Public Health Strategy 2015 - 2018
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1. **Foreword**

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome back public health into the local government fold. In many ways it was public health and its great municipal works that gave rise to modern local government, and it is with that level of ambition that I am determined to approach our new public health responsibilities.

So, instead of settling for the mandatory minimum, I want this council to put the public health of Cumbria at the heart of everything it does. I want to embed public health across all our activities. Most of all I want to enable all members to rise to the challenge of being members for the health of their communities.

This strategy sets out the first steps on the journey of this council becoming the first public health council in England. A journey that will result in better health and wellbeing for all the people and communities of Cumbria.

2. **Introduction**

There can be few objectives more worthwhile than promoting health and wellbeing. In many ways this already underpins a lot of what local government does, though over the years the connection may have become less obvious. Social care – both for adults and children – has always been about wellbeing. Education helps to equip children with the skills they need to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Economic development – too often seen as an end in itself – is mainly valuable if it helps people to be healthy and happy by improving their quality of life. Many community services such as libraries were originally established with the aim of helping people to improve their lot in life. At District Council level, planning functions, environmental health and many leisure services began as a response to poor health. In many ways, improving health and wellbeing is the ultimate objective of local government.

**Purpose and scope of strategy**

This strategy sets out the way in which Cumbria County Council intends to realise its ambition of promoting health and wellbeing in the County by becoming a public health focused organisation – putting public health at the heart of its business. It is not a multi-agency strategy for Cumbria as a whole; that is the purposes of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This document sets out how Cumbria County Council will shape itself in order to be best placed to take forward the multi-agency priorities set out in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It sets out how our specialist public health function is integrating into the Council, and what the other parts of the Council will do to play their part in improving public health and wellbeing.
3. Health and Wellbeing in Cumbria

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Cumbria provides considerable information about the health and wellbeing of the County. This section of the strategy draws on the JSNA to highlight the key factors and priorities that the Council is ultimately seeking to address through becoming a public health focused organisation.

Population

With a population of just under 500,000 Cumbria is the second least densely populated county in England. Cumbria’s population is an ‘ageing’ population; the number and proportion of citizens within older age groups is increasing. While this trend is similar to trends seen at a regional and national level it is more pronounced in Cumbria. Furthermore, the trend is forecast to continue into the future driven by, to a large extent, in-migration of people aged 45 and over and out-migration of younger adults. This changing demographic brings challenges associated with general health, dementia and social isolation, but older people also bring many assets that can support community action for health improvement.

Deprivation

Perhaps the biggest issue for Cumbria is tackling the gap between the “best” and the “worst”. Overall Cumbria appears to be relatively affluent; levels of deprivation in Cumbria are relatively low and some of the county’s residents live in areas where health is excellent and the quality of life is outstanding. However, this masks the deprivation facing specific neighborhoods and communities within the county; there are some areas of the county where deprivation is similar to that found in the most deprived inner city areas of the country. As a result, there are inequalities across the county in relation to, for example, levels of educational attainment, crime rates, and household income. These social factors, particularly low income, have a very significant influence on health.

Health and wellbeing outcomes

Cumbria’s life expectancy at birth is slightly lower than in England, standing at 79 years for men and 82.5 years for women (England: 79.4 and 83.1 years respectively). However this relatively small difference hides significant inequalities within the County – the gap between the best and worst parts of the County stands at 16 years for men, and nearly 17 years for women. Tackling these inequalities is a key priority for any public health strategy.

Key public health priorities for Cumbria based on our outcomes compared to England as a whole include:

Starting Well
- Promoting breastfeeding – our rate of breastfeeding initiation is lower than average, and there are clearly understood actions that can help to increase it.
Developing Well
- Tackling childhood obesity – a significant priority across the country, but with particular concern in some parts of the County.

Living and Working Well
- Tackling obesity and physical inactivity in adults
- Reducing alcohol consumption
- Reducing the rate of people killed or seriously injured on Cumbria’s roads
- Reducing the suicide rate – Cumbria has 10-15 suicides per year more than would be expected at national rates.

Ageing Well
- Tackling fuel poverty – a particular problem for older adults

In addition, promoting mental health and wellbeing is a key priority locally both for adults and for young people; while national comparisons do not suggest that mental health and wellbeing is generally worse in Cumbria, improved mental wellbeing is central to our overall health improvement objectives.

4. Strategic Context

Council Plan

The Council Plan sets as its overall vision:

For the people of Cumbria to benefit from sustainable economic growth and an enhanced quality of life.

Specifically for the County Council, the vision is:

To be an effective and efficient organisation that delivers the best possible services for the people of Cumbria within its available resources, protects the vulnerable, and works with others in the community to shape services and help find solutions for the future.

This strategy sets out how the Council intends to change how it works in order to promote health and wellbeing in line with these vision statements. In particular it will help to shape how the Council acts with regard to the priorities within the Council Plan:

- To safeguard children, and ensure that Cumbria is a great place to be a child and grow up, by integrating public health capacity within Children’s Services and promoting action to improve the health, resilience and wellbeing of children and young people.
- To enable communities to live safely and shape services locally, by integrating public health capacity into Locality Teams and promoting a growing emphasis on community resilience and asset based community development.
• To promote health and wellbeing, and tackle poverty, by supporting the whole Council to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

• To protect and enhance Cumbria’s world class environment, by recognising the importance that the environment has in promoting health and wellbeing.

• To provide safe and well maintained roads and an effective transport network, emphasising the importance of reducing road traffic accidents and promoting active and sustainable transport solutions.

• To promote sustainable economic growth, connecting health improvement and good work, improving health in order to support people to access or remain in employment.

• To support older and vulnerable people to live independent and healthy lives, by shaping a wide range of services aimed at promoting healthy, active and independent ageing.

• To be a modern and efficient council, recognising that a happy and healthy workforce is central to achieving all of the Council’s strategic objectives.

Wider Council strategies

This strategy does not attempt to define the full range of Council action that impacts on health and wellbeing. Many other Council strategies have a significant influence on health and wellbeing locally, including:

• The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which sets the overarching partnership approach to improving health and wellbeing in the County. This public health strategy aims to put the Council in the best possible position to play its part in implementing the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

• The Anti Poverty Strategy. Poverty is one of the main influences on poor health and wellbeing, and tackling poverty is therefore perhaps the single most important upstream intervention to improve health. The Council has already brought welfare support services under the remit of the Director of Public Health, and further work will be done to integrate health improvement and anti poverty work in future.

• Commissioning strategies for Health and Care Services and Children’s Services. These strategies will in future set out clearly how these services will work explicitly to improve health and wellbeing in the context of our lifecourse approach.

• Environmental strategies such as the climate change action plan and the biodiversity action plan. Future environmental strategies will be explicit about their impact on health and wellbeing and will ensure that they maximise the health benefits that come from Cumbria’s environment.

• The Workforce Plan, which sets out key aspects of our human resources policy. The workforce plan is a critical part of delivering this strategy and the health and wellbeing of our workforce will be put at the heart of this plan.

Council reshaping

The County Council is undergoing considerable changes in the way it is working – changes that have important implications for action on public health and wellbeing. Key considerations include:

• A move towards locality working for community services. This brings the opportunity to structure public health action at this local level, and to build the role of Local Committees as key drivers of public health programmes.
• The increasing need to promote resilience and self reliance – supporting individuals and communities to help themselves rather than creating dependency on statutory services. This is entirely consistent with public health objectives to support people’s sense of self efficacy and control.
• Moves towards integrating services, particularly in health and social care, to promote efficiency and improved co-ordination of services. The public health function therefore needs to be integrated across the Council as a whole rather than being seen as a separate function.
• The significant challenges created by ongoing public sector budget reductions, including reductions in mainstream services that are important for health and wellbeing. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the public health ringfenced grant is spent in a way that maximises its impact on health and wellbeing.
5. Our Approach to Public Health

Public health is defined as:

>The science and art of promoting and protecting health and wellbeing, preventing ill health and prolonging life through the organised efforts of society.

In practice, this is undertaken within local government through a number of related activities, including:

- Strategic leadership and influencing others to work in ways that improve health and wellbeing
- Providing expert support and advice to help improve our health and care services through innovation and evidence based practice
- Planning for and responding to threats to health (e.g. communicable disease, environmental hazards)
- Commissioning of services designed to support health and wellbeing
- Campaigning and communications to encourage healthy behaviours and to challenge anti-health forces.

History: four waves of public health

Modern public health can be seen as having emerged over four main waves, as illustrated below:
Future: a fifth wave?

While we need to build on the successes of previous waves, the major public health challenges of today – obesity, mental wellbeing / low level mental health, and sustainability and environmental change – need new approaches as well. In particular we need a more holistic approach to individuals, integrating physical and mental health and paying much more attention to the psychological components of wellbeing. Social and cultural change is also required, with new economic models that rely less on continuous consumption.

What impacts on health and wellbeing?

Health and wellbeing is affected by a huge range of factors, as illustrated in the diagram to the right. Some models of public health focus mainly on individual lifestyles; however factors such as income, social capital and the quality of the environment can have both direct effects (especially on mental wellbeing) and indirect effects, for example by influencing people’s behaviours. Improving public health therefore needs as much focus on these “upstream” determinants as it does on individual factors – if not more.

New County Council public health responsibilities

As of 1 April 2013, Cumbria County Council has been given the responsibility of taking whatever action we deem appropriate to improve health and wellbeing. There are five “mandated” responsibilities, reflecting national legal requirements:

- Commissioning open access sexual health and contraception services
- Commissioning NHS Health Checks
- Ensuring the delivery of child height and weight measurement in schools
- Health protection
- Providing public health advice and support to NHS commissioners

From October 2015 the Council will also be responsible for commissioning public health services for 0-5 year olds – currently Health Visiting and the Family Nurse Partnership – and additional mandated responsibilities will come with this.

In addition, under the Care Act, from 1 April 2015 the County Council will be responsible for promoting wellbeing for all residents, not only those for whom a social care service is provided. This includes specific duties around provision of information and advice services.
However, the County Council wishes to undertake its duties above and beyond the mandated minimum. The incorporation of Public Health within the County Council provides an opportunity for the Council to embed public health principles throughout its, activities, culture and workforce.

**Principles of the strategy**

This strategy is based on the following key principles:

**Health as an overarching objective**

Health is not only a worthwhile objective in its own right – it is also a resource for everyday life, and therefore a pre-requisite for achieving many other objectives. We should therefore consider the health impact of everything the Council does, and be conscious of these impacts when taking decisions relating to other objectives.

**Investing in prevention**

We are currently in an environment of rising demand for services and reducing resources to deliver them. In such circumstances investing in prevention is more rather than less important. The Council will continue to invest strategically in a way that supports prevention and demand reduction, both for our own services and those of our key partners.

**Tackling health inequalities**

Health inequalities, in which more deprived communities tend to experience poorer health than in less deprived communities, remain a significant problem to be tackled. However only focusing on the very worst health or the very most deprived communities actually misses most of the poor health in society as a whole. So in principle we will ensure that there is universal access to health improvement opportunities, but with additional support and opportunities available where the need is greater.

**A healthy mind in a healthy body – the parity of physical and mental health**

Mental health and physical health are two sides of the same coin and we need to treat both equally. Just as “health” is not defined simply as the absence of illness, so “wellbeing” is not simply the absence of mental illness – it is a positive state. Mental and physical health interact so it is important to take a holistic approach to supporting health and wellbeing.

**A life course approach**

Influences on health begin in the womb and build up gradually over many years. One response to this is to adopt a life course approach, considering and responding to these influences holistically at different stages of life. Our life course approach will adopt the following framework:

- Starting Well: pre-natal and early years.
- Developing Well: children and young people.
- Living and Working Well: working age adults.
- Ageing Well: older people.

These are not clear cut categories: ageing well, for example, is a long term process, not one that begins at some arbitrary age or point in life.
6. Our vision and priorities

Vision

“Cumbria County Council will set the standard nationally for being a truly public health focused council.”

Achievement of this broad vision will in future be demonstrated through five key commitments:

- We will be displaying clear leadership for health improvement within our local communities, supporting communities to have greater resilience and capacity to improve their own health and wellbeing.
- Public health and wellbeing will be at the heart of our decision making, with our services being designed to maximise health benefit, even where they are not primarily public health services.
- We will be active in engaging with the public about health and wellbeing.
- Our staff and elected members will understand their role in improving health and wellbeing, and will be active in supporting the health of service users.
- Our staff and elected members will themselves be healthy and happy.

This approach can be illustrated through the diagram below.
The Three Priorities

Leadership for health
Leadership can help put health and wellbeing at the heart of our business. The Council has identified improving health and wellbeing as a corporate priority; this strategy will embed it through Council activities at a national, County and local level and reflect it in our formal decision making processes. Our scrutiny and our audit functions will also be valuably used to assess the extent to which the Council is actually putting health and wellbeing at the heart of decision making.

Engaging with the people of Cumbria
To ensure that communities, groups and individuals receive the information and encouragement they need to make positive choices the council will run high quality whole population communications and campaigns and increase information to individuals as a fundamental part of being a public health council,

Workforce health and wellbeing
The Human Resources function is fundamental to our ambitions as a public health council, both because HR processes are so influential on employee health and wellbeing and because this is where the training and development function lies. We will therefore support our HR team to give them the tools they need to promote health and wellbeing throughout the workforce.

The Five Key Commitments

Embedding public health in all the Council's activities
Public Health is not just the responsibility of a small part of the council – this strategy will embed public health across the council's activities at a national, county and local level. Our staff and to an even greater extent our elected Members have a significant opportunity to help shape local communities and to improve their resilience. The Council is currently moving towards area-based delivery of services. We will place public health expertise at the heart of this area-based approach and integrate many of the lifestyle and wellbeing services commissioned by the Council into it.

Making every decision count
Given the very wide range of factors that influence health and wellbeing, many Council decisions have health impacts even when they are not specifically designed to do so. At present our decision making processes do not systematically consider these health impacts. We will therefore establish ways of considering health impact in all our policy and decision making, and where possible we will seek to minimise negative health impacts and maximise health benefits. We will support local Councillors to be champions for the health and wellbeing of their communities.

Communications and campaigns
While public health long ago moved away from a simplistic health education approach – because on its own that approach is known to be ineffective – there remains a need for good public health communications and campaigns to support other activity. At present most such communications are small scale or reactive; there is the need to adopt a strategic
approach to local campaigns, identifying a small number of themes over a year and addressing these using multiple platforms and opportunities throughout that time.

Making every contact count
All frontline staff and elected members can be seen as part of the extended public health workforce. In an increasingly resource constrained environment it is critical that we take full advantage of the contact that we have with members of the public to give public health messages and encourage positive behaviour change at every opportunity, not just as part of formal communications campaigns.

Workforce health and wellbeing
We start from the proposition that healthy, happy staff are also productive staff who deliver great services – so looking after staff is also important for the business of the Council as well as being a public health measure in its own right due to the high proportion of the Council’s workforce that is resident in Cumbria. We will therefore put staff health and wellbeing at the heart of our workforce plans – not just through health promotion campaigns but within the way we design jobs and recruit, support and manage staff.

7. Delivering the strategy

Responsibility for delivering the strategy lies across a number of parts of the Council, with the Public Health Team taking overall responsibility for co-ordinating the development of ongoing action across each theme and for monitoring delivery.

An annual delivery plan will be produced for approval by Cabinet. Key performance indicators will be embedded within the quarterly corporate performance monitoring process.

In addition, as part of the delivery plan annual refresh process an assessment will be conducted of progress against the actions in this plan, and on perceptions within the Directorates about the extent to which the five key commitments are becoming embedded within the Council as a whole.

The Strategy will be reviewed on a three-year cycle, consistent with the normal policy framework refresh process.