

TITLE OF REPORT: 'It's raining, its pouring' (2019/20). An update on inequalities.

REPORT OF: Director of Public Health

Purpose of the Report

To provide an overview of the Director of Public Health's annual report for 2019/20.

Background

The Director of Public Health annual report is a statutory function. It is required to be independent, in that it doesn't represent an organisational or political view, but instead sets out the local Director of Public Health's professional perspective of the health and wellbeing of the community.

The DPH annual report in 2017, 'It never rains but it pours', focussed on inequalities. That report described how disadvantage clusters and accumulates across the life-course.

This year's DPH report, '*It's raining, its pouring*', asks the question is 'how are we doing'? It examines the work, across the Gateshead partnership over the last 3 years, to understand the progress made and the challenges which remain.

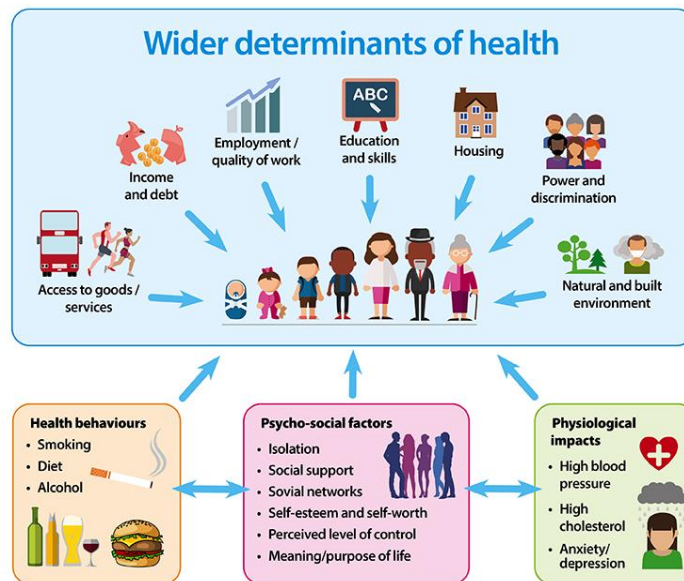
The report also touches briefly on the COVID-19 pandemic. It sets out some of the inequalities that have been highlighted and exacerbated by both the virus and the necessary non-pharmaceutical interventions required to mitigate morbidity and mortality for our residents.

Overview

In 2017 the board agreed that it was completely unacceptable for two babies, born today in the fabulous Queen Elizabeth hospital, to have as much as a ten-year difference in life expectancy. Possibly even worse, babies from the most deprived parts of our community can expect to live around 15 years longer in ill health.

The fact that poor health is significantly more common in communities that experience other difficulties, such as poverty and lower educational attainment, is unjust. These patterns of illness clearly demonstrate that health outcomes are considerably more complex than simply individual behaviour choices. The diagram below aims to

illustrate the many factors which impact on health and well-being – it is only if we act on all the factors concurrently that we will start to see positive changes for our residents.



Many, if not all, of the health outcomes we are collectively seeking to improve across Gateshead display unacceptable social gradients. While there has been improvements in some outcomes, when we look at those outcomes which have demonstrated an improvement, the question remains; has this closed the gap between those in the worst health and those with the best health?

In 2017 we agreed for a review and refresh of the health and wellbeing strategy so that it better reflects the breadth of work required if we are truly going to make a difference. The board completed this work and our new strategy, ‘Good Jobs, Homes, Health and Friends’, was published in February 2020.

Covid-19 has sadly exacerbated the inequalities we already had as well as derailing the action we were taking to address these. As frustrating as this is, Covid-19 must re-energize and motivate our aspirations to reaffirm our determination to change this. The recommendations in the DPH are based on this need.

Report recommendations

1: Strategy Implementation

We must continue to prioritise the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (published February 2020). This should include a review of the arrangements for the Health and Wellbeing Board.

2: Understand and engage

We must strengthen our targeted support for our most disadvantaged citizens working with our partners to engage local communities and groups, to understand need, as experienced by our residents, and address the causes of inequality.

3: Tackle inequality

We must make sure that our resources, time, people and assets, are targeted and proportionate to the needs in our community. This means that people living in more disadvantaged positions will receive more. It is only if we do this that we will start to address the unacceptable inequalities we currently see across Gateshead.

4: Participatory leadership

We should continue to embed the MECC approach into all aspects of our work, empowering local people to own, understand and engage with their own peers, improve health literacy, build trusting relationships and facilitate a participatory leadership model.

5: The economy as a driver for well-being

Our work on economic recovery should focus on creating well-being. We must continue to focus on developing the Gateshead economy as we recognise the importance of good quality employment, training and development for all. We recognise the need for flexibility to allow people to make choices to support their wellbeing.

6: Equitable health and care

The Gateshead system leaders have recognised the need to work more closely and in the last year have laid the foundations to develop integrated services. It is essential that the transformation of public services is focussed on local need and meaningfully involves communities in development of the future arrangements. We must ensure that health equity is central to this and proactive action to address the entrenched inverse care law is a priority for all partners.

7: COVID-19 impact assessment

During 2020/21 we should, as partners across the public, community and business sectors, complete a fuller analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 in Gateshead. We must use this impact assessment to direct our future response to tackling inequalities.

Recommendations

1. The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to consider and comment on the findings set out in the report.
2. The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to consider the recommendations.

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