

## **Minutes of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board**

**5 September 2024**

**-: Present :-**

Councillor Tolchard (Chairwoman)

Councillors Brook, Foster (Vice-Chair), Long and Douglas-Dunbar

Non-voting Co-opted Members

Amanda Moss (Chair of the Voluntary Sector Network)

Pat Harris (Healthwatch Torbay)

(Also in attendance: Councillors Tranter and Bye)

---

### **6. Apologies**

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat Group and Conservative Group, the membership of the Sub-Board had been amended to include Councillors Long and Brook in place of Councillors Johns and Fellows respectively.

### **7. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Board held on 8 August 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

### **8. Director of Public Health Annual Report - Women's Health**

The Director of Public Health and Public Health Specialist provided an overview of the key themes and recommendations from the forthcoming Director of Public Health Annual Report which focused on health and wellbeing of women as set out in the submitted report. The key themes were:

- Women, employment and household labour;
- Working with vulnerable women;
- Discrimination, inclusion and exclusion;
- Connecting with communities;
- Reproductive Health; and
- Barriers to being physically active.

Members asked questions around the lack of detailed information presented in the report; it was known that men were reluctant to go to the GP when they should have done so, was this the same for women; a lot of younger people were getting seriously ill e.g. people with cancer in their 30s, what was being done to

encourage people to seek help and go to their GP; were people from LGBTQ+ groups actively involved in providing feedback as part of the evidence gathering; what were women's health hubs; and the Council's Economic Development Team were developing an Employment and Skills Plan was there work that this Team could contribute to help Public Health with their data and inform the plan in a joined up way.

The Chief Executive of Healthwatch Torbay advised that Healthwatch had undertaken a survey on men's health as part of a pilot but the funding was withdrawn. Women usually had more contact with medical professionals due to contraceptives and pregnancy but there was a need to ensure an integrated approach to meet the needs of both men and women. Ms Harris raised concern that Healthwatch Reports were shared with the Council but they did not always receive feedback on the impact their reports had.

In response to questions Members were advised that the detailed report was still being developed ready to present to the launch event on 9 October 2024, which all Members had been invited to attend. The Director of Public Health felt that it was important to bring the overview to the Sub-Board to enable them to feed into the final report, with a view to Members monitoring the progress against the action plans which will emerge from the report later in the year, in the same way they were monitoring Cardiovascular Disease which was an action from last year's Annual Report. Women's Health had been chosen this year to highlight that although progress had been made there were still areas for improvement and to focus on issues such as culture and heritage, sexuality and gender identity that may present barriers in women's access and experience of healthcare services. Women tend to access healthcare more than men and a focus on the health of women could benefit the whole family. Key data around this was included in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which was another key piece of work carried out by Public Health.

Members were informed that Torbay was an outlier for poor health of working age people as well as having an aging population with high relatively high proportion of people with disabilities and poor health in poorer areas. There needed to be a more joined up approach looking at the whole population when dealing with health and wellbeing as well as looking at sub-groups where disparities may exist.

Members were informed that there was a huge disparity between health services for men and women with more funding for women's health than men and there needed to be a more joined up approach looking at the whole body when dealing with health and wellbeing. Torbay was an outlier for poor health of working age people as well as having an aging population. With high numbers of people with disabilities or poor health in poorer areas.

The Sub-Board noted that many different groups had been consulted and engaged with but that people from the LGBTQ+ community felt that they had been over consulted, however, views were obtained from non-binary individuals as well as discussions around transgender. Members acknowledged the need to show sensitivity around gender and show compassion for those involved.

Members were advised that part of the Government's National Women's Health Strategy 2022 was the creation of Women's Health Hubs with two year's funding

provided to the Integrated Care Board (ICBs). One Devon ICB was working with Public Health Teams across Devon to give better pathways for women's health across the County through GP services in Torbay as Devon was too small an area to create individual Women's Health Hubs.

In response to questions Members were advised that the support for women in employment required a holistic approach to supporting women with childcare to enable them access to health services, working with employers to support women who were returning to work. This was one of the proposed workstreams which would be developed over the year.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board notes the Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2024: Women's Health and that the Cabinet be requested to support:
  - development of flexible and inclusive employment practices to reflect and encourage women into education and employment;
  - raising awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on women who experience it, and the sensitivity of response needed to meet their needs;
  - improvement to access, experience and outcomes for women's healthcare through Torbay's women's health hub;
  - recognition and support of grass roots women's groups and activities as integral components of mental health and wellbeing provision;
  - development of integrated service delivery pathways for women's health care, reducing the need to attend multiple appointments for routine health care; and
  - development of inclusive approaches that facilitate and support girls and women to become more physically active.
2. that the final Director of Public Health's Annual Report be presented to members of the Sub-Board at the launch on 9 October 2024; and
3. that the outcomes arising from the Director of Public Health's Annual Report be presented to a future meeting of the Sub-Board.

## **9. Building Heart Healthy Communities in Torbay**

Dr Samuel Trethewey Public Health Registrar and Dr John McGuinness GP provided an update on the implementation of the actions arising from the 2023 Director of Public Health's Annual report which focussed on cardiovascular disease (CVD) as set out in the submitted report and presentation which was circulated after the meeting. The overall goal was 'we want everyone to have an equal chance to thrive physically, mentally, socially and economically'. Prior to the

meeting Members of the Sub-Board had their blood pressure taken as part of the 'know your numbers' week.

The Director of Public Health thanked the Trainee Registrar and GPs who had been working with the Public Health Team to address Cardiovascular Disease and help provide professional insight into the work of the Team.

Members asked questions in relation to what preventative action was being undertaken in deprived areas such as Watcombe; were employers encouraged to support employees in accessing services and identifying illness sooner; health checks for 40 to 74 year olds and why this stopped at 74; what happens when the funding for cardiovascular disease runs out; the lack of adequate information and advice to the public when they were identified as being at risk of high blood pressure or high cholesterol and the lifestyle and diet changes recommended; the cost of the Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and what cheaper alternatives could be explored; how many people were told they should go to the GP with high blood pressure but refused to go as they believe they would just be told to lose weight etc; and what was being done to tackle childhood obesity which could lead to longer term health issues including CVD.

Pat Harris, Chief Executive of Healthwatch thanked the Public Health Team for their support with the Community Hub which demonstrated the opportunities to work together with key partners in the community. Previously people were trained as Covid Champions to support people in the community and there was an opportunity to train people to become health champions. Healthwatch was also working with the Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust to support people waiting for surgery through the Community Hub.

In response to questions Members were advised that there were often barriers to accessing services which were often economic or social, based on affordability and availability of transport to appointments and the impact on working people and those who had caring responsibilities. The work carried out at the Community Hub was a good pilot and would help provide evidence of the impact of providing support in the community to enable this to be rolled out wider, looking at libraries and other community settings. The Public Health Team had been working with our anchor organisations to try to encourage more support to their employees' health and wellbeing, there had been a mixed response and it was important to get the right message. Focus was on organisations where staff were likely to be higher risk e.g. smoking and overweight. It was suggested that an organisation that helps people with their health and wellbeing could be seen as more attractive and it was questioned if there could be a charter mark or similar standard for this.

The NHS health check was a nationally funded initiative and pilots were being undertaken in work places to try to encourage take up. However, it was noted that communication to patients about the health checks was varied across each GP practice although Torbay had higher take up than some areas. More work was required to ensure a more consistent approach was taken across the whole of Torbay with individuals being invited for a health check at least once every five years. The cut off age of 74 was set nationally but this did not mean that people over 74 should not receive any health screening and can access as needed by their GPs depending on their individual circumstances and risk.

Members were informed that there were issues around sustainability of support for cardiovascular disease initiatives such as the library loan scheme for blood pressure machines with stop and start funding but there were other options to upskill people in the community and investing the funding where it would have the most benefit.

The Director of Public Health advised that whilst the Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan was being developed the Council and community need to think differently about how to improve access to walking and cycling making the most of existing paths and what action would need to be taken to make routes accessible to everyone.

It was noted that monitoring information had been sought from community pharmacists, GPs, libraries and other areas as well as the BP monitor pilot questionnaire to ask what category people were in with their blood pressure and if they shared the results with a healthcare professional and did they make any changes as a result. However, the key factor to improve outcomes for people at risk of cardiovascular disease was behaviour change this would take time to implement. It was important to look at the person and family/friends as a whole as behaviour was not just an individual issue and many health related issues were linked.

Members were advised that initiatives such as 'Torbay on the Move' and the national child measurement programme were carried out in schools and when children were identified as being overweight a letter was sent out to the parents. However, the Public Health Team would like to see more done in the community with both children and adults to support change for the whole family which will help improve health outcomes in the future.

The Sub-Board acknowledged the relative lack of engagement in the community of professional health services when it came to sustaining behaviour change and that people were more likely to engage through community groups, local sports and social groups. More could be done to provide facilities such as blood pressure monitors out in the community to reach more people, as well as better sign posting and sharing of fact sheets with actual numbers rather than percentages as they were more meaningful.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Director of Public Health be recommended to work with Your Health Torbay and GP Practices to review signposting information to patients once they have been identified as having or being at risk from cardiovascular disease or high cholesterol etc. to provide better signposting to relevant support and options for improved wellbeing and not assume that people know what actions they should be taking and to develop relevant factsheets for Councillors and members of the community to use to encourage people to identify issues and follow up with relevant behaviour changes or seek necessary support.

## **10. Healthwatch Annual Report**

Kevin Dixon, Chairman and Pat Harris, Chief Executive of Healthwatch Torbay presented the Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Annual Report for

2023/2024 which set out a summary of the work undertaken by Healthwatch over the past 12 months. It was a statutory requirement to produce an annual report.

Members asked questions in relation to what was happening with maternity and dementia services; was Healthwatch involved in the emerging Director of Public Health's Annual Report; page 28 of the report mentions Healthwatch websites and helplines was this information on the Council's website; and was there anything the Council could do to provide information to the new Members of Parliament to raise awareness of the 31,000 pensioners who were going to lose their winter fuel payment.

In response to questions Ms Harris advised that Healthwatch was working with the Devon-wide Dementia Strategy and could help provide links with Torbay Hospital for dementia and maternity services, however, this was a national issue and there was a need to ensure joined up working and exploration of actions that could be taken now but ensure sustainability. There were a lot of priorities and focus should be given to the top ten things Healthwatch can do with our communities to help them. Healthwatch had not been involved with the Director of Public Health's Annual Report but this was acknowledged at the meeting.

Members were advised that Healthwatch was already working closely with Torbay's two Members of Parliament and were also looking to promote support on the cost of living through the Community Hub in partnership with Citizen's Advice, as well as putting winter warmth events on. It was noted that the Household Support Fund had been announced up to March 2025 and the Torbay Communities was working with people, including on a one to one basis to help them access the relevant support.

All present thanked Healthwatch for their work with the community and illuminating their voices and it was acknowledged that there was a need to explore digital inequalities and access to health and wellbeing services.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Healthwatch Annual Report 2023/2024 be noted and the Sub-Board supports and recognises the essential and valuable work of Healthwatch Torbay;
2. that the Director of Public Health be requested to liaise with Healthwatch on relevant strategies to see where they can help to engage and represent the voice of the user and to ensure that Healthwatch are informed of the impact of any of their reports;
3. that the Director of Public Health be requested to include a link to the Healthwatch website and contact details on the Council's website to raise awareness; and
4. that the Director of Adult and Community Services be requested to produce a brief guide on the current cost of living social support available and that this message also be shared with the Public Health Team to include with their communications around system winter planning.

**11. Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker**

The Sub-Board noted the submitted action tracker. Councillor Brook advised that he had contacted Tara Harris to track work on homelessness but a meeting had not yet been arranged. The Democratic Services Team Leader agreed to chase the meeting.

Members requested the revised Dementia Strategy be presented to a future meeting of the Sub-Board.

Chairwoman

---

This page is intentionally left blank