

CABINET

4 APRIL 2023

“REDUCING HYPERTENSION IN MEDWAY” ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH 2021 - 2022

Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Brake, Portfolio Holder for Adults’ Services

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Summary

Directors of Public Health (DsPH) have a statutory requirement to produce public health reports. These reports are the DsPH professional statement about the health of the local community.

The 2021-22 report focuses on hypertension and how we can improve the health and wellbeing of residents with improved prevention, early detection and treatment of high blood pressure.

This report was considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 9 February 2023 and the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 March 2023, their comments are set out in sections 5 and 6 of the report.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1. Improving everyone’s health and reducing inequalities and improving support for vulnerable adults are identified priorities for Medway Council reflected in the Council Plan 2021/22.
- 1.2. Additionally, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2023 and its vision that “the lives of all people in Medway “will be as full, meaningful and healthy as possible” is underpinned by themes including: theme 2 – enabling our older population to live independently and well, theme 4 – improving mental and physical health and wellbeing and theme 5 – reducing health inequalities.

2. Background

- 2.1. Directors of Public Health have a duty to write an Annual Public Health Report. The aim of Annual Public Health Report is to identify issues that are currently, or have the potential to, impact on the health or wellbeing of the

local authorities population. Directors of Public Health are tasked with making recommendations to address identified issues.

- 2.2. The primary focus of this report (attached at Appendix 1) is one of the major public health challenges of our time, high blood pressure, also known as Hypertension. Hypertension is often termed the silent killer. When blood pressure is consistently too high, the heart has to work harder to pump blood around the body. If blood pressure is too high for a sustained period, it can lead to heart and circulatory diseases, kidney failure, heart failure, problems with sight, vascular dementia and ultimately death.
- 2.3. High blood pressure has a devastating impact on those affected by the condition. In England 1 in 4 adults are affected by high blood pressure. This amounts to around 13.5 million people. Within Medway in approximately 45,000 people, nearly 1 in 5 adults are diagnosed with hypertension. Hypertension is the third biggest risk factor nationally for heart disease after tobacco smoking and poor diet. In the region of 75,000 people die annually as result of hypertension. It is a major cause of health inequalities. People living in the most deprived areas of England, are 30% more likely than those living in the least-deprived, to have high blood pressure.

3. Options

- 3.1. Publishing an Annual Public Health Report is a requirement of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The report provides a focus on earlier intervention and prevention at scale, which will enable more local people to improve their mental wellbeing.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. The Annual Public Health Report sets out a number of recommendations to be considered by all stakeholders and partners in order for the population of Medway to fully benefit from digital transformation:
 - 4.1.1. Preventing hypertension - Reduce the likelihood of people becoming hypertensive in the first instance. Whilst some people due to inherited or genetic factors, are at an increased risk of high blood pressure, there is much that can be done to reduce the risk in the general public. Not smoking, reducing the amount of salt and fatty food we consume, and moderating alcohol intake will help. Being more physically active, eating more fruits and vegetables and managing stress are other practical steps we can take to reduce our risk.
 - 4.1.2. Finding those who are undiagnosed - For those people aged 40-74 years, attending the routine free NHS Health Check when invited is really important. Outside of any clinical appointments, regularly checking and understanding what your own blood pressure is and 'knowing your numbers' is essential for everyone. Blood pressure devices are now relatively inexpensive and home monitoring can help to identify issues early so action can be taken.

- 4.1.3. Treatment - Everyone must act in tandem to tackle the challenges posed by high blood pressure. Members of the public must do their bit to reduce the risks. People with high blood pressure who have been diagnosed, need to work with their health and care professionals to monitor and keep the condition under control. Health and care professionals must provide high quality and timely hypertension treatment services, in line with best practice guidance.
- 4.1.4. Reducing Inequalities - The Health and Care Partnership should continue to prioritise reducing health inequalities and through its work to tackle the wider determinants of health, ensuring hypertension reduction is a priority area within the ICB.

5. Health and Wellbeing Board

- 5.1. The report was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 9 February 2023.
- 5.2. The minutes of the discussion are as set out below (paragraphs 5.2.1- 5.2.9).
 - 5.2.1. The Director of Public Health introduced the Annual report which focused on hypertension and how improvements could be made to the health and wellbeing of Medway residents through prevention, early detection, and treatment. The Board was informed that Medway was the second highest Local Authority in the Southeast in early identification and the team, in particular Paul Scott, Katherine Bell and Georgina Crossman were commended for all their effort and hard work. The primary care teams were also commended for their work.
 - 5.2.2. Members then raised a number of questions and comments which included:
 - 5.2.3. It was commented that the report had been very well designed.
 - 5.2.4. **Additional Support** – concern was raised that due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, people may be in the position of having to make a choice between eating/heating and paying for prescriptions. it was asked if there was additional support in place to assist with this. The Director of Public health acknowledged that this could be a real issue for many families, and it was important to gain clarity on the broader impact of the cost of living crisis. The team was working with the ICB on outreach work and further thought would be given to how the household support fund could be further utilised by people facing challenges.
 - 5.2.5. **Accessibility of Blood Pressure monitors** – it was asked what could be done to ensure that there were accessible machines in community settings across Medway, to get the community to start thinking about accessing machines and taking more control of testing themselves in ways that were not linked with seeing their GP. The Director of Public Health agreed that this was an ongoing challenge, and it was vital that awareness was raised to get the

point across that people could take control of this aspect of their health and that getting their blood pressure checked was not dependant on them seeing their GP.

5.2.6. It was suggested that a team in the community could be used as a tool to conduct testing. The Board was informed that outreach work through the mobile bus which was often in the Pentagon Centre in Chatham with staff who regularly conducted blood pressure checked and fed the data captured directly to individuals GP records. There was now a facility in place to enable monitoring to take place in some pharmacies across Medway.

5.2.7. The Director of Public Health acknowledged that there were barriers that needed to be broken down to improve people's abilities to conduct their own health checks where appropriate and even more important was ensuring that the infrastructure and systems were in place for the information captured to be recorded on individuals' medical records.

5.2.8. **Decision:**

5.2.9. The Board noted the report.

6. Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6.1. The report was presented to the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 March 2023.

6.2. The minutes of the discussion are as set out below (paragraphs 6.2.1- 6.2.8).

6.2.1. Members considered the 2021-22 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health which focused on hypertension and how we can improve the health and wellbeing of residents with improved prevention, early detection and treatment of high blood pressure.

6.2.2. The following issues were discussed:

6.2.3. **Encouraging blood pressure checks** – suggestions were made that local employers and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) should be encouraged to carry out blood pressure tests and that a wider range of accessible venues be used for checks. The possibility of Council staff working remotely in supermarket to offer checks was raised and a point was also made that community groups were often suitable venues as they tended to be a more relaxed environment. In terms of whether training had been provided to community groups, the Deputy Director of Public Health advised that there was no training at the moment, but the machines were easy to use. The Council could not provide machines across Medway, but they were cheap to buy and could be shared amongst community groups. He agreed there were many opportunities for checks in a wider range of venues and would think through the suggestion that staff could work remotely in supermarkets.

6.2.4. **Household Support Fund** - the point was made that this Fund should not be used as a solution for people facing challenges with the costs of prescriptions.

6.2.5. **Black and ethnic minority groups** – noting that the people most affected by high blood pressure were often the most deprived, it was suggested the Annual Report was not clear on what was being done to tackle groups with greater needs. A point was made that there was a higher prevalence amongst black and ethnic minority groups for high blood pressure and there seemed to be a lack of awareness amongst GPs that some blood pressure drugs were less effective in these groups. The Deputy Director of Public Health commented the NHS blood pressure health checks targeted areas of higher deprivation. He would look into the comment about GP knowledge.

6.2.6. **High blood pressure amongst children** – noting that this was on the increase, the importance of machines which fitted children was emphasised as adult blood pressure machines were not suitable. The Deputy Director of Public Health undertook to discuss this with the team.

6.2.7. **Old blood pressure machines** – in response to a comment that many machines in people's homes were very old and potentially unreliable, the Deputy Director of Public Health agreed but felt the key was to identify people at high risk and if a home reading was high then this would prompt the resident to consult a GP to check the result.

6.2.8. **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to:

- a) note the comments of the Health and Wellbeing Board,
- b) note the Annual Public Health Report 2022/23.

7. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Not reducing hypertension rates across Medway	People living with hypertension are at greater risk are at greater risk of long term ill health and premature death. High blood pressure disproportionately impacts specific groups so a targeted approach can help reduce	Adopt the recommendations set out in the report	D2

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
	health inequalities in Medway.		

8. Consultation

- 8.1. In common with previous Annual Public Health Reports, evidence is gained from a number of different sources. Once finalised, the report and its recommendations will be shared with a range of organisations and committees.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1. Any resources required to deliver ambitions set out in this report will be found through existing service or organisational budgets.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1. The Annual Public Health Report is an independent report of the Director of Public Health as set out in Section 73B(5) & (6) of the NHS Act 2006, inserted by section 31 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Local Authorities are required to publish the Director of Public Health's Annual Public Health Report.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1. Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Note the comments of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- b) Note the comments of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- c) Note the Annual Public Health Report 2022/23.

12. Suggested reasons for decision

- 12.1. There is a statutory duty for Directors of Public Health to produce an Annual Report and Local Authorities to publish the report.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Annual Public Health Report 2022/23

Background papers

None