

# Embracing Optimism

Living with COVID-19

**Director of Public Health for Wirral**

Annual Report 2020-2021



# What a year it's been...

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In January 2020 Wirral became one of the first places in the world to respond to COVID-19 when we hosted British residents repatriated from Wuhan, China. Since then, we have all worked hard together to **Keep Wirral Well**.

Although COVID-19 has been the biggest health challenge to affect us all for generations, many of the enduring health problems we faced before the pandemic have worsened as a result.

Whilst the pandemic has touched us all, some people have felt the impact of the virus and the measures to control it more than others. It has also showed us how valuable our health is and how staying healthy protects us all.



**Julie Webster**  
**Director of Public Health**

# Same Virus

## Different Struggles

**The pandemic held up a mirror to the existing health, economic and social inequalities in our borough.**

COVID-19 has made these differences worse, and the heaviest impacts have fallen on the lives of people who are already experiencing health, economic and social inequalities.

These differences are the most significant health challenge in Wirral. They impact on the quality of people's lives; the way residents use services and how individuals and the economy prosper.

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# Health inequalities in Wirral

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Health inequalities are ultimately about differences in the status of people's health. They occur due to factors often outside of people's direct control and as a result people can experience systematic, unfair, and avoidable differences in their health, the care they receive and the opportunities they have to lead healthy lives.

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Research has shown that health inequalities occur because of the different conditions into which we are born, grow, live, work and age.

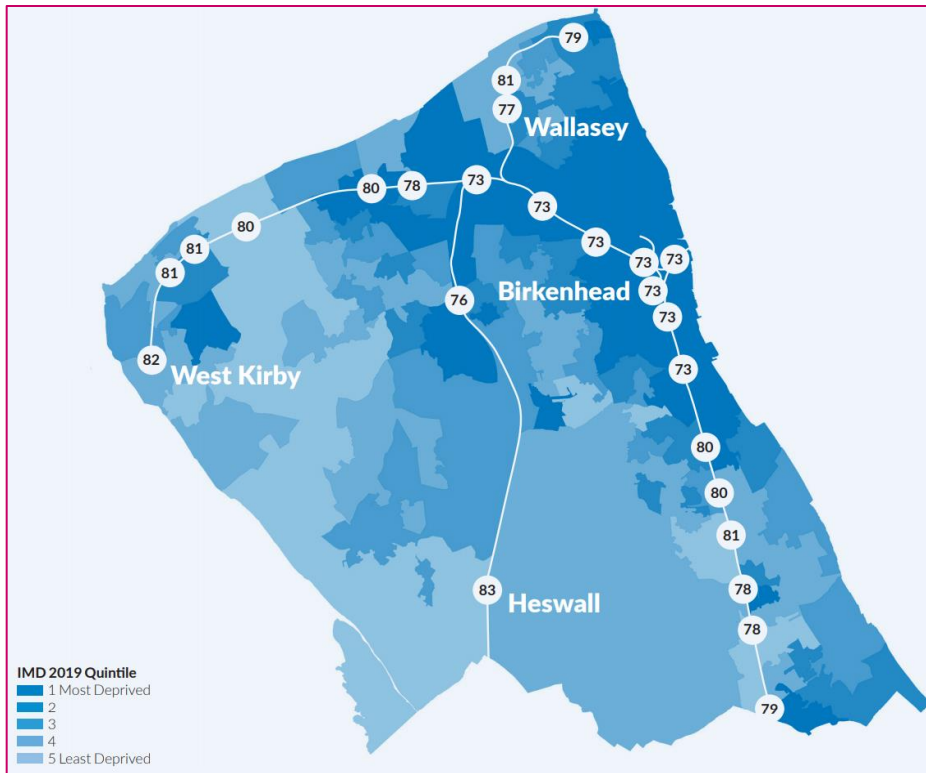
This diagram shows how these factors interact.

The Dahlgren and Whitehead Health Determinants Model (1991)

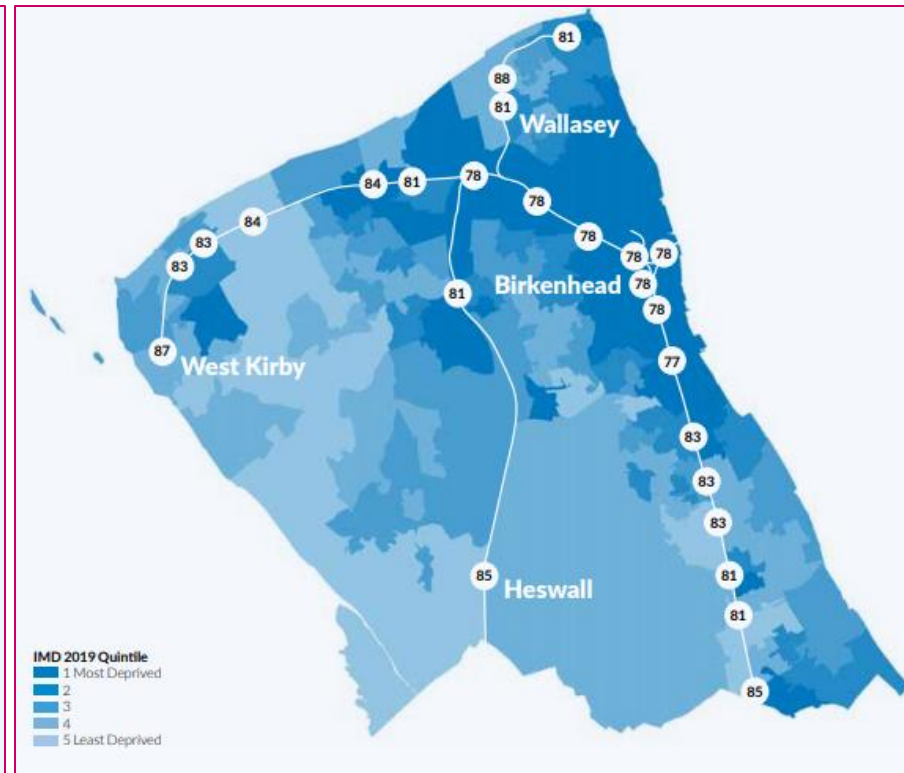


# Life Expectancy by Ward

Health inequalities can be measured in many different ways. As a key measure of a population's health status life expectancy is one of the foremost measures of health inequality



Male Life Expectancy at Birth



Female Life Expectancy at Birth

# Wirral life course statistics 2021

## A comparison to England

There are many reasons why people do not have the same experience of health as others. The places we live and work, the people we know and how we live all affect our health and wellbeing.

This diagram details how some of these factors affect the health of Wirral residents throughout their life.



# What do we do about it?

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We have made great progress in supporting people to live healthier lives. However, health inequalities are stubbornly persistent.

Crucially we are presented with the opportunity to reduce the gap in health between our communities and the rest of England or face the possibility that failure to act together, and at pace, increases poor health in Wirral.

Tackling health inequalities will benefit every resident of Wirral. The pandemic has shown us what we can achieve when we all work together and the speed at which we can make change happen.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, and reduce health inequalities in Wirral

1

Prioritise economic regeneration and a strong local economy

2

Safeguard a healthy standard of living for all

3

Increase support for children, young people and families

4

Strengthen action to address differences in health outcomes and prevention

5

Residents and partners continue to work together



# 1. Prioritise economic regeneration and a strong local economy

## I recommend that:

- Economic development plans are reviewed to ensure that they respond to the impact of the pandemic on residents and communities.
- Economic Regeneration and Development Committee, working with the Health and Wellbeing Board, should consider the development of an Economic Inequalities Strategy for Wirral.
- 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.
- Partners embed a 'Health in All' policies approach to regeneration planning. We can use this approach to ensure that the wide breadth of health impacts of the pandemic is part of routine decision making and to reduce health inequalities.



## 2. Safeguard a healthy standard of living for all

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### I recommend that:

- Wirral's Housing Strategy is reviewed to reflect the changing needs of residents and to address the challenges that have emerged during the pandemic.
- There is an integrated information and advice offer to enable people to access support when they need it.
- Build on the progress made during the pandemic to support people who are homeless.
- Define and streamline fuel poverty support pathways with partners across Wirral learning from COVID response.
- Relevant partners utilise Health Impact Assessment in spatial planning to identify risks to health and ways to mitigate them.



### 3. Increase support for children, young people and families

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I recommend that:

- The impacts of the pandemic on our young people are examined to ensure that children and families have the support they need to predict future areas requiring support and inform the offer for early years support from the Council and other partners.
- Continue to develop the early help and intervention model underpinned by a prevention framework.
- Work with families, early years, schools, further and higher education sectors to ensure all children and young people fulfil their potential through a 'cradle to career' approach.
- Ensure that services are maximising opportunities to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on children, young people and families with a focus on physical and mental health.
- Review existing support and services for our most vulnerable children, young people and families to ensure they are resilient, accessible and driving progress.



## 4. Strengthen action to address differences in health outcomes and prevention

### I recommend that:

- Local health and care partners focus on tackling inequalities in healthcare provision - this is their direct responsibility and must be the prime focus of their action.
- Local NHS partners ensure they can access high-quality data to measure performance on reducing health inequalities across services. This includes being able to breakdown outcome and performance data by deprivation and ethnicity.
- NHS partners use their role as local anchor institutions and the choices they make as an employer and a purchaser to reduce inequalities.
- Preventative programmes and proactive health management for groups at greatest risk of poor health outcomes are accelerated across key service areas as outlined within the NHS Long Term Plan.
- The developing integrated care system and local providers have a named executive board level lead for tackling health inequalities and access training made available by local and national partners.
- Local NHS partners engage with and play a supportive role in multi-agency action to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions in which people live.
- Health and care partners focus on good infection prevention control to ensure avoidable infections are prevented.



## 5. Residents and partners continue to work together

### I recommend that:

- All partners should continue to build on the strong partnership work developed through our COVID-19 response by implementing the action emerging from the Health and Wellbeing Board Community and Voluntary Sector work.
- All partners fully engage local people to co-design services and initiatives to enable residents to recover and improve their health and wellbeing. We need to prioritise our more vulnerable residents who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and use tailored communication methods.
- We undertake a resident listening exercise to learn from the experience of the pandemic to understand local people's experiences and aspirations for the future. This work should be a blueprint for developing a sustainable model for the use of insights gathered from local people.



Thank you

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