Community-Centred Approaches for Health and Wellbeing

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to give the People’s Board an update on the design and development of the community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing programme.

This programme is collaboration between the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector and wider St Helens Cares partners. It forms part of the “Early Intervention and Prevention” theme within the St Helens Cares programme.

The development of community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing is following the framework established by Public Health England. This covers four key areas of work:

- Collaborations and Partnerships
- Communications and Access to Community Resources
- Volunteer and Peer Roles
- Strengthening Communities

The following infographic shows the range of projects within the programme:
2. JUSTIFICATION

The community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing programme covers both mental and physical health within our communities. The programme is based on the principle that prevention is better than cure, and that to manage demands on statutory services, solutions can increasingly be found within local communities.

The programme is also about changing relationships with the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector, ensuring that they are recognised and understood, supporting sustainability and greater collaboration for the benefit of our population.

The new NHS 10 year plan (NHS, 2019) focuses on building an NHS fit for the future by:
- enabling everyone to get the best start in life
- helping communities to live well
- helping people to age well

The NHS plan includes:
- Building on peoples strengths and capacity; with the right support, people of all ages can and want to take more control of how they manage their physical and mental wellbeing.
- Using Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to bring together local organisations to make shared decisions with providers on population health, service redesign and Long Term Plan implementation.
- The NHS Long Term Plan (NHS, 2019) includes a commitment to double the number of NHS volunteers over the next three years. It also acknowledges that volunteering allows older people to stay physically active and connected to their communities, and younger people to develop skills and experience for work and education (p90).

3. WORK PROGRAMME

3.1 Collaborations and Partnerships

This project continues the strong collaborations and partnerships that have developed within the St Helens Cares system. There is further partnership work to be undertaken within communities, including working with new and existing social enterprises and community interest companies, working with schools (particularly pastoral leads) to develop community based activities for children and families, strengthening relationships across the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector and further developing the local third sector consortium. This project will also seek to maximise social value and links to the work in this area taking place within the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership.

To support this, the St Helens voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector forum has recently been re-instated. This provides a focal point for the work of the sector and ensures there is a clear communications channel between statutory services and stakeholders. Dates have been set for the remainder of 2019/2020 and all are welcome to these sessions.

A new Reference Group has also been established, to oversee and provide accountability for the work delivered by and with the sector. This group is formed from representatives of local partnerships and groups as follows;
The new infrastructure groups, informed by the public and other stakeholder specific engagement will design and deliver a new strategy for the sector in St Helens, accompanied by an action plan. The strategy and action plan will be brought to the November 2019 People’s Board. In the meantime, a draft action plan has been developed and work is underway on specific projects within the action plan, some of which are detailed within this report.

3.2 Access to Community Resources

The recent TalkFest public engagement events concluded that the public are not able to access information on community events, activities and advice to support their own health and wellbeing and to promote self-care of our population.

The social prescribing project has also highlighted the need for easily accessible and clear information on community activities and groups, to ensure that people can be more connected to their communities. The next stage in this project is to build the infrastructure for social prescribing (link workers) in primary care, taking a holistic approach to people’s health and wellbeing and connecting people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support.

The key project within “access to community resources” is to develop a St Helens Cares Directory. There are several different websites and other types of online directories across St Helens and beyond. This will provide one online resource which will be developed to provide information on all health and wellbeing assets across the borough. This will not replace individual organisations existing information, but instead will provide a co-ordinated front door to the information. A business case is being developed for the directory, which appraises a number of different options for implementation. Whichever option is implemented, will be implemented in conjunction with “Contact Cares” in order to complement the universal offer for health, social care and wellbeing in St Helens.

A second initiative within the “access to community resources” project has initially looked at “holiday hunger”. There are over 4,000 children in St Helens who are eligible for free school meals. The project aims to offer free, fun activities for children in St Helens during the school holidays, whilst also giving them a free meal. The project is initially being funded by St Helens Council and the Torus Foundation. A range of provision is being trialled over the 2019 summer holidays. This provision will be evaluated in September 2019 and a task and finish group are looking at solutions to tackle some of the wider issues around holiday hunger.

3.3 Volunteer and Peer Roles

There are many volunteers and groups and initiatives supporting volunteers around the borough. Primarily this is through the St Helens Volunteer Centre but there are many other groups of volunteers.
Work around volunteers within the programme includes;

- Agreed local pathways for volunteers – recognising the cohorts that volunteer most commonly and opportunities for skills development, career pathways and reviewing how volunteers and opportunities are matched.

- Reviewing organisational volunteering policies and streamlining these as far as possible across St Helens Cares organisations

- Consideration of reward and recognition for volunteers.

A key milestone locally is the hosting of the Rugby League World Cup 2021, where the sector will work in collaboration with the organisers on attracting local volunteers.

3.4 Strengthening Communities

There is strong evidence to support the notion that if we encourage and involve communities and local people in decision making and use community skills and assets working within communities that it reduces dependence on services and improves wellbeing.

This project is to work with our communities to understand the assets within those communities. To map what is already available, understand the duplication and the gaps and to also work with the communities to identify what is important in relation to wellbeing and community resilience and to identify improvements and provide potential solutions.

This work will build upon the strengths based approaches recently implemented within Adult Social Care and Health, and through the Movement Day process within the faith sector, that focus on the assets of St Helens.

In addition to mapping and understanding the assets and strengths of our communities, work is also progressing to look at physical assets. The project will support the identification and development of locality hubs and community spaces.

Fundamentally, the “Strengthening Communities” project will support improving mental health and wellbeing. The aim of this aspect of the programme is to strengthen community action on mental health and the social determinants of health.

There is a strong moral and economic case for tackling the rising challenge of mental health problems for communities and the people who experience them. The assets within communities, such as the skills and knowledge, social networks and community organisations, are building blocks for good health. The core concepts that underpin this are voice and control, leading to people having a greater say in their lives and health; equity, leading to a reduction in avoidable inequalities, and social connectedness, leading to healthier more cohesive communities. All of which have the potential to improve mental wellbeing (Public Health England, 2015).

Some of the best returns on investment for mental health are community based initiatives, such as for £1 invested in school-based social and emotional learning programmes has a return on investment of £84. There is an estimated saving of £325 saved annually per person who takes part in befriending schemes and £850 per member of a time bank due to impacts on wellbeing and resilience (Mind, 2013).
Communities, both place-based and where people share a common identity or affinity, have a vital contribution to make to health and wellbeing. Community life, social connections and having a voice in local decisions are all factors that underpin good health, however inequalities persist and too many people experience the effects of social exclusion or lack social support. Participatory approaches directly address the marginalisation and powerlessness caused by entrenched health inequalities. There are important roles for NHS, local government and their partners in fostering community resilience and enabling individuals and communities to take more control over their health and lives (Public Health England, 2015).

Examples of specific areas for action in this area are as follows:

- Through the Collaborative and Maternity Safety Champions, the NHS is supporting a culture of multidisciplinary team working and learning, vital for safe, high-quality maternity care.
- Mental health support for children and young people will be embedded in schools and colleges.
- Better support for the fathers/partners of women accessing specialist perinatal mental health services and maternity outreach clinics.
- To better support young carers through access to preventive health and social prescribing, and timely referral to local support services.
- Improve access to mental health support for people in work and there is a commitment to supporting people with severe mental illnesses to seek and retain employment.

Within the “Strengthening Communities” project, action has already begun, for example:

- Working with the new Primary Care Networks (PCNs) with the aim of all GP practices having access to a link worker / social prescriber.
- Working with the voluntary sector to increase access to lesson plans and activities to improve emotional health and wellbeing. An application has been submitted to NHS England for funding to train mental health practitioners to work with schools.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the People’s Board:

- Note the contents of this report and are aware of the community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing programme
- Agree to receive the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Strategy and action plan at the November 2019 Board meeting.

5. LEADS FOR THIS REPORT

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