
Health and Wellbeing Conference

Report being considered by: Health and Wellbeing Board
On: 24 September 2020
Report Author: Gordon Oliver and Kamal Bahia
Item for: Information

1. Purpose of the Report

To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with a report on the Health and Wellbeing Conference held on 11 September 2020

2. Recommendation(s)

To note the contents of the report.

3. How the Health and Wellbeing Board can help

Support continued engagement and communication with the public on health and wellbeing issues, the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board and respond to issues raised in the conference.

Will the recommendation require the matter to be referred to the Executive for final determination?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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4. Introduction/Background

The Health and Wellbeing Board ran its first public conference, organised by the Health and Wellbeing Engagement Group, which was held remotely via Zoom on 11 September. This report provides a summary of the event, the feedback received and lessons learned for future events.

5. Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board has held annual conferences in the past, but these have tended to be for stakeholders only. However, this year the Health and Wellbeing Engagement Group suggested the event was opened up to members of the public.
- 5.2 Given the current COVID restrictions on public meetings, the event was held virtually via Zoom. The event was recorded and will be posted to YouTube to allow those who were unable to attend in person to watch the presentations and workshops.
- 5.3 The conference was well attended – around 170 people signed up, with a maximum of around 100 attending the Zoom call. Some attendees shared a connection, for example one school with 16 pupils, so it was difficult to quantify total numbers exactly. The virtual event ran for three hours and the attendee drop-off for the first two hours up to the breakout sessions was less than 2%.
- 5.4 Rob Cao from Dynamiq was engaged to manage the event and to undertake relevant promotion particularly in relation to social media. This was considered essential to provide the support to the event.

- 5.5 The event was originally organised for April around the theme of ‘1000 Acts of Kindness’ and the plan had been to use it as a starting point for meaningful engagement, extending into a roadshow across the district. It was postponed due to key participants involved in the COVID pandemic response, but at the same time, the theme felt particularly appropriate reflecting on the extraordinary response of the local community to such a crisis.
- 5.6 The event started with a ‘working lunch’ where attendees could network via the Zoom chat function. During the ‘working lunch’ a rolling slideshow was displayed, including: information on the Health and Wellbeing Board and its sub-groups, particularly their outputs; videos about the work of the local community, the Community Hub and its volunteers; information about virtual GP appointments; information about the West Berkshire Directory; and other relevant health and care information.
- 5.7 The agenda was as follows:
- **Welcome** – Kamal Bahia (Health & Wellbeing Board Engagement)
 - **Volunteering** – Garry Poulson (Volunteer Centre West Berkshire)
 - **COVID in West Berkshire** – Matt Pearce (WBC Head of Public Health)
 - **Economic Recovery** – Nick Carter (WBC Chief Executive)
- 5.8 Members of the public were then given the opportunity to ask the speakers questions before going into three separate workshops. Attendees could pre-register for one of three workshops guided by subject matter experts:
- **Volunteering** – Garry Poulson (Volunteer Centre West Berkshire), Chris Boulton (Greenham Common Trust) and Katharine Makant (West Berkshire Community Hub)
 - **Working Together** – Dr Bal Bahia (Berkshire West CCG), Kathryn Macdermott (Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust) and Nick Carter (West Berkshire Council)
 - **Young People** – Dave Seward (Berkshire Youth) and Joe Sutton (Young Carers Project Worker)
- 5.9 In each case, workshop participants were encouraged to help with a SWOT analysis to determine what had gone well and what had not during COVID, and what could be done better in the future, as well as potential problems to be avoided.
- 5.10 Delegates came back together to hear feedback from the workshops and there was an opportunity for participants to ask questions based on the feedback.
- 5.11 **Young People:**
- There has to be recognition of the collective trauma of COVID and its consequences.
 - Young people are worried about the future and not being good enough.
 - West Berkshire doesn’t do well when it comes to closing the attainment gap and this has been exacerbated by COVID particularly young people and SEND children.

- There is concern about the national discourse in relation to young people who are often unfairly blamed as demonstrated with recent COVID headlines.
- There is a need to recognise the educational content lost for Year 12 students.
- There has been lots of good work around mental health in schools.
- A local Youth Strategy might be helpful to coordinate work, ideally with a shared funding pot.
- Employers have been good about understanding the impacts of COVID and looking at young people in a holistic way and not just their grades.
- Charities and statutory organisations are providing support for young people in different ways.

5.12 **Partnership Working:**

- There has been a fantastic response locally, with individuals / organisations / communities working together.
- There has been lots of fear and uncertainty amongst health professionals as well as residents.
- There have been more mental health issues, with patients not able to access support in the usual ways.
- We want to hang onto the spirit of neighbourliness and community.
- Have welcomed the cutting of red tape and the ability to do things quicker / things we didn't think possible before (e.g. tackling homelessness, home working, remote diagnosis, etc).
- How do we take this forward? There are no simple answers – it has to be bottom-up with people wanting to do it. We can't impose solutions, but need to enable / provide support / provide funding.
- If people see others acting in positive ways, then it gives them permission to do likewise.
- Communications are critical – national and local messaging. There is a recognition that communications have been better and we need to keep it going.

5.13 **Volunteering:**

- Volunteering has increased generally and has been very good locally.
- Volunteering is beneficial for volunteers as well as those who are helped.
- There is concern about isolation for some individuals, which could be storing up problems for the future.

- Some people with learning disabilities may be 'over listening' and becoming more isolated than they need to be.
- The West Berkshire Community Hub has been very good, but the NHS volunteering scheme less so – volunteers want to be managed so they know what they are doing.
- It is worth investing in young people who are looking to volunteer, even if only for a few weeks, since they may dip their toe in the volunteering pool and return to it in later life.
- Lots of money has been raised locally by the Greenham Common Trust appeal and there is still some available for groups in need.
- There are some communities who we are not in contact with and who may be reluctant to engage – we need to get qualitative feedback as well as quantitative data on these groups.

5.14 The conference concluded by highlighting further opportunities for public engagement in relation to the emerging Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

5.15 Initial feedback collected at the conference suggested that 89% of participants found the conference useful. A follow-up questionnaire has since been sent out to seek more detailed feedback.

5.16 Topics raised at the conference and during the planning phase included:

- The community response to COVID was universally praised responding quickly to support the most vulnerable in the community;
- Volunteers need to be actively managed and supported if they are to be retained – some are already disbanding due to a lack of activity;
- The NHS is only one element in relation to the health and wellbeing of our communities and work is required to understand the inequalities in our communities and the effects of wider determinants on health;
- Young people have been badly affected by the pandemic and will need greater support to get back into/continue with work or education, particularly those at points of transition;
- Young people and schools/colleges may require more pastoral care support to address mental health issues;
- Greater efforts are required to actively engage with and listen to those communities we do not have contact with;
- Some groups may be feeling anxious and scared of contracting COVID and may be socially isolated including people with dementia and adults with learning difficulties who may not have the ability to understand the situation;
- Young carers have been adversely affected by lockdown and the gap in missing learning was a major concern;

- The remote format of the conference worked well in terms of facilitating access for those who may otherwise struggle to attend;
- Schools and colleges expressed concern with the timing of the conference due to the previous disruption to their education as a result of COVID, but it was felt that we would go back and offer engagement in a more suitable form to help listen to their opinions;
- A young person's survey was developed to establish some feedback and Berkshire Youth presented their initial findings.

6. Options for Consideration

Options available include:

- Hold future annual conferences as public events.
- Hold additional events to encourage greater participation amongst key groups and to explore particular issues in greater depth.

7. Proposal(s)

- 7.1 Given the level of interest and engagement from this first public conference and the amount of positive feedback received, it is proposed that future annual conferences be held as public events.
- 7.2 The Health and Wellbeing Engagement Group will seek to engage with individual sixth forms and with Newbury College.
- 7.3 Work will continue with Community United to engage with the black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

8. Conclusion(s)

- 8.1 The event was successful in terms of improving communication and engagement with members of the public, which was a key recommendation of the West Berkshire LGA Peer Challenge Review, and feedback from delegates suggests that there is a clear appetite for similar events in future.
- 8.2 However, there are lessons to be learned for future events, particularly in terms of the timing of the event and management of delegates via Zoom, which will help to enhance the experience of delegates.

9. Consultation and Engagement

Councillor Howard Woollaston – Executive Portfolio Holder for Public Health & Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture; Dr Bal Bahia – Chair of Health and Wellbeing Steering Group; Matthew Pearce – Head of Public Health and Wellbeing; Catalin Bogos - Performance, Research and Consultation Manager.

10. Appendices

None

Background Papers:

None

Health and Wellbeing Priorities 2019/20 Supported:

- First 1001 days – give every child the best start in life
- Primary Care Networks

Health and Wellbeing Strategic Aims Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Health and Wellbeing Strategy aim(s):

- Give every child the best start in life
- Support mental health and wellbeing throughout life
- Reduce premature mortality by helping people lead healthier lives
- Build a thriving and sustainable environment in which communities can flourish
- Help older people maintain a healthy, independent life for as long as possible

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Health and Wellbeing Strategy aim improving engagement and dialogue with residents, health and care providers and other stakeholders.

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