

Public Health Annual Report 2024: Recommendations Update

Reference 9.1

Recommendation

Considerations of health equity need to be at the forefront of decision making in all sectors, with policy, service design and investment decisions aligned to the actions recommended by the Health Equity Commission for Lancashire and Cumbria in the 2022 report.

Progress update

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Westmorland and Furness includes actions on several of the recommendations from the Health Equity Commission report, including: reducing the gap in good level of development for children starting schools, work with anchor organisations on good employment, and development of health inequality plans in NHS organisations.

In addition, the Prevention Framework for Westmorland and Furness Council which is currently in development aims to provide a structured approach to putting considerations of health equity at the forefront of policy, service design and investment decisions.

Reference 9.2

Recommendation

Across Westmorland and Furness we need to take a 'Health In All Policies' approach, considering the opportunities to improve and protect health in all decision making on the building blocks of health, including (but not limited to) economic, housing and planning policy.

Progress update

The Public Health team work across the Council to ensure all policies and strategies consider the potential positive and negative benefits for health. This has included (but is not limited to) work on the Housing Strategy, Economic Strategy, Poverty Action Plan, Climate Action Plan and Family Help Strategy.

Reference 9.3

Recommendation

Given the significant impact of poverty on health and wellbeing, there needs to be concerted effort to prevent poverty and mitigate its impact, including 'poverty proofing' public services. Action to address poverty should be informed by, and co-produced with, people with lived experience of poverty.

Progress update

Poverty Truth Commissions have been held in Barrow and South Lakeland, and work on rural poverty undertaken in Eden.

Training on Poverty Proofing and Poverty awareness has been developed (by Poverty Truth Community Commissioners), alongside a Poverty Proofing Toolkit. These are promoted across the Council and poverty proofing sessions have been held with Westmorland and Furness Council service managers. The Council is working with Citizens Advice, Age UK, Inspira and others to directly support people in poverty increase their income and reduce expenditure through a referral "no wrong door" approach to holistic and tailored advice.

Reference 9.4

Recommendation

The first 1001 days of life are a critical time for physical, cognitive, and emotional development and therefore need to be given the highest priority in any strategies and programmes aiming to improve outcomes, and in the allocation of resources. There are some stark inequalities in outcomes for children and young people, and support for children and families, from early years through to adulthood, needs to be scaled appropriately to need in order to reduce these inequalities and improve outcomes for all.

Progress update

There has been significant work underway to develop a Westmorland and Furness Best Start in Life strategy. This sets out the ambition for our children and works in partnership with the local authority, NHS and VCFSE to improve early years outcomes for all, and especially families experiencing poorer health and wellbeing. The Westmorland and Furness Growing Healthy 0-19 Service is in place, which includes Health Visiting support available to all families. More families are now receiving this support, providing them

with advice and guidance in relation to a plethora of important health and wellbeing factors. In addition, Family Hubs are established in key areas and work in partnership with the local community, particularly focussing on areas of disadvantage.

Reference 9.5

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Reference: 9.6

Recommendation

Actions to prevent and delay disease, and reduce risk, need to be implemented at both a population and individual level. This means that opportunities to improve health and prevent disease for current and future generations need to be explicitly considered in all public sector decision making. In addition, throughout public services, and in particular in the health service, we need to ensure that greater focus is given to early identification and proactive management of the causes and risk factors for preventable disease and mortality.

Progress update

[See 9.2.](#)

A whole system CVD Prevention partnership has been established for Westmorland and Furness and is developing an action plan aimed at influencing wider determinants and modifiable risk factors. This work will be informed by a recent health equity analysis of NHS health checks in primary care and a Health Technology Assessment of digital health checks. Work is also now progressing to implement a 3 year digital health check pilot in Barrow.

Reference: 9.7

Recommendation

Our population is ageing, and more people are living with multi-morbidity and frailty. This national trend is particularly pronounced in Westmorland and Furness, with the working age population reducing more quickly, and the population of over 65 year olds increasing more rapidly than the national average. It is therefore imperative that we take action to support our residents to live with independence, in better health for longer, and maximise the quality of life experienced by all.

Progress update

Work is progressing to adopt a Westmorland and Furness-wide Age Friendly Communities approach. Age-Friendly partnerships are now established in all three localities (South Lakeland, Eden and Furness). Action plans are currently being developed under the WHO Age Friendly Communities framework.

Age Friendly Festival community engagement events are also being planned for October 2026.

The council has formally signed up to be an Age Friendly Employer.