

Health and Wellbeing Board

28 January 2015



Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2014 - All the Lonely People: Social Isolation and Loneliness in County Durham

Report of Anna Lynch, Director of Public Health County Durham, Children and Adults Services, Durham County Council

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to ask the Health & Wellbeing Board to receive the 2014 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham attached at Appendix 3.

Background

2. Under the Health & Social Care Act 2012, one of the statutory requirements of each Director of Public Health is to produce an annual report about the health of the local population. The relevant local authority has a duty to publish the report. The government has not specified what the annual report might contain and has made it clear that this is a decision for individual Directors of Public Health to determine.
3. It is important to note that most data and information on the health status of the communities in County Durham is detailed in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment available on the Council's website. Further information on public health programmes can also be found in the public health business plan and the joint health & wellbeing strategy. Detailed information on health protection issues for County Durham residents is contained in a Public Health England report – *Protecting the population of the North East from communicable diseases and other hazards – Annual Report 2012/13*. This is available on request.
4. The 2014 annual report focuses on tackling social isolation and the action that needs to be taken by a range of organisations to reduce the impact on the health and wellbeing of communities. Social isolation has been identified in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy as an issue raised by communities during the consultation period. The Better Care Fund programme includes a social isolation workstream that focuses on community action that support cohesion and connectedness which facilitates greater resilience and independence. This report attempts to develop an understanding of the issues and ways it can be addressed. The key messages from the report are detailed in Appendix 2.
5. The annual report will be uploaded onto the council website and hard copies provided to a range of organisations and individuals including the County Durham Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS England, third sector organisations, NHS foundation trusts, Public Health England, North of England Commissioning service etc. In addition, copies will be made available to the members library, to individual members (where requested), Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committees and officers.

Recommendations

6. The Health & Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- Receive the 2014 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health, County Durham and note the key messages and recommendations,
- Note that the report is used to inform commissioning plans, service developments and assessment of need to support a range of funding bids, particularly by third sector organisations

Contact: Anna Lynch, Director of Public Health County Durham, Durham County Council

Tel: 03000 268146

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

The publication of the report is funded by the ring fenced public health grant.

Staffing

No impact

Risk

No impact

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

No impact

Accommodation

No impact

Crime and Disorder

No impact

Human Rights

No impact

Consultation

This is the independent report of the Director of Public Health and is not subject to consultation

Procurement

No impact but should inform council commissioning plans in relation to services that impact on the health of the population

Disability Issues

No impact

Legal Implications

No impact

Appendix 2

KEY MESSAGES

- Social isolation and/or loneliness is a significant and growing public health challenge for County Durham's population. It is associated with poor physical, mental and emotional health including increased rates of cardio-vascular disease, hypertension, cognitive decline and dementia.
- Anyone along the lifecourse can suffer from social isolation, not just older people. It can affect anyone at any point in their lives, though some individuals are at higher risk.
- People with stronger social networks are more likely to be healthier and happier. Those with weaker social networks can become isolated, and as a result, more likely to experience poor physical and mental health and require support and intervention from the local health and care services.
- Earlier interventions could help prevent some of the negative effects of social isolation from accumulating further and impacting on health and wellbeing as people get older.
- Social isolation is an issue that requires all organisations, communities and individuals to become involved and to recognise that all have a key role to play.
- The causes of social isolation are complex and varied. As well as supporting individuals who are, or who are potentially at risk of social isolation, partner organisations must continue to tackle the underlying causes such as stigma and discrimination, education, poverty, skills and employment etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Partner organisations should identify those who are, or who are at potential risk of becoming socially isolated. There is a role for communities and individuals to support isolated people at a local level, and to build resilience and social capital in their communities.
- Organisations should support the building of local connectedness in communities, working across partnerships in order to protect those most at risk of social isolation.
- Organisations, including the voluntary and community sector and Action Area Partnerships (AAPs) should work towards creating an environment where people can connect with their neighbours, communities or people of the same interest.
- Front-line professionals should consider the impact of social isolation on their patients/clients and signpost or support them to sources of help.
- Relevant strategies should identify actions to tackle social isolation wherever appropriate.
- Service developments, new commissions and contract specifications should consider the impact of social isolation on client / patient groups.
- Appropriate training and policies should be in place to support volunteers in County Durham communities.
- Partners should continue to focus on 'upstream' approaches that tackle the underlying causes of social isolation.