

# In Our Shoes: Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Report of: The Director of Public Health

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Adults Health and Active Lifestyles)

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

## Brief summary

The Director of Public Health (DPH) has a mandatory duty to publish a report annually describing the health of the population and make recommendations to improve health. This year, the report is called “In Our Shoes” and focuses on the current state of children and young people’s health in Leeds. This includes exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives. The report spans from when the first COVID-19 cases were identified in Leeds, to the ongoing impact as we learn to live with COVID-19 and respond to new threats and opportunities relating to children’s health.

## Recommendations

- a) Note the content of the Director of Public Health annual report
- b) Support the recommendations of the report:
  1. All partners in Leeds to ensure the voices of children and young people are central to all work planned, taking into account the Child Friendly Leeds twelve wishes.
  2. Leeds City Council and partners to work to ensure children are kept safe with a focus on:
    - Prevention of harm;
    - Parenting support;
    - Early help;
    - Reducing domestic violence.
  3. Leeds City Council, the Leeds Office of the West Yorkshire NHS Integrated Care Board, and partners to continue to prioritise work to improve and protect children’s mental health. This will be delivered through the:
    - Leeds Children and Young People’s Plan;
    - Prevention workstream of the Future in Mind strategy.

4. Leeds City Council to build on the success of existing support to parental mental health and wellbeing, with a focus on the development of family hubs.
5. Leeds City Council to work with partners to continue to deliver a programme of work to protect and improve children's physical health. This will focus on:
  - Implementing the recommendations from the play sufficiency research;
  - Increasing physical activity opportunities;
  - Increasing access to healthy food;
  - Implementing the child healthy weight plan.
6. Leeds City Council to ensure that children are central to the delivery of work to become a Marmot city, with a focus on:
  - Improving housing;
  - Planning;
  - Mitigating the impacts of poverty;
  - Children getting a fair start in life;
  - Ensuring the Thriving Strategy is implemented.
7. The Best Start partnership to aim for all children in Leeds to receive the best start in life, with a focus on children from more deprived backgrounds. This includes redressing the gap in speech language and communication development.
8. Leeds City Council to maintain work underway to ensure equitable catch up in terms of educational attainment. This will be achieved through delivering the five main priorities of the 3As Plan:
  - Reading;
  - Attendance;
  - Special Educational Needs;
  - Wellbeing;
  - Transition.
9. The Leeds Office of the West Yorkshire NHS Integrated Care Board to ensure health care services are accessible to all children and young people. This will focus on:
  - Dental services;
  - Mental health services;
  - Speech, language and communication.
10. NHS England and The Leeds Health Protection Board to increase coverage rates of childhood immunisations.

## **What is this report about?**

1. Introducing "In Our Shoes", the Director of Public Health annual report 2022.

The first stage in creating this report was to conduct a comprehensive review of the available literature about the impact of living through the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people. Over 100 papers and reports were reviewed to identify key themes and statistics that would inform the report's development. An online survey was then conducted aimed at professionals working with children and young people in Leeds, titled: 'The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children in Leeds'. This survey was promoted via various methods, including social media and

directly with partners. The responses were analysed to identify recurring themes, which have been explored within this report. An online 'Call for Creative Submissions' was run. This was promoted within Leeds attractions including the Thackray Museum and Kirkgate Market, and through social media and outreach to partners. Children and young people were invited to create something that explained how the pandemic impacted them and to share it via an online form. These submissions were also analysed for key themes which are presented throughout this report. Focus groups were conducted with children and young people across Leeds. The report describes this process, findings and recommendations. In addition, a film was created with children, a link to the film is included in the report.

## 2. Headline findings:

The literature review, statistics on health outcomes and what children and partners who work with children shared were analysed. Key impacts of the pandemic and areas to focus on to improve children and young people's health in Leeds were identified.

- Children living in more deprived areas experienced higher levels of air pollution, worse housing and less access to gardens compared to children living in more affluent areas of the city. This had a big impact on how they experienced the pandemic and had a consequent negative impact on their physical and mental health.
- Some children were less safe during lockdown. There were reduced opportunities to identify neglect and abuse. Some children experienced an increase in arguing at home, parents using alcohol and witnessing domestic violence.
- Although some children and young people reported improvements to their mental health during lockdown, overall there remains a significant deterioration in the mental health of children and young people in Leeds. Parental mental health also deteriorated during the pandemic. Families living in deprived areas were at greater risk of poorer mental health.
- Children's physical health was impacted in terms of sleep, food, play, screen time, and activity levels. This impact was not equally experienced. It resulted in a significant increase in children living with obesity, especially in areas of the city which are deprived. This rise has dropped back to slightly below pre-pandemic levels for reception-class children but remains higher than pre-pandemic levels for children in year 6. In addition, levels of children living with obesity in both reception and year 6 remain higher for children living in deprived areas of Leeds compared to the Leeds average.
- Children's communication, language and general development was impacted by the lockdown. It had the greatest impact in poorer communities, with many partners reporting children are now behind in their social, emotional and communication development.
- Children's educational attainment was impacted disproportionately. Schools with a higher proportion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds lost most learning.
- Health care services were not accessible to all and there remain significant delays to some services, specifically: dentistry; speech and language therapy; mental health services.
- Rates for childhood vaccinations have also dropped. This may lead to increased childhood infections.
- Some children had positive experiences during lockdown. This included more time with family members, particularly dads, more flexible services and less road traffic. However, these were not experienced equally.

3. "In Our Shoes" was submitted to the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) as part of the annual report competition and celebration. At the ADPH annual workshop and AGM on 24<sup>th</sup> May, the Chief Executive, announced the shortlist of reports submitted for the Annual Report Celebration. These reports demonstrated excellence or innovation. A total of 49 reports were submitted from all over the UK. The topics covered included health inequalities, cost of living,

ageing, the influence of the pandemic and more. The top four reports that stood out as overall good examples included Leeds. The panel said: “This year, we had great pleasure in recommending the Leeds report, which gave a powerful snapshot of the inequity of outcomes for children and young people in the city. We particularly enjoyed the film embedded into the report, and the presentation was fresh and inviting on every page. The report is also peppered with statistics and quotes which makes it relatable and interesting throughout. One thing that really stood out was the section on positive impacts of the pandemic. This isn’t something you hear much about but serves as a timely reminder that there is good to be found in every situation, and by exploring what that good is, we can learn valuable lessons for the future.”

### What impact will this proposal have?

4. It is hoped the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022 will have a wide-ranging impact if partners take note of the recommendations, which have been written in response to intelligence created by a review of evidence, epidemiological data and a wide consultation of children, young people, their families and partners who work with children and young people in Leeds.

### How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing       Inclusive Growth       Zero Carbon

5. The report focuses on the need to improve the health and wellbeing of all children in Leeds following the impact of the pandemic, with a focus on improving the health of the poorest fastest. The report also identifies the unequal and negative impact of air pollution.

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

6. 46 children and young people and 25 parents were engaged through focus groups. 99 professional partners completed surveys.

### What are the resource implications?

7. No additional resources needed.

### What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

8. No risks identified.

### What are the legal implications?

9. No legal implications identified.

## Options, timescales and measuring success

### What other options were considered?

10. The Director of Public Health considered other areas to focus on for her annual report but agreed the focus should be on children and young people in Leeds.

### **How will success be measured?**

11. Progress on recommendations will be recorded in the next Director of Public Health Annual Report.

### **What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?**

12. The report was publicly launched on 20<sup>th</sup> July at the Health and Wellbeing Board (Public Meeting). Progress against recommendations will be shared in the next Director of Public Health Annual Report.

### **Appendices**

1. "In Our Shoes" Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022
2. Children's summary of "In Our Shoes" Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022
3. EDC&I screening form

### **Background papers**

- None