the necessary criteria. These interest free loans have to be paid back but can help people to buy

furniture or household equipment, pay for travel costs or even to pay for items to look for or start work.

The Review Panel was interested in how successful the scheme was in helping people in the longer term with a concern that they are simply back in crisis a month later. The Review Panel heard that there are difficulties with this as there is no additional monitoring within available resources. It was explained that many people will always be subject to DWP sanctions due to behaviour and will always return to the scheme. However, Members were pleased to hear from officers that the scheme has had a positive impact on the lives of young people who have been or are homeless and are trying to get started again. Positive feedback has also been received from some people who were in desperate need and couldn't have managed without the scheme. Officers also stated that the scheme has been critical for vulnerable people who move in and out of hostels due to family conditions.

Appeals against refused applications

Claimants can appeal against an unsuccessful application and these are looked at by the Team Leader. These include appeals against a refusal to give an award due to an award already being made in the same two year period. Since April 2013, 2508 appeals have been made and the success rate is 45%. If applicants are unsuccessful, the Council will signpost these to other third sector organisations such as charities or those that provide specialist support.

Scheme administration costs

The costs to administer the scheme for 2014/15 were made available to the Review Panel and are shown below:

Total award expenditure	£862,857
Text local	£1,715
Allpay admin (card transactions)	£5,308
Staffing costs	£125,387
Total	£995,267

The staffing costs amounting to £125,387 have been apportioned to the costs of the salaries of the six assessment officers, one administration officer, a senior clerk, a Team Leader and elements of the Operations Manager and the Head of Business Processes. However, it was acknowledged by the Review Panel that these costs do not include the recharge for the time spent at One Stop Shops to provide payment cards, explain elements of the award and to ascertain what further welfare advice can be given. Officers stated that this is reducing as we move towards a more appointments based system.

Communication of the scheme

The Review Panel was informed that the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was low key during year one but relevant partner organisations were notified of the scheme in order to signpost applicants in the right direction. As well as being advertised on the Council's website, the scheme was promoted on Housing Benefit notification letters and through Discretionary Housing Payments applications. These have ceased from April 1st 2015 until a decision is made on the scheme's future.

The table below details the percentage of applications for awards across age bands ranging from 16 to over 65 for 2014/15.

Age Band	16-25	26-35	36-50	51-65	65+
% of Applicants	27%	31%	29%	12%	1%

The analysis shows that fewer applications are

made from older people (51-65 and 65+). Older people may be unaware of the scheme but could be struggling financially and could be entitled to a grant through the scheme. However, the Review Panel was informed that that the age demographic figures for Wirral mirror closely those figures for the DWP when it administered the previous scheme.

6.3 Third Sector Organisations

As part of the scrutiny review, representatives from a number of third sector organisations were invited to attend the evidence day to further understand the needs in the community, the potential to signpost or refer applicants to other schemes / grants and to also identify the potential for alternate delivery models moving forward.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

The Citizens Advice Bureau provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It also receives many applications for clients to get assistance for items such as white goods or for advice around debt. The key observations from the Operations Manager for CAB are detailed below.

- The number of people coming to the Citizens Advice Bureau in relation to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme has decreased as the perception from clients is that there isn't any help. Some clients are being informed by the DWP that if they have had already received one award they are then not entitled to another. Clients are also being told that they can't claim if they have received DWP sanctions. Officers did clarify that in both cases this may be due to other local authorities adopting these policies and the DWP not differentiating between them.
- Clients who come in relation to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme state they are only aware of its existence through word of mouth as it's not very well advertised. Clients are unsure when is the right time to make an application with the belief that only one award would be given regardless of reasons for any future claims.
- Wirral's scheme would not always be the first point of contact for referrals so Wirral Council may only be dealing with a small proportion of people who are in need. The Citizens Advice Bureau sources other available avenues such as grants for energy payments for those that use British Gas as part of their scheme. These grants have not been well publicised, even with British Gas.
- The Citizens Advice Bureau is very responsive to the fact that there is some funding still available to carry on due to the clear demand in the community and that there will likely be an increase in essential need with more DWP sanctions being applied and changes in welfare reforms. The Operations Manager stated it is imperative that essential support is provided only to those who really need it and that essential items should be limited to food, heating and lighting. The Citizens Advice Bureau believes the DWP sanctions to be unfair which is affecting more and more clients who consequently have nowhere else to turn.
- As the Citizens Advice Bureau is impartial and independent it would not be appropriate for them, and other similar advisory organisations, to administer Local Welfare Assistance and make decisions on awards. However, it was put to the Review Panel that the Council may wish to consider allocating some funding moving forward to any organisation that

could provide preventative advice to help clients in the future and reduce the numbers accessing the scheme.

Wirral Foodbank

Wirral Foodbank was established in November 2011 and is part of The Trussell Trust, a Christian charity that provides “emergency food for local people in crisis” as well as debt, benefit and employment advice. The key observations from discussion with the Trustees are detailed below.

- There are fourteen food bank distribution centres across Wirral with over two hundred volunteers who give time regularly and many more who volunteer at one-off events. Food is generally donated by local people churches, schools, supermarket collection days and local businesses across Wirral. There are also collection boxes in Tesco, Asda, Coop and Sainsbury’s. Tesco also makes a monetary donation of up to 30% of the value of the food collections.
- Wirral Foodbank does not make any assessment to determine who is in need of food as these are carried out by one of the eighty four voucher-holding agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Ones Stop Shops.
- A voucher is exchanged for three days’ supply of food at one of the fourteen distribution centres across Wirral. Due to food hygiene regulations, only non-perishable food items such as tinned products, rice and fruit juices are given. The amount of food allocated is dependent on whether the client is single or is supporting a family and guidance to referring agencies is that a maximum of three vouchers should be issued but this can be flexible subject to the agreement of the Foodbank.
- In 2014, 12,503 people received emergency food, of which 4498 were children. Low income, benefit delays and benefit changes were the main reason why people were referred to food banks during that year.
- Wirral Foodbank’s biggest expense is the operation of their two vans and the associated insurance and fuel costs to ensure food can be delivered to one of the fourteen distribution centres and collected from the various supermarket locations across Wirral. One of these vans is leased from the Council and the other is rented.
- If Wirral Council was to increase the number of referrals to Wirral Foodbank as part of any future strategy for delivering the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme, there should not be any significant issues in sourcing additional food items to meet this demand. This would be subject to review based on the number of actual referrals received.

WIRED

WIRED is a registered local charity that works within the voluntary and community sector in Wirral providing information, advice and support. Historically, WIRED has provided a lot of advocacy work but now a key objective is to support carers through the provision of carers’ support services. WIRED has extensive experience of administering grants, including carers’ grants. WIRED delivers the Carers’ Grant Service and this is jointly commissioned by the CCG and Wirral’s Department of Adult Social Services. The key observations from the Executive Officer for WIRED are detailed below.

- If anyone came to WIRED for essential items (eg. Food, fuel or household items), they would go to grant-making trusts that can provide people with emergency support to look at the best way forward for them. It is not always about the provision of cash as a solution to meeting a need.
- There may be other national schemes that the Council may not be aware of that people could access. However, the issue could be that the individual may not have

the capacity to apply for them themselves and organisations don't have the resources to deal with individual applications.

- Wirral Council could try to reduce the number of applications coming in and signpost to other schemes or funding elsewhere to try and enhance the lifetime of the budget. However, the Council should still ensure that the scheme is adequately promoted to ensure that anyone who is eligible can access it.
- To further enhance the lifetime of the LWAS, a proportion of the budget could be retained and used to enable awards to continue to be made beyond the lifetime of the available budget. This would require a lot more exploration outside of this Scrutiny Review to identify investment opportunities and is an exercise that third sector organisations could be involved in.

Energy Projects Plus

Energy Projects Plus is an independent charity and social enterprise which aims to reduce fuel poverty and carbon emissions across Merseyside and Cheshire. The key observations from discussion with the Chief Executive of Energy Projects Plus are detailed below.

- Energy Projects Plus provides a number of services including 'Save Energy Advice Line' which is a free and impartial service to provide energy efficiency advice to clients.
- Energy Projects Plus is one of a number of organisations that delivers the British Gas Energy Trust Fuel Debt Advice Service through the provision of a grant. Free and impartial money and debt prevention advice is provided through the service, emphasising on the relief and prevention of fuel poverty.
- The Fuel Debt Advice Service can help clients access funding from the Trust to clear fuel debts as well as 'Further Assistance Payments' for white goods, boiler repairs and replacement or funeral arrears. To be eligible, applicants must be in need, hardship or other distress. Referrals are normally received from third party organisations or from the Save Energy Advice Line.
- Clients that apply for awards are subject to an income/expenditure analysis before the applications are sent online to the Energy Trust and it can be 8-12 weeks before the financial assistance is received. Cases are prioritised but needs cannot be met where there is an emergency but attempts to expedite the process are made.
- Energy Projects Plus received 111 applications in the first three financial quarters of 2014/15 but received 101 in the last financial quarter so there has been a spike in demand. Approximately 60-70% of all applications are made for white goods.
- Wirral Council has started to make some referrals to Energy Projects Plus for white goods and there is capacity for Wirral Council to make more referrals moving forward. However, it is not clear how much funding has been made available for organisations to access from the Trust to deliver the scheme and how long this will last.
- Emergency utility credit awards are available to British Gas customers referred by Energy Projects Plus and other organisations to customers of British Gas who have a financial crisis and specific health needs. The awards available are dependent on the availability of funds from the British Gas Energy Trust and could be withdrawn at any time. The awards available are:
 - £28 for an individual; and
 - £45 for a family (two or more people living within the property)

6.4 Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

The Review Panel considered a number of potential options for providing local welfare assistance from 1st August 2015 based on information presented during the evidence session. These included extending the existing scheme with consideration to enhancing the lifetime of the available funding, whether loans could be provided instead of or in addition to grants and considering the role of the voluntary sector for either signposting or administering the scheme.

The clear outcome from the evidence session was the strong rationale for the Council to continue to administer and extend the existing scheme that is in place and signpost to other organisations where necessary. This rationale included:

- The importance of retaining the existing knowledge base and experience of staff who understand welfare benefit and the effects of welfare reform;
- The importance of having access to both Council records and DWP data through data share arrangements which may not be available to third party providers to check the financial legitimacy of applications or to identify fraud;
- Control to review and amend the scheme and make it more stringent if required to further enhance or maintain the lifetime of the available budget;
- Existing partnership arrangements with Energy Projects Plus which can now be expanded in line with BGET funding made available to them;
- Existing partnership working with other third parties, such as Tenancy Support Officers, other advocacy services and local hostel managers;
- The likelihood of identifying a third sector organisation who could administer the scheme effectively without infringing their remit of providing impartial advocacy;
- The significant time and resource that could be required to determine if third party administration would actually be viable and cost effective for the finite money available;
- The risk of service destabilisation during any transfer of administrative control to a third party, impacting the ability to deal with applications effectively and efficiently; and
- The requirement for robust monitoring procedures to be developed for third party organisations which may negate any savings on administrative costs.

In addition to the above, the Review Panel welcomed a proposal by officers which would potentially allow the scheme to be extended from August 2015 to the end of March 2017 with the available £900k budget. Members also learned from the evidence session that this was also consistent with all other Merseyside local authorities who have also extended their scheme for 2015 onwards. However, it is not known whether these schemes are funded through unspent balances or from allocated budgets.

It was explained that this proposal ensures would require slight amendments to the criteria for awards to accommodate for an expected increase in demand for direct assistance with food and fuel.

However, this would see amounts allocated for white goods and other essential awards decrease through more stringent assessment of applications and amendments to the criteria of awards. The indicative figures below show the full allocation of the anticipated budget of £900k.

Assistance Type		% Change to 2014/15 scheme
Food and fuel	£97,500	35 % increase
White goods and furniture	£240,000	8.5 % decrease
Other essential awards	£22,500	10 % decrease
Total	£360,000	

2016/17

Assistance Type	
Food and fuel	£146,250
White goods and furniture	£360,000
Other essential awards	£33,750
Total	£540,000

These figures will also include the expected costs for running the scheme, such as elements of salary costs and provision of payment cards. The Review Panel acknowledged that as the demand for the scheme is only estimated, the scheme could end earlier than March 2017 or even extend further.

The Review Panel agreed that to reduce spending on white goods, furniture and other essential items, there would be a need to clearly redefine what is classed as an essential need. Members considered that there could be potential to exclude awards being provided for floorings and furniture (such as wardrobes and chest of drawers) but agreed with officers that some exceptions should be made for those who are most vulnerable, such as people leaving care.

The Review Panel identified the opportunity for the Council to utilise the British Gas Energy Trust funding available to Energy Projects Plus to help with fuel debts or to provide white goods. To reduce expenditure on white goods, it was considered that any application for a washing machine could be referred to Energy Projects Plus to provide from funding available to them. The rationale for this is that it the biggest expenditure in terms of cost and is not considered as essential as cookers or fridge freezers. Additionally, Energy Projects Plus has the same eligibility criteria as Wirral. However, there was an acknowledgement that some funding should remain to allow the Council to provide washing machines in exceptional circumstances. It was also suggested that any applications for white goods that do not meet Wirral's criteria could also be referred to Energy Projects Plus to access funding from the British Gas Energy Trust.

The Review Panel did not consider that providing loans instead of / inclusive of grants would be appropriate to increase available funds for 2015 and onwards. It was the opinion that awards made reflect the vulnerability of applicants so any repayment of the loan would be difficult as their income would have been assessed as already being at a low level. Additionally, officers and Members of the Review Panel acknowledged that it would not be cost effective to administer the loans considering the relatively small value. The DWP was able to recover payments from ongoing entitlement to benefits but this is not possible for local authorities and would result in an invoice having to be raised on each occasion with little prospect of recovery.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel recommends that Wirral Council continues to administer and maintain the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme with the remaining budget available in line with the officer proposal but with consideration to:

- i) Reviewing and redefining what items constitute an essential need with a view to excluding them from the scheme or reducing the circumstances in which they are provided;*
- ii) Excluding washing machines as an award provided from the scheme directly, except in exceptional circumstances, and referring these applications to Energy Projects Plus; and*
- iii) Referring applications for white goods which have been assessed as not meeting the Council's criteria and where a potential fuel debt issue has been identified to Energy Projects Plus.*

Recommendation 2

The Emergency Utility Credit which is available to British Gas customers who have fallen into debt and are on prepayment meters should be effectively promoted by the Council. Applicants identified through the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as being eligible should be signposted to Energy Projects Plus for an assessment and application to be made.

A key outcome from the evidence session was the potential for the Council to work with Wirral Foodbank in providing essential food items to applicants. As Wirral Foodbank confirmed it would be possible to source additional food items if required, the Review Panel considered the viability of making a small donation to the charity from the budget for operational expenses, such as a one year lease on a van. In return, it was suggested that Wirral Council could reduce its maximum award from seven days to four days. Wirral Foodbank would then provide the remaining three days where an applicant has been assessed as requiring the full seven days of essential food. In all cases, an applicant would still receive up to one week of essential food items.

The Review Panel considered that this could create the opportunity to extend the lifetime of the fund as well as providing a benefit to Wirral Foodbank to enhance its operations in Wirral. Although Wirral Foodbank was invited to attend the evidence session as a result of covering the whole of Wirral, the Review Panel is mindful of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules should any donation be made.

Recommendation 3

Officers should explore the feasibility of referring successful applications for essential food to Wirral Foodbank, or any identified food bank that can service all of Wirral, with an appropriate donation being made from the remaining budget to help cover some operational costs. The Review Panel suggest that how this is achieved should be determined by officers to ensure that actual benefits can be identified and delivered and to ensure that the Council's Contract Procedure Rules are complied with.

The Review Panel did not have any significant concerns regarding take up of the scheme but did acknowledge comments made by the Operations Manager for the Citizens Advice Bureau that some of their clients' awareness of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was by 'word of mouth'. Additionally, the Review Panel acknowledged comments made that there may be some confusion conveyed by the DWP in relation to the number of awards that can be made from the scheme. As such, the Review Panel recognised that it would now be beneficial to review how the scheme can be effectively publicised from August 1st 2015 should the scheme be extended and amendments made.

Recommendation 4

Publicity and communication plans should be reviewed to ensure there is take up and understanding of the scheme from all those who need it. This should include a broadcast to partner agencies to provide an update on the key aspects of the scheme from 1st August 2015.

The Review Panel acknowledge that the remaining £900k funding made available to provide local welfare assistance is finite and that there is no certainty that the removal of government funding for local welfare schemes from 1st April 2015 would be reversed in the future. It was agreed that it would be critical to identify any opportunities to continue the provision of local welfare assistance nearer to April 2017 when it is anticipated that the budget will have been depleted. This would provide an opportunity to further amend the scheme's policy in light of what budget remains as well as identifying the availability of any central or local government grants, identifying other schemes which could provide a source of funding or retaining some funding to help build the capacity of the voluntary sector to operate schemes directly.

Recommendation 5

Cabinet is requested to support a further review of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as part of the Transformation and Resources Policy & Performance Committee's work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year. The objective of the review would be to identify any strategies for providing local welfare assistance once the budget set aside for local welfare assistance has been depleted.

The Review Panel considers that funding for local welfare schemes is vital in providing crucial support to communities, specifically to those people who are most vulnerable and are suffering through crisis. The Review Panel is opposed to the Government's decision to withdraw direct funding to provide support for those who need it.

Recommendation 6

That Cabinet lobbies Central Government against the withdrawal of Local Welfare Assistance Funding from April 2015 and the impact that this has on local communities.

***This Report was produced by the Transformation and Resources Task & Finish Panel
(which reports to the Transformation and Resources Policy & Performance Committee)***

Appendix 1

Page 28

Scope Document

Review Title: Local Welfare Assistance Scheme

Date: 9th April 2015

1. Contact Information:	
Scrutiny Panel Chair: Cllr. J. Williamson	Panel Members: Cllrs Tom Anderson, Phil Gilchrist, Paul Doughty, Mathew Patrick, Joe Walsh
Scrutiny Officer(s): Michael Lester, 691 8628 michaellester@wirral.gov.uk	Departmental Link Officers: Malcolm Flanagan, Head of Business Processes 666 3260 malcolmflanagan@wirral.gov.uk
Other Key Contacts: Trish Hughes, Operational Manager 666 3222 triciahughes@wirral.gov.uk	
2. Review Aims:	
What are the main issues?	
<p>The Government has announced that local welfare funding for schemes effective from April 2015 is to be withdrawn. The Council has a budget totalling £900k which is a result from a shortfall in spend from 2013/14 and the likely underspend from 2014/15. This is to be made available in 2015/16 to provide a local scheme. It is not anticipated that any other direct funding will be made available.</p> <p>Members were interested in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding how effective the Council has been in administering the scheme to ensure that awards are made to those who are eligible.• The potential to work with third sector organisations to help administer a local scheme.• Identifying opportunities to signpost people to other schemes / funding.• Considering any strategies for delivering a local scheme once the £900K budget has been depleted. <p>As the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme provides awards to people who are in severe need, this contributes to meeting the corporate priority of protecting the vulnerable in Wirral.</p>	
The Panel's objectives in doing this work: To determine how the ring-fenced funding of £900k agreed by Cabinet in February 2015 could be allocated after the discontinuation of the 2014/15 policy at the end of July 2015.	
The desired outputs/outcomes: That the budget is maximised to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable people in the community.	
3. Review Approach	

How will the Panel engage with the Executive?

The final report will be presented to Cabinet to consider the recommendations made.

Who will the Panel be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet Members
Third sector organisations

Duration of review?

The review is to be conducted through an evidence day with a final report presently directly to Cabinet in June 2015.

What category does the review fall into?

Policy Development

Extra resources needed? Would the investigation benefit from the co-operation of an expert witness?

Not applicable

4. Sources of Evidence:**Secondary information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc).**

- Wirral's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Policy
- Relevant media release articles

Primary/new evidence/information

- Reflect on the views of officers on suggested options
- Costs of administering the scheme
- Number of applicants who have applied across the two years
- Anecdotal breakdown of the income of applicants
- Anecdotal breakdown of applicants average age across the scheme
- Breakdown of awards made against specific categories (i.e. against food, fuel, furniture etc) and the average award made against each category
- Breakdown of awards against electoral wards
- Statistics on claimants who received awards on multiple occasions
- Statistics of applicants who have had benefit sanctions or were waiting for a DWP payment
- A summary of the potential options for how the scheme could be delivered after July 2015 with details of benefits / implications
- What other Local Authorities implemented/decide

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc).

1) Representatives from:

- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- WIRED
- Wirral Foodbank
- Energy Projects Plus

2) Council officers, including:

- Head of Business Processes
- Operational Manager, Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services, Housing Benefit
- Team Leader, Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services.

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

Officers:

- Background information on local welfare funding
- How the scheme is administered including information on applications and awards.
- Officer advice on any feasible suggestions for allocating the ring-fenced funding

Third sector representatives:

- Respective organisation overview
- Information/data on who uses their service, including numbers, trends etc.
- Advice on other schemes or grants that may be accessible to applicants

What processes can we use to feed into the review? (site visits/observations, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, written questionnaire, etc).

Face-to-face questioning

Desk top analysis/research

In what ways can we involve the public and at what stages? (consider whole range of consultative mechanisms, local committees and local ward mechanisms).

Not applicable

This page is intentionally left blank

**WIRRAL LOCAL
WELFARE ASSISTANCE
SCHEME
POLICY
2015/16**

(effective from 1st August 2015)

CONTENTS

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Purpose of the Scheme**
- 3. Financial Constraints**
- 4. Eligibility & Assessment Criteria**
- 5. Accessing the scheme**
- 6. Methods of award**
- 7. Appeals**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The discretionary Crisis Loans for Living Expenses and Community Care Grant elements of the Social Fund administered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) were abolished with effect from April 2013. Funding has been allocated to Local Authorities for the provision of a replacement local scheme.
- 1.2 Crisis Loans were intended for people who were unable to meet their immediate short terms needs in an emergency or as a consequence of disaster, and they were awarded for immediate living expenses in order to avoid serious damage to the health and safety of the applicant or a member of their family. Community Care Grants were primarily intended to help vulnerable people live as independent a life as possible in the community and were dependant on receipt of income related benefit.
- 1.3 The DWP continues to administer the discretionary Crisis Loan Alignment and Budgeting Loans which are being replaced with new national schemes for Short Term Advances and Budgeting Advances. The DWP also continues to administer the regulated elements of the Social Fund (Funeral Payments, Cold Weather Payments, Winter Fuel Payments and Sure Start Maternity Grants).
- 1.4 The DWP intended that Local Authorities would need to consider the scheme's original purpose when developing local schemes, and that they would develop schemes that were flexible to meet the needs of local communities.
- 1.5 The funding provided for the scheme was less than the previous DWP spend on Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants, and the new local schemes therefore need to address issues of reliance on the scheme and prioritise those most in need. The DWP expected the funding to be concentrated on those facing greatest difficulty in managing their income and to enable a more flexible response to unavoidable need.
- 1.6 Following analysis and consideration of the issues identified during the first six months of delivering the local scheme, this document sets out the revised year one policy of the Council's provision. This policy will continue to be reviewed and further developed for subsequent years.
- 1.7 [After Central Government withdrew direct grant funding from April 2015 Wirral has reviewed its Local Welfare Assistance Scheme and has made a number of amendments alongside using a one off budget to allow a further period where this scheme will be available prior to a future funding review.](#)

2. Purpose of the scheme

- 2.1. The scheme aims to provide emergency support to people who have insufficient resources to meet their own or their family's immediate short term needs, which if not met would pose a serious risk to their health and wellbeing, or would put at risk their ability to remain or establish themselves in the community.
- 2.2. The scheme will not be appropriate where the authority considers that the applicant has alternative means of addressing those needs.
- 2.3. Consideration will also be given to those applicants with an identified immediate need that cannot be met through any other channel, and which the applicant cannot reasonably be expected to fund themselves.
- 2.4. The scheme will only be appropriate where the support required is not available through any other provision. Where we consider it reasonable to expect the applicant to use that alternative provision, the application will be refused and the applicant will be appropriately signposted and supported to access that provision.
- 2.5. The scheme intends to avoid cash payments - the intention is to meet the presented needs through the provision of goods or services rather than with cash awards. Cash will only be considered as a last resort where there is no other way of meeting the need.
- 2.6. Support will be targeted at those most in need through consideration of the circumstances of each application, as explained in section 4.
- 2.7. In the longer term, the scheme will aim to provide long term solutions where applicable by addressing any underlying issues identified during the application process. Working with partner organisations we aim to develop a network of support which can be accessed by referral via the scheme.

3. Financial Constraints

- 3.1 Government funding of the scheme [has now ended and will not](#) be adequate to support all applications for support through this scheme.
- 3.2 Close and regular financial monitoring of the scheme will take place to understand the pressures on the scheme and to inform the extent to which the scheme can support applications.
- 3.3 The eligibility criteria in section 4 define the basic criteria required in order for an application to be considered. Having met those basic criteria, decisions on support or awards which can be provided from this scheme will be dependant on the level of resources available.
- 3.4 Should the levels of applications meeting basic eligibility criteria significantly outweigh available funding then the basic eligibility criteria may need to be amended [as has been done from August 2015](#).
- 3.5 In the event of an under-spend of the LWA budget, consideration will be given to extending financial support to third party partner organisations whose work supports the principles and intentions of this scheme.

4. Eligibility & Assessment Criteria

4.1 The eligibility criteria for support under this scheme is focused upon the circumstances, presenting need and level of risk rather than focusing on eligible groups of people.

4.2 To be eligible for access to the scheme **all** of the following criteria must be met:

- Aged 16 or over
- Be a Wirral resident or, in the case of those who are homeless or leaving an institutional establishment, have established links with Wirral
- Support is required to address essential needs of yourself and/or your dependants
- It is demonstrated that there are no other resources or other ways of meeting this need which are considered reasonable

4.3 In order to be eligible for essential immediate support the applicant would also need to be able to demonstrate that there would be a serious risk to the health and wellbeing of the applicant and/or his or her dependants if those needs are not met.

4.4 Examples of essential immediate support needs are:

- Essential food
- Heat/electricity
- Essential supplies associated with infants/children

This list is not exhaustive and applications for other needs claimed as essential and immediate will be considered.

4.5 To be eligible for support to remain or become established in the community where the applicant cannot reasonably be expected to fund items themselves, the following criteria must be met:

- The applicant has essential items or costs associated with establishing or maintaining residence in the community, **and**
- It is demonstrated that there are no other resources or other reasonable ways of meeting this need
- If funding constraints apply, priority will be given to applicants who are supported or who have been referred to the scheme by an organisation which supports vulnerable people

Or

- The applicant has to replace essential items (this could be following a disaster or unforeseen event), **and**
- It is demonstrated that there are no other resources or other reasonable ways of meeting this need

4.6 Examples of items or costs that would be considered are:

- Essential domestic appliances¹
- Essential domestic furniture²
- Essential bedding

This list is not exhaustive and applications for other items or expenses claimed as being required to maintain health and wellbeing in the home or in the community will be considered.

Items of essential need will from August 2015 exclude washing machines as an award provided from the scheme directly, except in exceptional circumstances, and referring these applications to Energy Projects Plus;

This will include referring applications for white goods which have been assessed as not meeting the Council's criteria and where a potential fuel debt issue has been identified to Energy Projects Plus

4.7 Applications for support to meet essential travel costs may be considered under this scheme. Travel costs will only be considered for travel within the United Kingdom; overseas travel will not be considered due to the financial constraints of this scheme. Examples of travel that would be considered are:

- Travel to attend the funeral of a close relative³
- Travel to visit a close relative³ in care or another institution

This list is not exhaustive and applications for other travel costs will be considered.

4.8 The scheme will not be considered for the following:

¹ ie a microwave or cooker, a washing machine for those with dependant children or a disability which increases laundry requirements, a fridge for those applicants who cannot shop on a daily basis or who need to store medication in a fridge.

² A bed and a form of comfortable seating e.g. sofa/arm chair are considered essential, other furniture such as dining table and chairs, and storage will also be considered but will be given a lower priority.

³ A close relative is defined as a spouse, parent, grandparent, sibling, child or grandchild or the spouse of any of these relatives.

- Those applicants who have an income or savings or a member of their household has an income or savings which could be used to meet their needs
- To buy (or repair) TV or satellite equipment
- To meet contract costs for TV packages, mobile phones, broadband etc

4.9 If the basic eligibility criteria are met then an application will be assessed to quantify the level of priority of the need. This assessment will be based upon the severity of the likely impact if the need is not met.

4.10 Outcomes from assessments will be utilised if legitimate demand levels for support from the scheme outweigh the finite level of support available through the schemes budget. There may therefore be instances where the basic eligibility criteria above are met but an application may be refused because the priority of that application is lower than the scheme's budget can accommodate.

4.11 In the longer term an element of the assessment process will be the identification of the underlying causes of the crisis. Applicants will be offered a range of services to support them including benefit maximisation, energy efficiency, debt management and support in finding work or accessing training.

5. Accessing the Scheme

- 5.1 Applications and referrals will be available through a number of channels to maximise accessibility.
- 5.2 Applications to access the scheme will be accepted by referral from a range of partner organisations and Council services where an applicant either has an existing relationship with that organisation, or has approached them for guidance and support.
- 5.3 Applicants will need to provide evidence of their identity and residency and, where appropriate, evidence that they meet the eligibility criteria and presenting circumstances.
- 5.4 Initial screening questions will be asked to determine whether
 - an exceptional need has occurred,
 - the basic eligibility criteria are met, and
 - some support can usefully be put in place
- 5.5 Those applicants who meet the eligibility criteria will have their application reviewed with priority given to those requiring emergency support. The scheme will aim to provide a same day decision and award for such emergency cases.
- 5.6 Where appropriate an appointment will be made to review the application, the circumstances of the applicant and the potential options available.
- 5.7 This service will not be available out of hours. However the Council's Emergency Duty Team will continue to respond to the needs of vulnerable adults and children out of hours, and will be supported to do so through the scheme's funding.

6. Methods of Award

- 6.1 Where a need is identified that cannot reasonably be met by any other scheme, consideration will be given to the provision of goods and / or services to meet that need.
- 6.2 In order to maximise the number of people that can be supported by this scheme, where goods are required we will look to provide second hand refurbished furniture and white goods where appropriate rather than new items.
- 6.3 Where goods cannot be provided directly, consideration will be given to payment cards or vouchers to enable the purchase of such goods. These payment cards or vouchers must be used for the purpose for which they have been requested.
- 6.4 Where a voucher is issued, this may not offer a choice of providers / stores. However the Council will work to ensure that the goods offered by any provider it specifies are of acceptable quality and offer good value to the customer.
- 6.5 Cash will only be issued where there is no identifiable alternative to meeting the need of the applicant.
- 6.6 Where cash is awarded, the sum provided will be sufficient to meet the minimum needs of the applicant and his or her dependants for the period until the applicant's circumstances can reasonably be expected to have changed. This sum will be calculated according to a schedule of rates determined by the Council and will be reviewed at regular intervals.
- 6.7 Repeat applications within 2 years will generally be denied unless the reason for the application is unrelated to the previous award. Where a repeat application is awarded then consideration may be given to providing the award as a loan rather than grant depending on the applicant's ability to repay the award value. The value of the loan will be the cost of the goods and / or service provided by the Council, or the amount of the cash awarded where applicable.
- 6.8 It is unlikely that any further loans will be made whilst a previous loan has an outstanding balance payable, however we will consider the individual circumstances of the application including whether there has been an effort to repay the loan and the amount outstanding.

- 6.9 Where a loan has been made to a couple, both partners will be deemed to be liable for the repayment of the loan.
- 6.10 Where it is likely that an applicant's circumstances will quickly and significantly improve (e.g. a person whose access to bank funds has been temporarily suspended), the first award may be designated as repayable.
- 6.11 Awards may be made to a person other than the applicant where they are:
- Enduring Power of Attorney
 - Lasting Power of Attorney for Property and Affairs
 - Department for Work and Pensions Appointee
 - Housing benefit appointee provided there is no conflict of interest

7. Appeals

- 7.1 Applicants will have a right of appeal if they do not agree with a decision made as to their eligibility. They will also be able to appeal against a decision not to make an award due to budgetary constraints.
- 7.2 All appeals will need to be made at the time of receiving the decision, and will be considered by a more senior member of staff.
- 7.3 Those appeals of decisions where the need is immediate (i.e. food, essential provisions or heating) will be prioritised, and we will aim to make decisions within one working day of receipt of the application.
- 7.4 Where the need is for essential items of furniture or support with travel costs, we will aim to review the decision within 5 working days.
- 7.5 There will be no further right of appeal. However any complaints received by the Council about this process will be handled according to the Council's complaint policy, and used to inform future amendments to arrangements, training and communication requirements with our staff, partners and partner services.
- 7.6 Applicants will not be able to appeal against the amounts laid down in the schedule of rates, or about any other matter laid out in this policy. Any disputes relating to the content of this policy will be treated as a complaint and handled according to the Council's complaint procedure.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

29 JUNE 2015

SUBJECT:	NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES EXTENSION OF TRANSITIONAL RELIEF POLICY FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM PROPERTIES AND ADOPTION OF A LIVING WAGE DISCOUNT POLICY
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	HEAD OF BUSINESS PROCESSES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES
KEY DECISION	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks formal approval to extend the National Non Domestic Rates Transitional Relief Scheme that was due to expire on 31 March 2015 until 31 March 2017. This is in line with the Chancellor's autumn statement of 3 December 2014 the contents of which also require the Authority to amend it's own policy on Retail Rate Relief whereby the maximum award is increased from £1,000 to £1,500 from 1 April 2015. The report also seeks approval to introduce the Authority's own Living Wage local discount for businesses that sign up to and gain licensed accreditation for paying the Living Wage, which is part of the Authority's adopted Budget proposal for 2015-16.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

Transitional Rates Relief

- 2.1 The original scheme was introduced in 2010 to help ratepayers who were faced with higher bills following on from the five year revaluation of Business Rates; and limited the amount of the increase to be paid. The scheme expires at 31 March 2015, the original end date for the existing valuation list.
- 2.2 The government decided in 2012 to extend the life of the list by two years to end 31 March 2017. Properties will then be subject to a new valuation list and new rateable values from 1st April 2017.
- 2.3 The Government announced in the autumn statement on 3rd December 2014 that it will extend to 31st March 2017 the current transitional relief scheme for properties with a rateable value of up to £50,000, without this extension businesses would from April 2015 have to pay the full increase from the 2010 list.

- 2.4 The transitional relief has to be granted under the Council's Discretionary Rates Relief powers (section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988) and all relief granted will be fully reimbursed by Government.
- 2.5 Wirral's proposed policy, following Government guidance, is shown in Appendix A and it is recommended that it is adopted to allow the award of Transitional Relief until 2017. It is anticipated that 20 cases will receive this relief for 2015-16 with less in 2016-17.

Retail Rate Relief

- 2.6. The Government brought in provisions for a Retail Rate Relief scheme in 2013 whereby businesses with a maximum Rateable Value of £50,000 could receive relief up to £1,000. This Relief was for 2014-15 and 2015-2016
- 2.7. Wirral amended its Discretionary Rate Relief scheme to incorporate the Retail Rate Relief on 13 March 2014 and has awarded the relief where appropriate.
- 2.8. The government in its autumn statement on 3 December 2014 increased the amount maximum amount of relief from £1,000 to £1,500 from 1 April 2015.
- 2.9. Wirral's policy is as shown in Appendix B and it is recommended that the policy is amended to allow the maximum amount of relief be increased to £1,500 from 1 April 2015. The increase along with the initial relief is fully funded by Government grant.

Living Wage Discount

- 2.10. The Business Rates Retention scheme was introduced 1 April 2013 by the Localism Act 2011 and amended Section 47 of the Local Government Act 1988 to allow council's to introduce local discounts and award them to businesses as it sees fit. A major strand of Business Rates Retention scheme is councils and government sharing in the benefits and risks of Local Business Rates. This means that in the case of local discounts the cost is borne 49% by the Council 50% by Central Government and 1% by Merseyside Fire Authority.
- 2.11. Wirral's Budget for 2015-16 included £50,000 for funding the award of a local Discount for employers who formally signed up for and pay the Living Wage. The limitation being that it was a support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) and that they pay Business Rates. This was approved at Council on 24 February 2015 (minute 112) as follows

Using Business Rates flexibilities to incentivise employers to pay the Living Wage - £50,000

The Council has the discretion to award discounts in national non-domestic rates to businesses under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. To award discounts under this provision a business must meet criteria set by the Council. The cost would be charged in accordance with the business rate allocation from the Collection Fund, i.e. the Council would pay 49%, Fire 1% and Central Government 50%. If the Council contributed £50,000 then the scheme total fund would be £100,000. It is therefore proposed that £50,000 be set aside to create a total fund of £100,000 and

to offer small and medium sized businesses (10-250 employees) the opportunity of obtaining a discount on their business rates if they become an accredited Living Wage employer. The details of how such a scheme will operate will be reported to Cabinet.

- 2.12. The European Commission's definition for SME's is that they must employ between 1 and 250 employees. Based upon the aforementioned percentage split of cost borne within National Non Domestic Rates there is £102,000 available to award as a discount in total. This relief will only be awarded only 2015/16.
- 2.13. The type of discount has already been proposed by two London Councils and it can take any form the Council sees fit, such as a percentage of the rates payable or an across the board lump sum or based on relative cost to the employer as shown below.
- 2.14. The proposed way forward for consideration is to pay the Living Wage accreditation fee or multiples thereof. The aim is to keep the scheme as administratively simple as possible for the council and businesses. Upon sight of the accreditation licence issued by the Living Wage Foundation the discount can be awarded to cover the fee or multiples of it. The fee is on a sliding scale and dependent on the number of employees in the business. If it has less than 10 employees then the fee is £10. It is viewed with small firms that a one off grant of a maximum of £500 would provide a suitable incentive. However for larger companies of between 10 and 250 employees they could pay a maximum of £1,000 accreditation fee and it is proposed to award a maximum of five times the accreditation fee (£5,000 maximum) against the business rates account.
- 2.15. The Living Wage Rates Relief scheme will only be operational for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. Awards will only be issued upon production of the Living Wage licence produced between 01 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 and with the additional provision that sufficient funds remain to pay the award. This will be achieved by limiting the awards to the first 20 employers with less than 10 employees and 20 with more than 10 but less than 250. As only the largest firms would pay the maximum £1,000 fee the budget is highly likely not to be exceeded and if available any residual sum can be used on a first come basis until the budget is used.
- 2.16. We cannot award relief where rates are not directly paid and are covered by such reliefs as Small Business Rates Relief.
- 2.17. If approved by Members publicity would be undertaken both directly by the authority and via contact through organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 If a decision is not made adoption of these reliefs all previous recipients would be required to pay the full amount from April without any relief or increased relief. The aim of the Council's budget would not be realised for firms paying the Living Wage if this new discount is not adopted.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 No other options were considered.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 No consultation has been undertaken.

6. OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

6.1. None in relation to this relief.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 These changes will see organisations currently in receipt of relief see continue to receive this or higher level relief for 2015.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

8.1 Transitional and Retail Rates Relief, costs are all met in full by central government. The Living Wage discount will be met 50% by Central Government, 49% by Wirral and 1% by the Merseyside Fire Authority.

8.2. There are no asset, IT or staffing implications arising from this report.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Scheme, including its limits will be well publicised and within that define precisely what information would be required for a valid application, how it is made and to whom, so that priority to those who submitted a valid application earlier in time can be rationally be given.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Equality Impact Assessment link for National Non Domestic Rates Relief is shown;

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversitycohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/finance>

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION

13.1. That the transitional rate relief policy (appendix 1) to this report be approved as the authority policy from 2015/17 for current relief recipients.

- 13.2. That the retail rate relief policy (appendix 2) to this report be amended to increase the maximum amount of relief granted from £1,000 to £1,500 for 2015-16.
- 13.3 That the Living Wage local discount policy (appendix 3) be approved for 2015-16.

14.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 To allow members to agree the award of national non domestic rates transitional relief, to increase the maximum amount of retail rate relief awarded and award a local discount to employees who pay the Living Wage.

REPORT AUTHOR: Malcolm Flanagan

Head of Business Processes
malcolmflanagan@wirral.gov.uk
 (0151) 666 3260

APPENDICES

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 – Transitional Relief Policy 2015/17. | Department for Communities & Local Government January 2015 |
| 2 – Discretionary Relief Policy 2015 /16. | Wirral Council |
| 3 _ Living Wage Local Discount 2015/16. | Wirral Council |

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Department for Communities & Local Government
 Reoccupation Relief Guidance March 2014
 Business Rate Information letter (4) March 2015
 Retail Rate Relied guidance (revised) March 2015
 Business Rate Information letter (3) February 2015
 Transitional Relief extension Guidance February 2015
 Living Wage implementation guidance February 2015

SUBJECT HISTORY

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Cabinet (minute 306)	3 February 2011
Cabinet (minute 202)	18 February 2013
Cabinet (minute 165)	13 March 2014
Cabinet (minute 197)	19 June 2014
Council (minute 112)	24 February 2015

This page is intentionally left blank



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Business Rates

Extension of Transitional Relief for small and medium
properties - Guidance



© Crown copyright, 2015

Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This document/publication is also available on our website at www.gov.uk/dclg

If you have any enquiries regarding this document/publication, complete the form at <http://forms.communities.gov.uk/> or write to us at:

Department for Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

For all our latest news and updates follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CommunitiesUK>

January 2015

ISBN: 978-1-4098-4458-7

Contents

About this guidance	4
Introduction	4
Section 1	
How will the relief be provided?	5
Which properties will benefit from the relief?	5
How much relief will be available?	5
Recalculations of relief	6
State Aid	7
How will the relief work in Enterprise Zones?	8
Section 2	
Calculation for the extension of transitional relief	8

Extension of Transitional Relief for small and medium properties - Guidance

About this guidance

1. This guidance is intended to support local authorities in administering the extension of transitional relief for small and medium properties announced in the Autumn Statement on 3 December 2014. This Guidance applies to England only.
2. This guidance sets out the detailed criteria which central government will use to determine funding relief for properties falling out of transition to higher bills in 2015/16. The Guidance does not replace existing legislation on any other relief.
3. Enquiries on this measure should be addressed to:
ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Introduction

4. The transitional relief scheme was introduced in 2010 to help those ratepayers who were faced with higher bills. The scheme ends on 31 March 2015 and as a result a small number of ratepayers will face a jump to their full rates bill from 1 April 2015.
5. The government announced in the Autumn Statement on 3 December 2014 that it will extend to March 2017 the current transitional relief scheme for properties with a rateable value up to and including £50,000.
6. This document provides guidance to authorities about the operation and delivery of the policy. The number of ratepayers affected in each local authority is very small (typically below 100) and the government recognises that authorities may choose to explore manual solutions to calculate the relief. If as a result authorities are unable to include the award of relief in bills for the beginning of 2015/16 then they are encouraged to inform the ratepayers affected that relief is available.

Section 1:

Extension of Transitional Relief

How will the relief be provided?

7. As this is a measure for 2015-16 and 2016-17, the government is not changing the legislation around transitional relief. Instead the government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance, reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers, under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended¹, to grant relief. It will be for individual local billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and decide in each individual case when to grant relief under section 47. Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of the discretionary relief (using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003). In view of the fact that such expenditure can be reimbursed, the government expects local government to grant discretionary relief to qualifying ratepayers.
8. Central government will reimburse billing authorities and those major precepting authorities within the rates retention system for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the relief that falls within the definitions in this guidance.

Which properties will benefit from relief?

9. Properties that will benefit are those with a rateable value up to and including £50,000 who would have received transitional relief in 2015/16 or 2016/17 had the existing transitional relief scheme continued in its current format. In line with the existing thresholds in the transitional relief scheme, the £50,000 rateable value threshold should be based on the rateable value shown for 1/4/10 or the substituted day in the cases of splits and mergers.
10. This policy applies to transitional relief only (i.e. those moving to higher bills).
11. As the grant of the relief is discretionary, authorities may choose not to grant the relief if they consider that appropriate, for example where granting the relief would go against the authority's wider objectives for the local area. We would encourage councillors to be consulted on the final scheme that the local authority adopts, so there is a clear line of accountability.

How much relief will be available?

12. The government will fund Localism Act discounts to ensure eligible properties receive the same level of protection they would have received had the transitional

¹ Section 47 was amended by the Localism Act 2011

relief scheme extended into 2015/16 and 2016/17. The transitional relief scheme should be assumed to remain as it is in the current statutory scheme² except that:

- a. the cap on increases for small properties (with a rateable value of less than £18,000/£25,500 in London) in both 2015/16 & 2016/17 should be assumed to be 15% (before the increase for the change in the multiplier)³, and
 - b. the cap on increases for other properties (up to and including £50,000 rateable value) in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 should be assumed to be 25% (before the increase for the change in the multiplier)⁴.
13. As explained above, the scheme applies only to properties up to and including £50,000 rateable value based on the value shown for 1/4/10 or the substituted day in the cases of splits and mergers. Changes in rateable value which take effect from a later date should be calculated using the normal rules in the transitional relief scheme⁵. For the avoidance of doubt, properties whose rateable value is £50,000 or less on 1 April 2010 (or the day of merger) but increase above £50,000 from a later date will still be eligible for the relief. Where necessary the Valuation Office Agency will continue to issue certificates for the value at 31 March 2010⁶ or 1 April 2010⁷. The relief should be calculated on a daily basis.
14. A detailed explanation and illustration of how the relief (and the associated section 31 grant) should be calculated is at Annex A.

Recalculations of relief

15. As with the current transitional relief scheme, the amount of relief awarded should be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or the hereditament. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.
16. The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1059)⁸ require authorities to provide ratepayers with at least one year's notice in writing before any decision to revoke or vary a decision so as to increase the amount the ratepayer has to pay takes effect. Such a revocation or variation of a decision can only take effect at the end of a financial year. But within these regulations, local authorities may still make decisions which are conditional upon eligibility criteria or rules for calculating relief which allow the amount of relief to be amended within the year to reflect changing circumstances.

² As prescribed in the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2009 No. 3343.

³ Specifically, X in regulation 8(3) for the years commencing 1 April 2015 and 1 April 2016 should be assumed to be 115. Q should be assumed to be 1.019.

⁴ Specifically X in regulation 8(2) for years commencing 1 April 2015 and 2016 should be assumed to be 125. Q should be assumed to be 1.019.

⁵ i.e. "N over J" for reductions or "N minus J" for increases.

⁶ Regulations 15 or 16, SI 2009 No. 3342.

⁷ Regulation 14 SI 2009 No.3343.

⁸ The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 No. 1059.

17. Therefore, when making an award for the extension of transitional relief, local authorities should ensure in the conditions of the award that the relief can be recalculated in the event of a change to the rating list for the property concerned (retrospective or otherwise). This is so that the relief can be re-calculated if the rateable value changes.

State Aid

18. State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to State Aid. However the extension of transitional relief will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013)⁹.
19. The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years). Local authorities should familiarise themselves with the terms of this State Aid exemption, in particular the types of undertaking that are excluded from receiving De Minimis aid (Article 1), the relevant definition of undertaking (Article 2(2)¹⁰) and the requirement to convert the aid into Euros¹¹.
20. To administer De Minimis it is necessary for the local authority to establish that the award of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of De Minimis aid. Note that the threshold only relates to aid provided under the De Minimis Regulations (aid under other exemptions or outside the scope of State Aid is not relevant to the De Minimis calculation). Where local authorities have further questions about De Minimis or other aspects of State Aid law, they should seek advice from their legal department in the first instance¹².

How will the relief work in Enterprise Zones?

21. Where an eligible property is also eligible for Enterprise Zone relief, then Enterprise Zone relief should be granted and this will be funded under the rates retention scheme by a deduction from the central share. Local authorities should not claim funding for the extension of transitional relief on properties which would otherwise qualify for Enterprise Zone government funded relief.
22. If a property in an Enterprise Zone is not eligible for Enterprise Zone relief, or that relief has ended, the extension of transitional relief may be granted in the normal way, and this would be reimbursed by grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:352:0001:0008:EN:PDF>

¹⁰ The 'New SME Definition user guide and model declaration' provides further guidance:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm

¹² Detailed State Aid guidance can also be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15277/National_State_Aid_Law_Requirements.pdf

Section 2:

Calculation for the extension of transitional relief

Calculating the extension of transitional relief where other reliefs apply

Under the existing statutory transition scheme which ends on 31 March 2015, transitional relief is measured before all other reliefs. But the extension of transitional relief into 2015/16 and 2016/17 will be delivered via section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended by the Localism Act) which is measured after other reliefs (including other Localism Act delivered reliefs such as retail relief).

Therefore, for the purposes of awarding relief and claiming section 31 grant, authorities should measure the extension of transitional relief after all other reliefs. To do this authorities will need to:

- Step 1: identify those eligible properties which would have qualified for transitional relief in 2015/16,
- Step 2: calculate the actual rates bill for those properties in 2015/16 after all other reliefs assuming transitional relief has ended,
- Step 3: calculate the rates bill for those properties in 2015/16 after all other reliefs assuming transitional relief continued (in line with the assumptions in this guidance), and
- Step 4: calculate the difference between stage 2 and 3 and award a Localism Act discount to that value.

Authorities will be asked to report the cost of extending the transitional relief scheme using this methodology from which the associated section 31 grant will be calculated (using the appropriate local share).

Example

If a ratepayer would have been eligible for transitional relief of 25% caps in 2015/16 then their bill is calculated as follows (ignoring inflation):

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
	2014/15	2015/16	2015/16	2015/16
Bill before any reliefs	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Transitional relief (had the original scheme continued)	-4,000	n/a	-2,500	n/a
Net bill before Localism Act discount	6,000	10,000	7,500	10,000
Localism Act discount (to give effect to transitional relief)	n/a	n/a	n/a	-2,500
Net rates bill	6,000	10,000	7,500	7,500

For illustration we have assumed the multiplier does not change between years.

This is the simple case. The value of the transitional relief had the scheme continued is £2,500. In practice extending transitional relief will be achieved by awarding a Localism Act discount which is calculated at the end of the bill. But because there are no other reliefs the value of the discount to ensure in practice transitional relief continues is also £2,500.

But if, for example, the same ratepayer would otherwise have fallen out of transitional relief in 2015/16 also receives 80% charitable mandatory relief then their bill is calculated as follows (ignoring inflation):

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
	2014/15	2015/16	2015/16	2015/16
Bill before any reliefs	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Transitional relief (had the original scheme continued)	-4,000	n/a	-2,500	0
Net bill before Charitable relief or Localism Act discount	6,000	n/a	7,500	10,000
Charitable Relief	-4,800	-8,000	-6,000	-8,000
Localism Act discount (to give effect to transitional relief)	0	0	0	-500
Net rates bill	1,200	2,000	1,500	1,500

For illustration we have assumed the multiplier does not change between years.

In the above example, whilst the reported cost of transitional relief in 2015/16 would still have been £2,500 had the scheme continued in its current form, this is measured before all other reliefs. In practice extending transitional relief will be achieved by awarding a Localism Act discount which is calculated after all other reliefs. So the value of the discount to ensure in practice transitional relief continues is £500.

This page is intentionally left blank

1. ACCESS

- 1.1. Is membership open to all sections of the community? There may be legitimate restrictions placed on membership which relate for example to ability in a sport or the achievement of a standard in the field covered by the organisation or where the capacity of the facility is limited. Clubs or organisations should not be considered if they have membership rates set at such a high level as to exclude the general community. In general, the club or organisation must be prepared to show that the criteria by which it considers applications for membership are consistent with the principle of open access.
- 1.2. Does the organisation actively encourage membership from particular groups in the community e.g. young people, women, older age groups, persons with disability, ethnic minorities, etc? An organisation which encouraged such membership might expect more sympathetic consideration than one which made no effort to attract members from groups which the Authority considered to be particularly deserving of support.
- 1.3. Are the facilities made available to people other than members, e.g. schools, casual public sessions etc? The wider use of facilities should be encouraged and rate relief might be one form of recognition that an organisation was promoting its facilities more widely.

2. PROVISION OF FACILITIES

- 2.1. Does the organisation provide training or education for its members? Are there schemes for particular groups to develop their skills e.g. young people, the disabled, retired people? An organisation providing such facilities might deserve more support than one which did not.
- 2.2. Have the facilities available been provided by self-help or grant aid? The fact that a club uses or has used self-help for construction or maintenance or had facilities funded by grant aid might be an indicator.
- 2.3. Does the organisation run a bar? The mere existence of a bar should not in itself be a reason for not granting relief. The Authority should look at the main purpose of the organisation. In sports clubs for example the balance between playing and non-playing members might provide a useful guide as to whether the main purpose of the club is sporting or social activities. A social club whose main aim is to bring together people with similar interests should not be excluded from relief just because of the existence of a licensed bar.
- 2.4. Does the organisation provide facilities which indirectly relieve the Authority of the need to do so, or enhance and supplement those which it does provide? Authorities should not refuse relief on the grounds that an organisation is in competition with the Authority itself, but should look at the broader context of needs of the community as a whole. A new need, not being provided by the

Authority itself but identified as a priority for action, might be particularly deserving of support.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1. Is the organisation affiliated to local or national organisations e.g. local sports or arts councils, national representative bodies, i.e. are they actively involved in local/national development of their interests?
- 3.2. If the organisation is a sporting club and its main activities are a recognised eligible sport the club will be encouraged to register with the Inland Revenue as a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC).
- 3.3. Is the membership drawn from people mainly resident in the charging authority's area? Although authorities will have in mind that 25% of the cost of any relief given will be borne by the Council Taxpayers in their area, particular difficulties may arise with hereditaments which straddle local authorities boundaries and which under Regulation 6 of the Non-Domestic Rating (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989 No. 1060) will now fall to be shown in one list. In these cases and in those where hereditaments are situated close to an authority's boundary, a proportion of the membership may come from another charging authority area. Also for geographical reasons, or because of the nature of the terrain, particular facilities may be the only ones available for a wide area. In such cases the joint use of facilities by one or more similar organisations is not uncommon. In most cases there will be a measure of reciprocity between the memberships of organisations from different areas.
- 3.4. Authorities may wish to add further criteria or substitute relevant alternative criteria, which are appropriate to the furthering of their policies and the needs of the community such as development programmes. They should also bear in mind the need to encourage new activities in the wide range of organisations for which relief from rates is available.
- 3.5. The manner in which charities or organisations are funded should also be considered. In cases of full or substantial funding from central government; either directly or through an agency, council or similar body, which is funded or established by central government, consideration should be given to the merit of awarding relief.
- 3.6. Are members paid to participate? The Authority may wish to consider whether to award relief where payments or other significant benefits are provided to players. Exceptions may be the reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses or reasonable provision and maintenance of club owned equipment. The Authority may look favourably on clubs whose paid players contribute more to the club than just playing e.g. by coaching younger members.
- 3.7. The Authority may wish to consider the extent to which the organisation's activities contribute to local community strategies or authority objectives for developing neighbourhood identity, community building or social inclusion.

- 3.8. Housing Associations, universities, further education colleges and independent schools are specifically excluded from receiving discretionary rate relief as per Cabinet decision dated 10 January 2008.
- 3.9. All future discretionary rate relief applications in respect of properties with a rateable value of less than £18,000 are accompanied by a Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) application to encourage SBRR take up and to continue to reduce the reliance on the Discretionary Rate Relief budget.
- 3.10. With effect from 1 April 2014, Community Interest Companies and social welfare organisations that occupy properties with rateable values under £7,000 be entitled to full discretionary rate relief and those occupying properties of £7,000 or more be considered by Members on a case by case basis.

3.11. **RETAIL RELIEF PROVISIONS**

Retail relief eligibility from 1st April 2014 will be administered in line with the Department for Communities and Local Government Retail Relief Guidance of January 2014 as set out below.

How will the relief be provided?

1. As this is a measure for 2014-15 and 2015-16 only, the Government is not changing the legislation around the reliefs available to properties. Instead the Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance, reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers, introduced by the Localism Act (under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended) to grant relief. It will be for individual local billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and decide in each individual case when to grant relief under section 47. Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of the discretionary relief (using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003). The Government expects local government to grant relief to qualifying ratepayers.
2. Central government will reimburse billing authorities and those major precepting authorities within the rates retention system for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the relief that falls within the definitions in this guidance. Local authorities will be asked to provide an estimate of their likely total cost for providing the relief in their National Non Domestic Rate Return 1 (NNDR1) for 2014-15 and 2015-16. Central government will provide payments of the local authorities' share to authorities over the course of the relevant years.

Which properties will benefit from relief?

3. Properties that will benefit from the relief will be occupied hereditaments with a rateable value of £50,000 or less, that are wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments.
4. We consider shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments to mean:

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:

- Shops (such as: florist, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, chemists, stationers, off licence, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets)
- Charity shops
- Opticians
- Post offices
- Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
- Car/ caravan show rooms
- Second hand car lots
- Markets
- Petrol stations
- Garden centres
- Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)

ii. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Hair and beauty services (such as: hair dressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops)
- Shoe repairs/ key cutting
- Travel agents
- Ticket offices e.g. for theatre
- Dry cleaners
- Launderettes
- PC/ TV/ domestic appliance repair
- Funeral directors
- Photo processing
- DVD/ video rentals
- Tool hire
- Car hire

iii. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/ or drink to visiting members of the public:

- Restaurants
- Takeaways
- Sandwich shops
- Coffee shops
- Pubs
- Bars

5. To qualify for the relief the hereditament should be wholly or mainly being used as a shop, restaurant, cafe or drinking establishment. In a similar way to other reliefs (such as charity relief), this is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, hereditaments which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.

6. The list set out above is not intended to be exhaustive as it would be impossible to list the many and varied retail uses that exist. There will also be mixed uses. However, it is intended to be a guide for authorities as to the types of uses that government considers for this purpose to be retail. Authorities should determine for themselves whether particular properties not listed are broadly similar in nature to those above and, if so, to consider them eligible for the relief. Conversely, properties that are not broadly similar in nature to those listed above should not be eligible for the relief.
7. As the grant of the relief is discretionary, authorities may choose not to grant the relief if they consider that appropriate, for example where granting the relief would go against the authority's wider objectives for the local area. We would encourage councillors to be consulted on the final scheme that the local authority adopts, so there is a clear line of accountability in case of a dispute on the final local scheme that is adopted.
8. The list below sets out the types of uses that government does not consider to be retail use for the purpose of this relief. Again, it is for local authorities to determine for themselves whether particular properties are broadly similar in nature to those below and, if so, to consider them not eligible for the relief under their local scheme.

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, cash points, bureau de change, payday lenders, betting shops, pawn brokers)
- Other services (e.g. estate agents, letting agents, employment agencies)
- Medical services (e.g. vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
- Professional services (e.g. solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/ financial advisers, tutors)
- Post office sorting office

ii. Hereditaments that are not reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public

How much relief will be available?

9. The total amount of government-funded relief available for each property for each of the years under this scheme is £1,500. The amount does not vary with rateable value and there is no taper. There is no relief available under this scheme for properties with a rateable value of more than £50,000.

3.12. BUSINESS RATES REOCCUPATION RELIEF

Government Guidance used as Eligibility Guidance for Wirral Council award of relief for 2014/15 and 2015/16

1. This guidance is intended to support local authorities in administering the “Reoccupation Relief” announced in the Autumn Statement on 5 December 2013. This Guidance applies to England only. This guidance sets out the detailed criteria which central government will use to determine funding in respect of Reoccupation Relief. The Guidance does not replace existing legislation on retail properties, any other relief, or development control.
2. The government wants to encourage thriving and diverse town centres and wants to see the number of vacant shops decrease. This relief is intended to encourage reoccupation of shops that have been empty for a long period of time and reward businesses that make this happen.
3. The government announced in the Autumn Statement on 5 December 2013 that it would provide a 50% business rates discount for 18 months for businesses moving into previously empty retail premises between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016, up to State Aid De Minimis limits.

How will the relief be provided?

4. As this is a temporary measure that applies to ratepayers moving into previously empty retail premises between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016 only, the government is not changing the legislation around the reliefs available to properties. Instead the government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance, reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers, introduced by the Localism Act (under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended), to grant relief. It will be for individual local billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and decide in each individual case when to grant relief under section 47. Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of the discretionary relief (using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003). The government expects local government to grant relief to qualifying ratepayers.
5. Central government will reimburse billing authorities and those major precepting authorities within the rates retention system for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the relief that falls within the definitions in this guidance. Local authorities will provide an estimate of their likely total cost for providing the relief in their National Non Domestic Rate Return 1 (NNDR1) for 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18. Central government will provide payments of the local authorities’ share to authorities at the end of the relevant years.

Which properties will benefit from the relief?

6. Properties that will benefit from the relief will be occupied hereditaments that:

When previously in use, were wholly or mainly used for retail as set out in paragraph 11 below

Were empty for 12 months or more immediately before their reoccupation

~ Become reoccupied between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016

Are being used for any use (ie not just retail use) except as set out in paragraph 10 below

7. There is no rateable value limit for the hereditament in respect of either the previous or reoccupied use. However, State Aid De Minimis limits may limit the amount of relief given.

What is retail use?

8. In relation to a premises' previous use for the purposes of Reoccupation Relief we consider retail to mean:

i. Hereditaments that were being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:

Shops (such as: florist, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licence, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets)

Charity shops

Opticians

Post offices

Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)

Car/ caravan show rooms

Second hand car lots

Markets

Petrol stations

Garden centres

Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)

ii. Hereditaments that were being used for the provision of the following services principally to visiting members of the public:

Hair and beauty services (such as: hair dressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops)

Shoe repairs/ key cutting

Travel agents

Ticket offices e.g. for theatre

Dry cleaners

Launderettes

PC / TV / domestic appliance repair

Funeral directors

Photo processing

DVD/ video rentals

Tool hire

Car hire

iii. Hereditaments that were being used for the provision of the following services principally to visiting members of the public:

Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, bureaux de change, payday loan shops, betting shops, pawn brokers)

Other services (e.g. estate agents, letting agents, employment agencies)

iv. Hereditaments that were being used for the sale of food and/ or drink to visiting members of the public:

Restaurants

Takeaways

Sandwich shops

Coffee shops

Pubs

Bars

9. The list set out above is not intended to be exhaustive as it would be impossible to list the many and varied retail uses that exist. There will also be mixed uses. However, it is intended to be a guide for authorities as to the types of uses that government considers for this purpose to be retail. Authorities should determine for themselves whether particular properties not listed were broadly similar in nature to those above and, if so, to consider them to be retail. Conversely, properties that were not broadly similar in nature to those listed above should not be considered to be retail.

Reoccupied use

10. The new use of the reoccupied premises can be for any use (i.e. not just retail uses) except for hereditaments wholly or mainly being used as betting shops, payday loan shops, and pawn brokers

In the context of the public debate about the cumulative impact of betting shops, payday loan shops and pawn brokers the Government does not consider it the best use of public funds to offer tax relief that would encourage and incentivise the proliferation of these types of uses.

11. As the grant of the relief is discretionary, authorities may choose not to grant the relief if they consider that appropriate, for example where granting the relief would go against the authority's wider objectives for the local area or where it would not help a shopping area to thrive. We would encourage councillors to be consulted on the final scheme that the local authority adopts, so there is a clear line of accountability in case of a dispute on the final local scheme that is adopted.

How much relief will be available?

12. Relief will be available for 18 months from the first day the hereditament becomes occupied as long as the first day falls between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016, subject to the hereditament remaining continuously occupied.
13. The eligibility for the relief and the relief itself will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis.

14. Under this scheme the relief available for each property is 50% of the business rates liability after any mandatory or other discretionary reliefs (other than retail relief) have been applied, up to State Aid De Minimis limits. The relief should be calculated ignoring any prior year adjustments in liabilities which fall to be liable on the day.
15. Councils may use their discretionary powers to offer further discounts outside this scheme (and under local rate retention, 50 per cent of the cost would be locally funded and 50 per cent funded by central government).

State Aid

16. State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to State Aid. However Reoccupation Relief will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013).

Detailed State Aid guidance can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15277/National_State_Aid_Law_Requirements.pdf

17. The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years). Local authorities should familiarise themselves with the terms of this State Aid exemption, in particular the types of undertaking that are excluded from receiving De Minimis aid (Article 1), the relevant definition of undertaking (Article 2(2)3) and the requirement to convert the aid into Euros⁴.
18. To administer De Minimis it is necessary for the local authority to establish that the award of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of De Minimis aid. Note that the threshold only relates to aid provided under the De Minimis Regulations (aid under other exemptions or outside the scope of State Aid is not relevant to the De Minimis calculation). Section 3 of this guidance contains a sample De Minimis declaration which local authorities may wish to use. Where local authorities have further questions about De Minimis or other aspects of State Aid law, they should seek advice from their legal department in the first instance⁵.

Splits, mergers, and changes to existing hereditaments

19. Where a new hereditament has been created by a split or merger of hereditament(s), the new hereditament will be eligible for the Reoccupation Relief where at least half of the floor area of the new hereditament is made up of retail hereditaments that have been empty for 12 months or more (subject to meeting the other criteria in paragraphs 9 and 13).
20. Where a hereditament in receipt of Reoccupation Relief splits or merges to form new hereditaments, the new hereditaments will not be eligible for the remaining term of Reoccupation Relief.

21. Where a hereditament in receipt of Reoccupation Relief becomes unoccupied for any period of time less than 12 months it will not be eligible for any further Reoccupation Relief on occupation. However, if a hereditament that has previously received Reoccupation Relief becomes empty for 12 months or more it will be eligible for an additional 18 months Reoccupation Relief if the criteria are met.

Change of ratepayer

22. The relief will run with the property rather than the ratepayer. So if a hereditament is in receipt of Reoccupation Relief and a new ratepayer becomes liable for the property they will benefit from the remaining term of the relief, subject to the new ratepayer's State Aid de minimis limits.

How will the relief work in Enterprise Zones?

23. Where a property is eligible for Enterprise Zone relief, that relief should be granted and this will be funded under the rates retention scheme by a deduction from the central share. If a property in an Enterprise Zone is not eligible for Enterprise Zone relief, or that relief has ended, Reoccupation Relief may be granted in the normal way, and this would be reimbursed by grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. Local authorities should not claim funding for Reoccupation Relief on properties which would otherwise qualify for Enterprise Zone government funded relief.

- 3.13. The level of Discretionary Rate Relief to be awarded for current qualifying recipients is a maximum level of support of 100% for discretionary relief only cases and in cases where mandatory relief of 80% is awarded the additional discretionary top up is 20%. This will be the case in 2014/15 and 2015/16. From 2016/17 the qualifying criteria will be amended and revised criteria will be decided upon current applicants and may be applied for new applications from the revised criteria's adoption.

DISCRETIONARY RELIEF POLICY 2015

3.14. Living Wage Discount Policy 2015/16 Relief.

Enacting legislation - Localism Act 2011 amending Section 47 of the Local Government Act 1988. This allows councils to award local discounts to businesses.

The discount is available to Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) as defined by European Legislation and covers businesses of 1 or more up to 250 employees.

The discount is for the period 1st April 2015 until 31st March 2016 and is awarded to SME's who sign up to pay the Living Wage, currently £7.85 per hour, (subject to review November 2015) and receive licensed certification confirming the living wage is payable to all employees of the company from the Living Wage Foundation.

Production of the aforementioned certificate plus fee invoice/receipt will result in an award which will be credited to the businesses rate account, the only time an award will not be made is if the business rate account is zero owing to the award of other reliefs or discounts or certificate production to the council is made 1st April 2016 or later.

For firms with up to ten employees the award will be £500. The award will be for five times the licence accreditation fee payable to the Living Wage Foundation, to a maximum of £5,000; said fee is dependent on the size of the organisation. Cancellation/removal of the award will result in removal of the Living Wage Discount.

The Living Wage scheme will only be operational for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. Awards will only be issued upon production of the Living Wage licence produced between 01 April 2015 and 31st March 2016.

This is a cash limited incentive and will be achieved by initially limiting the awards to the first 20 employers with less than 10 employees and the first 20 with more than 10 but less than 250 employees. The residual sum to be used for applications from either category on a first come basis.

The Living Wage Foundation details are as follows:-

Living Wage Foundation
112 Cavell Street
London E1 2JA

Phone 020 7043 9882

<http://www.livingwage.org.uk>

This page is intentionally left blank

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

29 JUNE 2015

SUBJECT:	CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION & RESOURCES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	CLLR ANN MCLACHLAN
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report sets out the current performance of the Council against the delivery of the Corporate Plan as at Year End 2014/15. Cabinet Members are requested to consider the details of the report and highlight any issues.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Performance of the Corporate Plan is regularly monitored against the targets set at the start of the year. Red, amber and green (RAG) ratings are assigned depending on the performance level against those targets. For indicators rated red, the responsible officer is required to complete an exception report and highlight what corrective actions will be put in place.

2.2 The Corporate Plan Performance Report (Appendix 1) sets out the final year position against 20 outcome measures from across the Council. 14 (70%) of the measures are rated green, 4 (20%) are rated amber and 2 (10%) are rated red. For the 2 measures rated red, action plans are provided and included as follows:

- Performance appraisals completed – Appendix 2.
- Sickness Absence: The number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness (cumulative) – Appendix 3.

2.3 The refreshed Corporate Plan for 2015/16 was agreed by Council on 8 December 2014. This is the final year of a three year planning cycle. The first quarter performance against this will be reported in September.

2.4 Work is under way to re-shape the Council's business planning framework for the next planning cycle from 2016 onwards. A new Council Plan will be taken to Policy Council in July and the performance reporting that underpins this will be developed later in the year. This will involve a significant change towards performance reporting against a range of agreed priority outcomes.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 The performance management framework is aligned to the Council's risk management strategy and has been considered as part of the Directorate planning process.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 N/A

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 N/A

6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

6.1 There are none relating to this report.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 There are none arising from this report.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The report is for information to Members and there are no direct equalities implications at this stage.

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising from this report.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising from this report.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 Cabinet Members are requested to note the contents of this report and highlight any questions or comments.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 To ensure Cabinet Members have the opportunity to review the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Carol Sharratt**
Performance Management Officer
Telephone: 0151 691 8032
Email: carolsharratt@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Corporate Plan Performance Report (Year End 2014/15)

Appendix 2 – Exception report/action plan for Performance Appraisals completed

Appendix 3 – Exception report/action plan for Sickness Absence: The number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness (cumulative)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	15 January 2015
Cabinet	10 October 2013
Cabinet	19 September 2013
Cabinet	11 July 2013

This page is intentionally left blank

WIRRAL COUNCIL
Corporate Plan Performance, Finance and Risk Report as at 31st March 2015



No.	Description	Data Source	Performance 2013/14	North West 2013/14	Target/Plan 2014/15	YTD Target 2014/15	YTD Performance	Forecast Outturn	Overall Status	Monthly Trend	Reporting Period	Accountable Officer (Head of Service)	Comments
PERFORMANCE													
DOMAIN 1: FAMILIES AND WELLBEING													
Public Health, Performance, Business Intelligence and Commissioning													
PHCP01	Alcohol-related admissions to hospital: Rate of attendance at A & E for injury and assault where alcohol was a factor	Trauma, Injury Intelligence Group (TIIG)	901.37	N/A	901.37	901.37	808.42	808.42	G	↓ +	Apr 14 - Mar 15	J Webster	The data shows a further reduction in the rate of attendances to A&E, suggesting a continuing positive improvement in performance of the system. However it should be noted that, although this improvement is encouraging, the methodology we are using to track this target is new so it is important to keep a close watch on the data to ensure that this downward trend is a genuine improvement and not a function of the change in the methodology.
PHCP02	NHS Health Checks - Offered	Integrated Performance Measures Monitoring Return	17.7%	18.5%	20.0%	20.0%	22.7%	22.7%	G	↑ +	Apr - Mar	J Harvey	As predicted, quarter 4 activity resulted in an increase in uptake of health checks. Uptake went from 42% in quarter 3 to 51% in quarter 4. However, even with this increase, our cumulative annual uptake is 44.4%, which is a decrease on last year. Action to increase performance in 2015/16 will include: - A new contract with revised payment levels - Public Health Practice Nurses continuing to support struggling practices, improvements to systems, provision of training etc - promotional videos and posters will go into every practice and also into specific community venues. - A pilot to assess the impact of 'Point of Care Testing' within GP practices is due to begin in selected practices aimed at reducing non-attendance. - personalised targets and quarterly performance profiles for every practice.
PHCP03	NHS Health Checks - Take up	Integrated Performance Measures Monitoring Return	53.1%	51.0%	50.0%	50.0%	44.4%	44.4%	A	↑ +	Apr - Mar	J Harvey	
Children and Young People Department													
CYCP01	Rate of Children Looked After (per 10,000 population 0-17)	SSDA 903 Return	100.1	81.0	95.8	95.8	101.0	101.0	A	↑ -	Mar	L Arthey	Looked after children (LAC) numbers continue to be higher than the national average and statistical neighbours. The number of LAC has been relatively static, hovering between 98-101 throughout the year. The number of LAC is 683, but this is expected to reduce slightly, following year end validation with the statutory returns.
CYCP02	Rate of Children in Need (per 10,000 population 0-17)	Children in Need Census	402.1	343.1 (2012-13)	375.0	375.0	390.7	390.7	G	↑ -	Mar	L Arthey	The number of CIN have increased to 2643 compared to 2537 for 2013/2014. This is in line with the increase in referrals 4217 compared to 4066. Given the case closures for the corresponding period 4015 compared 4226 evidences the overall throughput for CIN.
Department of Adult Social Services													
ADCP01	Proportion of safeguarding alerts actioned within 24hrs	SWIFT	98.4%	N/A	100.0%	100.0%	99.5%	99.5%	G	↔	Apr-Mar	S Garner	There have been 15 cases out of a total of 3,020 that have fallen outside of target and this is due to waiting for further information from either the referrer or the police. There had been recording issues previously that have been addressed by the design of the new client information system, Liquid Logic. Social workers now have to complete the section on what action is required following a safeguarding alert before they can complete the section on confirming that action has been completed.
ADCP02	Permanent admissions of older people (aged 65 and over) to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population	ASC-CAR & Office for National Statistics (ONS)	835.9	777.8	759.3	759.3	810.9	810.9	A	↑ -	Apr-Mar	C Beyga	The average number of placements per month equates to 45 against a monthly target of 42. The number of placements per 100,000 population has reduced by 3% when compared with 2014-15. The proportion of placements which can be linked directly back to hospital discharges is 57% which is consistent with 2013-14; non-elective admissions to hospital increased by 3.7% in 2014-15 which has placed further pressures on Social Care and in particular the use of residential and nursing beds. Additional Intermediate Care and Transitional Bed capacity will be available in 2015-16 which allied with hospital discharge pathway redesign work will help reduce the number of permanent admissions.
ADCP03	Proportion of people who have received short term services to maximise independence requiring no on-going support	SALT	New measure	N/A	50.0%	50.0%	71.2%	71.2%	G	↓ -	Apr-Mar	C Beyga	This was a new measure introduced as part of the 2014/15 Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework. Performance has consistently exceeded the target set with: 50% of people being completely independent 23% of people require an ongoing care package 14% of people require only ongoing low level support (Assistive Tech) 8% of people self fund their care 2% of people require short term support

WIRRAL COUNCIL
Corporate Plan Performance, Finance and Risk Report as at 31st March 2015



No.	Description	Data Source	Performance 2013/14	North West 2013/14	Target/Plan 2014/15	YTD Target 2014/15	YTD Performance	Forecast Outturn	Overall Status	Monthly Trend	Reporting Period	Accountable Officer (Head of Service)	Comments
DOMAIN 2: REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT													
Environment & Regulation													
RECP01	Number of interventions put in place for travel plans and transport (to improve accessibility to employment & opportunities)	Travel Solutions	2,300	N/A	2,200	2200	3067	3,067	G	↑	Apr-Mar	Mark Smith	This project has now concluded as part of the LSTF funded initiative, it has exceeded targets for the second year in succession.
RECP02	To maintain local environmental quality (LEQ) of litter, detritus, & graffiti in main gateways and shopping areas	Local Survey Data	91%	N/A	93.5%	93.5%	97.5%	97.5%	G	↑	Apr-Mar	Mark Smith	Now in its second year, this indicator has seen consistent improvement across all quarters, compared to the same periods last year. Exceeding the target by 4%, the performance of this indicator is representative of the hard work and resources that have gone in to improving environmental quality in these important gateway and investment areas.
Housing & Community Safety													
RECP03	Number of new affordable homes	Homes & Communities Agency MIS	354	N/A	300	300	322	322	G	↑	Apr-Mar	Ian Platt	Year-end target has been achieved.
RECP04	Number of interventions to improve private rented sector properties	MVM Database	783	N/A	400	400	523	523	G	↑	Apr-Mar	Ian Platt	Year-end target has been exceeded.
RECP05	Number of adaptations completed	MVM Database	1,934	N/A	1,900	1900	2257	2257	G	↑	Apr-Mar	Ian Platt	This indicator has again achieved it's year-end target.
Business & Investment													
RECP06	Jobs created and safeguarded (via Invest Wirral)	Invest Wirral	937	N/A	925	925	970	970	G	↑	Apr-Mar	Alan Evans	This PI has exceeded it's anticipated year-end target.
RECP07	Gross Value Added per head of population	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	£11,599	N/A	£12,013	£12,013	£12,482	£12,482	G	↑	2013	Alan Evans	GVA per head of population has greatly improved across Wirral between 2012 – 2013. The latest published data has confirmed that Wirral achieved a 7% increase during 2013 resulting in Wirral accomplishing the highest percentage increase of any standard geographical area in England.
RECP08	Number of working age people claiming out-of-work benefits (economic in-activity)	NOMISWEB	15%	N/A	14.5%	14.5%	14.1%	14.1%	G	↓	Dec-14	Alan Evans	Q4 performance is not available until May 2015. Latest performance data (Q3 2014/15 shows Wirral is performing at 14.1% and is already on track to meet the end of year target for 2014/15.
DOMAIN 3: TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES													
Resources													
TRCP01	Implementation of Windows 7 & Office 2010 across the Council	Silver Project reports	N/A	N/A	100%	100%	100%	100%	G	↑	Apr 14 - Mar 15	M Zammit	Phases 1 and 2 are now both complete. Work continues to roll out Windows 7 to Children's Centres and Adult Learning. These were originally out of scope and have included only latterly. The delivery of computers from now on will become part of the business as usual activities of the IT Service.
TRCP02	£(m) Projected Delivery of Council budget savings	General Ledger, revenue monitor and Concerto	£46.900	N/A	£36.259	£36.259	£27.252	£27.252	A	↔	Mar-15	T Sault (Accountable for reporting)	Year end accounts are closed. Shortfall against original programme but has been fully mitigated as year end authority budget shows a small underspend position. Variances around commissioning, slippage to remodelling timetable and some families savings.
Human Resources													
TRCP03	Performance Appraisals completed	Intranet	27% (employee KIEs) 65% (senior manager PAs)	N/A	80%	80%	49%	N/A	R	↑	Apr-Sep	C Hyams (Accountable for reporting)	This is the first year that Performance Appraisal has been delivered across the Council. Where there have been delays, the remodelling programme has impacted on delivery. The programme timescales are complete for 2014/15. The final outturn figure is 49% • For 2015/16 a new programme of delivery will be developed. This will include a bespoke programme for each strategic Directorate, led by each Strategic Director. • Bespoke arrangements will be put in place for the large groups of staff who work on a part time/ dispersed basis to enable them to participate in performance appraisals.
TRCP04	Sickness Absence: The number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness (cumulative)	Data collected via HR SelfServe	10.47	N/A	9.75	9.75	10.31	10.31	R	↓	Apr-Mar	C Hyams (Accountable for reporting)	The sickness absence rate of 10.31 days for April 2014 - March 2015 is verified. It is 0.16 below the 10.47 rate for April 2013 - March 2014. During the verification a number of submissions which have been over reported have been identified, where sickness levels in excess of 36 hours per week were submitted. Allowing for this over reporting forecast is now 10.31 at 2014/15 year end, missing the 9.75 day target by 0.56.

	Performance within tolerance for target set.
	Performance target slightly missed (outside of tolerance).
	Performance not on track, action plan required.

	Performance is improving Lower is better
	Performance is improving Higher is better
	Performance is deteriorating Lower is better
	Performance is deteriorating Higher is better
	Performance sustained in line with targets set

PERFORMANCE ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

This template is to be completed and forwarded to the Corporate Performance Team for ALL Corporate and Directorate performance measures showing **RED** status of non-compliance against the specified target. It needs to be updated on a monthly basis for the period that the measure shows a **RED** status.

INDICATOR OVERVIEW			
Indicator Title	TRCP03 - Performance Appraisals completed		
Strategic Director Lead	Joe Blott		
Departmental Lead	Chris Hyams/ Diane Cottrell		
Year End Target	80%	Year End Forecast	N/A

CURRENT SITUATION: Detail what the performance is for this measure and reason/s for non-compliance		
Performance this Period	49%	+ / - Target - 31%
Non-compliance reason	This is the first year that Performance Appraisal has been delivered across the Council. Where there have been delays, the remodelling programme has impacted on delivery.	

ACTIONS: This describes what's necessary or how to achieve a 'green' score. This way everyone is clear on what is required and when; knows the expected outcome and how to achieve it.	
What (is required)	The programme timescales are complete for 2014/15. The final outturn figure is 49%
How (will it be achieved)	<p>The programme ran from April to September 2014. 49% is the year-end outturn figure for 2014/15. To ensure that targets are met for 2015/16 the following will be put in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new programme of delivery. This will include a bespoke programme for each strategic Directorate, led by each Strategic Director. • Bespoke arrangements for the large groups of staff who work on a part time/ dispersed basis to enable them to participate in performance appraisals
Who (will be responsible)	Senior Leadership Team
When (will results be realised)	The programme ran from April to September 2014. The outturn position for 2014/15 is 49%

This page is intentionally left blank

PERFORMANCE ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

This template is to be completed and forwarded to the Corporate Performance Team for ALL Corporate and Directorate performance measures showing **RED** status of non-compliance against the specified target. It needs to be updated on a monthly basis for the period that the measure shows a **RED** status.

INDICATOR OVERVIEW			
Indicator Title	Sickness Absence: The number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness (cumulative)		
Strategic Director Lead	J Blott		
Departmental Lead	C Hyams		
Year End Target	9.75	Year End Forecast	10.31

CURRENT SITUATION: Detail what the performance is for this measure and reason/s for non-compliance		
Performance this Period	10.31	+ / - Target : -0.56
Non-compliance reason	Absence levels per person continue to exceed the target.	

ACTIONS: This describes what's necessary or how to achieve a 'green' score. This way everyone is clear on what is required and when; knows the expected outcome and how to achieve it.	
What (is required)	No of days absence per person needed to reduce Improve application of policy
How (will it be achieved)	<p>A report was taken to Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) on 31 March 2015 highlighting key issues around absence performance, steps that have been taken and options to improve performance.</p> <p>SLT agreed an initial plan of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic referrals to Occupational Health for stress • Departmental Targets are applied • Specific Manager's briefing to clearly set expectations • Increased performance monitoring by Directorate Management Teams <p>It was agreed medium term consideration would given to consult on change to the absence policy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specify a set number of days alongside occasions of sickness • Apply 'automatic warnings' for breach of triggers with any exceptions to be agreed by Head of Service
Who (will be responsible)	Managers with support of Human Resources
When (will results be realised)	Monthly and quarterly performance monitored with year end outturn figure determining whether performance target has been met.

This page is intentionally left blank

WIRRAL COUNCIL

Cabinet
29 JUNE 2015

SUBJECT:	Wirral Public Health Annual Report 2014
WARD/S AFFECTED:	All Wards
REPORT OF:	Director of Public Health
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Public Health
KEY DECISION?	No

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Local government has long been involved in promoting health taking action to reduce harm from the things that create poor health. Wirral council, as the democratically accountable stewards of their population's wellbeing, understands the importance of 'place' in promoting wellbeing. The role of the Director of Public Health is to support the strategic thinking about how to drive reductions in health inequalities, both through the things that local authorities can directly influence, and through effective, local, partnership working.

1.2 One of the responsibilities of a Director of Public Health is to produce an annual report on the health of the local population, and the Council has a duty to publish that report. The intention of the report is that it is an important vehicle by which Directors of Public Health can identify key issues, flag up problems, report progress and, thereby, serve their local populations. It is also be a key resource to inform local inter-agency action and will contribute to improving the health and well-being of local populations and reducing health inequalities.

1.3 One of the important questions often asked is how we can maximise our efforts and impact on the health of people in Wirral. This year's Public Health Annual Report is based on a practical, evidence based report produced by the King's Fund in 2013 which sets out what can be done, how it affects health, and the associated business case for action. We review each of the nine priority areas to see what is being done locally, and to highlight ways in which we can strengthen our impact.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Nine themes for action

There are nine themes identified for action in the report. These themes and the rationale provided by the King's Fund for each is outlined in the following sections of this report.

2.1.1 The best start in life

To get the best possible start in life, a baby's mother needs to be healthy before and during pregnancy and childbirth. There is compelling evidence that a child's experiences in the early years (0-4) have a major impact on their health and life chances, as children and adults.

2.1.2 Healthy schools and pupils

Evidence from many countries confirms that there is a strong correlation between educational attainment, life expectancy and self-reported health, within and across generations. School is also an important setting for forming or changing health behaviours. But interventions need to be well targeted, and achieving improvements in behaviour among more deprived pupils may be more difficult and more costly.

2.1.3 Helping people find good jobs and stay in work

Injuries and stress endured in the workplace can be bad for health, but being unemployed can lead to poor physical and mental health, across all age groups, with major impacts for the individual concerned, their spouse and family. Getting back into work improves people's health, as long as it is decent work.

2.1.4 Active and safe travel

Local authorities are responsible for drawing up and implementing local transport plans. Poor planning and regulation leads to preventable deaths and injuries (particularly among vulnerable groups); it also leads to air pollution, and social and economic isolation, and acts as a disincentive to people making healthier choices like cycling and walking.

2.1.5 Warmer and safer homes

Suitable accommodation that is safe and warm is one of the foundations of personal wellbeing, whether in childhood or old age. It enables people to access basic services, build good relationships with neighbours and others, and maintain their independence – all resulting in a better quality of life. We focus here on three areas that can have a significant impact on improving health: preventing accidents in the home, making homes warmer, and preventing falls among older people.

2.1.6 Access to green and open spaces and the role of leisure

Access to open spaces and leisure and recreational facilities has direct and indirect impacts on people's physical and mental health, but can also enable people to build social capital.

2.1.7 Strong communities, wellbeing and resilience

Local authorities have a role to play in helping individuals and communities to develop social capital (for example 'neighbourliness', social networks and civic participation). There is growing recognition that although disadvantaged social groups and communities have a range of complex and inter-related needs, they also

have assets at the social and community level that can help improve health, and strengthen resilience to health problems. Several local authorities are pioneering these community asset-based approaches to improving health and building resilience for wellbeing.

2.1.8 Public protection and regulatory services

Effective public protection services – covering council powers of inspection, regulation and licensing – are an important component in ensuring public health and safety. Local authorities can make a difference in many areas, for example the regulation of takeaways and fast foods (a sector that has grown considerably in the past 30 years); the improvement of air quality; and fire safety.

2.1.9 Health and spatial planning

Good spatial planning helps improve the 'liveability' of areas. The 2012 National Planning Policy Framework acknowledges the role of spatial planning in improving health, and requires local authorities to help develop the evidence base further. Spatial planning is not an intervention in itself, but an enabler. How places are planned affects, for good or ill, how the other areas discussed in this report impact on health.

2.2 The 2014 Public Health Annual report provides recommendations within each chapter for action. Many of these actions link closely with the aims of the existing Corporate plan to support vulnerable people, promote good health and a positive environment and encourage employment opportunities.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 n/a

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 n/a

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 n/a

6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

6.1 n/a

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 n/a

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

8.1 n/a

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 n/a

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(c) No because of another reason which is that this report does not directly make any decisions impacting on our local community. It does raise issues which impact differentially on our communities.

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 n/a

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 n/a

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 That Cabinet receives and notes and approves for publication, the content of the Public Health Annual Report for 2014

13.2 That the Cabinet considers the recommendations of the Report and reflect on how they can be incorporated into Council policy.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 Wirral Council has a statutory duty to publish a Public Health Annual Report. The report is intended to support the understanding and insight required to identify key issues, flag up problems, report progress and, thereby, serve our local populations. It is also a key resource to inform local inter-agency action.

REPORT AUTHOR: Fiona Johnstone
Director of Public Health
telephone (0151) 691 8210
email fionajohnstone@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Public Health Annual Report 2014: Improving the Public's Health in Wirral

BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL

http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_publication_file/improving-the-publics-health-kingsfund-dec13.pdf

BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY

Briefing Note	Date

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy & Performance Committee: presentation on the King's Fund report – improving the public's health	8 April 2014

This page is intentionally left blank

IMPROVING THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH IN WIRRAL

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR
OF PUBLIC HEALTH FOR WIRRAL 2014

Contents



Introduction	4
The best start in life	6
Healthy schools and pupils	12
Helping people find good jobs and stay in work	18
Active and safe travel	22
Warmer and safer homes	28
Access to green and open spaces and the role of leisure services	34
Strong communities, wellbeing and resilience	42
Public protection and regulatory services	48
Health and spatial planning	54
Looking back, moving forward	60
Sources of further help and information	64

Introduction

A year and a half has passed since the Public Health team took its place alongside council colleagues. The Health and Social Care Act (2012), which saw in this change, makes it clear that a duty to improve and protect the health of local populations now rests squarely with local authorities. This mission has been received with enthusiasm and determination in Wirral, and Public Health professionals have been warmly welcomed to the Council family.

A lot has happened in a year and a half. We have much to be proud of; joint working with colleagues across the council is already paying health dividends, with examples highlighted throughout this annual report. But like many other councils, Wirral has also had to find millions of pounds worth of savings, with still more to follow. With a population approaching a third of a million, Wirral also has some of the widest extremes of wealth and poverty in England, leading to a life expectancy gap of 12 years for men and 10 years for women between parts of East and West Wirral.

In this context, improving the health and wellbeing of Wirral children, adults and older people relies on finding approaches that directly tackle the fundamental causes of poor health. The search is on for initiatives which offer a good return on investment, are sustainable and can be successfully delivered through the work of partners in the council and beyond.

In 2013, the King's Fund published a report entitled Improving the Public's Health. Described as a resource for local government this sixty page document builds on the ground-breaking work of Sir Michael Marmot and others; this showed how differences in health are patterned according to differences in so-called 'social determinants of health' such as employment, education and housing. The King's Fund report focuses on nine key areas spanning themes from 'the best start in life' to 'health and spatial planning'. Each chapter includes evidence-based suggestions for possible health improvement policies that local authorities can implement.

Inspired by the King's Fund report this year's Public Health Annual Report takes a local look at all nine areas in turn. Each section opens by describing why and how each area influences health followed by an overview of 'the picture in Wirral'; then asks, 'what more can be done?' and

concludes with recommendations -
'where should we go from here?'

Last year's Public Health Annual Report on social isolation sparked community-wide conversations throughout the past year and galvanised a great deal of positive action. Increasing social inclusion and participation remain Public Health priorities in 2015-16. This year's report with its council-wide perspective offers us all another important opportunity to take stock of our successes and focus on those areas where evidence suggests we could and should do more.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my heartfelt thanks to colleagues, within and outside the Council, who have supported the preparation of this important report. Your success stories and ambitions for the future were shared with genuine enthusiasm and interest and convey a real commitment to improving health and wellbeing across Wirral.

I firmly believe that the key to securing better health for all rests in working together and with local people. We need to capitalise on Wirral's assets, build on evidence of what works and embrace new perspectives and fresh ideas. This report reaffirms what our shared commitment must be - to create places and communities where good opportunities lead to healthy lives.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Johnstone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fiona Johnstone
Director of Public Health
Wirral Council

The best start in life



How do the first years of life affect health?

More and more evidence shows that experiences in the first four years of life are critical determinants of health and wellbeing in adulthood.

Negative impacts can arise even before birth, depending on expectant mothers' smoking status, alcohol intake, food choices and engagement with ante-natal care. All of these are linked to significant and lasting health problems associated with being born under or overweight. Longer-term health and life chances are also influenced by the socio-cultural world into which children are born and the behaviours they see around them, e.g. smoking, eating and drinking habits, how adults interact with children and one another. When children experience neglect, the consequences for their lifelong physical and mental health are known to be particularly severe¹.

The picture in Wirral

In Wirral around one in four children aged under 16 grows up in poverty. Disadvantage begins to accumulate even before birth - overall one in seven new mothers in Wirral is smoking at the time of delivery, but in some areas of Birkenhead this rises to one in four. This pattern of smoking during pregnancy is reflected in the geographical pattern for babies who are born underweight. As in other areas, Wirral also sees significant rates of nutrition-related concerns amongst its youngest residents, for example only a third of babies are still breastfed at two months old, a fifth are overweight by the time they go to school and will typically have at least one decayed tooth².

By the time children start school there is already an obvious gap between the richest and poorest households. In Wirral, 47% of five year olds have reached a good level of development as they leave reception class, but less than a third of children with free school status achieve this, falling to under one in five among looked after children³.

Once established, these socially patterned differences in health, behaviour and opportunity usually persist into later life. Children who have a difficult start in life typically go on to perform less well in school, experience more unemployment and poverty as adults, and die younger - a depressing picture⁴.

What are we already doing?

In Wirral, there has been a focus on targeting support towards families who have the most to gain from linking with early years services. Half of Wirral's two year olds are entitled to free early education for example, but last year, one in five did not take up their place. This has now improved, with less than one in twenty not taking up their place with the introduction of providing support with applications at libraries, health settings, Children's Centres and One Stop Shops. Alongside funded early education places, Children's Centre workers also provide a package of play based activities for children delivered in the home and the community.

The aim is to enable parents to support their children's healthy development and learning in the home environment, establishing a foundation for life-long learning and promoting 'school readiness'. Since August this year, nearly 600 children have also been eligible to receive a package of six home visits, resulting in improvements to home safety, referral to other support services and help for parents to try out group activities. The impact of these on carer health and resilience can be impressive.

"One grandparent has just enrolled for first aid training, has accessed the Citizens Advice Bureau for money advice and is attending a healthy weight management programme which will support her with her own and her families' healthy eating"

The Family Nurse Partnership is a national evidence-based programme that provides long-term, intensive support to first time mums and dads under the age of 19. Specialist nurses carry out home visits from pregnancy until the child is two. Intensive investment of resource and effort at this stage aims to enhance health and life chances for parents and child far into the future. Savings generated are calculated to be five times greater than the costs⁵. Seeing one mum through a chaotic and unstable time during pregnancy and the year and a half that followed, one Family Nurse Partnership nurse was able to reflect on a successful outcome:

"He is now 18 months old and is a sociable, affectionate and cheerful little boy. He attends nursery when mum is at college and has settled in well. His development to date is normal in all areas. He has a sense that he is loved and well cared for by his mum, who is also more confident and able to participate more"

The NHS Community Trust Livewell

Service also works with childcare settings to ensure that staff are equipped to promote healthy choices to children and parents alike. A recent focus has been on breastfeeding. Oakdale Children's Nursery in Wallasey received support to develop its breastfeeding friendly policy. A breastfeeding mum who was returning to university also prompted Livewell and nursery staff to develop a clear guideline so mums can store breast milk at the nursery rather than switching to formula feeding.

Heygarth Primary School in Eastham became a flagship site for promoting breastfeeding as the norm to children in reception class. Opportunities to promote breastfeeding were identified in the curriculum and children also benefitted from books and posters, visiting speakers and a real life demonstration. At the beginning of the project the children associated feeding babies with bottles, but by the end the class had switched and said babies were breastfed.

What more can be done?

The good news is that many policies and interventions that target 0-4 year olds, and particularly those born into the most disadvantaged circumstances have proven to be very effective and cost-effective tools for tackling social injustice. Creating a more level playing field right at the start of life supports every child to reach their individual potential and narrows future inequalities in health^{1,6}. Alongside the King's Fund, landmark Public Health reports such as the Marmot Review and Due North have strongly endorsed this area as a top priority for local and national policy action, with the potential to deliver major health and economic dividends^{7,8}.

Opportunities for positive change include poverty reduction strategies; effective implementation of government initiatives

to ensure low income families access their pre-school education entitlement; approaches to develop and improve the quality of childcare settings and programmes that provide intensive, family-focused, behavioural support for parents of disadvantaged children, including the expanded Troubled Families Programme. Public Health England⁹ has recently drawn attention to the power of parenting focused approaches giving parents the skills and practical and emotional support to form loving attachments to their children and smooth their transition to school. Hallmarks of effective early intervention are those that encompass the full range of needs of all children and their parents and target support at groups in the most challenging circumstances.

Where should we go from here?

1. Highly targeted approaches that safeguard and support the most vulnerable e.g. the Family Nurse Partnership should be complemented by high quality early years services (children's centres, private nurseries and child-minders) that deliver a universal investment in the physical and emotional wellbeing of children and parents. Where individuals, families or communities need more input and support to achieve the best start in life for their children, this expectation should be recognised and met; this approach is referred to as 'proportionate universalism'.
2. Health messages and advice need to be based on sound evidence, tailored to individual needs and family capabilities and consistent across ante-natal, 0-5 services and beyond. Aligning the work of services to explicit outcomes and indicators e.g. school readiness, will help embed this approach, as will the transfer of the 0-5 Healthy Child Programme to local authorities in October 2015. In Wirral, a strong answer to this call comes from Children's Services' new school readiness framework, which contains overarching indicators on health, child development, parenting capacity and resilience and parents ready to work and learn.
3. Supporting all childcare settings to meet nationally recognised quality standards^{10,11,12} is an effective way of investing in the future of our very youngest children. Developing mentoring arrangements between the best settings and those in need of more support may be worth considering.
4. Early years professionals should be in a position to help families address the full range of problems that can destabilise family life. This might for example, include signposting to sexual health and contraception, mental health, education, debt advice or employment services. Where appropriate some of these might be delivered within childcare settings.
5. Sustainable employment and a dependable income lay the foundations for a happy and fulfilling family life. Relevant professionals should strive to create employment opportunities that recognise the particular needs of parents.

1. Fair Society, Healthy Lives (the Marmot review) <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>
2. Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment <http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/ourjsna/wirral2009-10/>
3. Public Health England (2014) Public Health Outcomes Framework <http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#gid/1000041/pat/6/ati/102/page/0/par/E12000002/are/E08000015>
4. Due North: report on the inquiry on health equity for the north http://kingsfund.blogs.com/health_management/2014/09/due-north-report-of-the-inquiry-on-health-equity-for-the-north.html
5. HM Government (2011). Early Intervention: The next steps www.media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/g/graham%20allens%20review%20of%20early%20intervention.pdf
6. Roberts H. What Works in reducing inequalities in child health? Policy Press, 2012
7. Heckman J. Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. *Science* 2006; 312: 1898-900
8. HM Government (2011) Early Intervention: smart investment, massive savings <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-intervention-the-next-steps--2>
9. Public Health England (2014) Good quality parenting programmes and the home to school transition https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355764/Review1_Early_intervention_health_inequalities.pdf
10. NICE Infants and neonates <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/population-groups/infants-and-neonates>
11. Institute of Health Equity (2014) Measuring what matters: a guide for children's centres <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/measuring-what-matters-a-guide-for-childrens-centres>
12. Public Health England (2014) From evidence into action: opportunities to protect and improve the nation's health https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/366852/PHE_Priorities.pdf

Healthy schools and pupils



How do schools and services for children affect health?

Across society, levels of educational attainment vary hand in hand with health behaviours and longer-term physical and mental health outcomes.

Children who benefit from high quality education acquire knowledge, social skills and qualifications that open doors to diverse employment and social opportunities. School-leavers who succeed educationally are better equipped to take control of their lives and pursue further education and job opportunities that are the foundations for a secure and fulfilling adulthood. Giving people more control to shape their lives and cope with adversity lies at the heart of many approaches to reducing health and social inequalities. Contemporary thinking on the transition from childhood to the adult world recognises that an important determinant of success is how people bounce back from setbacks, termed 'resilience'. Stable, protective situations help to grow resilience. Unfortunately, this often means that those children who encounter the toughest challenges are least well prepared to overcome them. A recent report on the multiple health issues faced by participants in the national Troubled Families Programme clearly underlines this reality¹. Good schools represent much more than a system for delivering exam results; as settings they can also mould pupils' attitudes, beliefs, and aspirations and build reserves of self-esteem and resilience².

The picture in Wirral

Low educational attainment can itself be considered a form of deprivation. Wirral surpasses the English average for the

number of pupils who receive 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C. In parts of East Wirral around one in four pupils do not reach this level, but this falls to less than one in ten in some areas of West Wirral. Looking at the statistics for 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training in Wirral, there is a four-fold difference which mirrors almost exactly the patterns of educational attainment. Having successful outcomes from school is a gateway to continuing education and training opportunities. In this respect it is also interesting to note that overall, Wirral has the fourth highest pupil absence rate in the North West^{3,4}.

What are we already doing?

Wirral Council's services have clear ambitions for pupils to be ready for school and work and to feel safe and secure. Efforts are made to ensure that initiatives reach children in vulnerable and at-risk groups and provide skills and attitudes to help young people handle the wider issues that can easily destabilise performance at school. This approach is exemplified by the work of the Youth Services Team, who recently held the Annual Youth Voice Conference, which was organised by the Youth Voice Group on the theme of emotional wellbeing. Young people from 13 local schools, colleges and youth groups met to explore contemporary issues such as isolation due to social media and gaming, dealing with loss and change, body image and healthy relationships.

Intensive Family Intervention Programme (IFIP)

Wirral's response to the national Troubled Families Programme has attracted widespread recognition as an example of excellent practice. The IFIP programme works with families to get children back into school, reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour and helps adults into employment.

Many families helped by this initiative have longstanding or even inter-generational relationships with statutory services, which have heavy financial implications. Added to these are the emotional and social costs faced by individuals and their communities.

How does the IFIP succeed where others have failed? The foundation of the Wirral approach is establishing a trusting relationship between the family and a single keyworker, giving time, listening deeply, finding solutions to immediate problems e.g. debt, and poor housing conditions, celebrating successes however small and building self-belief and resilience.

Almost 700 families were helped by the programme in 2014. Outcomes which have shown particular improvement since IFIP was introduced include school attendance, reduced anti-social behaviour, enhanced parenting skills, mental health and engagement with healthcare services. The average cost saving per family helped is estimated at £76,557, which reflects how families move to a position where they are linked into appropriate services, but are no longer service dependent. It is at this point that positive changes in health, education and

employment, parenting and social inclusion really come together.

Keyworkers' reflections:

"Spend time with them. Families get battered down by their own issues."

"Get in the boat with them."

"Find the hook. There's always something a family does well which can be built on."

"Be ready to challenge perceptions from everyone."

"Be persistent... let them know you're not going to abandon them."

"It's very rare that they even consider themselves belonging to a community... we need to help them see that they can change their community from the inside."

A parent reflects:

"I want a better life for my children."

"I always look at the positives with him [her son], no matter what the situation."

KIDSTIME workshops

Two thirds of people with mental illness are parents. This scheme specifically addresses the needs of children whose parents have a mental illness. Typical family goals include, 'to get support from other families' and 'to help my daughter have fun with her peers'. In the short-term, fun, family workshops help young people to cope with and understand their situation and to build better relationships with parents. The longer-term aim is to reduce the chances of children entering onto a path of mental illness themselves. The supportive, family-centred ethos of Kidstime has been praised by parents, children and partner organisations alike.

Health Service in Schools

There are also universal services such as the Health Service in Schools for 13-19 year olds. Youth workers and school nurses work together to deliver information, advice and support in a range of ways on issues such as sexual health, smoking, drugs and alcohol, and emotional wellbeing. Almost 8,500 young people use the service over the course of a year and more than half return for further support. A source of pride for this service is the strong links that have been established with external partners such as the Brook Sexual Health Clinic.

Anti-Bullying

Mersey Park Primary School in Tranmere has recently been recognised for its anti-bullying work with a nationally recognised silver award⁵. Mersey Park is so far the only Wirral school to attain this level. To earn this recognition the school has set up an anti-bullying steering group with roles for child anti-bullying ambassadors, parents and teachers. Pupils from across the school have done work on 'What is bullying?', drawing up class anti-bullying contracts, designing posters and setting up 'bother boxes' where children can leave a note if something is worrying them. Parents have been involved through an anti-bullying evening event and there are now also excellent leaflets, links and lines of communication so children and parents know where to turn.

Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (the RADY project)

This pilot project looked at the impact of equal target setting for year seven secondary school pupils from

disadvantaged backgrounds. Following an invitation from Wirral Council's Children and Young People's Service, three schools agreed to take part.

Teachers were simply asked to set all pupils the same targets for achievement over the school year, regardless of background. As usual, any pupil who was felt to be falling behind was offered additional support.

Before the project, 20% fewer children from deprived backgrounds attained the A*-C Maths and English target compared to their peers. Just two terms later, this difference in predicted attainment had fallen to 6%.

Developing a culture of equal expectation and achievement among all pupils and their parents appears to have been critical in delivering these impressive results and enabling pupils from all backgrounds to realise their potential.

What more can be done?

The policy options outlined by The King's Fund authors in this area recognise that a key aim must be to prevent the most vulnerable children from dropping out of school or being excluded. Suggested interventions include, evidence-based whole school approaches to recognise and reduce the impact of bullying and conduct disorders. This emphasis recognises a requirement for all schools to engage with these objectives, but with more intensive targeting and support for schools in greatest need. In Public Health this scaled approach is known as 'proportionate universalism' and is a guiding principle for work on inequalities⁶.

These types of approaches offer impressive returns on investment; Knapp et al (2011)⁷ calculated that for each £1 invested in anti-bullying programmes there is a £15 return in adulthood, as school-leavers fulfil their productive potential by taking up higher paid jobs, whilst investment in emotion-based learning is recouped by the end of the first year through savings to social, NHS and criminal justice services.

A second policy strand focuses on maximising the potential of the school setting to influence children's self-esteem, resilience and conflict resolution skills. This provides them with the core beliefs and attitudes they need to take on life's challenges, not least those concerned with investing in their own health and wellbeing. There is also a recommendation around one-stop wellness services for children who are at risk of engaging in multiple risky behaviours.

Where should we go from here?

1. Complementary 'whole school' approaches should be developed to underpin successful, targeted support initiatives. The whole school perspective^{8,9} builds health and wellbeing into all areas of school policy, environment and the curriculum. Strands might include food and physical activity, emotional wellbeing and risk behaviours.
2. In particular, schools should offer universal support to enable pupils to build their self-esteem and resilience. Guidance on this topic from Public Health England offers a helpful starting point². The Public Health team's Risk and Resilience Strategy, developed using co-production principles, will also guide and shape work with local young people.
3. The school hubs pilots described in the 'strong communities' section of this report, suggest that pupils and families can benefit enormously when schools embrace their potential as centres for whole community development.

1. Department for Communities and Local Government (2014) Health bulletin on troubled families https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/345327/Health_bulletin.pdf

2. Institute of Health Equity and Public Health England. Local action on health inequalities. Building children and young people's resilience in schools. <http://www.instituteoftheequity.org/projects/building-children-and-young-peoples-resilience-in-schools>

3. Wirral Joint Strategic needs assessment <http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/ourjsna/wirral2009-10/>

4. Public Health Outcomes Framework <http://www.phoutcomes.info/search/isolation>

5. Anti-bullying Quality Mark UK <http://www.abqm-uk.com/#>

6. Institute of Health Equity (2010) Fairer Society, healthy lives. <http://www.instituteoftheequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

7. Knapp M, McDaid D, Parsonage M (eds). Mental Health Promotion and Prevention: The Economic Case. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/businessAndConsultancy/.../pdf/PSSRUfeb2011.pdf>

8. Bond L, Patton G, Glover S, Carlin JB, Butler H, Thomas L, Bowes G (2004). 'The Gatehouse Project: can a multilevel school intervention affect emotional wellbeing and health risk behaviours?' *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, vol 58, no 12, pp 997–1003. Available at: <http://jech.bmj.com/content/58/12/997.full%20>

9. Jackson CA, Henderson M, Frank JW, Haw SJ (2012). 'An overview of prevention of multiple risk behavior in adolescence and young adulthood.' *Journal of Public Health*, vol 34, suppl 1, pp i31–40. Available at: http://jpubhealth.oxfordjournals.org/content/34/suppl_1/i31.full



Helping people find good jobs and stay in work



How does employment affect health?

Our working life has a major impact on health. Good quality jobs not only provide protection from poverty, they can also offer a sense of purpose, identity and self-esteem, as well as a ready made social network.

On the other hand, poor working conditions, or uncertain employment can be harmful. For example unsafe working environments can pose risks from injury, and jobs in which people have little or no control over their work are bad for mental health¹. Consequences for employers large and small include reduced productivity, low morale and problematic rates of absenteeism and presenteeism.

Unemployment presents a particularly severe challenge to staying healthy. One in seven men develops clinical depression within six months of losing their job², with knock on effects for their physical health and family welfare. An episode of unemployment is harder to overcome when financial and social support is lacking, perhaps when family and friends face similar challenges³ and research has shown that ever having been classed as NEET (young people aged 16-19 who are not in education, employment or training) delivers a particularly lasting blow to future life chances and health prospects⁴.

A vicious circle can develop where unemployment impacts on health and further reduces long-term job opportunities. A recent, influential report⁵ shows how in the North of England, disability and poor health are primary reasons why people are not in work and calls for actions to help prevent people leaving their jobs because of poor health as well as support to help them re-enter the workforce.

The picture in Wirral

In Wirral the number of people receiving out of work benefits is falling year on year, but still amounts to around one in seven of working age people, with as many as one in six 16-18 year olds classified as NEET in Birkenhead and Tranmere. Health-related worklessness is double the national rate. The most common reason for receiving support due to illness and disability is mental illness, with claimants concentrated in some of our least affluent areas around Birkenhead. For more detail on these figures, see our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment at www.info.wirral.nhs.uk

What are we already doing?

The ReachOut Partnership

In the past three years, ReachOut has helped nearly 2,000 Wirral residents to find jobs, with over 60% still employed six months later. ReachOut has set up a network of Work Clubs with good links to other health and welfare services, for example Health Trainers, debt specialists and housing advisors. One-to-one support is available with a personal employment adviser for people with the most challenging barriers to getting into good quality employment, including mental health problems, or a history of substance abuse or crime. Initial, intensive skills-focused support maximises opportunities to enter job roles and mentorship continues for an additional six months to help people successfully negotiate a sustainable transition out

of unemployment.

The health related worklessness programme

As part of Wirral Council's involvement in the Public Service Transformation Network this targeted project aims to tackle long-term health related worklessness in the areas where this is most common - Bidston, St James, Birkenhead and Rock Ferry. The project will work to understand barriers to entering employment from individuals themselves and local employers. This insight will then be used to develop new approaches that forge new links with health and employment support professionals, which might include examples such as locating work clubs in GP surgeries. A key strength of this pilot is that it recognises that the people involved - people with long-term health conditions and local employers - already have many of the answers that are needed. Making employment an achievable and rewarding prospect requires agencies to appreciate the issues in the round and start to break down some longstanding professional boundaries.

Wirral Community NHS Trust Livewell Team

Wirral Community Trust's Livewell team works with businesses of all sizes to help employers enhance the health benefits of being in work. As part of Stoptober's month of smoking cessation activities, the team held two events for staff from Mersey Ferries and the Mersey Tunnels. As well as stop-smoking advice, employees were given free blood pressure checks and lifestyle advice, with several signposted back to their GPs for follow up care.

What more can be done?

The King's Fund suggests that local authorities should act as role-models by showcasing supportive, health-aware work environments that promote wellbeing and manage ill-health in a person-centred way. The Social Value Act (2012) also creates opportunities to positively direct council employment opportunities towards the NEET and long-term unemployed population. Other employers, including those from the private and third sector should be offered support to create work environments that are better for bodies and minds, with the understanding that this will result in better business and productivity. It is also vital to find ways to reduce health-related job loss and unemployment.

Where should we go from here?

Attaining a vision of positive, health-supporting employment for all in Wirral requires action on a variety of fronts and local programmes, such as those described above, which already align well with expert opinion in this area. Future work in this area needs to address three challenges:

1. Improving the health of the employed and unemployed.

For example, by offering support to employers to implement NICE guidance on healthy workplaces⁶ and equipping managers with the skills and knowledge to spot health issues early and signpost to appropriate support. Employment services should also be able to signpost to health and wellbeing support for their clients, and likewise health and welfare services should endeavour to include pathways to employment as part of client-centred support.

2. Maximising opportunities for sustainable, good quality employment.

For example, by using the Social Value Act (2012) and collaboration with the Local Enterprise Partnership and Chamber of Commerce to channel economic activity toward local people. Building strong relationships between employers, employment services, schools and colleges based on the 'ready for work' concept is key to reducing the number of young people who are NEET.

3. Enabling people to overcome health-related and other barriers to employment.

The health-related worklessness programme is an excellent development. Building in links to other services that impact quality of life and poverty reduction, for example the healthy homes programme or parenting and childcare support through children's centres can only strengthen this approach.

1. Bamba C. *Work, Worklessness, and the Political Economy of Health*, 1 edition. Oxford ; New York, OUP Oxford, 2011
2. Royal College of Psychiatrists (2013) *Depression and Men* www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/depressionmen.aspx
3. Bellis MA, Lowry H, Hughes K, Deacon L, Stansfield J, Perkins C (2012) *Variations in risk and protective factors for life satisfaction and mental wellbeing with deprivation: a cross-sectional study* *BMC* 12, 492-509
4. Strandh M, Winefield A, Nilsson K, Hammarstrom A. *Unemployment and mental health scarring during the life course.* *Eur J Public Health* 2014; 24: 440-5.
5. *Due North: report on the inquiry on health equity for the north* http://kingsfund.blogs.com/health_management/2014/09/due-north-report-of-the-inquiry-on-health-equity-for-the-north.html
6. <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/settings-and-environment/workplaces>

Active and safe travel



How do travel and transport affect health?

How we get around has a real impact on health. Incorporating bursts of physical activity in day to day life reduces the risk of many obesity-related health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers, as well as contributing to mental wellbeing and resilience.

And what's more, the health dividends from choosing active forms of travel start to kick in almost straight away. Enabling people to walk and cycle more also brings rewards such as improved air quality and enhanced social interaction and cohesion.

A quality local transport network should make walking or cycling a convenient, safe and realistic option for children and adults. But if we want people to leave their cars at home and take to the streets, this also needs to address peoples' concerns about possible dangers, for example road traffic collisions, pollution and personal safety. People living in less affluent communities are more likely to be affected by these issues. For example, even though car ownership is comparatively low in Birkenhead, the constituency area accounts for almost 40% of road collision casualties in Wirral¹. The chance of a collision which results in the death or serious injury of a child is also higher in the most deprived areas.

The picture in Wirral

The good news is that Wirral already has one of the lowest rates of illness related to air pollution in the North West and can also celebrate having the highest percentage of adults who meet the government's targets on physical activity (six out of ten)². The Draft Core Strategy for Wirral which sets out the Council's proposed plans, policies and vision for sustainable development over the next 10 to 15 years, supports low carbon transport development and opportunities for safer travel and more active forms of travel.

Department of Transport statistics for Wirral show an overall downward trend in accidents involving pedestrians. However, following a steady rise in the number of cyclists on our roads, Wirral now has the third highest rate of serious accidents affecting cyclists in the North West region.

What are we already doing?

Wirral Council's Road Safety Team

offers a range of programmes aimed at keeping pedestrians and road users safe. As the figure below shows these cover the needs of people across the life-course, from assistance with correctly fitting car seats, to the Safer for Longer programme for car drivers over the age of 70. Currently, 10,000 children receive road safety training each year, with 2,200 going on to complete cycling training, while 3,500 Wirral adults also receive road safety education and advice.

Wirral Travel Solutions is an innovative scheme that provides individual advice on travel in East Wirral specifically targeting people who are entering employment. This approach recognises that negotiating travel networks and the cost of travel can present real barriers and threaten lasting employment opportunities. The service provides assistance with journey planning and travel costs, and promotes the Bike to Work, Scooter Commuter and Maxi Taxi travel schemes. Established in 2012, the Wirral Travel Solutions Programme has issued nearly 5,000 solutions, including 1,000 for Bike to Work. Six months after receiving a solution, 80% of clients were still in employment. The health benefits of this initiative are two-fold; enabling people to overcome barriers connected with the costs or practicalities of commuting to a new workplace; and by encouraging active forms of travel, some participants also experience physical and mental health benefits, with knock-on gains in productivity for employers.

WIRRAL ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVES ACROSS THE LIFE-COURSE

All ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road safety events and campaigns • 102 school crossing patrols • Child car seats - how to transport children safely
5-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAPS - practical road safety session for child pedestrians • Walk Once a Week - WOW project
7-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive Alive - teaching in schools • Bike Right - national standards on road cycling training • Wirral Safer Roads Badge - for Brownies and Cubs • WOW
11-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk Wise - interactive classroom education on causes behind road traffic collision • Bike right • Free your feet - Living Streets walking initiative
14-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belt Up - classroom based session - pedestrian and in-car safety • Free your Feet • Suddenly from Nowhere - road safety session delivered by the Fire Service
16-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage - delivered by local driving instructors with a focus on key issues for young drivers • Young driver, young passenger - teaching for year 12 pupils • Geared & Go - interactive education for users of bikes, motorcycles and scooters
Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind your business, road safety at work - practical and theory based sessions on road safety in the work place • Bikesafe - safety skills course for motorcyclists • Geared & Go • Bike Right for adults - national standards for on-road cycle training
Over 70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer for longer - informal, interactive presentation to older drivers covering driver and pedestrian safety issues in later life

What more can be done?

The King's Fund report challenges local authorities to take the lead in promoting cycling and walking as cheap and healthy forms of active travel or recreation. This ambition is echoed by Lord Darzi in his recent 'Better Health for London' report, which called for investment in schemes to reward employees who walked the first and last mile of their commute³.

For many, switching time spent driving short journeys, for time spent cycling or walking may seem more achievable or sustainable than prioritising regular trips to the gym, whilst for others the financial saving will be a major pull factor. Whichever the case, evidence shows that enabling more people to make these choices should also be attractive for employers who want to increase productivity and reduce absenteeism⁴.

Wirral's green space assets already support thousands of people to walk and cycle recreationally. Making walking and cycling safer and more pleasurable in built-up areas requires co-ordination and vision from planning and transport professionals. It is essential that health

and productivity gains are not threatened by an increase in the number of pedestrians or cyclists who are injured on the road. Long-term changes can come from carefully addressing the walkability and liveability of new developments or regeneration schemes at the design stage to make the healthy choice the easy choice. In the shorter term, targeting traffic calming, including 20mph zones in selected accident hotspots in residential areas, can deliver a cost-effective reduction in road collisions, especially if local people are also involved in plans.

Although Wirral may seem a world away from cities where active travel is the norm it may be worth remembering that the cycling revolution in the Netherlands only dates back to the 1970s. It has been suggested that an equivalent investment in England would save the health economy £1.6 billion per year (the knock on costs of a single road traffic accident has been estimated at £74,000)⁵. The Merseyside Local Transport Plan has taken inspiration from active European cities to develop its vision of a 'new mobility culture' founded on active travel⁶.

Where should we go from here?

1. Invest in further work with employers to sell the benefits of active travel, including cycle to work schemes. The NICE advice briefing on this topic for local authorities provides an excellent starting point for developing evidence-based partnership approaches⁷.
2. Continue to deliver road safety education in school settings and develop this approach further with local employers. Consider opportunities for additional joint working to reach other important groups whether as drivers or pedestrians, for example young, unemployed people and older people living independently.

1. Wirral Compendium of statistics 2014. <http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/default.aspx>

2. Power A, Davis J, Kjellstrom T, Plant P (2010). Built Environment - Marmot Review Task Group Report. www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/builtenvironment-marmot-review-task-group-report

3. London Health Commission (2014) Better Health for London <http://www.londonhealthcommission.org.uk/better-health-for-london/>

4. Hendriksen IJM, Simon M, Galindo Garre F, Hildebrandt VH (2010). 'The association between commuter cycling and sickness absence'. *Preventive Medicine*;51(2): 132-5.

5. Going Dutch on cycling could cut £1.6 billion from health budget <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/public/cyclesafety/article3789794.ece>

6. Third Local Transport Plan for Merseyside [http://www.letstravelwise.org/files/1296228986_Summary%20\(10%20res\).pdf](http://www.letstravelwise.org/files/1296228986_Summary%20(10%20res).pdf)

7. Nice (2013) NICE Advice (LGB8) Walking and Cycling <http://www.nice.org.uk/advice/lgb8/chapter/introduction>

Warmer and safer homes



How does housing affect health?

The roof over our heads is fundamental to our health and consequently Local Authorities have statutory duties around housing - to offer accommodation to people who are homeless, replace poor quality housing stock and ensure there are enough, appropriate, good quality, affordable homes.

Good quality housing means safe, warm and in good repair. Once people have a decent home in which to live, they can turn their energies toward looking after their health, building good relationships within their community and maintaining their independence. Having a stable tenancy arrangement also adds to the benefits for emotional wellbeing.

Children, older people and those with existing health conditions are most at risk of experiencing health problems due to their living conditions. Health issues fall into three main categories: falls or accidents at home, mental health problems from noise, security or financial worries, isolation or overcrowding and cold-related illness and death. Analysis of health data shows that people who live in poverty are much more likely to be affected by all of these issues¹. This may be because landlords or home-owners have not kept up to date with safety checks and repairs or in the case of cold homes because older run-down housing stock is not energy efficient.

The picture in Wirral

Although two thirds of Wirral homes are owner occupied², one in ten households lives in fuel poverty³; around a fifth of properties fail the decent homes standard and one in ten has a serious hazard⁴.

Sub-standard housing is particularly prevalent in the private rented sector and is typified by Victorian stock and poor quality flat conversions. Each winter, local health services witness a rise in people with circulation and breathing problems brought on by living in continuously cold conditions. There need not be a 'cold snap' for this to happen; a combination of draughty homes, high fuel costs and low income is the main driver.

Most childhood accidents and falls in older people occur at home. In 2012-13, 2,623 people aged 65 and over were admitted to hospital in Wirral following a fall⁵. This figure is higher than the North West average, even after taking account of the number of older people living in Wirral. For pre-school children, there were almost 300 hospital admissions due to accidents and injury between 2010 and 2012⁴.

What are we already doing?

Wirral Council has a range of options to assist householders whose homes may be too cold or unsafe. At the emergency end of the spectrum, this extends to provision of discretionary grants and loans to fund improvements for the most vulnerable residents where there are imminent risks to health and safety.

Warmer Homes

There is wide-ranging activity on this front, for example, helping to tackle fuel poverty by addressing poor energy efficiency, low income and fuel costs. By 2012, one third of Wirral homes had been insulated through successful partnership with British Gas and Energy Projects Plus. The energy efficiency rating of private sector Wirral homes is now significantly better than the national average, although this still tends not to be the case in low income areas. Energy Projects Plus and Scottish Power continue to deliver door-to-door warmer homes advice in areas of fuel poverty and also train volunteers and frontline staff.

Selective licensing

Where private landlords are involved, the Council takes a proactive approach, but also uses its powers of enforcement to ensure tenants are kept safe and protected. A proposal for 'selective licensing' takes this approach a step further by introducing conditions with which private landlords need to comply in order to hold a landlord's license. The 'selective' element refers to the fact that these initiatives are restricted to those areas where there are high numbers of poor quality or empty properties which can attract anti-social behaviour. It is hoped that this focused effort to drive up standards will have wider benefits for quality of life in the community and neighbourhood as a whole.

Healthy Homes

The Wirral Healthy Homes Scheme describes itself as a 'whole person' approach to tackling poor housing and health inequality. The scheme combines practical improvements to make homes warmer and less costly to heat, as well as a discussion about other health, financial and social issues. Following a detailed home assessment, a Healthy Homes Community Worker signposts to a wide range of partner services and organisations. As well as health and lifestyle services this will often include opportunities that are not traditionally associated with health, e.g. debt advice, employment services or activities to help overcome loneliness. The Healthy Homes Scheme is promoted to health and social care professionals and other front line services that work with vulnerable households. More than two thirds of people who received assistance from Healthy Homes in the past year said that their health and wellbeing had improved as a result.

"An older lady cared for by her granddaughter was referred as they really needed repairs doing but didn't have the necessary funds. During the Healthy Homes visit the granddaughter raised concerns over the gas fire, which was giving them headaches. The fire was checked and found to be giving out carbon monoxide. The defective fire has now been made safe."

"The difference the Healthy Homes team has made to my life is unbelievable. I only had 2 plug-in heaters to heat my flat, this was detrimental to my health - asthma, osteoarthritis... the cold hit me hard; I was dreading the winter. Now, with central heating, I don't have to worry!"

Hospital to home

Before the introduction of a specialist housing link-worker based at Arrowe Park Hospital, 70% of homeless people were discharged back onto the streets. Now, emergency readmissions for this group have fallen by a third and the amount of days spent on wards by homeless people has reduced by a quarter thanks to fewer delays in discharge.

Wirral's Aids and Adaptations team has also developed a fast-track hospital discharge scheme for people who need simple adaptations at home (such as stair rails to help prevent falls) before they can be discharged. Patients benefit from getting back home more quickly and given that a hospital bed costs £300 to £600 a day the smoother discharge process has led to significant financial savings.

What more can be done?

The King's Fund recommends that local authorities carry out a sustained programme of home safety improvements targeted at low income households that are rented or overcrowded, or where there are children under 5.

An evidence-based falls prevention strategy should be developed. This should include targeted risk assessment and offering people adaptations to help them live safely and independently at home for longer. Making links with social care,

hospital discharge teams, community health services and opportunities for socialising all serve to strengthen a whole-person, integrated approach. An integrated service is currently being developed in Wirral to reflect this model.

To prevent cold-related illness and death in at-risk groups, local authorities need to take action on a number of fronts. Landlords and home-owners can benefit from assistance to help them access money available to make home efficiency improvements, for example installing insulation. Individual heating bills can be brought down with support to identify cheaper providers and payment options as part of financial welfare services, as well as giving tips on how to conserve energy without sacrificing warmth. There is scope for significant community involvement in developing some of these approaches.

Nationally, the health and social care costs that accrue from not improving the quality of our housing amount to several billion year after year. For example, 40% of admissions to residential care homes are the result of a fall. In 2012/13 three out of every four visits to Accident and Emergency in Wirral for treatment of an injury, amongst over 60s, was due to a fall⁶. Addressing unsafe and sub-standard housing is a cost-effective way of reducing dependence on high-cost medical care and improves quality of life.

Where should we go from here?

1. Wirral already offers a number of options to improve cold or unsafe housing. It is essential that existing networks are used to effectively promote these, e.g. health services, pharmacies, schools and childcare settings, employment services, faith and community groups
2. Fuel poverty services should have strong links to partner services dealing with food poverty, debt advice, health and employment so that both long-term and immediate issues can be tackled
3. Consideration should be given to how the Healthy Homes programme could be expanded through partnership working.
4. Support and evaluate the proposed selective licensing scheme.
5. A review of childhood injury prevention should be incorporated into the Early Years Strategy.

1. The Institute of Health Equity (2011) *The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Poverty* <http://www.instituteoftheequity.org/projects/the-health-impacts-of-cold-homes-and-fuel-poverty>

2. Office of National Statistics (2013) *2011 Census, Key Statistics and Quick Statistics for local authorities in the United Kingdom - Part 1* <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-327143>

3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/2012-sub-regional-fuel-poverty-data-low-income-high-costs-indicator>

4. David Adamson partners (2013) *Private Sector Stock Condition Survey*

5. *Public Health Outcomes Framework* <http://www.phoutcomes.info/search/fall#gid/1/pat/6/ati/102/page/3/par/E12000002/are/E08000015>

6. *Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2014), Falls (older people)* http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/ourjsna/falls_older_people.html



Access to green and open spaces and the role of leisure services



How do open space and leisure services affect health?

In recent years a growing body of research has clearly demonstrated that having access to good quality green spaces and coast delivers significant health benefits for local populations.

Parks attract people both young and old from across different neighbourhoods, bringing a shared sense of togetherness and belonging that boosts both individual and community wellbeing. Having a strong connection with the natural world and spending time in nature has been estimated to deliver a boost to wellbeing around a third as strong as marriage. Yet only 10% of children now play in natural areas, four times fewer than when their parents were children¹.

Individuals with easy access to green space are three times as likely to participate in physical activity and 40% less likely to become obese². Furthermore, simply spending time in natural surroundings also provides relief from day to day stresses, anxiety and depression, so people are better able to cope with life's challenges - the so-called 'restorative effect'. Research has even shown that neighbourhoods with safe, recreational green space show smaller differences between the health of the most and least well-off compared to neighbourhoods where this resource is lacking³.

Some of these benefits are hard to put a price on, but Groundwork⁴ has estimated that giving everyone access to open spaces in England could cut the treatment costs for obesity by £2 billion. Gains at least as great are also predicted for positive impacts on mental health, policing, and environmental sustainability.

Taking up opportunities for sport and leisure activities brings similar benefits to physical and mental health, especially where facilities are within easy reach of communities and barriers, for example cost can be reduced. As these activities have the potential to reach the whole population, they have also been shown to be highly cost-effective investments in health⁵.

The picture in Wirral

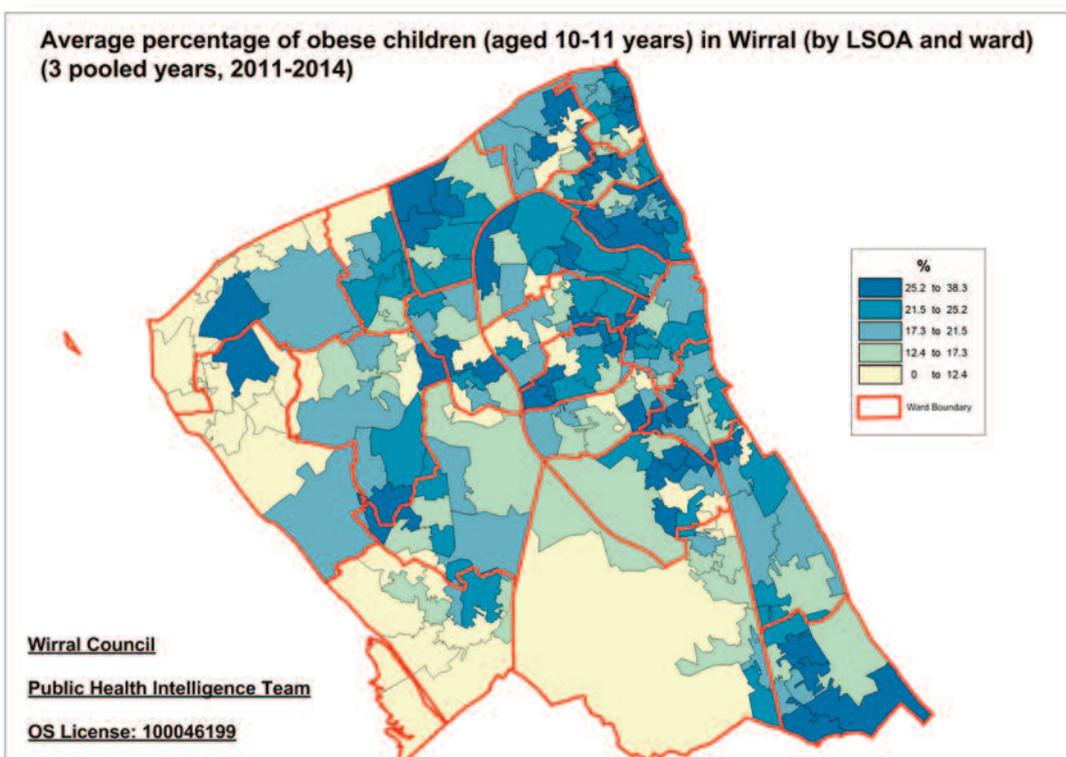
Wirral boasts over 1,500 hectares of publicly accessible green space, equivalent to 1,500 international rugby pitches. Parks, allotments and 26 miles of coastline create an attractive and distinctive sense of place, which attracts large numbers of visitors and locals alike. The pay-off in terms of getting people moving is impressive; Wirral currently tops the North West, with six out of ten adults meeting the government's recommendations on physical activity⁷.

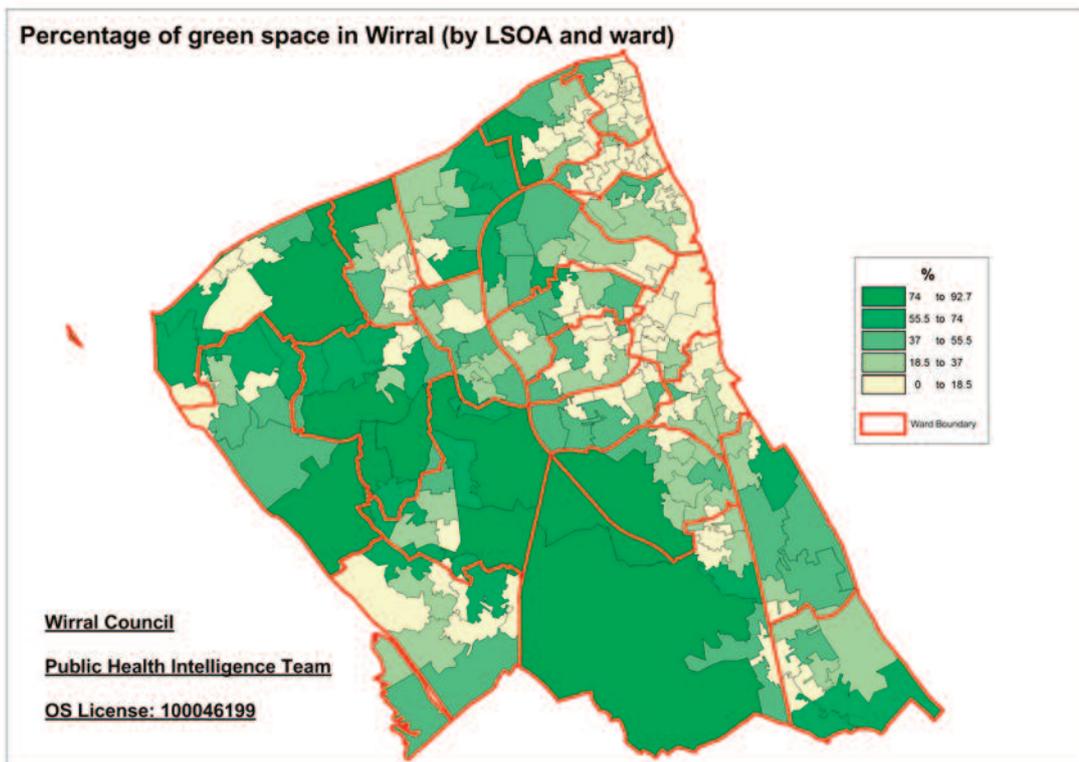
A Wirral Parks' survey in 2012 showed that two thirds of residents used a park, beach or open space more than once a week in spring and summer. The survey also showed that people tended to use open spaces that were convenient and local to them. So while some Wirral sites attracted visitors from up to an hour's drive away, two out of three people simply walked and one in six cycled. Interestingly, less than one in ten made the journey on public transport. Best estimates suggest that around one in five

people in Wirral have visited open spaces deliberately in order to benefit their health in a week⁸. The other main reason for visiting is to relax and have fun - outings and picnics with children, friends and family, organised events, or wildlife watching. Dog fouling was cited as the main deterrent to using these spaces even more.

The established network of parks and open spaces act as catalysts for community development and involvement, playing host to a diverse and growing range of groups and activities. One example is the 48 Friends Groups that have helped 18 Wirral Parks earn the sought after Green Flag status. In 2013, Wirral green spaces attracted around 4,350 hours of volunteer time.

All this information demonstrates that people in Wirral are clearly green space enthusiasts. Unfortunately, research shows that the quality and availability of green space in areas typically fall as levels of deprivation and poor health rise⁹. To illustrate this for Wirral, the maps below show how obesity in 10-11 year olds is patterned alongside local availability of green space. The dark blue areas show obesity hotspots and it is notable how these overlie the palest green areas around Wallasey and Birkenhead where green space is in shortest supply. Enabling these communities to enjoy better access to green space is one way of reducing levels of obesity and health problems such as heart disease.





What are we already doing?

The Wirral Green and Open Space Strategy contains a specific objective around using parks and open spaces to drive population-wide health benefits. Current examples of cross-sector working include educational activities with schools, links between the community primary care Livewell programme and eleven new NHS funded green gyms and a joint project involving Adult Social services. The concept of Forest Schools for example - a successful initiative led by Wirral Park Rangers which encourages children to enjoy local parks and open spaces - has inspired Park Ranger

colleagues in New York to develop a similar initiative in Central Park. The focus on physical activity is complemented by plans to introduce food growing and a new strategy for allotments and playing pitches. The range of activities and volunteering opportunities that continues to spring up means that a visit to the park becomes an occasion for people of all ages to mix and socialise. For example, West Kirby's Ashton Park receives 10,000 visits a week from people attracted by the playground, sports pitches and activities such as mother and buggy fitness classes, nature events and volunteering.

**Volunteering at Tam O'Shanter Farm -
"an essential prescription for the heart
and soul"**

Two volunteers vividly describe the transformative benefits that they gain from volunteering:

"Helping out on the farm has enabled me to leave the confines of my family home and given me independence and an opportunity to socially interact and meet with everyday people and other autistic individuals, like myself. The caring interaction (with the people and animals) and hard work is therapeutic, mentally stimulating and gratifying. The farm has helped to develop me into the person I am today".

Another volunteer, who got involved when heart surgery left him feeling low and not himself, called his experiences at the farm, "an essential prescription for the heart and soul."

Royden Park Project - a place to grow

The Royden Park Project¹⁰ is funded by Wirral Council Adult Social Services department. It provides opportunities for disabled people to gain sheltered training in Horticulture, Conservation and Woodwork in a supportive environment. The project is supported by volunteers and aims to enhance independence, enable people to benefit the local community and gain meaningful, person-centred work experience.

Highlights include learning to grow herbs and vegetables in the beautiful walled garden and taking them to the kitchen at the 5 star Hillbark Hotel, achieving recognised qualifications in the use of leaf blowers, strimmers, lawn mowers and log splitters, and trying out fishing and

floristry. Spending time outdoors and interacting with volunteers and other groups based in the park all adds to the positive and beneficial experience.

Green space champions

The Green Space Champions Pilot was developed by the Church of England Diocese of Chester as part of their Life Expectancy Wirral (LEW) campaign. The aim of the project was to increase the health and wellbeing of people living in the Laird Street area of Birkenhead by enabling them to make more use of green space. The project took shape as representatives from the Council, NHS, local churches, allotments and communities got together to create a project team.

Seven volunteer Green Space Champions were recruited and trained. The projects group network of contacts helped the champions reach out to people and introduce the scheme. From looking at the evidence the organisers targeted their efforts on older single men, mums on low incomes and single mums. Activities were tailored to groups' preferences and included trips out to Port Sunlight and Tranmere Rovers and orienteering. The main emphasis was simply spending quality time together.

"It's good for my asthma, it relaxes me and I've enjoyed getting out. You'd just stew sitting in the house, you'd go off your head."

"We had a laugh going round the park together" - some mums were then inspired to get involved in more community activities at their children's schools.

This pilot has now put down roots, with a Council employed community worker in place to carry the work forward. The story of how Green Space Champions carried out targeted health promotion using the green spaces on their doorstep highlights what an asset existing groups and networks can be, especially those such as faith groups, which are already working with social responsibility in mind.

Wirral Council's Sports Development Team has set itself an inspiring and far-reaching vision - 'improving the lives of Wirral residents and their communities through sport and physical activity'. Underpinning this are themes of community safety, training and educational opportunities and community cohesion and of course, health improvement. Successful relationships have been developed with all four Wirral constituencies, schools, the Fire Service, the Intensive Family Intervention Programme, Police, community groups and Public Health, which has resulted in the delivery of a huge range of activities across Wirral. Some of these programmes have adopted a deliberately targeted approach; for example in areas of greatest deprivation, or through working with individuals who are more likely to be involved in high-risk and anti-social behaviour.

A selection of recreational activities are provided free of charge, for example 'Doorstep Clubs'; under 18s can also enjoy free swimming in school holidays, and over 65s and people in receipt of specified benefits are able to take advantage of the Wirral Passport scheme for discounted sports and leisure activities.

The impressive wider community benefits that are achievable under the banner of sports development are well illustrated by the two case studies below.

National Citizens Service (NCS)

This is a national, personal development programme for young people aged 16 to 17. It aims to provide participants with opportunities to develop their communication, team-working and leadership skills - setting the scene for a successful transition to adulthood. Local communities also benefit from enhanced social mixing and community involvement projects. The monetary benefits to society are estimated to be almost three times more than the cost¹⁷.

NCS volunteers in Wirral recently set up and delivered a monthly 'soup kitchen' event at the Charles Thompson Mission. The group began by raising money for the initiative by doing supermarket bagging, sponsored events and making funding applications. Next, they gathered unwanted clothing from friends and family, which was set out at the event. Having gained their food hygiene qualifications the twenty-strong team organised and prepared a two course roast dinner for 75 diners, many of whom were living with drug and alcohol issues or were homeless. The NCS team were able to develop real insights into the needs of this vulnerable group by talking with local professionals and guests at the event. One NCS co-ordinator reflected,

"They have been so positive in the delivery of this programme, from fund-raising to bid-writing... and worked endlessly on the day".

Operation Banger 2014

Operation Banger was developed as a multi-agency approach to reduce anti-social behaviour, criminal damage and fire-setting around Bonfire Night, Mischief Night and Halloween. This has become one of the busiest times of the year for the Police and Fire Service, as they deal with calls from across local communities.

Using data about known incident 'hotspots', the Sports Development Team set up a series of 'diversionary sports activities' in parks, which were developed in consultation with local young people and the Youth Service Outreach Team, and delivered by Wirral Council coaches and their 'sportsmobile'.

Almost 700 young people took part in sessions. The Fire Service later reported, 'no secondary fires throughout Operation Banger in locations where Sports Development had activities in situ'. The Police reported similarly that, 'Sports Development interventions had a direct impact on the reduction in reported anti-social behaviour where diversionary activities were going on'.

The team sum up their success as coming from their 'right time, right place and right style' approach, delivering an attractive alternative to anti-social activity directly to potential perpetrators within known hotspots.

What more can be done?

From its evidence-based review, the King's Fund recommends prioritising recreational space as a key strategic element of local planning and development and giving special consideration to enabling disadvantaged communities to make full use of what is on offer. In order for green space, recreation and leisure to have a real effect on health inequalities it is important to remove the practical barriers, for example transport options and access to public toilets, that are often faced by those with most to gain - older people, people with disabilities or existing health problems, and children. Forging closer links with health, educational and social services is an obvious way of bringing the health benefits of parks to people with physical, social, emotional or developmental needs. Staffing must be adequate to deter anti-social behaviour, but large-scale engagement with community groups and volunteers can also encourage local people to actively maintain the spaces they use. Creative solutions to dwindling budgets may come from working to develop private and third sector partnerships.

Where should we go from here?

1. Colleagues in Health, Social Services, Leisure, Employment and Children's Services should explore creative new ways to further tap into the therapeutic potential of green and open space in their work.
2. If Wirral's green space assets are to make a greater impact on health inequalities we will need to work on finding ways to help overcome some of the practical barriers that can make it difficult for some people to get out into the natural environment. Local Parks' Champions and Friends Groups are well placed to develop local solutions.
3. Open spaces bring people together. They may provide a natural focus for future community development work in Wirral.
4. Subsidised leisure activities should also be supported due to their potential to reduce inequalities in physical activity.

1. Bird (2007) *Natural Thinking. Investigating the links between the Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Mental Health. A report for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Bedfordshire*
2. Defra et al (2011). *UK National Ecosystems Assessment: Technical report Chapter 23:Health Values from Ecosystems*
3. Mitchell and Popham (2008). 'Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population study'. *The Lancet*, 372, 9650: 1655–60.
4. Groundwork (2011) *Green Spaces - What are they worth?* <http://www.groundwork.org.uk/News/research-confirms-benefits-of-green-space>
5. Audrey et al (2012) *Health promotion and the social gradient: The free swimming initiative for children and young people in Bristol Public Health*; 126(11): 976-981
6. Marsh K, Bertranou E, Samanta K (2011). *Cost-benefit Analysis and Social Impact Bond Feasibility Analysis for the Birmingham Be Active Scheme. London: Matrix Evidence.* www.socialfinance.org.uk/sites/default/files/matrix_be_active_final_report_0.pdf
7. *Public Health Outcomes Framework. Indicator 2.13i percentage of physically active adults* <http://www.phoutcomes.info/search/activity#gid//pat/6/ati/102/page/3/par/E12000002/are/E08000015>
8. *Public Health Outcomes Framework. Indicator 1.16 Utilisation of outdoor space for exercise/health reasons* <http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#gid/1000041/pat/6/ati/102/page/3/par/E12000002/are/E08000015>
9. *Institute of Health Equity. Natural Solutions for tackling health inequalities* <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/natural-solutions-to-tackling-health-inequalities>
10. *The Royden Park Project* <http://www.roydenparkproject.co.uk/>
11. *NatCen Social Research (2013). Evaluation of the National Citizen Service, 2012* http://natcen.ac.uk/media/205475/ncs_evaluation_report_2012_combined.pdf

Strong communities, wellbeing and resilience



How do strong communities affect health?

In the last few years, terms such as strong communities, wellbeing and resilience have become everyday ‘buzzwords’ in councils and other public service organisations, but at the same time, the concepts they describe can seem hard to pin down. Strong communities are those where people feel good about their health, their lives and what they have to offer.

Strong communities are also more resilient and better equipped to recover from difficult times, such as the current economic situation.

Strength and resilience rest on social support networks - and by social support networks we mean families, circles of friends and other important groups such as from schools, workplaces and recreational activities. These are increasingly being recognised as precious community assets.

As local authorities look to make efficiency savings, empowering communities to tap into their unique knowledge, skills networks and resources offers the prospect of creating more resilient, less service dependent communities who can tackle the issues that really matter to them. This is often referred to as asset based community development or ‘ABCD’. ABCD is an approach that works by finding out what local people really care about and enabling them to bring about the changes they want to see. Professional community ‘builders’ and home-grown community ‘connectors’ work alongside groups and individuals to help get things off the ground.

If social support networks are good for health, the opposite is true for social isolation, which was the theme of last

year’s public health annual report. Aside from the effects on mental health the chronic stress of being alone or feeling alone impacts physical health at a level similar to heavy drinking or smoking¹. Having good levels of social support around us is linked to perception of health, health-related behaviour e.g. being successful at stopping smoking and making a recovery from illness or emotional setbacks. Unfortunately, as with other determinants of health, this social resource (sometimes called ‘social capital’), is not distributed equally in the population. People living in deprivation are more likely to feel that they have no one to turn to, meaning that an event such as job loss can be even more of a challenge to come back from.

The picture in Wirral

The good news is that just one in eight local people had a low happiness score in a recent survey. Unfortunately, more than a quarter of Wirral residents reported high anxiety levels and just under half of carers and people in receipt of social care felt they had as much social contact as they would like and one third of people aged over 65 lived alone^{2,3}. These figures suggest that some communities are affected by low levels of individual wellbeing and correspondingly low levels of social cohesion and resilience.

What are we doing already?

Community Action Wirral

Community Action Wirral's mission is to provide effective support for local groups, organisations and individuals in order to enhance the quality of people's lives and build strong communities. Around 10% of people on Wirral have a voluntary role of some kind, although the national average is three times higher. Community Action Wirral assists over 5,000 people a year to discover roles that suit their skills and interests, as well as supporting a diverse array of voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations. From a wellbeing and social capital perspective, this is a 'win-win' arrangement. Volunteers benefit from feeling more confident and valued, building skills, and extending networks of social support; while the public benefit from, and can get involved with, the huge range of health, leisure, support and advice services and events listed on the Wirral Well website.

Asset Based Community Development

St Catherine's Community Centre has been chosen as the base for a pilot of ABCD working for local people living in Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Birkenhead. A community builder has engaged residents in a series of ongoing conversations about the things they would like to see developed at the centre. The case studies below give a flavour of how, with support, good ideas can blossom and take on a sustainable life of their own.

'IT & Biscuits'

A St Catherine's centre user and volunteer asked for some help to set up his new laptop. Soon, Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning had become involved and short IT courses were up and running, with the volunteer taking on the role of 'peer supporter'. The courses were a success and a funding application was made to John Moore's Foundation to extend the reach of the project and develop a wider range of digital skills training delivered as a drop in service - 'IT& Biscuits'. An additional £6000 of match funding was also awarded by Unionlearn North West. The volunteer and three community members are now being trained up as Digital Champions. The first IT&Biscuits session took place early in the New Year and looked at online shopping tips and know-how.

'Swishing'

A local woman came forward with an idea about holding a 'swishing' event - an opportunity for people to get together and swap clothes that they no longer wear. This has now developed into a Christmas gift swap shop. With very little support, she arranged for local choirs to attend as well as a children's entertainer and face-painting. Half of the money raised from refreshments is already earmarked for Wirral Foodbank. The value of this project will be in attracting people to come to the community centre, promoting neighbourliness and social cohesion, as well as raising the profile of Wirral Foodbank. The Community Builder's comments show how often it takes very little for people to act on their ambitions:

“In terms of the support given, it really has been quite minimal - she just needed to talk through her ideas to get some clarity and put a plan in place and we have offered the use of the room, plus practical support in taking donated items and delivering leaflets. We are all really excited about this activity. Sometimes all that is needed is to listen to someone’s idea, believe that it can work and believe that they can do it!”

Better Food Wirral: a food plan for Wirral

Better Food Wirral was developed in response to accelerating levels of food poverty, increases in obesity and an opportunity to develop Wirral economically. A key aim of this work is to inspire local communities to take greater control of their own health and wellbeing and to find solutions to address local need. It places a refreshing emphasis on tackling the causes of diet-related health problems rather than simply treating symptoms.

So far, a team of community researchers has been developed and have gained rich insights into the realities of people’s lives and the full range of problems that a local food plan might need to address. A short documentary film captures local views and the Public Health team, which initiated the Better Food Wirral concept provided information to the All Party Parliamentary Food Poverty Inquiry.

‘Food exchange’ events are planned to bring together local producers, suppliers and community members and Public Sector partners are also involved, looking

at how to make the local food system healthier, fairer and more prosperous. The Better Food Wirral Innovation Fund has been established to seed grassroots initiatives. One example is Friends of Fender; this scheme will develop the community school garden, with the local allotment society providing weekly gardening sessions to members of the local community. It is hoped that the scheme will enable people to enjoy first-hand the experience of growing food and healthy eating. Excess produce will be used in the school and for weekly sessions offering soup to children, families and community members.

School Hubs

Another pilot scheme has seen Holy Spirit Primary School in Leasowe and Fender Primary School in Woodchurch transformed into thriving hubs for community development. With strong leadership from the school Head teachers and dedicated support from community builders and ‘connectors’, both hubs have successfully drawn together community assets to provide parents, pupils and local people with a host of new opportunities and an easily accessible web of support. Assets refer to volunteering, new links between non-educational organisations and external funding opportunities. A few examples of activities include adult education, budget management, employment and IT support and work experience, parenting classes and early years activities, ‘can cook’ classes, English and Maths summer schools, aspiration days, community events, and health and wellbeing activities.

In the space of just a few months, hundreds of children and their parents have moved towards a place where they are more ready for school or work and feel more safe and secure. After six months, staff reported that fewer children required support from specialist services and those that did, benefitted from swifter referral, as well as extra input from hubs while this process took place. Schools have also reported adults getting back into work as a result of the skills and confidence they have acquired through hub activities.

Testimonials convey some of the positive impacts:

"I now feel that someone cares for me and my family and I can see light at the end of the tunnel."

This lone mum successfully re-entered education and was presented with an award in recognition of her achievements.

Head teachers reported how much children enjoyed summer hub activities and the lack of negative behaviour they witnessed. These were clearly a cherished opportunity. Asked what they would have been doing if they could not attend hub clubs, children said:

"I would just have been on the streets... playing on X-box...sitting on the couch being bored... nothing"

At the same time, one school noted that for the first time in seven years, there was no vandalism over the school holidays.

What more can be done?

To support individual wellbeing councils can work on ways to help people pursue the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing - 'connect, be active, keep learning, take notice and give to others'. Supporting volunteering certainly helps people to give more, but also helps build social capital. Health related volunteering projects have shown returns of £4 to £10 for each £1 invested⁴. Similarly, investing in initiatives to reduce social isolation and loneliness helps people reconnect. As yet, the evidence base for interventions to tackle loneliness is still being developed, but helpful toolkits⁵ are available and there is potential for innovative 'test and learn' approaches. Empowering people to set up and join group activities whether these are for music, exercise or some other hobby answers to our need to be active, keep learning and take notice.

Councils can also spend more time mapping out the assets that neighbourhoods already have, rather than solely focusing on deficits and unmet need. Skilled community builders can identify existing community champions and get people talking about the changes they would like to see and how they can be part of making those a reality in their neighbourhoods. This is an essentially place-based approach which is both organic and dynamic, so solutions to reduce speeding or littering in one neighbourhood might look very different in another.

Where should we go from here?

1. Asset mapping should be built into service development in the Council and partner organisations. This opens the door to involving people more fully in developing sustainable solutions to the issues they face.
2. The initial success of the School Hubs project shows great promise and should be considered as an area for further expansion. Other community institutions e.g. Children's Centres or parks may also have potential to act as hubs for asset based development.
3. Systems should be put in place so that health, social and support services can routinely offer people opportunities to overcome isolation and participate more fully in the social life of their communities. Models might include social prescribing and community navigators. A single directory of activities, groups and volunteering opportunities building on the Wirral Well resource would further enable this approach.
4. Seek ways to measure the impact of ABCD approaches on relevant and meaningful outcomes.

1. Holt-Lunstad et al (2011) *Social relationships and morality risk: a meta-analytic review*. *Public Library of Science Medicine* 2010, 7:e1000316

2. *Wirral Joint Strategic needs assessment* <http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/ourjsna/wirral2009-10/>

3. *Public Health Outcomes Framework* <http://www.phoutcomes.info/search/isolation>

4. Knapp et al (2011). *Building Community Capacity: Making an economic case* www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/BCC/Latest/resourceOverview/?cid=930

5. *Loneliness and Isolation: a toolkit for Health and Wellbeing Boards*. <http://campaigntoendloneliness.org/toolkit/>

Public protection and regulatory services



How do public protection and regulatory services affect health?

Councils have powers of inspection, regulation and licensing that are used to help protect people from obvious, as well as potentially hidden sources of harm.

Environmental Health Teams have considerable legal powers in recognition of their health protection role, for example imposing closure notices on food outlets that pose unacceptable risks to health. Trading Standards teams carry out test purchases to check that retailers are not breaking the law by serving cigarettes or alcohol to young people under the legal age limit. They can also take action against backstreet suppliers of illicit alcohol or tobacco. Licensing falls within the remit of council planning departments, and this function has begun to attract increasing interest from Public Health professionals keen to put a halt to the proliferation of businesses selling cheap alcohol.

The return of Public Health to local authorities has inspired fresh collaborative approaches to commonplace, but important health risks. Some local examples include, toughening up on standards and inspection for tattooists to prevent blood-borne infections and enforcing restrictions on sun-bed use amongst children. The extended health promotion role incorporated into fire safety checks by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has earned it national recognition.

Key issues for Wirral, as elsewhere are tobacco, fast food and alcohol. Differences in smoking, alcohol intake and

obesity explain a substantial proportion of the differences in life expectancy that continue to be all too apparent across the Wirral.

In the UK, eating outside the home has become the norm and the availability of calorie-dense fast-food has sky-rocketed, especially in the most disadvantaged areas. Research shows that the more fast food outlets there are in an area, the more people will turn to junk food meals, pushing up obesity rates¹.

Alcohol and alcohol-related harm remain a public health priority. Liver disease is the only major killer where rates continue to increase², and the human cost incurred through alcohol-related violence and anti-social behaviour cannot be underestimated³. Once again, it is the poorest communities that pay the highest price from excessive drinking.

Overall, smoking rates are falling in England. However this masks a much slower decline among the most deprived 20% of people, who are also less likely to have kicked other unhealthy behaviours⁴. Continuing dependence on tobacco coupled with an increase in the average cost of cigarettes to around £9.00 for a pack of 20 may be pushing people towards unregulated sellers of illicit, backstreet tobacco.

The picture in Wirral

Wirral currently ranks fifth highest in the North West for hospital admissions related to alcohol. Recent insight work with Wirral teenagers confirmed that obtaining cheap alcohol from off licences underage and drinking to get drunk are common facts of life for many. Excessive drinking is an issue across Wirral, but hotspots for deaths caused by alcohol stand out in Rock Ferry, Birkenhead, Tranmere and Bidston. These are also the areas with the lowest smoking quit rates. In West Wirral, one in six ten year olds is obese, compared to one in four in more deprived areas of the borough.

What are we already doing?

Wirral has already seen work to ensure the adoption on skin piercing registration byelaws and the Sunbeds Regulation Act 2010, which places a duty on salons to ensure under 18s are not using sunbeds. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service also carried out almost 15,000 Home Fire Safety Checks in the past year, with recipients benefiting from fire safety improvements and signposting and referral to other services. In the future, the use of a new information system will enable the fire fighters who undertake these checks to further prioritise their visits to reach Wirral's most vulnerable residents.

Innovative work to protect people from cheap, high strength alcohol and the unhealthy effects of frequent fast food meals warrant particular mention.

'Reducing the strength'

Wirral's alcohol related issues have led to a coming together of key stakeholders as part of a 'Reducing the Strength' campaign for Wirral.

Cheap 'Super Strength' products (stronger than 6.5% ABV) have been shown to be particularly attractive to young drinkers and street drinkers as a fast and cheap route to intoxication, notwithstanding all the related risk of harm in terms of individual health and wider community impacts e.g. anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Wirral Council's Public Health team has engaged with other local authority colleagues such as constituency committees, licencing and trading standards alongside other key partners including the police to work towards the gradual removal of super strength, cheap beers and ciders from sale by the borough's off-licences. This is achieved by encouraging and supporting off-licence owners to enter into voluntary agreements (preferably recorded in minor licence variations at no cost to themselves) not to sell these products.

Similarly run campaigns in places such as Ipswich have demonstrated how this approach can effectively reduce street drinking, ASB and other crime. Also, the way more and more licenced premises steadily joined in the Ipswich campaign as it progressed (from 53 at launch to 94 by twelve months later) strongly suggests it is not injurious to business and profit.

Plans are now being cemented for two areas; one in Birkenhead and one in Wallasey to pilot this work in Wirral. Measureable expectations from this work include:

- decreases in street drinking incidents
- decreases in anti-social behaviour
- increases in problem drinkers engaging with services

Eat Well Wirral and Takeaway for a Change

These sister projects designed and implemented by the Environmental Health Team, with support from Public Health are based around Rock Ferry Primary School and Children's Centre. Local takeaways agreed to offer healthier versions of their standard meals and families received vouchers to test them out. 167 families took part and feedback from participants and takeaway showed that the healthier menus proved a 'winner' with local people.

Eat Well Wirral is a complementary initiative based on a three level award scheme for fast food retailers. Takeaways can aim for a bronze, silver or gold award by switching to smaller portion sizes, increasing vegetables, reducing salt and sugar, opting for healthier fats and improved frying techniques. In return for free, positive publicity participating takeaways enable customers to automatically opt into making healthier fast food choices.

'The illicit tobacco project'

This project is undertaken by the Trading Standards team and aims to regulate and restrict the supply of tobacco products and decrease demand for illegal and illicit tobacco. This is by:

- Providing training to retailers on the risks and penalties associated with the sale of illegal/illicit tobacco.
- Carrying out underage test purchasing exercises with retailers in areas of deprivation.
- Increasing awareness of legislation amongst retailers of niche tobacco products (i.e. smokeless tobacco products such as chewing tobacco and nasal snuff and smoked tobacco products such as water pipe/shisha/hookah).

As resources are targeted in areas of high deprivation where illegal and illicit trade is most prevalent, the project will therefore address health inequalities and has an important part to play in safeguarding those who are most vulnerable to the illicit trade. Illicit tobacco trading creates a temptingly cheap supply for children and young people and encourages adults to continue smoking. It is also linked to organised crime and contributes to an underground economy worth hundreds of millions of pounds. Cancer Research UK estimates that it is a scourge which kills four times more people than smuggled illegal drugs⁵.

What more can be done?

Partnership working between Public Health and other services that also have a duty to protect health has great potential. The development of multi-agency Health Protection forums in local authorities can be a catalyst for more professional joint working cross-over. Progress can be made using two main approaches. Firstly, work in co-operation with existing retailers to reduce health-damaging effects, which can involve award schemes as well as the use of statutory powers where necessary. Secondly, there may be potential to use planning and licensing policies to take greater account of the health impacts associated with applications for new businesses such as takeaways or off licences in areas where these types of establishments are already well represented and health is poor.

Where should we go from here?

1. Continue joined up working between Public Health, Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing. Future areas of joint working could include protecting people from financial risks e.g. loan sharks, doorstep sales, gambling outlets
2. It is a fact of life that people will want to consume fast food. Continuing the work of Eat Well Wirral and Takeaway for a Change reduces some of the health risks associated with this. Future work with parents and schools could further reduce the amount of fast foods and sugary drinks children consume during the school day. The section on spatial planning also highlights potential to curtail proliferations of takeaways using planning policy.
3. Consider the results of Public Health England's planned review of evidence for the inclusion of health as a licensing objective for applications to sell alcohol. This would further enhance the promising work being done within the 'Reducing the Strength' campaign
4. The potential to build on the health promoting work already undertaken by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service should also be explored

1. Public Health England (2014) *Obesity and the environment: regulating the growth of fast food outlets* www.apho.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=134605
2. Public Health England (2014) *Local authority liver disease profiles*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-launches-local-authority-liver-disease-profiles>
3. Beynon and Hungeford (2012) *The burden of liver disease and inequalities in the North West of England*
<http://www.bsg.org.uk/sections/liver-news/burden-of-liver-disease-and-inequalities-in-the-north-west-of-england.html>
4. Buck and Frosini (2012) *Clustering of unhealthy behaviours: implications for policy and practice*
<http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/clustering-unhealthy-behaviours-over-time>
5. West R (2008) *Why combating tobacco smuggling is a priority* *British Medical Journal*; 337: a 1993



Health and Spatial Planning



How does spatial planning affect health?

The scope of council planning services is wide-ranging, from spatial planning and regeneration, to building and development control, cultural services and licensing.

Because planning processes are concerned with places they often involve close working with other powerful stakeholders such as leaders from economic regeneration and employment, housing, roads and transport, parks and leisure services and communities themselves. In this context, the potential to enable or erode health opportunities in the places where we live, work and play should not be underestimated. This is reflected in governmental guidance on developing local plans, which advises planners to work collaboratively with Public Health colleagues¹.

How does spatial planning impact health? Regeneration schemes and new housing or business developments create opportunities to build more health promoting environments where the healthy choice becomes the easy choice. Obvious examples would be the layout of footpaths and transport links to encourage active travel, adequate provision of play areas for families and the deliberate inclusion of high quality shared

spaces that link neighbourhoods together and promote a deeper sense of community belonging and inclusivity. Integrated planning also helps to put people within easy reach of the things they need to live well, e.g. jobs, shops, schools, health services, community groups, green space and leisure. Removing barriers to access such as distance, travel costs or fear of crime is one way of improving health and life chances, especially for people living in deprived communities.

An added advantage is that health benefits tend to follow initiatives to increase environmental sustainability and reduce the impact of climate change, such as investing in energy efficient homes. Furthermore, because this type of work is levelled at whole communities rather than individuals, the health return on investment is impressive. NICE found that for each £1 invested in spatial planning policies concerned with walkability, there was a health benefit valued at £60, rising to £168 for cycling².

The picture in Wirral

Wirral in numbers

- Population approximately 320,000
- 9th largest Council in England
- 10th worst district in England for employment-related deprivation
- 1 in 3 of adults in employment work outside the borough
- 1 in 5 houses built before 1919
- Difference in life expectancy between least and most deprived: 12 years for men, 10 years for women
- 55% land use is classified urban and 45% greenbelt
- 25 conservation areas
- 710 listed buildings

What are we already doing?

In a similar way to Public Health, spatial planning takes the 'long view' on change and development. The Core Strategy sets down the Council's vision of what sustainable development should like over the coming 10 to 15 years, and incorporates feedback from extensive consultation³. Due to its broad scope, this framework lights on many of the issues discussed elsewhere in this report, and affirms priorities such as the regeneration of run-down urban areas, increased social inclusion, tackling poverty and worklessness through economic revitalisation, and improving the quality of housing and neighbourhood environments.

The planning perspective mirrors Public Health thinking on several fronts. For example, the central commitment to

target development and investment at those 'areas of greatest need' relates strongly to inequalities in health and opportunity. The emphasis on working with Wirral's existing built, environmental and economic assets, e.g. green space and coastline is another shared priority. There are also explicit references to the creation of health promoting environments e.g. the role of transport infrastructure.

The most transformative changes will arise out of the large-scale regeneration at Wirral Waters, which will include the creation of a new city neighbourhood at East Float and the transformation of Birkenhead town centre and three partnership neighbourhoods. As one of the largest regeneration schemes of its type, Wirral Waters is expected to attract £4.5 billion of private sector investment and create 21,000 jobs.

The new New Brighton

The redevelopment at Marine Point has seen New Brighton recapture the vibrancy of its heyday and become a major retail and leisure destination in Wirral and beyond. The total investment amounted to £60 million, including £11 million to transform the Floral Pavillion into a 1,000 seat theatre and conference centre, which attracts 300,000 visitors a year. Elsewhere, families flock to the digital Light cinema and ever-popular soft play centre or spend a more traditional day at the seaside. 700 new jobs, 14 new businesses and a dramatically different atmosphere and appearance have led to an additional £6 million spend in the local economy. Still to come are 24 new apartments and £1.3 million destined to further improve public areas.

Port Sunlight River Park

The efforts of a broad family of partners have led to the successful regeneration of an old landfill site on the waterfront at Bromborough. The beautiful 28 hectare park stands out in the local landscape and offers magnificent views across to the Liverpool skyline and birdlife on the nearby saltmarsh. For the first time in a generation, the coastline linking Port Sunlight, Bromborough and New Ferry is fully accessible and the local area has received an economic boost since the river park was opened.

What more can be done?

Health impact assessment is a framework to systematically evaluate how a planning development or policy will affect the health of local people. HIA recommendations are aimed at making the most of the health promoting aspects and minimising or even removing unhealthy impacts. Building HIA into strategic planning is an excellent first step, but an even stronger approach is to start by understanding local public health priorities. This approach genuinely recognises a commitment to actively invest in the health and happiness of local people. Pioneering approaches such as the 'healthy streets' model can be used to take a fresh look at the small changes that make a difference to people's health on the streets where they live⁴.

Creating a closer working relationship between Council Planning and Public Health teams is an important first step. Access to team members with dual professional knowledge makes joint working more efficient and effective. However, fully exploring the possibilities also requires closer relationships between leaders from public health, spatial planning, housing, transport and environmental health. To inspire this new way of working, the King's Fund report looks to recent joint policy publications like Public Health England's 'Planning Healthier Places'^{5,6,7} which uses case studies to highlight where and how Public Health teams and their colleagues can begin to work more effectively. Well known examples include the stance adopted by Waltham Forest Council, stating that,

“planning permission will not usually be granted for Class A5 shops which fall within a 10 minute walking distance (~400m) from the boundary of either a school... youth facility... or parks”

This has already resulted in 8 out of 10 fast food outlet applications being refused⁸. St Helen’s Council has also produced its own supplementary planning document on hot food takeaways. So-called cumulative impact approaches have also attracted attention from areas experiencing the health and social effects of problem-drinking.

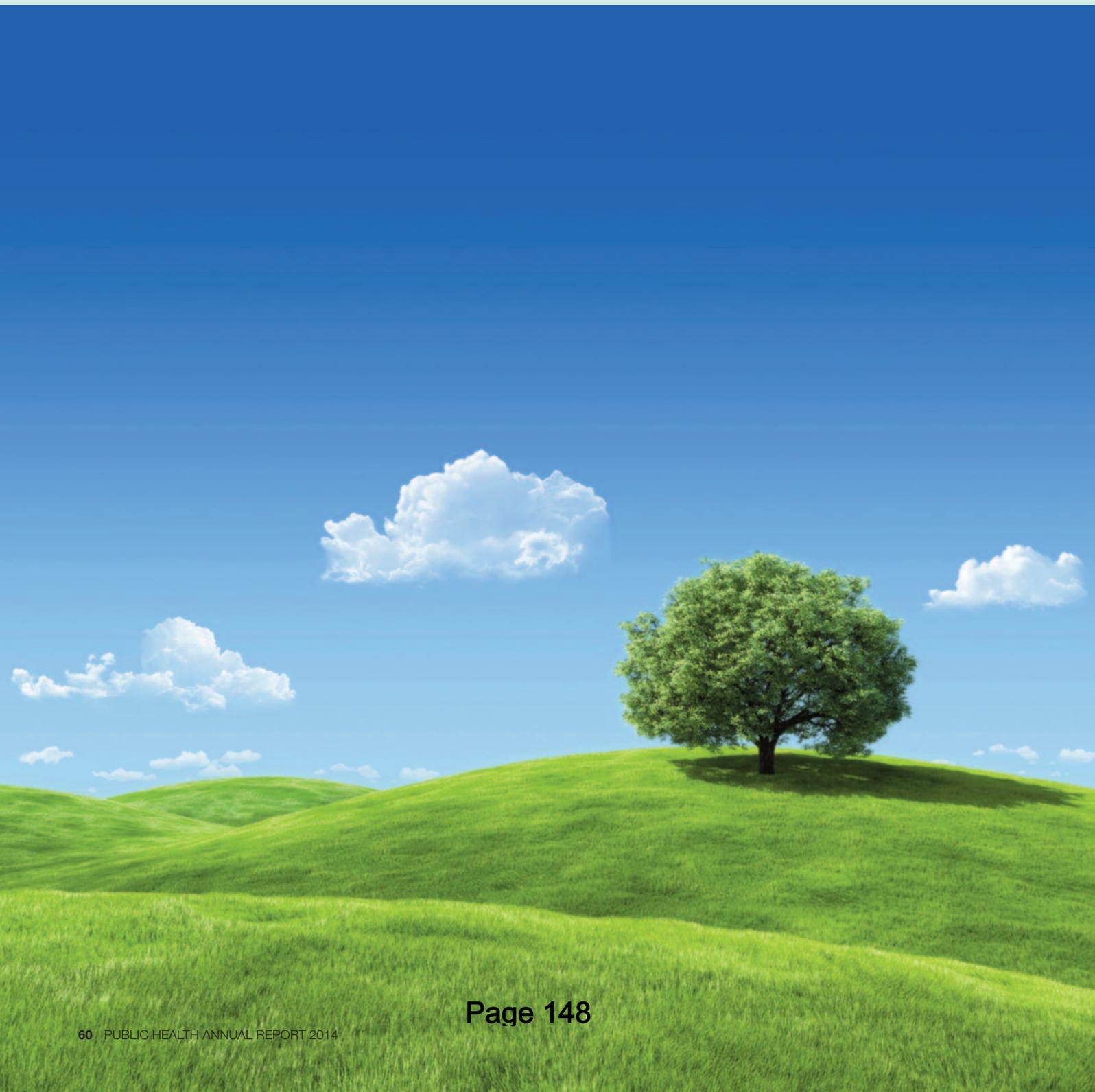
Where should we go from here?

1. Public Health should support the planning process through closer working.
2. As a starting point greater use can be made of the growing literature on planning healthy places, but action may also be required to address gaps in knowledge and skills that could be a barrier to truly effective inter-disciplinary working.
3. Examples of the successful use of planning policy to limit excessive concentrations of fast food outlets, such as that adopted by Waltham Forest Council should be studied to see how this might work locally.

1. *Planning practice guidance: plan making; local plans*
<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/plan-making/>
2. Powell et al (2011) *Review 7 Spatial Planning & Health: The cost-effectiveness of integrating health into the planning process. Decision models of the additional costs and benefits of integrating health into spatial planning appraisal and development.*
<http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=106103>
3. *Wirral Council Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy, 2012*
<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/environment-and-planning/planning/local-development-framework/core-strategy-development-plan>
4. *Transport for London (2014) Improving the Health of Londoners Transport Action Plan Healthy Streets*
<https://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/improving-the-health-of-londoners-transport-action-plan.pdf>
5. *Ross and Chang (2013) Planning Healthier Places - Report from the Reuniting Health with Planning Project*
www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Planning_Healthier_Places.pdf
6. *The Marmot Review: implications for Spatial Planning. The Marmot Review Team (2011).* <http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=106106>
7. *Spatial Planning and Health Group (2011) ‘Steps to Healthy Planning: Proposals for Action’* http://www.spahg.org.uk/?page_id=194
8. *London Health Commission (2014) Better Health for London* <http://www.londonhealthcommission.org.uk/better-health-for-london/>



Looking back, moving forward



Continuing action on social isolation in Wirral.

Last year's Public Health Annual Report on social isolation has become one of the most talked about in recent years. Social isolation and chronic loneliness are now firmly recognised as important risk factors for poor health and strike a deep chord with all of us.

Posing the question, 'everyone's responsibility?', the last Public Health Annual Report clearly spelled out why this issue should be a target for action not just in the Council, but across wider public, private and third sector partners and Wirral communities.

In order to bring focus and clarity to the task ahead the report concluded with six recommendations. Each of these is revisited below with examples of local initiatives that show how far we have already come, and the potential to do much more.

- *Individuals within local communities should be encouraged to take some responsibility for identifying, 'reaching out' supporting potentially isolated people within their own communities*

For anyone looking for an opportunity to invest some of their own time in tackling social isolation locally Community Action Wirral helps to put would-be volunteers in touch with local groups and activities, many of which have a specific focus on addressing social isolation, for example support for carers, help following bereavement or befriending. The associated website WirralWell.org receives 2,300 'hits' a month, can be translated into nine languages and lists over 1,000 different groups and activities.

Advocacy in Wirral supports people experiencing issues with their mental health, drugs or alcohol. The Women's Mental Health Peer support group is now thriving and offers dependable, friendly support to women at drop-in sessions, and also organises outings. The group recognises that when people are living with isolation every day, taking the first step and simply sitting alongside people who understand can deliver a powerful boost to wellbeing.

Another example of a self-starting initiative that is continuing to grow is 'Soup n Support'. Based at West Kirby Methodist Church, Soup n Support is a monthly lunch for carers. Coming together for just a couple of hours helps attendees take a break from the physical and emotional isolation that around half of all carers experience. There are talks from services that offer carer support, but often it is simply having the space, time and understanding to offload and re-energise that means the most.

- *The newly emerging constituency committees should play a crucial role in identifying 'community connectors' who could identify potentially isolated or vulnerable people within their neighbourhoods*

Neighbourhood managers have also taken steps to actively promote action to reduce social isolation, with notable campaigns in Wallasey and Birkenhead. In Wirral West the onset of the cold winter weather was accompanied by the launch of the 'Stay Safe, Warm and Well' project, which uses staff and volunteers from organisations such as Age UK Wirral and Magenta Living to reach out to vulnerable, often isolated older people to supply warm clothing, blankets, health checks and information on staying safe and warm throughout the winter. Elsewhere, Age UK has also been promoting its Friends in Action service for people aged 50 and over, which offers a combination of practical support and befriending, using local volunteers.

- *All frontline health and social care workers should, as part of their daily work, become aware of the dangers of social isolation and find ways to connect people to activities or organisations that can help*

Health and social care services often work with people who may have become isolated. Giving frontline staff the skills and information to help people reconnect is one important way of turning the tide of social isolation.

Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (WUTH) recently held a social isolation event for trustees. The afternoon was led by WUTH's chairman Michael Carr, with Director of Public Health, Fiona Johnstone providing the keynote speech. The occasion was an opportunity for local groups and services

to showcase their work on social isolation and to build links with one another. Attendees heard from representatives of groups set up to support people with learning difficulties, carers, ex-seamen, men, older people, and people affected by stroke. The hospital's matron for Older People's services, Margaret Davies spoke about isolation as a key feature of dementia and highlighted the success of Arrowe Park Hospital's innovative 'Memories café'.

Other examples of organisations seeking to offer more when it comes to identifying and reducing social isolation come from within Wirral's Integrated Recovery Drug and Alcohol service, where staff have received training to promote the many health and wellbeing related activities offered by the Livewell service. Advocacy in Wirral has also developed a network of 'recovery mentors' who work within GP practices to identify people whose mental health is affected by their isolation and assisting them to get in touch with local support and social activities.

- *Health impact assessments should be carried out by all commissioning organisations on any proposed service development in order to assess the potential impact on social isolation for vulnerable groups*

Community Action Wirral's Outreach team has conducted a comprehensive piece of research into the positive impact of Wirral's network of luncheon clubs. These currently reach an estimated 1,600, mostly older people and often supply advice, support and onward referral in addition to tasty food and good company. Unsurprisingly, feeling less isolated was reported as a major benefit by regular visitors at lunch clubs. However, lunch clubs now face significant challenges to their sustainability e.g. sufficient volunteers, and rising costs of food and venues, and these are addressed with specific recommendations.

- *Statutory, voluntary and community organisations and groups must work together to ensure that community capacity is built through programmes such as Asset Based Community Development(ABCD)*

Wirral can take pride in its many new and ongoing grassroots initiatives to tackle social isolation. These are great examples of assets-based working, harnessing the energy and talents that already exist in our communities (see the 'strong communities' section of this report). Examples range from the faith-based, for example TLC (Tea, Listening and Company) at Christ Church Moreton, and the Jireh Community Project in Bebington; to groups united by a shared experience, such as AMMO (All Military Members Organisation) or West Kirby Self-Help Support Group for people with mental health problems; to community projects that generate a spirit of collective endeavour; for example the Joseph Mayer Community Partnership, which is working

to redevelop Bebington's Joseph Mayer Buildings for the use of local people.

- *Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Board should ensure that the recommended actions to address social isolation contained within separate local strategies, e.g. Wirral Carers strategy and the Wirral Ethnic Health Advisory Group strategy, are joined up where it is sensible and practical to do so*

We are currently reviewing the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and will look to ensure this recommendation is visible in the future approach.

By its nature social isolation is often hard to spot and easy to overlook; the rise in awareness and proliferation of local initiatives are very positive, but now is not the time to rest on our laurels. The problem of social isolation in Wirral needs to stay in the spotlight - 'what can I do?' and 'what can my organisation do?' are questions we must continue to ask.

There is no simple 'fix' to social isolation. We are choosing to develop our work on this using systems leadership and social movement approaches, which will build on assets, existing schemes and the enthusiasm of those who recognise the need for strengthened community resilience.

Sources of further help and information

Advocacy in Wirral

Offers advice, support and representation to people in Wirral with mental health problems.

www.aiw.org.uk

0151 650 1530

Age UK Wirral

Provides advice, services and support to make life easier for older people.

www.ageuk.org.uk/wirral

Advice hotline: 0300 3330 0111

All Military Members Organisation (AMMO)

Provides support and activities to Wirral's military veterans.

www.recoverywirral.com

Advice hotline: 0151 649 0138

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

Support for men of any age, who are down or in crisis via a helpline and website.

www.thecalmzone.net

0800 58 58 58

Campaign to End Loneliness

Draws on research and inspiration from across the UK to offer ideas to both individuals and those working with older people.

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org

020 7012 1409

Carers Trust

Information, advice and practical support for carers.

www.carers.org

0844 800 4361

CAW (Community Action Wirral)

Offers a wide range of support to all voluntary, community and faith organisations working in Wirral.

www.communityactionwirral.org.uk

0151 353 9700

Childrens Centres

Local centres providing childcare, family support and a range of parent and toddler activities.

www.wirral.gov.uk

0151 606 2000

Connexions

Independent information, advice, guidance and support service for all young people aged 13 to 19.

www.connexionslive.com

0800 0126 606

Contact a Family

Support for the families of disabled children.

www.cafamily.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 808 3555

Cruse

Offers information and support to people after the death of someone close.

helpline@cruse.org.uk

0844 477 9400

Healthwatch Wirral www.healthwatchwirral.co.uk
Healthwatch Wirral is there to make sure local peoples' views on health and social care services are heard. 0151 230 8957

Home-Start Wirral www.homestartwirral.co.uk
Home-based friendship and support to families on Wirral as part of a wider network of Home-Start schemes nationally and internationally. 0151 647 8369

Irish Community Care Merseyside www.iccm.org.uk
ICCM is a charity, which offers and develops culturally sensitive services for the Irish community. 0151 237 3987

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) www.info@wirral.nhs.uk
The source of evidence that underpins the report.

Listening Ear www.listeningearmerseyside.org.uk
A bereavement service specialising in services for people who have experience of particularly traumatic losses, for example from suicide. 0151 488 6648

Merseyside Society for Deaf People www.msdp.org.uk
Support to help deaf, deafened and deaf/blind people to live more independently. 0151 228 0888

Puffell www.puffell.com
Puffell is an online community that helps people connect to support and encourage one another as they work towards goals to improve health, wellbeing and happiness.

The Quays Project www.aiw.org.uk
AiW also runs The Quays Project, which offers advice and support to anyone whose life has been affected by alcohol or substance misuse. 0151 649 0138

RASA www.rasamerseyside.org
RASA provide specialist support and counselling to victims of sexual violence. 0151 633 2151

The Right Side of Care www.therightsideofcare.com
The online resource for all Looked After Children in Wirral. All the information you need to help you understand the process in one place.

Samaritans A 24-hour confidential telephone helpline.	www.samaritans.org 08457 90 90 90
Support Line Confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults.	www.supportline.org.uk Helpline: 01708 765 200
Teen Wirral Website that brings together a variety of information and advice for teenagers.	www.teenwirral.com
Time bank A national charity that supports individuals and businesses with volunteering.	www.timebank.org.uk 020 3111 0700
Tomorrow's Women Wirral Tomorrow's Women is a charity whose aim is to reduce female imprisonment, offending and to provide support and assistance to women who want to make positive lifestyle changes.	www.tomorrowswomenwirral.org.uk 0151 647 7907
University of the Third Age Lifelong learning co-operatives for older people no longer in full time work, providing opportunities for shared learning experiences in a wide range of interest groups and to pursue learning not for qualifications, but for fun.	www.u3a.org.uk 020 8466 6139
Vision 2018 Vision 2018 is the plan to re-shape health services and social care in Wirral, whilst supporting people to take more responsibility for looking after their own health. You can find out more on the Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group's website.	www.wirralccg.nhs.uk 0151 651 0011
Wirral Carers A source of information about organisations and services that can support carers.	www.wirralcarers.co.uk Helpline: 0151 670 0777
Wirral Change A black and racial minorities outreach service.	www.wirralchange.org.uk 0151 649 8177
Wirral Hospice St John's Wirral Hospice St John's provides Specialist Palliative Care and support for patients with severe and progressive disease, where curative treatment is no longer possible.	www.wirralhospice.org 0151 334 2778

Wirral Information Resource for Equality and Disability (WIRED)	www.wired.me.uk
An organisation of and for disabled people and carers that provides a range of services to people, acts as an umbrella organisation for other local disability groups and promotes the inclusion of disabled people into society.	0844 880 1500
Wirral Integrated Recovery Service	www.cri.org.uk/wirral
Offers a full range of support to people who are experiencing problems with any substances, including 'legal highs', other drugs and alcohol dependency.	0151 556 1335
Wirral leisure centres	www.wirral.gov.uk
	0151 606 2000
Wirral libraries	www.wirral.gov.uk
	0151 606 2000
Wirral MIND	www.wirralmind.org.uk
Advice and support for anyone with a mental health problem.	0151 512 2200
Wirral Multicultural Organisation	www.wmo.org.uk
Advice, information and support to members of Wirral's BME communities.	0151 666 4547
Wirral Pathfinders	www.wirralpathfinders.org.uk
A self help group, providing support for anxiety and depression sufferers and their families.	0151 334 2111
Wirral Society for Blind and partially sighted	www.wirralsociety.org.uk
Offers help, support and advice to those with serious sight problems in Wirral.	0151 652 8877
Wirralwell	www.wirralwell.org
An online and telephone directory for health, social care, wellbeing and events, groups and activities.	0151 638 9179
Wirral Women and Children's Aid	www.wirralwomensrefuge.co.uk
A refuge for women and their children who need a place of safety.	Helpline: 0151 643 9766

