



HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

DATE: 3 NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT TITLE	HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT
REPORT OF	DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

Good employment opportunities are a fundamental part of our collective effort to improve health outcomes. As well as being vital to individual health, an economically active population enables sustainable economically prosperous communities.

Unemployment and health related worklessness have presented longstanding challenges within the borough. The pandemic has amplified these challenges resulting in a fall in employment and increased health related inactivity. The Public Health Annual Report 2020/2021 recognises these challenges and advocates for a strong local economy that improves the public's health.

The impact of the pandemic on employment and health has yet to be fully understood. Emerging experiences and evidence from services working with local residents is presented to the Board and will be used to develop plans to respond to the 2021 Public Health Annual Report recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note the report and supporting presentation contained in Appendix 1.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The relationship between employment and health is well established and was highlighted in the recently published Public Health Annual Report. The presentation provided to the Board offers an overview of emerging issues in relation to health and employment following the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights work being carried out across Wirral to respond to these issues.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 This report provides the Health and Wellbeing Board with an overview of emerging issues for information. Long term service plans need to be developed responding to the associated demands arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In June 2021 the Health and Wellbeing Board received a report on work to improve health through employment highlighting challenges for Wirral and action to address them. The global COVID-19 pandemic has compounded these challenges and further highlighted the need to augment work that supports people to enter the job market and maintain economic independence for themselves and their families. The significance of this on health and health inequalities is reported in the recently published Public Health Annual Report 2020/2021 which recommends that *“Employment support services and skills development programmes are available, accessible and sustainable to ensure income maximisation and support those most susceptible to job loss and job insecurity”*.
- 3.2 COVID-19 has had a profound effect on the UK labour market. Many workers have been furloughed and unemployment is likely to rise materially over the next year following the cessation of the furlough scheme on 30th September 2021 and as businesses recover. The latest data showed that at the point of the furlough scheme ending Wirral had around 6,500 employees on furlough, whilst it is unclear how many of these have returned to their existing employer, we are expecting local services to see an influx of new jobseekers. This compounds many existing issues making it difficult for those furthest from the labour market and excluded groups who are now competing against those recently unemployed who may be more ‘job ready’.
- 3.3 The unemployment rate took seven years to return to pre-recession levels after the past two recessions and the expected rate could take even longer as uncertainty about future demand, could cause firms to delay hiring decisions. The impact of COVID-19 is different in nature to past impacts on unemployment levels, COVID-19 has led to greater uncertainty about the economic outlook and the likelihood of finding a job. Being in good employment protects health, while unemployment, particularly long- term unemployment, contributes significantly to poor health. The broader strategy for the economy and our regeneration plans is therefore integral to our efforts to address existing health inequalities within the borough, as reflected in

the Public Health Annual Report 2020/2021, and the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- 3.4 In addition to the impact of the pandemic there are several national policy changes which will affect both working and unemployed households this autumn. From 6th September 2021 claimants who receive Universal Credit will lose £80 per month or £1035pa, due to the temporary COVID uplift payment ending, it will affect different people at different times due to the nature of the way the benefit is paid, but by November will be affecting all claimants. Research from Policy in Practice shows that 225,000 households nationally will be unable to meet essential costs at the point their benefit is reduced.
- 3.5 For those in employment, the rise in the National Insurance (NI) contribution scheme for workers and employers is a further loss of income and may deter some employers from recruiting new staff as well as rationalising their workforce. Those people who are in receipt of working tax credit will also lose the easement, which has allowed them to work less than 16 hours and still receive their tax credit payments, this is likely to force more people to move to Universal Credit, in most cases this means they will be much worse off than on the more generous tax credits package. The grace period that was provided to people making a new claim in 2020 of not having their benefit reduced due to the benefit cap, will now have this restriction applied, again removing some income from their benefit. Families with two or more children will be amongst those most affected.
- 3.6 In August 2021, Government released an Open Consultation for ‘Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper. The consultation asks for views on how the Government can help people to live more independently, including support to start, stay and succeed in work and ways we can improve the experience people have of the benefits system.

Local services to support people into employment

- 3.7 Local services, including Community Connectors and Reach Out delivered by Involve North West, continue to respond to supporting local people and their families and will be an invaluable resource for local communities as they begin to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The table below details the current Council investment into these programmes.

Commissioned Service	Investment	Funding Source	Contract Expiry
Connect Us	£717,121	Public Health	Feb 2023 (option of additional +1, +1)
(extra investment in programme- further 22 connectors to support COVID)	£598,881	Tier 3 COVID monies	March 2022
Reach Out	£1,450,500	European Social Fund- £934,766.67	October 2022

		Public Health- £515,733.33	
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- 3.8 The Reach Out project within the Wirral Ways to Work Programme, is part of the wider Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Ways to Work Programme. This programme is European Social Fund (ESF) funded and is the City Region's flagship employment support programme with all six local authorities delivering it since 2016.
- 3.9 Connect Us is a Council commissioned service, currently employing 48 connectors to work across all wards in Wirral. Originally commissioned to address high levels of health related worklessness in the borough, the aim of this service is to engage the disengaged through door knocking in communities to tackle social isolation and promote active inclusion to improve mental health and wellbeing. Community Connectors provide outreach and one to one support to individuals to encourage greater access to social groups and activities within the community and mainstream services. The service works with individuals and communities building trust and coaching individuals to be the best that they can be. An independent evaluation carried out by John Moore's University evidenced the contribution the service makes to improving outcomes for local people, including supporting people to gain secure and stable housing, improving relationships with family members, accessing volunteering and employment opportunities, and providing debt and benefits advice.
- 3.10 The Combined Authority recently conducted research as part of their submission to the Health Foundation for their 'Economies for Healthier Lives' bid, which aims to improve how employment and health services work together. Within the research service users were asked about their experiences of accessing health and employment services and the barriers people report facing related to health when trying to find work were as follows:
- Personal fears (whether founded or not) to do with how they would be perceived and judged
 - Structural issues with application processes, general processes, and organisation policies and insurance
 - Societal barriers in the form of lack of knowledge and understand of health issues within companies, employment support, and the general population
 - Cultural barriers within organisations over aspects such as flexible working opportunities, and 'outsider'/'insider' mentality i.e. fitting in with the organisations 'culture' and 'norms'
 - Economic barriers such as lack of part-time opportunities within the area or insufficient financial support when not employed by an employer
- 3.11 Those with long term health conditions (likely to last 12 months or more) report to having faced these barriers more than those without. Many of the health conditions reported are unseen conditions such as mental health.
- 3.12 As the evidence of the effect of the pandemic starts to emerge and evolve the Board is presented with the experiences from these local services and service users to highlight key issues and will be used to develop plans in response to the 2021 Public Health Annual Report recommendations.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The services described in this report and the work they do is currently funded and commissioned, some are resourced from European Grant Funding (ESF) which will cease after 2023, and or short-term Council funding. Long term funding solutions need to be identified.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 This report and work referenced within it has been developed by public health and investment teams working collaboratively. There are long term risks in relation to recurrent funding and therefore the sustainability of the work referenced within this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Some of the services described within this report are currently commissioned for a specified period using grants and or other short-term funding. They are not therefore secured for the longer term, which places a great risk on services for unemployed residents in the borough.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 No public engagement or consultation has been undertaken in relation to this report. However, the schemes of work referenced within the report engage with services users to inform delivery and development.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

9.2 We have used the Wirral Growth Plan EIA and Community Connectors recommission EIA as part of our assessments. You will find both on the link below. They have both been reviewed and no material changes have been made in respect of this report <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 No direct climate implications.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** The report describes the symbiotic relationship between the economy and health. The Community Wealth Building Strategy makes an important contribution to improving economic, social and health outcomes of the borough and reducing disparities in health. The work outlined in this report recommendations will contribute to the aspirations outlined in the Community Wealth Building Strategy.

REPORT AUTHOR: *Rachael Musgrave*
Assistant Director: Consultant in Public Health
telephone: (0151 666 5164)
email: rachaelmusgrave@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PRESENTATION FROM INVOLVE NORTH WEST

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1) Wirral Economy Strategy (2021)
- 2) Public Health Annual Report 2020/2021 Embracing Optimism: Living with Covid-19.
- 3) Timpson et al (2019) An Evaluation of the Wirral Health-Related Worklessness Programme Executive Summary. Liverpool John Moores, Public Health Institute
- 4) Wirral Council (2021) ReachOut Project Evaluation.
- 5) Wirral Intelligence Service (2021) Wirral JSNA. Economy, Business and Skills
<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/this-is-wirral/economy-business-and-skills/>
- 6) ONS (2020) Deaths involving COVID-19 by local area and socioeconomic deprivation: deaths occurring between 1 March and 31 July 2020
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsinvolvingcovid19bylocalareasanddeprivation/deathsoccurringbetween1marchand31july2020>
- 7) HM Government (2021) Build Back Better: our plan for growth
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth>
- 8) Health Equity Institute (2020) Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On
<https://www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/the-marmot-review-10-years-on>
- 9) HM Government (2019) Public Health England. Health Matters: Health and Work.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-health-and-work/health-matters-health-and-work#how-phe-can-support-you>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Health & Wellbeing Board	16 June 2021
Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee	7 th June 2021