

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Rebuilding our lives during a Cost-of-Living Crisis in a Post Pandemic World



Public Health Annual Report 2022

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Foreword

Welcome to my Director of Public Health Annual Report for Cheshire West and Chester 2022:

'Rebuilding our lives during a Cost-of-Living Crisis in a Post Pandemic World'

The cost-of-living crisis made 2022 a difficult year for all our residents, and this year's Public Health Annual Report looks at how Cheshire West, its residents and partners have worked to support and further develop resilient communities, particularly for those most impacted. Initiatives featured in this report focus on the actions we are taking to mitigate the impact of rising fuel and food costs, and declining mental health and social isolation as legacies from the pandemic.

Residents and local communities have responded magnificently to the cost-of-living crisis through amongst other things, the provision of warm spaces and food schemes. The past 12 months have also been challenging for our mental wellbeing, and community groups and activities have been benefiting our Cheshire West and Chester residents by providing social spaces and walking groups to help combat loneliness and isolation. Volunteering opportunities are also helping people reconnect with their local communities, improving their wellbeing and opportunities for employment.

The previous years have affected us all, with many of the existing health inequalities in Cheshire West exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. Our residents and communities are continuing to show us new and innovative ways of living well in a world post pandemic. The Living Well Bus is an example of how we are taking health and wellbeing services to people who, for whatever reason, find it more difficult to access these services. The bus also continues to provide COVID-19 vaccinations for those who are eligible.

In this my final report as your Director of Public Health, I would like to personally thank our residents, communities and partners for their work and commitment during what has been an incredibly challenging year for many.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Ian Ashworth'.

Ian Ashworth, Director of Public Health

Progress on past recommendations and priorities

Learning from the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Council and its partners should ensure that its response to the COVID-19 pandemic is reviewed and that best practice and opportunities for development are built into plans for responding to future pandemics.

The Council has carried out a full structured debrief into its local response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was led by the Council Emergency Planning Team and focuses on what went well and key learning high level areas for improvement; it concludes with a series of recommendations to assist the Council, Companies, Services and Teams to improve the planning and management of the response to, and recovery from, similar future events.

The debrief builds on the work carried out by the Pandemic Response and Recovery Scrutiny Committee between June and October 2020. This time-limited scrutiny committee was responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the Council's response on a borough-wide basis to the Coronavirus Pandemic and cross cutting issues impacting on the Council and the borough as a whole.

The Council is also providing evidence to the ongoing UK COVID-19 Inquiry. The Inquiry has been set up to examine the UK's response to and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and learn lessons for the future.

The Council should build on experience gained from its Outbreak Management Hub and develop an integrated Public Protection Service to provide a coordinated response to ongoing infection control and other health protection incidents.

The Council budgeted to continue its Outbreak Management Hub and associated expertise post pandemic. The Hub provides infection control advice to all settings where required, on a range of infectious diseases including food borne diseases and diseases spread by animals.

The Council and partners in health and social care should work to maintain a strong and resilient specialist Infection Prevention and Control service that can meet demand.

The Council commissions a community Infection Prevention and Control service which is delivered by Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Some of the services provided by the infection prevention and control service include infection control training and outbreak support to nursing and residential care staff, childcare/education providers; investigating infections associated with health care (such as *Clostridium difficile* and MRSA); tuberculosis screening and case management and infection control audits. The team work closely with NHS partners and neighbouring authorities to continue to develop and improve services to ensure they meet changing demands from our population and emerging threats from infections.

The Health Protection Board Partnership monitors infection levels in the borough and provides assurance that services can respond to them. We collaborate across Cheshire and Merseyside via the CHAMPS Public Health Network Health Protection Leads group to improve our response to infections including delivering high quality training and communications campaigns.

Focusing on routine immunisation and screening: The Council should work with NHS and other partners to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on uptake of routine immunisation and screening and work to maximise uptake of these programmes and reduce unwarranted variation.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a decrease in the uptake of routine immunisations and negatively impacted cancer screening programmes across the North-West. Catch up programmes have been effective and while there is more work to be done, Cheshire West and Chester immunisation and screening uptake rates overall compare favourably with the North-West and England averages.

The Council continues to work closely with NHS England and our Cheshire and Merseyside partners to improve coverage and uptake of immunisation and screening programmes.

We have done this by:

- **Working with our education and School Aged Immunisation Service colleagues providing communications on immunisations to raise awareness and uptake**
- **Collaborating with our Cheshire and Merseyside Partners in supporting a North-West wide approach to increasing vaccine take-up, particularly regarding Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)**
- **Completing a three-year programme by the Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance to increase uptake of breast, bowel and cervical cancer screening resulting in increased screening participation**
- **Producing and continuing to develop a Health Protection Dashboard which enables us to identify and target areas of low vaccination uptake within our borough**

We are currently working to develop an immunisation framework for Cheshire West and Chester, with an initial focus on MMR, as this is an emerging national priority.

COVID-19 and flu vaccination: The Council should continue to work with its partners to increase confidence in flu and COVID-19 vaccines and ensure fair access to these vaccines for all, in particular the most vulnerable.

Cheshire West and Chester Council has worked with our local NHS trusts to provide an effective and accessible COVID-19 and flu vaccination programme across the borough.

This included a comprehensive and targeted communication campaign for COVID-19 and flu vaccinations which included multiple digital media campaigns, bus stop posters and securing the Cheshire and Merseyside “Advan” to be present across the borough.

The Council has worked with Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to support and enable the Living Well roving vaccination clinic which has targeted our most vulnerable by taking the service to people at 180 outreach clinics during 2022.

A COVID-19 vaccine tracing pilot was also undertaken in an area with the lowest uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations. Telephone calls were made to residents resulting in approximately 700 additional COVID-19 vaccinations being given and several vulnerable residents were identified who needed house visits.

Response to Poverty

Working with communities to inspire change together

As part of the Council's commitment to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities a Fairer Future Strategy has been co-produced with people with lived experience of poverty called Community Inspirers.

Community Inspirers are central to the borough-wide approach to addressing poverty and the rising cost of living. They work with the Council, health partners, housing providers and community groups to build a better understanding of poverty and help to identify local solutions to problems. Taking account of poverty-related issues when designing services and developing policy results in more appropriate and responsive services and avoids individuals presenting in crisis.

The Fairer Future strategy sets out three pillars of activity. These are:



Voice

Hearing the voices of people experiencing poverty and acting to address the issues they raise



Alleviation

Delivering urgent action to tackle the immediate consequences of poverty



Root Cause

Transforming society and the economy to tackle the underlying causes of poverty

Key Statistics

- Nearly 25,000 residents live in neighbourhoods ranked in the top 10% most deprived in England
- 12% of our households live in fuel poverty
- An estimated 1,800 people attended a 'warm welcoming space' each week this Winter

The focus on tackling poverty has become even more pressing in the context of the increased cost of living which has made it more difficult for many residents to meet the cost of essentials like food, transport and keeping their homes warm.

The Council has worked closely with West Cheshire Foodbank to co-design a training and capacity programme to support more people to become Community Inspirers. The programme provided an opportunity for Community Inspirers to share their experiences with Senior Officers of the Council to help us make services more accessible and effective.

Eight people completed the Community Inspirer development and capacity building programme. All participants recorded improvements in terms of confidence, motivation and health and wellbeing and want to continue to engage with the Council and partners as Community Inspirers, as well as undertaking a broader range of volunteer roles.

Cost of Living

Community Food - Warming Wednesdays

Key Statistics

- In the 12 months to December 2022, food and non-alcoholic beverage prices rose by 16.9%
- In September 2022, across the UK, 18.4% of households experienced food insecurity in the past month
- In the spring of 2022 National Energy Action, a national fuel poverty charity, estimated 6.5 million households across the UK (23.4 per cent of all households) were in fuel poverty
- In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the Council worked with partners across the borough to set up a network of warm welcoming spaces

As the UK started feeling the effects of the cost-of-living crisis, communities across the borough began to plan how they could support those most in need. With worries about heating and residents being able to afford food, the Council worked across its own services, with Council-owned organisations and local community groups to offer residents access to warm, welcoming spaces over the winter. These spaces are free for residents of all ages to use and provide a space where people can stay warm and safe.

The warm, welcoming spaces were also used to signpost residents to further support, particularly in terms of the rising cost of energy bills, food, and transport. Support was put in place to help residents to access welfare rights, benefits and debt advice, ensuring they get the money they're entitled to, and informing people about the latest Government support measures.

Working with Cheshire West Voluntary Action, Cheshire Community Action, and the wider voluntary and community sector, the Council has expanded the network, providing a range of services to support people using the warm welcoming spaces.



Case Study

"Warming Wednesdays is great as I live alone and wouldn't usually have a warm lunch. I often feel isolated, so it was great to have some good company. The atmosphere was welcoming and stimulating."



As the cooler months approached and with food and fuel costs rising, partners working in Lache identified the need for a warm place for Lache residents to go.

With funding from the Council, Cheshire West Communities Together, Healthbox and Soul Kitchen launched 'Warming Wednesdays.' Taking place each Wednesday, they have an open door to anyone who wishes to attend, offering refreshments, a hot meal, and a warm place to spend a few hours, with the aim of reducing isolation and supporting those who may be struggling with rising costs.

Warming Wednesday was planned to coincide with an existing walking group which meets each Wednesday. In addition, the organisers were keen to promote Warming Wednesdays to the whole community, including those who may not be mobile enough to participate in the walking group and those with young families. Using Facebook and promotion via other established groups, Warming Wednesdays took off immediately, bringing together residents from the local area. The session became a social event with the organisers setting up long communal tables to encourage mixing, conversation, and new friendships.

Warming Wednesdays is free, however some residents felt the need to pay, so a donations basket was put in place. These donations have been fed back into the project ensuring it could continue throughout the winter and beyond.

Warming Wednesdays has been a great success, providing a welcoming warm space and hot meal for those coming along. Reducing isolation and forging friendships, the project has also been a route for residents to other support and services, with many also attending the Tuesday coffee morning and gardening club. The project has also helped to identify further need within the community, with plans for a dementia support group currently in the early planning stages.

When asked for feedback on Warming Wednesdays, residents who attended said:

"Gave me the opportunity to be in a safe space with likeminded people but also the opportunity to share and enjoy food with others. It was great to connect with people of all ages and all walks of life."

"During the winter months I wasn't able to heat my flat and also felt isolated whilst experiencing poor health. Warming Wednesday made me get out of the flat into a warm space and access a free warm meal. It also promoted inclusion, especially for those who are socially isolated."

"Warming Wednesday gave me an excuse to get out of bed, go have a hot midweek meal and the opportunity to chat to others."

Access to Food

Holiday Hunger

There are two main programmes in Cheshire West and Chester which aim to reduce holiday hunger - the Holiday Activity and Food Programme and the Welcome Network's holiday food offer.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme enables children and young people eligible for Free School Meals or with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to access healthy food and take part in fun, enriching activities over the school holiday periods. In 2022, HAF was available to eligible children and young people for six weeks of the holidays (four hours a day, four days a week for six weeks), across the Easter, Summer, and Christmas holidays. In that year, 57 providers and 83 Holiday Clubs welcomed 9,500 Children and Young People to face-to-face sessions with nutritious food, fun activities, and opportunities for making new friends. Of the 9,500 participating, 1,100 had Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

The Welcome Network is a project funded through the Public Health grant. It has been running since 2017, supporting those in food poverty. Working to develop a network of community food provision across the borough, the team has worked tirelessly to provide advice and shared learning, deliver training, and access and coordinate funds. The Welcome Network grant funds projects supporting families in need to access hot meals during the holidays, both through funding for community providers to deliver sessions and a voucher project aimed at supporting those families not eligible for Free School Meals.

Key Statistics

- Latest data shows that 18.4% of the Cheshire West and Chester population is at risk of food insecurity / poverty
- Households with more children are more at risk of food insecurity
- 10,141 children and young people are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals in Cheshire West and Chester
- One in three school-age children in England living in poverty (800,000) cannot access free school meals despite cost-of-living struggles of families
- Research has shown that the school holidays can be pressure points for some families. For some children this can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from low-income households being less likely to access organised out-of-school activities; more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health; more likely to experience social isolation

Case Study

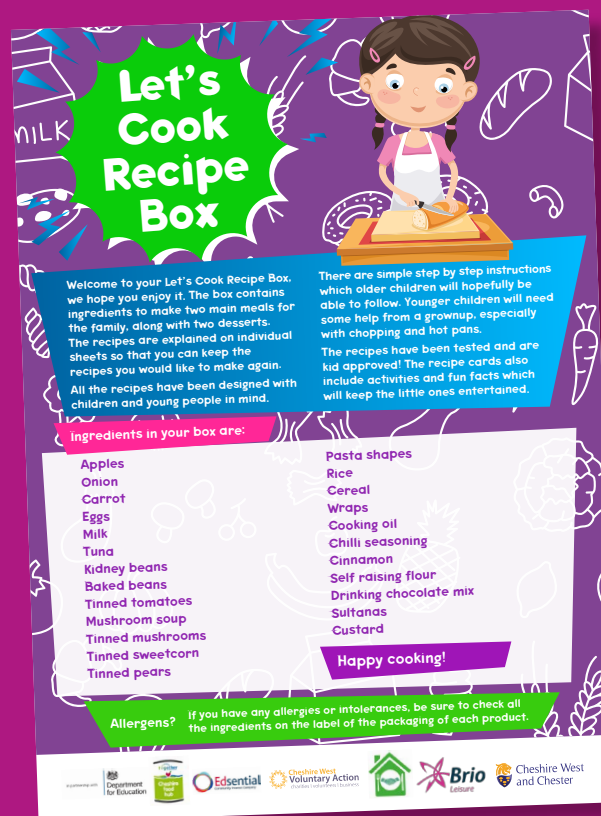
Let's Cook Recipe Boxes

Whilst the vast majority of HAF provision was delivered face-to-face, the Christmas holiday period is slightly different. Whilst face-to-face sessions do still take place, over the last two years (2020-2022), the programme has taken a hybrid approach, offering face-to-face sessions but also an offer which can be enjoyed at home with a family trip out included.

Working closely with The Cheshire Change Hub, 2,500 Let's Cook Recipe boxes were delivered to schools who had identified families who would benefit most. The Let's Cook Recipe boxes contained the ingredients and recipes to make two main meals and two desserts. The boxes came with easy-to-follow recipe cards to encourage children and young people to take the lead. Simple instructions on how to peel and chop vegetables and fruit were included to ensure everyone was able to follow the recipe. The recipes were written by a Registered Nutritionist and tested with families. The boxes also contained activities such as a wordsearch and colouring, as well as fun facts.

Families who received the 'Let's Cook' recipe boxes were also able to choose to take part in a funded family activity. This year they had the option of the local pantomime and ten pin bowling. The team at the Council, Edsential and Brio worked hard to ensure that families got their activity of choice.

Following the Christmas break, a survey was sent to all parents and carers who received the Let's Cook boxes and the feedback was very positive.



Examples of feedback include:

"We cooked the meals and used the ingredients that was provided. Really enjoyed it doing cooking as a family."

"Fantastic, easy to follow and the children loved it too."

"Hampers were very good with easy-to-follow recipes and we had great time making those meals. Helped us out a great deal too! I wouldn't change a thing. Families in need will appreciate them!"

"The box as a whole was fab. Easy recipes, teaching how to even cut the vegetables."

Case Study

Ellesmere Port Market

Over the holiday periods in 2022, the Welcome Network ran a project in Ellesmere Port, providing vouchers for the cafes at the local market so that families could get a hot meal during the school break. Working with The Ellesmere Port Academy College and the Ellesmere Port Catholic High School, both schools offered 150 vouchers to their young people and families.

Schools identified families who may not have been receiving any other support, or they knew would benefit from this offer. Learning from previous funding rounds, vouchers were offered to the whole family, not just the young person in the school, so that the whole family could enjoy a meal together. Schools also posted the vouchers directly to families and called them ahead of the vouchers arriving to let them know that this was something they could use and explain the process to them.

The idea of the project was to support young people to visit the market with friends or family and be able to eat a meal of their choice at a time that suited them. They could use it for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. In September 2022, the value of the vouchers was increased from £5 to £7.50 in recognition of cost of living rises, ensuring recipients could still have a substantial meal. Over the holidays, 486 vouchers were redeemed at the market, meaning that 486 had a hot meal to enjoy.

During the 2022 Easter and May school holidays, the Welcome Network also ran a similar pilot voucher project in Winsford using the Brio / Winsford Lifestyle Centre Cafe and Winsford Academy. This pilot supported 39 families to enjoy a hot meal.



**Ellesmere Port
Market**

Fuel Poverty

Key Statistics

- In 2022 18,093 (11.9%) households in Cheshire West and Chester were in fuel poverty
- There are three important elements in determining whether a household is fuel poor:
 - Household income
 - Energy efficiency of their home
 - Fuel prices

In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the Council created several initiatives focusing on the benefits of staying warm. These included:

- The creation of the keep warm, keep well webpage providing advice and signposting for residents
- Internal training to public facing staff within the Council and partner organisations including the NHS and Cheshire Fire and Rescue, ensuring they were aware of the support available to residents
- Provided funding for 60 places on the National Energy Action: Fuel Debt Advice in the Community qualification for Council staff and colleagues in partner organisations
- Provided postcode level data on vulnerable households to Cheshire Fire and Rescue to assist in targeting the provision of Safe and Well checks. These checks consist of a member of the fire service visiting homes to carry out a fire safety check but will also include other safety messages including advice around cold homes. Information leaflets on help and support were created to support this project
- Winter warmer packs were used within the adult social care sector and given out to vulnerable people over the winter period



Set up a range of projects to tackle fuel, food and digital poverty, and provided welfare advice and guidance to residents, with a total of **£2.7m** of Council and Government funding through the Household Support and Winter Poverty Funds

Case Study

Winter warmer packs

In August 2022, a working group from the Council's adult social care service met to consider their approach to the cost-of-living crisis specifically in relation to food and fuel poverty. From this, money was secured from the Poverty Budget to provide tangible objects which residents would find most useful including duvets, socks, pyjamas and dressing gowns, hats and gloves.

Once the products were available, the project details were shared across adult social care and health colleagues. Information packs were also developed with advice and information on the support available both locally and nationally.

Work to develop a sustainable long-term project is now on-going, exploring how the packs could work alongside the Warm, Welcoming Spaces Network, which offers residents access to warm, welcoming spaces in Council and community group-owned buildings.

"We gave the winter pack to a gentleman who was living in his home with no heating, which he could not afford to get repaired. This was impacting on his mental health, and motivation. We were able to get a winter pack and a radiator for him. The impact and change in this gentleman were immediate. The fact that he could be warm, and additionally, that it was free, made the difference in areas that meant he felt motivated to do other things to improve his situation. Thank you."

Ali Shaw (Practice Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Adult Mental Health Team)

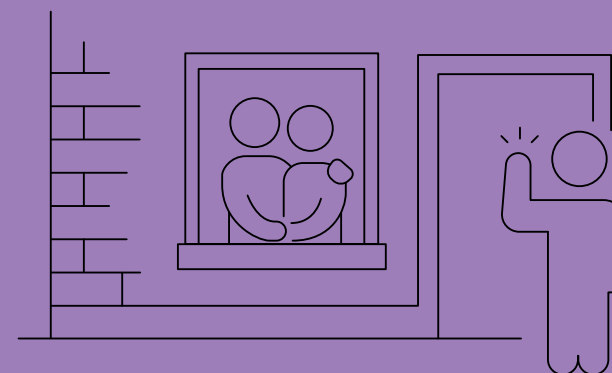
"A gentleman came to Blacon Let's Talk, which is one of four sites across the borough providing a drop-in for face-to-face advice about wellbeing support that is available in the local area. At the drop-in he spoke to Citizens Advice, and said he had no food or heating, and it was mid-December, and extremely cold. Citizens Advice sourced emergency heating support, I was able to arrange to pick items up and drop off to this man later that day including dressing gown, socks, thermals, heater, and the local Food Bank sourced an emergency food parcel."

David Redpath Smith (Practice Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Chester South and Neston Social Work Team)



Supported **4,011** residents through the provision of essential items, energy vouchers, foodbank vouchers and a range of advice, guidance and signposting

Been in contact with more than **14,000** residents to provide advice and practical support through our Help in Emergencies for Local People (HELP) Scheme



Mental Health & Wellbeing

Key Statistics

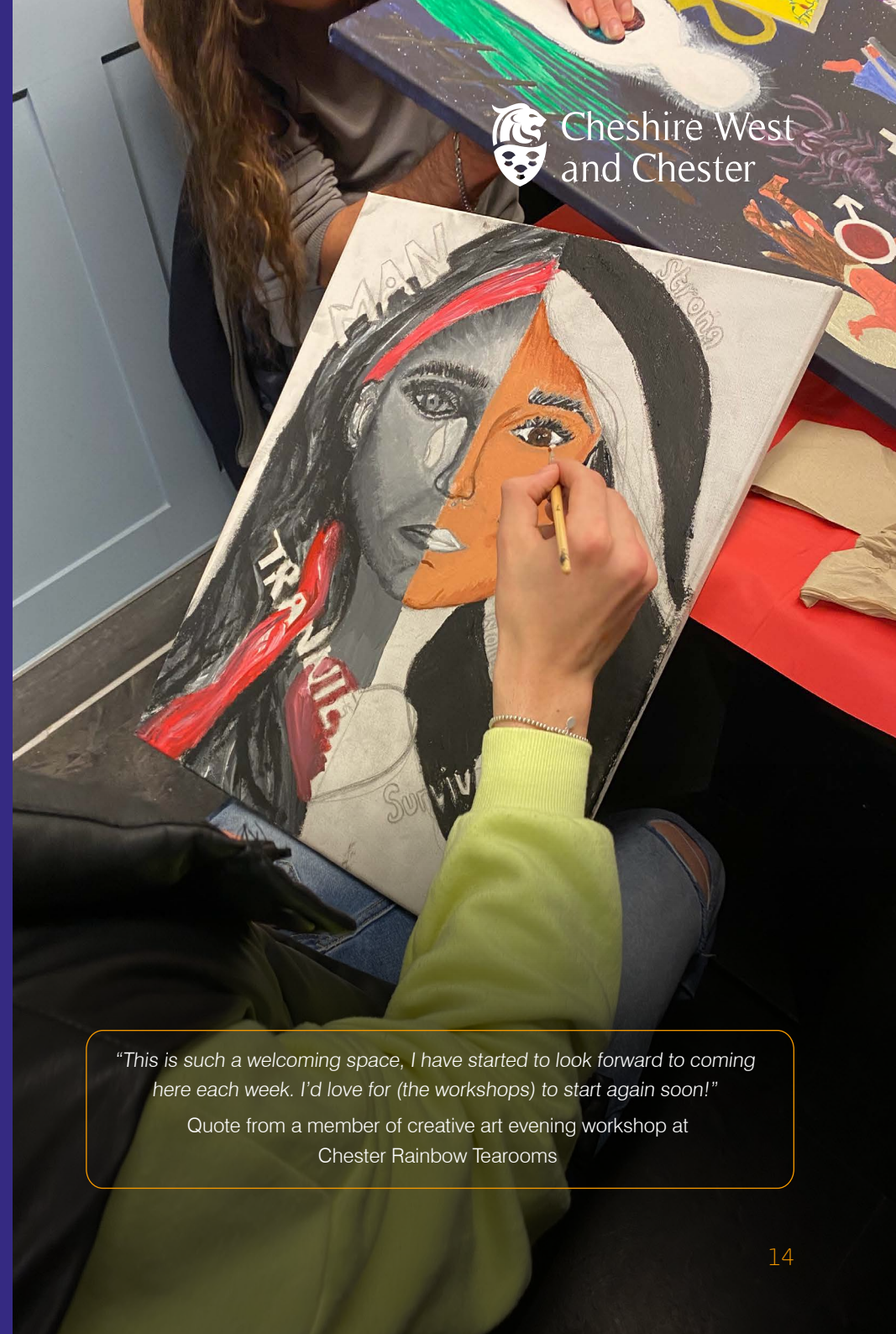
- One in four adults experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any given year. People from all walks of life can be affected and at any point in their lives. Mental health problems represent the largest single cause of disability in the UK
- At least one in six children and young people have a diagnosable mental health condition
- Almost one in five adults experienced some form of depression during the pandemic, almost doubling from around one in 10 before the pandemic

Mental health and wellbeing is important for individuals, families, and communities. We know that those individuals with good mental health and wellbeing have better physical health, stronger relationships with others, and are more productive in education and at work.

Mental health problems are frequently associated with a range of other factors including poverty, poor housing, homelessness, disability and long-term ill health, and experience of violence and abuse. The COVID-19 pandemic and the current pressure on the cost of living has put an extra strain on people's mental health.

Public mental health includes promotion, prevention, effective treatment, care, and recovery across the whole life course. To deliver effective public mental health there is a need to work in partnership across a range of sectors and organisations as well as with local communities and individuals.

Radiate Arts delivered a project entitled True Colours which included creative workshops and events. The project supported LGBTQ+ members of our community and improved the mental and emotional wellbeing of 61 individuals who were experiencing many forms of stress, depression, and isolation.



"This is such a welcoming space, I have started to look forward to coming here each week. I'd love for (the workshops) to start again soon!"

Quote from a member of creative art evening workshop at
Chester Rainbow Tearooms

Case Study

In 2022, the Public Health team commissioned:

- **Mental Health First Aid training** - 57 people from a wide range of organisations gained the adult two-day qualification
- **Rugby League Cares** - delivered a further two “sets” of their Offload programme to male Cheshire West & Chester Council staff from a wide range of council departments and services
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkit Support Package for Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)** - 16 SMEs from across Cheshire West and Chester signed up and were supported to develop and implement their own Mental Health and Wellbeing strategies. One representative from each SME also gained the Adult Mental Health First Aid qualification
- **The third series of Taking Care of You was delivered to SMEs** from across the borough. The series of five webinars focused on improving awareness of mental health and its importance in the workplace
- Several projects were commissioned across the borough to address specific areas of need. These projects ranged from the **Young People’s Early Intervention Service** delivered by Youth Federation to **suicide prevention projects** aimed at middle-aged men
- **255 people from 46 organisations attended online suicide prevention training** delivered by Papyrus
- **Eight members of the Brio team qualified as Mindfulness Practitioners** and delivered a series of online sessions to Cheshire West and Chester Council staff

Some of the young people and their parents who benefited from the Young People’s Early Intervention Service delivered by Youth Federation said:

“You have helped me significantly and to identify that others are getting the same help is truly amazing! You should be extremely proud of yourselves.”

“Hi just wanted to say a huge thank you for helping me understand what’s going on in my head and get out of bed in the morning.”

“Thank you for the difference you have made, without your help at this difficult time for our daughter and us as parents would be unthinkable, thank you again.”

Case Study

Key Statistic

Over 800 people from Hong Kong have been welcomed to our borough as part of the British National Overseas Scheme

The Hong Kong community in our borough is diverse and includes young, single people, married with young and school aged children or teenagers, and multi-generational families including grandparents. Whilst some have settled easily, others have struggled with existing trauma, the language, finding a home, a job, and assimilating into a new culture. Cheshire West and Chester Council therefore funded Hong Kong in Chester, a community organisation supporting Hong Kongers to integrate into their local community, creating a positive impact socially and economically, and supporting their physical and emotional wellbeing. Key issues affecting the Hong Kong community include mental health, depression and anxiety, particularly for teenagers; integration into local communities; and parents struggling to support their children academically and introducing them into a new culture.

Funding for Hong Kong in Chester enabled drama, music and activity-based sessions to be held for teenagers, to help loneliness and build confidence. Workshops were also held for parents focusing on parenting skills, English language, and understanding the academic system and requirements. A Christmas celebration was also held for the Hong Kongers and other community groups from the Unity Centre to share food and enjoy a performance by the Hong Kong youth.



Staying Well - Healthy Lifestyle Choices

There are several important risk factors which can lead to poor physical ill-health, these include smoking, being overweight, drinking too much alcohol, being physically inactive and having high blood pressure. In Cheshire West and Chester there is a range of services and programmes supporting residents to improve their physical health and wellbeing.

Cheshire West and Chester's Integrated Wellbeing Service is commissioned by the Council to provide services such as stopping smoking, weight loss, exercising safely and falls prevention. Brio Leisure operates the service on behalf of the Council through the Cheshire Change Hub, a one stop shop for good health.

Cheshire West and Chester is a member of The Natural Health Service consortium, working together to tackle health inequalities in targeted communities across The Mersey Forest and North Cheshire area. The Nature4health programme is a three-year project which provides health-promoting, enjoyable group activities in a green therapeutic environment such as woodland walks, gardening, and conservation. Sessions on mindfulness in a natural setting and Tai Chi are also available for residents to enjoy.

Analysis of the first year of the project by Liverpool John Moores University has shown that physical activity in everyday life - walking, moderate activity, and vigorous activity - all increased. Walking increased by 48% with moderate activity up 163%.

Key Statistics

- **Smoking:** 25,368 (8.8%) of adults aged 18+ in Cheshire West and Chester currently smoke
- **High Blood pressure (hypertension):** Around one in four adults in the UK have high blood pressure, although many will not realise it. The only way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked
- **Healthy Weight:** In 2019/20, 201,300 (69.83%) of adults aged 18+ were classified as being overweight or living with obesity, however in 2020/21 the percentage of adults classified as overweight or living with obesity had reduced to 60.24% (173,655 adults aged 18+)
- **Physical Activity:** In 2019/20 the percentage of physically active adults aged 18+ was 69.13% (199,282 adults aged 18+), however in 2020/21 this had increased to 73.40% (211,592 adults aged 18+)

Case Study

Know Your Numbers Week 2022

Brio Leisure delivered 297 blood pressure checks during the weeklong campaign. Of those tested:

62%

of those tested were female

23%

had a high BP reading

24%

were signposted to their GP



Know Your Numbers Week is a national campaign encouraging people to check their blood pressure as high blood pressure can lead to heart attacks, strokes, and other illnesses.

During the week of 5-11 September 2022, Brio Leisure ran several drop-in sessions for 'Know Your Numbers Week' and also delivered blood pressure (BP) checks within their usual clinic times. Residents were encouraged to attend these sessions and have their blood pressure checked. They were given their blood pressure result and information leaflets with advice on how to reduce their blood pressure.

Cheshire West and Chester Council also supported the campaign by sending out messages via media releases, internal communications, and social media. The media releases and communications included references to the national campaign but also highlighted the work of our partner organisation, Brio Leisure.

Case Study

Stoptober 2022

Smoking remains the single biggest cause of preventable illness and death in England. Stoptober is an annual national campaign based on evidence that people are five times more likely to quit for good if they can stay smoke free for 28 days.

The borough's smoking cessation service delivered by Brio Leisure, provides up to 12 weeks of free nicotine replacement therapies and unlimited behavioural support. In June 2022, the service was expanded so that any borough resident, or those registered with a Cheshire West and Chester GP, can refer themselves into the service without visiting their GP.

Cheshire West and Chester Council and Brio Leisure worked together to produce a successful Stoptober campaign in 2022. The campaign ran over the four weeks of October but was also extended to include the run up to Christmas with our 'Countdown to Quitmas' material.

The themes for the 2022 campaign included messages around the health benefits of quitting smoking but also the financial gains and highlighting the environmental impact of the tobacco industry. Throughout October social media releases, videos and drop-in Q&A sessions helped spread the message encouraging residents to self-refer into the smoking cessation service:

"It was actually easier than I thought to be honest, but I couldn't have done it without you (Brio)."

"I have tried for years; my advisor Lea was excellent; dealt with me over the phone and she made sure I never ran out of anything. Being able to call her directly gave me lots of reassurance and made me feel like a priority. I'm not choking to death in the morning, my taste has really improved, wish I'd done it years ago to be honest."

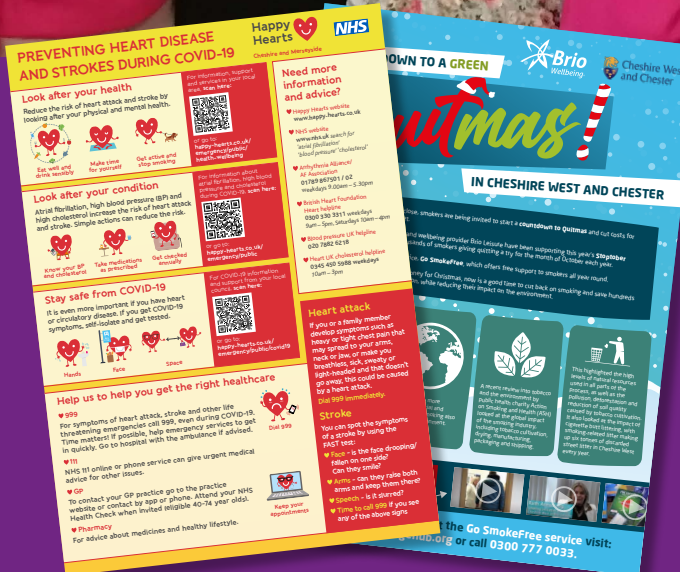
"The advice from Lea was great. She never judged me and was there when I needed her. I think you are all doing a great job and I tell everyone at the hospital about you particularly if I see them smoking."

"I've tried all kinds of things; hypnotherapy, acupuncture, they could not do what Mags did for me."

"Since I've had covid, my health is much worse, she knew this and still kept encouraging me. I've recommended all of my smoking friends to quit with the service as you can't get better than Mags!"



Smoking Cessation Team



Staying Well - Being Active

Key Statistics

- Eight partnership organisations working together
- 23 walks taking place weekly (57% increase from 2021)
- 35 active walk leaders / volunteers (14 newly trained since 2021)
- 250 people taking part per week

A network of Wellbeing Walks has been set up across the borough by a partnership of organisations and volunteers, coordinated by the Health Rangers in the Total Environment team at the Council. The partnership brings together numerous volunteers as well as Cheshire West Communities Together, Healthbox, Canal and River Trust, Primary Care Cheshire Community Interest Company, Friends of Countess of Chester Country Park, and the Land Trust. The partnership has supported local communities to set up weekly walks and access training, insurance, and systems through The Ramblers Association.

Wellbeing Walks are helping participants to improve their physical health but, as the name suggests, participants benefit much more than getting just physical exercise. Getting people together outdoors and in green spaces, creates lots of opportunities for people to improve their wellbeing.

The walks aim to tackle inactivity in adults, including those with long-term health conditions and mental health challenges. They are inclusive of those living in areas of deprivation, on low income, women, and those from ethnic minority communities, all of whom are more likely to be inactive.



A video about the network can be found at vimeo.com/654512535
and further information found at cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/walks



Cheshire West
and Chester



Case Study

The Countess of Chester Country Park Wellbeing Walk

This walk was set up by a partnership between Total Environment and the Friends of the Countess of Chester Country Park. The Park, owned by the Land Trust, offers a quality green space for neighbouring communities in Blacon, Upton and Chester city centre, which include areas of high deprivation. Total Environment initially trained up two members of the Friends of group as Ramblers certified Wellbeing Walk Leaders and together launched the walk. Once established, four further volunteers were trained up as Walk Leaders and are now sustaining the walk with six to 13 people attending the walk weekly with regulars being predominantly women ranging in age from 59-86 years old.

"Walking in a lovely area, with lovely people who know the area so well and give us so much interesting information about [it] - you feel you are in the middle of the countryside yet feel completely safe!"

"I enjoy the walks as it gives you fresh air and light conversation with different people mak[ing] you feel happier. I feel my health and wellbeing has improved dramatically, I have lost some of the weight I put on over lockdown and it gives me structure for the week."



Inequalities

Key Statistics

- There is a gap in life expectancy at birth of 9.8 years for males and 7.8 years for females living in different areas of Cheshire West and Chester
- 8,322 children aged under 16 in Cheshire West and Chester are estimated to be living in low-income families
- There are stark differences between electoral wards in the proportion of children who are overweight or obese

In Cheshire West and Chester, like England as a whole, there is a difference in people's health, where those living in more deprived areas tend to have worse health and shorter lives than those who live in less deprived areas. This difference exists across the whole population, and life expectancy at birth increases as economic and social position increases. In Cheshire West and Chester for the period 2018-2020, the range in life expectancy between the least deprived 10% of the population and the most deprived 10% of the population was estimated to be 9.8 years for males and 7.8 years for females. Although health inequalities already existed in Cheshire West and Chester prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic has highlighted and further increased these.

Cancer and circulatory diseases (heart disease and stroke) are key diseases that contribute to inequalities in life expectancy for both males and females in Cheshire West and Chester. However, COVID-19 mortality rates were also higher in the more deprived areas of the borough, further contributing to the inequality gap in 2020 to 2021.

Although life expectancy is a key indicator of overall health, we know that inequalities start early in life. Children in Cheshire West and Chester are born into different socio-economic circumstances and as a result grow up in very different environments. 13.4% of children aged under 16 in Cheshire West and Chester were estimated to be living in low-income families in 2020/21, equating to 8,322 children.

There was also significant variation between wards. 26.2% of children aged under 16 in Westminster ward were estimated to be living in low-income families in 2020/21, compared to only 5.7% of children (under 16 years) in Tarvin and Kelsall.

A child's earliest years (especially the first 1,001 days) lay the foundation for health and wellbeing throughout life and inequalities during these years can have lifelong impacts, shaping a child's later education, employment, and health outcomes. However, there are income related inequalities in children's early development, so that by the time children reach the end of reception year, their levels of cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical development are already unequal. There is also evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted on children's early development and locally we have seen that the proportion of children not meeting the expected level of development in their two to two and a half year developmental review has increased between 2019/20 and 2021/22.

Alongside children's early development, inequalities are also seen in childhood obesity. Three-year combined data for 2017-20 shows a stark difference between wards in the proportion of children with excess weight. In this time period, the proportion of reception aged children who were overweight or obese ranged from 9.5% in Whitby Park to 34.5% in Winsford Wharton. Similarly, the proportion of year six children who were overweight or obese ranged from 22.2% in Tattenhall to 44.4% in Strawberry ward.

Health inequalities also exist for people with protected characteristics (such as ethnicity or sexuality) and for socially excluded groups (such as asylum seekers and the homeless population).

Case Study

Starting Well Service

In Cheshire West and Chester, the Starting Well Service delivers a range of Public Health programmes and interventions, including the 0-5 and 5-19 Healthy Child Programme, the Family Nurse Partnership programme for first time teenage parents, and the Children's Centre core offer which provides both universal services and a range of targeted support for vulnerable families.

In 2022, the Starting Well Service worked with BookTrust Cheshire to support children's literacy through various targeted offers to support low-income children aged one to four and by delivering school readiness sessions for parents in early years settings in the most deprived areas of the borough, focusing on extending parents' confidence and knowledge around the home learning environment.



Response to COVID-19 and Vaccination

Businesses

Key Statistics

- 322 new jobs created
- 200 businesses/individuals supported
- £700k delivered in grants
- 18 workshops/bite sized training delivered
- 112 grant recipients and workshop recipients

COVID-19 has created many challenges for businesses and Cheshire West and Chester Council has taken a proactive role in supporting businesses to survive and adapt to the impacts of the pandemic. Since the start of the pandemic, the Council has managed 16 different grant schemes distributing £140m of grants.

In late 2021, an opportunity arose where the Council was able use just over £1m to develop, design and deliver the West Cheshire Business Support Programme. This aimed to support businesses to recover, grow, adapt, diversify or expand through direct support, workshops and training, including grants for eligible businesses. Programme activities were shaped using evidence from a survey of 500 businesses, with Blue Orchid and West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber of Commerce used as delivery partners.

Key areas of the West Cheshire Business Support Programme included:

- Stimulating entrepreneurial activity
- Creating new start ups
- Enhancing and re-energising third sector development
- Accessing/securing commercial premises
- Building resilience and accelerating growth plans
- Assisting with recruitment/retainment, training and skills
- Building opportunities for businesses to work together

Business sectors that assisted in this programme included hospitality and leisure, health and social care, retail, digital services, manufacturing, beauty and health and fitness, which were some of those sectors most impacted by the pandemic.

Outbreak Management Hub

Key Statistics

- 389 incidents for six different disease types were responded to
- Two periods of intense activity: COVID-19 January to March 2022 and Streptococcus A in December 2022
- The Council gained legal powers from Chester magistrates court in June 2022 to limit the spread of tuberculosis

The last Public Health Report recognised that the Council should build on experience gained from its Outbreak Management Hub and develop an integrated Public Protection Service to provide a coordinated response to ongoing infection control and other health protection incidents. From April 2022 the Outbreak Management Hub evolved and embraced the Food Safety and Health and Safety functions of the Public Protection Service, working closely with the Infection Prevention and Control service.

2022 represented the end phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we moved into 'Living with COVID-19'. In early 2022 the Council was still dealing with COVID-19 outbreaks in educational settings and some businesses. Cases reduced rapidly from January with a further smaller peak in March 2022 which signalled the beginning of a new phase.

During 2022, the Council's Outbreak Management Team dealt with a total of 318 incidents from educational establishments and 71 incidents associated with business, commercial, factory and some care homes and supported living settings. These incidents included COVID-19, but also diarrhoea and vomiting, Group A Streptococcus, Monkeypox, Scarlet Fever and Tuberculosis.

Vaccines and Roving Clinics

Key Statistics

- 180 targeted outreach clinics
- 5,737 COVID-19 vaccines given (including 810 first or second doses)
- 1,197 physical health tests (cholesterol, blood pressure, BMI, glucose, pulse)
- 215 health test results outside healthy range shared with GPs

Cheshire and Wirral Partnership's Living Well Service began as a roving COVID-19 vaccination service in Cheshire West in 2021, as a solution to improve access and engagement in communities identified as having lower than average vaccination uptake. Recognising the significant overlap between low vaccine uptake and wider health inequalities, the service enhanced its offer in June 2022 to align with national priorities.

The service is built on the principles of listening to seldom-heard communities and meeting their needs by bringing the right services to them. The Living Well Bus was located in areas of higher levels of deprivation, in ethnically diverse communities, in refugee and asylum seeker settings, in homeless support settings, in Gypsy Roma and Traveller and our local boating communities. Operating as a drop-in outreach service, Living Well now provides COVID-19 vaccinations, a broad range of physical health checks (cholesterol, blood pressure, BMI, glucose, pulse), focused mental wellbeing support as well as supportive discussions around any wellbeing challenges. The service works in partnership with the Council's Public Health service to identify and engage with communities where tailored outreach would be most beneficial.

The Living Well service is clinically led, and all health test results are shared with a person's GP.



Recommendations

Access to food

The Council should continue to support projects such as the Welcome Network who help to develop, coordinate and support the community food provision across Cheshire West and Chester.

Fuel poverty

The Council should continue to work with the NHS and other partners to prepare a co-ordinated approach to reducing fuel poverty, recognising its effects on both physical health and mental wellbeing, and in particular the most vulnerable.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Council should continue to deliver services to support the mental health & wellbeing of those who live, work, volunteer, and study in Cheshire West & Chester.

The Council should commission mental health and suicide prevention training for those working and volunteering across the borough.

Staying Well - Healthy Lifestyle Choices

The Council and partners should continue to promote the benefits of, and support interventions and activities, that support healthy lifestyle choices including being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight and stopping smoking.

Staying Well - Be Active

The Council should continue to work with partners to encourage residents to enjoy the natural environment through Wellbeing Walks, and therapeutic behaviours such as Tai Chi, gardening, and conservation. These activities will contribute to tackling inactivity in adults and support residents' mental wellbeing.

Inequalities

The Council should continue to work with partners to tackle health inequalities and support activity to become a Marmot Community ensuring that the voice of lived and living experience is embedded within the local approach.

COVID-19

The Council and its partners should ensure that the outcomes of the COVID-19 review are built into plans for the response to future pandemics.

Vaccination

The Council should continue to work with partners to ensure fair access to all immunisation programmes and reduce unwarranted variation, with particular regard to the most vulnerable.

Links to further sources of information, support, relevant local initiatives, and organisations

Further Sources of Information

- > [Live Well Cheshire West](#)
- > [CW&C Cost of Living Support](#)
- > [Cheshire West and Chester HELP \(Help in Emergencies for Local People\) Team](#)
- > [CW&C Adult Social Care Services](#)
- > [CW&C Housing Information](#)
- > [DWP](#)
- > [CAB](#)
- > [CW&C Libraries](#)
- > [Cheshire West Voluntary Action](#)

Support

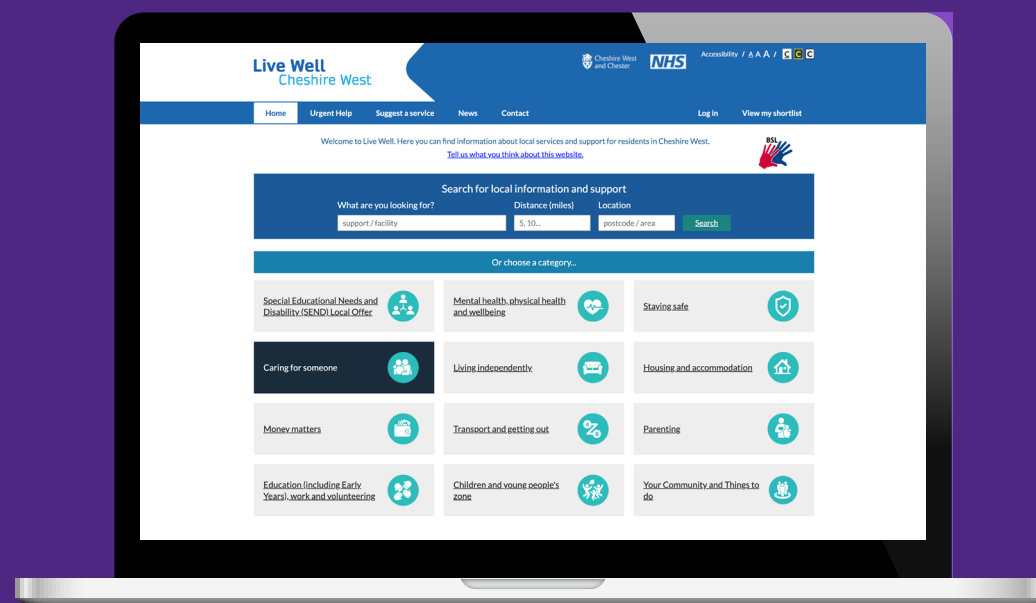
- > [Substance Misuse](#)
- > [Sexual Health Services](#)
- > [ForFutures Housing](#)
- > [Starting Well Service](#)
- > [Integrated Wellbeing](#)
- > CWP Mental Health Crisis Support Line: **Call 0800 145 6485**.
Helpline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is open to people of all ages - including children and young people
- > Samaritans: **Call 116 123**

Food Banks and Social Supermarkets

- > [West Cheshire Foodbank \(Chester, Ellesmere Port, Neston, Tarvin, Tattenhall and surrounding areas\)](#)
- > [Frodsham Foodbank \(part of Runcorn Foodbank\)](#)
- > [Mid Cheshire Foodbank \(Winsford, Northwich, Tarporley and surrounding areas\)](#)
- > [Other Food Support available in your local community or neighbourhood](#)

Relevant Local Initiatives

- > [Volunteering Opportunities in West Cheshire](#)
- > [Become a Community Champion in West Cheshire](#)
- > [Get involved with Consultations and petitions of Cheshire West & Chester Council](#)

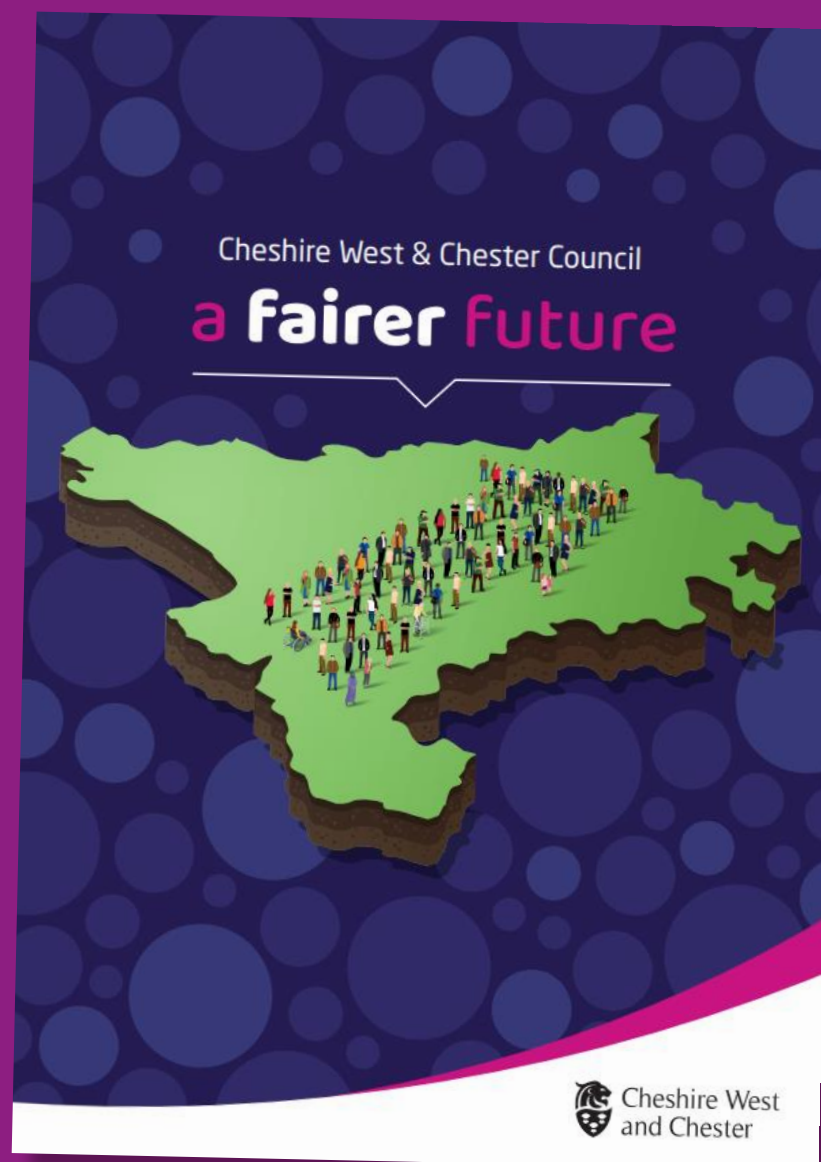


Access to further data and information

- > [Council Plan 2020-24](#)
- > [Place Plan 2019 - 2026](#)
- > [State of the Borough Dashboard](#)
- > [Population Estimates for Cheshire West](#)
- > [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)
- > [CW&C Health Improvement Strategy](#)
- > [CW&C Climate Emergency](#)
- > [Making our neighbourhoods even better places to call home](#)
- > [Tackling the Poverty Emergency and CW&C's Fairer Future Strategy](#)
- > [Fingertips](#)
- > [NHS Cheshire & Merseyside](#)

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this year's Public Health Annual Report, in particular to the residents of Cheshire West and Chester.





Our short film is available to watch