

3 MARCH 2022



UPDATE ON THE HEALTH INEQUALITIES TASK GROUP

Purpose of report: To provide the Adults and Health Select Committee with an update on the work of the Health Inequalities Task Group.

Introduction:

1. At its public meeting on 20 October 2021, the Adults and Health Select Committee formally established the cross-party Health Inequalities Task Group, the aim of which is to develop an understanding of health inequalities in Surrey, scrutinise the progress being made on tackling these, and contribute to the development of future policy by both Surrey County Council and its health and social care partners.
2. The members of the Task Group are as follows:
 - Angela Goodwin (Chair)
 - Trefor Hogg
 - Riasat Khan
 - Carla Morson
 - Bernie Muir (Ex-Officio)
3. Below is a summary of the witness sessions undertaken by the Task Group and plans for future evidence gathering.

Update on the Task Group work undertaken to date

Planning

4. On 11 October 2021, the Task Group took part in a workshop run by Public Health officers that provided Members with an overview of health inequalities and the approach being taken to tackle these in Surrey. The Task Group also discussed the role of the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy in tackling health inequalities, how the Council works with its health and social care partners, and what Members were hearing from residents in their divisions.

5. Following the workshop, on 25 October 2021 Members of the Task Group took part in a planning meeting to discuss and identify areas they wanted to concentrate on and witnesses they would like to speak with. Numerous potential witnesses were identified, and it was agreed that the Task Group would start its work by meeting with the Priority Lead Sponsors and relevant Public Health officers for each of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy's three priority areas.
6. The Task Group also agreed that the first stage of its work would be used to examine health inequalities using a "top down" approach to evidence gathering, which would involve speaking to service providers and commissioners, as well as academics and experts, to gain a greater understanding of health inequalities and how these manifest themselves in Surrey before speaking to service users, resident representative groups and charities about their experiences.
7. The Task Group agreed that it was important to ensure all Members had sufficient knowledge of what was meant by health inequalities before scrutinising what was being done to tackle these across the county.

Witness sessions

Priorities 1 and 3 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

8. On 6 December 2021, the Task Group met with Public Health officers to examine Priorities 1 and 3 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy – "helping people to lead a healthy life" and "supporting people to fulfil their potential".
9. The Task Group was presented with detailed slides on the strategic approach taken by the Council and its health and social care partners to tackle health inequalities and the role Priorities 1 and 3 played in this.
10. Further to this, Members examined the various programmes that sat within the two priority areas, the governance structures in place, and the ways in which the Health and Wellbeing Strategy helped to foster and strengthen partnership working.

David Buck, The King's Fund

11. On 18 January 2022, the Task Group's second witness session took place with David Buck, Senior Fellow (Public Health and Inequalities) at The King's Fund, an independent health and care think tank. The witness session was used to examine health inequalities from a national perspective, as well as to consider the role local authorities could play in helping to tackle these.

12. The Task Group discussed the various ways in which health inequalities can affect different population groups, as well as the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on making health inequalities more acute for certain members of society.
13. The Task Group heard about the importance of local authorities having a clear framework to detail the ways in which health inequalities were driven locally and how the efforts being undertaken were impacting on these.
14. A discussion was also had on the importance of local authorities creating strong links with their communities and the vital role played by early intervention and investment in the tackling of health inequalities.

Surrey County Council Communications

15. On 26 January 2022, the Task Group met with officers from the Council's Communications team to discuss the ways in which the Council used various communications methods to help tackle health inequalities and reach residents who might be experiencing them.
16. The Task Group was presented with detailed slides on the strategic approach taken by the Council's Communications team, the methods used to reach and connect with various communities, and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy communications plan.
17. Communications officers also explained to the Task Group the ways in which they had learnt from, and developed, the communications methods used during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the partnership working that was taking place with the Council's health and social care partners. On the last point, the Task Group sought assurance that, going forward, the Council would ensure that its communications messaging was aligned with that of NHS Frimley Integrated Care System to ensure a joined-up approach across the whole of Surrey.
18. It was subsequently agreed that a follow-up witness session would be organised with officers from both Communications and Public Health to further examine the ways in which Public Health messages were created, what methodologies were used, and how population groups were identified and targeted.

Priority 2 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

19. On 2 February 2022, the Task Group's fourth witness session took place with Helen Rostill, Deputy Chief Executive of Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Priority 2 Lead Sponsor, and Phill Austen-Reed, Principal Health and Wellbeing Lead at Surrey County Council, to examine Priority 2 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy – "supporting mental health and emotional

wellbeing". The witness session was initially scheduled to take place on 20 December 2021 but had to be rearranged due to the pressures being put on the Council and local health services by the spread of the Omicron variant.

20. The Task Group heard that Priority 2 had a strong focus on supporting those with mental health issues, with outcomes which focused on access, wellbeing of family and carers, and the prevention of isolation. Further to this, the Task Group examined how the Health and Wellbeing Strategy was aligned with the Mental Health Improvement Plan and how this was ensuring joined up partnership working across Surrey.
21. A discussion was had around the ways in which officers engaged with local authorities outside of Surrey to ensure they were learning from initiatives being pursued in other areas of the country (such as the South East Regional Board for NHS providers), as well as work being done to develop an alliance of partners in Surrey to create better pathways to employment.

Conclusions:

22. The Task Group is making good progress and continues to regularly undertake witness sessions as part of the evidence-gathering stage of its work.
23. As of 23 February 2022, the Task Group has dates for three further witness sessions confirmed:
 - Learning Disabilities and Autism – Monday 28 February
 - Surrey Coalition of Disabled People – Wednesday 9 March
 - Independent Mental Health Network – Thursday 17 March
24. The Task Group is also in the process of organising several other witness sessions with a wide variety of health and social care representatives, such as representatives from Frimley and Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Systems, Council officers working in the Substance Misuse Commissioning team, the Surrey branch of the National Autistic Society, and the Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum.

Recommendations:

The Select Committee is asked to note the update report.

Next steps:

The Task Group will continue to undertake its work and will report back to the Select Committee with further updates at the appropriate time.

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