

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE TOWER HAMLETS HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

**HELD AT 5.05 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 16 APRIL 2024**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL**

**Members Present in Person:**

Councillor Gulam Kibria	Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Choudhury (Chair)	
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Performance
Dr Somen Banerjee	Director of Public Health, LBTH
Steve Reddy	Corporate Director of Children Services
Matthew Adrien	Service Director at Healthwatch Tower Hamlets
Dr Neil Ashman	Tower Hamlets Place Lead, NHS North-East London
Dr Ian Basnett	Public Health Director, Barts Health NHS Trust
Councillor Ahmodur Khan	Chair of the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Vicky Scott	Chief Executive Officer THCVS
Charlotte Pomery	Representative from North-East London NHS Integrated Care Board

**Apologies:**

Councillor Saied Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
Councillor Maium Talukdar	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor))
Kosru Uddin	(Representative from the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum)

**Officers Present in Person:**

Natalia Clifford	
Liam Crosby	Associate Director of Public Health (Acting)
Naveed Mohammed	(Head of Strategy, Policy & Improvement)
Gemma Lyons	(Health Protection Lead)
Joel West	(Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))

**1. STANDING ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

**2. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Maium Talukdar, Councillor Saied Ahmed, Councillor Abdul Wahid and Kosru Uddin (Representative from the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum).

### **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Board meeting on 6 February 2024 are approved as a correct record.

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

There were none.

#### **4.1 Draft Special Educational Needs Disabilities & Inclusion Strategy: 2024 - 2029**

Steve Reddy, Corporate Director Childrens Services and Frances Winter, Strategy & Policy Lead introduced the report that set how the partnership, led by the SEND Improvement Board, would secure the improvements needed so that the right support is provided for children and young people with SEND and their families in Tower Hamlets.

The strategy aims to engage partners across the health and well-being board to promote consultation participation through various channels within the community. Notably, there has been a notable increase in demand across the education, health, and care sectors, especially concerning educational disabilities, as evidenced by a rise in education, health, and care plans from over 2000 to nearly 4000 in recent years.

The report highlighted the scrutiny around Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) with inspections and challenges prompting a need for self-assessment readiness for upcoming re-inspections. The focus on delivering better value programs for high-needs individuals, engaging young people and families, and attracting additional funding to manage demand highlights proactive steps being taken.

The strategy's priorities revolve around timely support, user-friendly services, phased support across different education stages, and creating an inclusive environment celebrating young people with SEND. Active involvement of young people would be sought in shaping priorities through forums like the Young People's Forum

During discussions, the Board sought ways to enhance support for those over 18 with learning disabilities, address low COVID booster uptake among the SEND cohort, and improve leisure and well-being opportunities for individuals with disabilities to tackle health inequalities. Suggestions included boosting over 18 special education offerings, enhancing pandemic response learnings, and promoting accessibility in leisure programs to cater to diverse needs more effectively.

The board welcomed the report.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The Health and Wellbeing Board agree that the draft strategy is published for consultation during May and June 2024, with formal approval of the revised strategy to follow in late summer 2024.

#### **4.2 Covid Booster update**

Natalia Clifford, Associate Director for Public Health and Gemma Lyons, Health Protection Lead introduced the report that updated the Board on the Autumn Covid-19 booster programme, delivered between 11 September 2023 and 31 January 2024. The data revealed that 25.6% of the eligible population in Tower Hamlets received the booster between September 2023 and January 2024, slightly lower than the North East London average of 31%. Noteworthy was the higher coverage among high-risk groups, including care home residents (75% coverage), housebound residents (81%), and individuals aged 80 and over (45%).

However, certain demographics, such as those aged 80 plus, individuals aged 65 to 79, and patients with learning disabilities or serious mental illnesses, exhibited lower booster coverage compared to the North East London average. To address these disparities, funding from the North East London Integrated Care System (ICS) and public health sources was utilized to implement targeted communication and engagement initiatives. These efforts involved collaborating with voluntary, community, and faith-based organizations to organize events, workshops, Q&A sessions, and distribute informative materials through various channels.

An innovative vaccination engagement pilot was developed to reach vulnerable residents, focusing on those aged 80 plus and individuals with specific health conditions. Additionally, motivational interviewing training was provided to enhance the workforce's ability to engage with the public effectively. The after-action review conducted with partners highlighted challenges and identified areas for improvement for the upcoming spring booster program.

Moving forward, action areas have been identified to enhance the delivery model for care homes, housebound patients, and clinically extremely vulnerable children. Improvements in escalation processes, governance, vaccine delivery across the health system, integration of outreach activities into broader health events, and data scrutiny mechanisms were outlined for future planning. The spring booster program, running from April 15th to June 30th, targets adults aged 75 and over, residents in care homes, and immunosuppressed individuals.

Efforts are being made to strengthen the delivery model through collaborative partnerships and tailored communication strategies for these specific cohorts. The overarching goal is to ensure equitable access to vaccinations, increase uptake among priority groups, and streamline processes for efficient program implementation. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the planned improvements, the health system aims to enhance vaccination coverage and promote public health resilience in the community.

Further to the presentation, the Board:

- Stressed the importance of improving COVID booster uptake, especially among vulnerable sections of the community, such as older age groups and immunosuppressed individuals.
- Expressed concerns about the drop in vaccination rates within the Bangladeshi community, despite initially having high uptake at the start of the pandemic.
- Expressed concerns about the lack of detailed demographic data, particularly on COVID uptake by ethnic minorities, poses a challenge in addressing health inequalities effectively. The Board underscored the ongoing challenges in collecting comprehensive demographic data and the imperative need for tailored strategies to improve vaccination coverage across all vulnerable populations.
- Welcomed the additional efforts made to engage with communities historically showing lower vaccination rates through targeted messaging
- Expressed concerns about low vaccination rates among individuals with learning disabilities and serious mental illnesses and highlighted the need to increase awareness about the need to address barriers and enhance support for marginalised groups.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The Health and Wellbeing Board note the updates and efforts to promote uptake and awareness of the spring Covid-19 booster among eligible residents.

#### **4.3 Health and Wellbeing Story - Just Say Hello**

Natalia Clifford, Associate Director for Public Health introduced the report that summarised the 'Just Say Hello' campaign, which was part of a broader campaign to tackle loneliness and isolation in Tower Hamlets.

Further to the presentation, the Board:

- Welcomed engagement with and from partners including charities, the NHS, and Council services, voluntary and community sector. Board members suggested this be widened to engage with the Tower Hamlets Together Partnership, including primary care, PEPS,

community care, mental health services, and hospitals, to address social isolation comprehensively, especially post-illness periods.

- Asked if the campaign could be extended to target children and young people through school outreach programs to ensure a more holistic approach to combating loneliness and promoting well-being across all age groups.
- Noted the outreach efforts in GP surgeries, schools, and community hubs and welcomed the estimate which indicated around 1000 residents per week were reached during the campaign period.
- Expressed concerns regarding measuring impact, particularly on loneliness and isolation, given the collaborative nature of the campaign with multiple partners using varied evaluation methods. The Board welcomed plans to standardise measurement practices across partners to better understand the program's impact moving forward.
- Additionally, feedback highlighted the need to cater to residents who speak languages other than English to ensure inclusivity in future campaigns.
- Noted and welcomed the relatively low cost associated with the campaign,

**RESOLVED** that the Board:

Note the campaign and share with colleagues. Provide advice on how to further promote the campaign in preparation for next year re-launch (October 24)

#### **4.4 Be Well Report**

Somen Banerjee, Acting Corporate Director Adult Social Care, Natalia Clifford, Associate Director for Public Health and Liam Crosby, Public Health Consultant introduced the report and provided a presentation that set out an overarching framework and logic model for a system-wide Be Well programme to tackle health inequalities and reduce risk of cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and cancer. The Be Well programme will be system-wide, consolidating existing workstreams and with input from all HWB partners.

Further to the presentation, the Board:

- Stressed the need to address existing fragmentation and siloed working within partnerships, particularly evident in initiatives like social prescribing where there lacks a consistent prevention message across various organisations.
- Stressed the need for targeting specific neighbourhoods with tailored well-being initiatives in collaboration with residents to address varying health issues like heart disease. Community approaches, such as conducting blood pressure checks in lunch clubs or collaborating with

mosques to identify and manage health concerns within communities could be effective.

- Expressed hope that the borough-wide brand "be well" would create a recognizable and consistent platform for residents to access key health messages and support services seamlessly. Such a system-wide approach could bring coherence, consistency, and collaboration across various health initiatives, addressing fragmented working practices, targeting specific health issues at the neighborhood level, establishing a unified health brand for residents, and enhancing analysis of health variations and relationships between healthcare providers to improve public health outcomes comprehensively.
- Stressed that prevention, particularly addressing wider determinants to effectively combat inequalities and promote overall well-being
- Noted the importance of getting the data right and aligning with related initiatives.
- Recommended the inclusion of children and young people in prevention efforts, recognising the impact they can have not only on their own health but also on influencing family behaviours positively.

**RESOLVED** that the Board:

1. Note the scope and outline structure of the proposed Be Well programme;
2. Commit to organisational representation at the Programme Development workshop.

#### **4.5 PEG Mental Health Prevention Concordat next steps**

Liam Crosby, Public Health Consultant and Angela Burns, Public Health Programme Manager introduced the report that provided an update on the priority within the 2023- 2028 Partnership Plan to become a signatory to the Mental Health Prevention Concordat and to develop an action plan to deliver mental health prevention and promotion for at least twelve months.

Tower Hamlets' Draft Mental Health Prevention Action Plan for 2024-2026, was something which Public Health are supporting PEG to develop. Angela and Liam asked the Board to note that PEG will discuss the application at their next meeting, agree leads for actions, and will submit as part of the application process for the Prevention Concordat to DHSC at the end of May 2024.

Angela and Liam set out next steps, including submitting the plan for approval at the forthcoming PEG meeting in May 2024, followed by submission to the Department of Health and Social Care. Input from stakeholders was encouraged to ensure the plan reflects the breadth of ongoing work and

priorities across different life stages, with a particular focus on children and young people's mental health as a critical aspect of prevention efforts.

Angela and Liam explained that signing up to the Concordat doesn't bring additional resources, but focuses on maximizing synergies within the system. The aim is to leverage commitments to attract resources in the future, exemplified by past funding successes.

Further to the presentation, the Board:

- Welcomed the development of a comprehensive action plan focusing on mental health prevention and promotion, involving partners from various sectors across the borough, including the Council, NHS, voluntary organizations, community groups, police, fire services, and businesses.
- Noted the key components of the plan include conducting needs assessments, improving partnership working, enhancing leadership commitment, promoting mental health, addressing inequalities, and developing a shared outcomes framework to measure progress consistently.
- Welcomed some of the commitments outlined in the mental health concordat, such as aligning organizational plans with mental health objectives, contributing to shared outcomes and annual reporting
- Noted that the Board would have a role in monitoring progress and ensuring accountability as a subsidiary group of the partnership, however it was suggested that the Mayor and the lead member to sign off on the Council's commitment to signify support for the plan.
- Noted concerns regarding young people's mental health trends, emphasising the importance of addressing this issue comprehensively.

**RESOLVED** that the Board:

1. Agree that the sign off of the action plan will be by a named representative of the Tower Hamlets PEG.
2. Support delivery of the proposed action plan in their respective organisations as action leads.
3. Noted that senior leaders would be named as leads on actions within the Mental Health Prevention Action Plan.
4. Agreed to review progress on the action plan on an annual basis (2024/2025 and 2025/2026).

**5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

The meeting ended at 6.50 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury  
Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board