



West Berkshire Annual Public Health Report 2024

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West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

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Setting the scene

- ❑ Public Health leadership transition within West Berkshire Council provides the opportunity to pause and reflect in order to plan the future direction of travel.
- ❑ Health in All Policies in particular provides the opportunity to continue to move upstream.
- ❑ Our role within the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS) provides us with the opportunity to reorientate towards population-based health care.
- ❑ It is important to understand the history locally and of the Public Health system to inform our future direction of travel.
- ❑ Today Public Health broadly consists of three domains of action: Health Protection; Health Improvement; and the Healthcare Public Health.
- ❑ Prevention is key, but in enabling people to live who might previously have died, the burden of disease may actually increase and with it the costs of maintaining people's health over many years.
- ❑ The social goal is for all to 'die young as old as possible' while reducing inequality and the prevalence of long-term conditions whilst maintaining independent living.

Public Health comes home

Public Health intervention dates back to Victorian movements. Sanitary Act 1846 and Annual Public Health reports emerge providing a snapshot of population health at a moment in time

1900s comprehensive programme to address physical deterioration and concern over military fitness

Public Health definition in 1920 – the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting physical health

Progress in medical advances, vaccination and the emergence of the NHS In 1948 saw a shift in PH focus to hospital medicine

1988 and the creation of joint Control of Communicable Disease posts saw the start of the shift back to Local Government, completed in 2013.

A Public Health vision for West Berkshire

West Berkshire Council is committed to improving the health of everyone in West Berkshire. To support this Council vision, the Public Health team's commitment is summarised below:

- To develop and support population level interventions to protect and improve health that are based on high quality intelligence and evidence to inform best practice.
- To take a Place and Asset-based approach to working with local communities and develop a Community Orientated Health and Social Care System building on existing strengths to create a sustainable future.
- To maintain a relentless focus on reducing health inequalities.
- To work in partnership with all those who value the health and wellbeing of the people of West Berkshire.
- To commission and deliver evidence based, high quality, value for money, public health services.

Health protection – where are we now?

- ❑ High vaccine coverage
- ❑ Local variation and pockets of low uptake
- ❑ Poorer uptake of vaccination in older age
- ❑ Low levels of STI and HIV diagnosis – lower incidence, but possibly also poorer access and uptake
- ❑ Smoking and alcohol misuse rates in line with England but inequalities persist

Health protection – what have we achieved?

- ❑ Seasonal vaccination through the *Be Well This Winter* service
- ❑ Childhood vaccination and measles protection in West Berkshire
- ❑ Health Impact Assessment policy and process for new developments in West Berkshire
- ❑ Existing public health programmes including smoking cessation and the provision of substance misuse (drug and alcohol) services have addressed some of these wider threats but there is more that needs to be done.

Health protection – priorities moving forward

- Continuously strengthen our preparedness against future health protection threats and improve the quality of our services to protect health.
- Fulfil the assurance role of ensuring that appropriate health protection arrangements are in place to protect the health and wellbeing of the residents of West Berkshire.
- Ensure that organisational and system level governance arrangements are in place across Berkshire West through the Berkshire West Health Protection and Resilience Partnership Board (HPRPB).
- Ensure that environmental, biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear threats and hazards are understood, and that health protection issues are addressed through close collaboration with Emergency Planning Teams, Environmental Health and other appropriate colleagues.
- Work proactively with Environmental Health, Emergency Planning, Trading Standards and the Communications Team on incident and outbreak investigation, response and management.

Health protection – priorities moving forward

- Work with planners, other council officers, the general public, and others to ensure the design of safe, supportive, and sustainable housing, neighbourhoods and communities.
- Through our Health in All Policies (HiAP) we will work with Development Control, Planning, Licensing and Trading Standards, and Environmental Health to reduce externally driven harms to the vulnerable.
- Develop a public health approach to violence prevention, using an evidence base to understand populations at risk and the impact of interventions.
- Work with local communities and Family Hubs to identify problems related to health and wellbeing and mobilise and support community assets in the battle against anti-health influences.
- Work with organisations across West Berkshire to develop a strategic approach to combatting the threat of addiction whether by alcohol, tobacco, drugs and other harmful substances, risky sexual activity, or gambling, supported by high quality, evidence-based services to reduce harm.
- Work with other bodies, organisations, and interested parties to reduce the hazards that increase the risk of falls in the vulnerable and the elderly.

Health improvement – where are we now?

❑ Child health

- Higher rate of 0-4 year olds attending A&E compared to England
- Higher rate of 0-5 year old admissions for tooth decay compared to England
- Nearly a third of year 6 children are overweight or obese
- High rate of alcohol related and self-harm hospital admissions for under 18s compared to England

❑ Adult health

- Well over half (61.3%) of adults are over wight or obese
- The three highest recorded long-term conditions locally were depression, hypertension and diabetes.
- Mortality rate from preventable cancer; cardiovascular disease and respiratory disease was lower than the national average but we still saw over 100 deaths that were preventable in West Berkshire in 2021

Health improvement – what have we achieved?

Extensive health improvement programmes of work covering the following areas:

- Children and young people, including: Public Health nursing service; contribution to family hubs; Antenatal, Postnatal and Flying Start parenting and family courses; Every Child a Talker and Chatterbox to support developmental delays; Best Start in Life parenting support; Health and Wellbeing in Schools and Youth Counselling
- Healthy weight needs assessment and commissioning of new leisure provider
- Smoking cessation service provision
- Cardiovascular disease Healthcheck and community wellness outreach service
- Sexual health commissioning of advice, information, education and services related to contraception, STIs and HIV
- Mental health promotion of the Every Mind Matter and Five Ways to Wellbeing campaigns
- Ageing well including falls prevention, community and memory cafés and nature for health

Health improvement – priorities moving forward

Children and Young People

- We will continue to advocate for evidence-based Policies, Programmes, and Practices for children and young people in West Berkshire and ensure that public health grant is invested optimally for their benefit. We have more evidence than any other generation about what is important and what works.
- We know that the building blocks of future health and lifetime success are laid in the earliest years of life and that this is the phase of life where primary prevention is most possible. Yet, despite all this evidence, too many babies, young children and families are currently being failed by fragmented health policies that fail to meet the scale of need.
- Increased population need with widening health inequalities means more children experience poor health and are being harmed by conditions that are largely preventable. The UK has some of the worst child health outcomes compared to other similar nations, with widening health inequalities (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) State of Child Health).

Healthy Weight

- The Public Health team will continue to work with our partners in the voluntary sector to deliver a range of physical activities for different target groups, under the 'Ever Active' service. This service is provided by Get Berkshire Active, Age UK, Mencap and Berkshire Vision.
- We will continue to develop our free volunteer-led activity programmes, 'Run Together' and 'Wellbeing Walks', which maintain high levels of participation and deliver running and walking groups for all abilities.

Smoking

- 'Solutions4Health' will hold regular clinics at the following locations across West Berkshire; Kingsland Centre, Thatcham, Tesco, Pinchington Lane, Newbury and Sainsbury's, Calcot.
- We will continue to work on strengthening 'Solutions4Health' relationships with partners and will support West Berkshire Council's 'Smokefree Sidelines' campaign through the attendance of outreach workers at children's football tournaments held across West Berkshire.

Health improvement – priorities moving forward

Sexual Health

- We will continue to commission emergency hormonal contraception (EHC) and long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) provision. Working in partnership with our service provider we will meet post-COVID needs of our population closely monitoring and improving the service and delivering sexual health promotion.
- Our focus for the next year is to review condom distribution, expand HIV testing, review and support women's health hubs, and look to enhance links with substance misuse services and those supporting individuals with learning disabilities. Additionally, we aim to improve data collection and update our sexual health needs assessment.

Mental Health

- We will continue to work with partners to develop and deliver a mental health promotion programme and implement our suicide prevention strategy.
- We will promote the use of wider services that support emotional and mental wellbeing, such as libraries, leisure services and green spaces. This includes maximising opportunity by working smartly and imaginatively with health and community partners, to promote good mental health and wellbeing. Our aim is to build on the success of our previous mental health grant scheme with a renewed focus away from covid-19. This will allow non-for-profit organisations to apply for small pots of funding for projects aimed at promoting good mental health.
- For the first time, the public health team is working on a new death literacy project, starting with a film screening during 'Dying Matters' (a campaign by Hospice UK to improve the quality of life and support for people who are dying or grieving) and working with partners to consider how to take this work forwards.
- We will continue our efforts to provide information and resources to residents and professionals about mental wellbeing and the importance of seeking early help for mental health issues. This will be achieved by promoting the 'Reading Well' books scheme, which supports individuals to understand and manage their health and wellbeing using helpful reading.
- Together with partners, we are working on a new 'life transitions' project, which will explore how our residents can maintain good mental health whilst they go through important transitions in life and the experience of loss, such as bereavement, becoming a parent or starting a new job.

Health improvement – priorities moving forward

Drug and Alcohol Services

- We will work in partnership to support the delivery of national ambitions to reduce drug use, drug-related crime, and drug-related deaths together with partners in education, employment and accommodation, treatment and criminal justice.
- We will work to prevent and minimise harm from alcohol and drug use among young people and adults. Our focus will be to improve referrals, capacity, quality and outcomes in treatment and recovery.

Leisure and activity physical health (sports and leisure)

- We will develop a new healthy lifestyle service for adult residents with learning disabilities. Unfortunately, adults with learning disabilities in the UK face a higher burden of poor health outcomes than their peers, with life expectancy being around 16 years lower. West Berkshire is no exception, and we are working to develop our health improvement offering for this population.
- We will be commissioning a 12-month pilot service, open to adults with learning disabilities and carers, which will focus on balanced diets and being physically active, in 2024. Our aim is to secure meaningful and well-paid employment for these groups.
- We will be reviewing how the public health team can best support the development of Council-funded supported employment programmes, working with vulnerable groups and residents to obtain and continue in good quality employment.

Aging well and dementia

- Work in partnership with the Local Integration Board in the development of additional Falls Prevention initiatives
- Work in partnership with West Berkshire Community Hospital and Royal Berkshire Hospital to use the Fall Proof resources to encourage physical activity and falls prevention for in patients on the wards
- Work in partnership with the Environment and Waste teams, Business Improvement District and VCS partners to explore how the national Refill scheme could be implemented locally to support improved hydration.
- Explore IT support sessions for older people in the community.

Healthcare Public Health – what have we achieved?

- ❑ Collaborating with the Integrated Care Board to fund a Community Wellness Outreach Service aimed at identifying individuals at risk of cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and improving access to the NHS Health Checks in underserved populations.
- ❑ Recruitment of a Consultant in Public Health and Director of Public Health across West Berkshire and Reading to provide specialist public health advice and leadership to the ICB and ICS bringing to bear the tools and perspectives of public health practice on the provision of health and care.
- ❑ Externally commissioned Public Health services.
- ❑ Understanding patterns of health and disease, identifying needs of our local population and prescribing those interventions that are most effective in improving health and wellbeing through the JSNA

Healthcare Public Health – priorities moving forward

- Provide strong, visible public health leadership within the Berkshire West healthcare system to protect and promote health.
- Develop an integrated approach to generating and using public health evidence and intelligence in decision making within the NHS and across the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP).
- Promote a focus on prevention and inequalities in the commissioning and delivery of NHS functions, including strong links with the factors influencing health outcomes such as employment, education, housing and the environment.
- Work with the NHS to ensure good knowledge, systems and processes are in place for responding to health protection threats.
- Work from the bottom up at a community level with an Asset Based Community Development philosophy as far as possible, within a wider local authority and NHS strategic framework.

Research/evidence base – priorities moving forward

- Work with partners across and beyond the council to develop a joined-up, evidence and intelligence function to support commissioning decisions.
- Build on new tools and techniques for data linkage, enabling measurement of the impact of a change in one part of the system on other parts.
- Work with stakeholders to develop the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Asset mapping, reflecting the priorities of the Integrated Care Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Strengthen the evaluation of public health interventions delivered across the council and wider system, providing clarity on health and economic impact.
- Improve the experience of the public users of public health services with clear service offers and the increased ability of managers to be self-sufficient in access to intelligence resources through the use of tools such as Microsoft Power BI.
- Build relationships with academic institutions and research networks within the ICB to ensure development of a public health research programme within the council.
- Improve how we use information from those with lived experience to develop services and further embed the use of citizen science and understanding of the lived experience of local people.

Communications – priorities moving forward

- Work with council communications team to deliver a communications programme of awareness raising and information to the public.
- Send out adverse weather warnings via social channels and internal messaging channels, hot weather June to September and cold weather November to March using United Kingdom Health security agency (UKHSA) resources and supporting documents from the Adverse Weather and Health Plan.
- Continue to promote Covid-19 vaccine and, flu vaccine, and other messages via social channels and internal messaging channels using UKHSA resources.
- Continue to promote Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine using West Berkshire Council measles and MMR messaging plan and UKHSA resources.
- Strengthen our internal communication so other teams in the council understand the work of public health and opportunities for engagement.
- Use our learning from the COVID-19 pandemic of those approaches that work best with different groups in our local community.
- Use internal messaging channels ('In the Know', 'Reporter', 'Residents Newsletter')
- Continue to provide expert advice, underpinned by data and evidence, and informed by behavioural insights.

Workforce – priorities moving forward

- Continue to deliver workforce development training and opportunities to the Public Health Team and the wider workforce.
- Broaden our public health training offerings, building expertise to deliver high-quality public health training across the council and external stakeholders.
- Support all career stages, including the development of an apprenticeship program for those early in their careers and providing specialist training for aspiring consultants.
- Ensure that our ways of working foster a diverse workforce, where staff from all backgrounds feel equally valued and accepted.
- Develop innovative approaches to our training and development, positioning us as leaders across the system and as an employer of choice.
- Provide the necessary training and support to ensure strong leadership at all levels.

Public Health function – priorities moving forward

- Make the biggest impact by addressing the building blocks of health, these are the natural and built environment in which we live, work, move, and play; the quality of the work we do and the resources available to us either through income or access to facilities to live a full life.
- Tackle health inequalities and ensure we have equal opportunities for all.
- Embed a Health in all Policies approach within West Berkshire Council and work in partnership to promote health and wellbeing at every opportunity.
- Tackle preventable cardiovascular disease through delivery of a community wellness outreach service, taking lifestyle support and health checks to communities.
- Continue to deliver on the joint [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#).

Conclusion and priorities

- ❑ A balanced approach to improving public health in West Berkshire across three levels:
 - Interventions that impact the whole population;
 - Targeted intervention for groups at risk of ill health; and
 - Support for those with established disease to prevent further ill health and enable people to live well and independently with established medical conditions.
- ❑ Embedding the Public Health approach through partnership working to reach more people and address the wider determinants of health
- ❑ Advocate for evidence-based decisions and communications
- ❑ Continue to commission and deliver high quality Public Health Services

The West Berkshire Public Health Team welcomes the challenge of protecting and improving the health of our local people in the years ahead.

To quote Cicero “The Health of the People is the Highest Law”.