

Introduction

The engagement exercise undertaken to help inform the health and wellbeing strategy was not structured in order to provide messages to individual organisations but to build a wider picture, from both professionals and members of the public, concerning how they felt the aims of the strategy could best be achieved through working together as a whole. For example, to encourage the greatest freedom and diversity of response the questions posed tended to be very open, such as, *'what do you think would make the most impact on helping children in Staffordshire to get the best start in life'* and *'what do you think will have the biggest impact on reducing harm caused by alcohol and drugs'*. Therefore, the responses to these questions do not always pinpoint messages aimed specifically at individual organisations in isolation, particularly in terms of responses from members of the public who may not be aware of the roles of different public sector organisations. However, a number of messages can be found which are specifically relevant to individual organisations and these will be explored more fully.

Messages for CCGs

One issue particularly relevant to the CCGs is that of GP access, with some individual respondents commenting that they felt that A&E was inappropriately used due to lack of GP access:

'Quicker access to your family doctor negates people going to A&E.'

'Something needs to be done about access to GPs. If people have to wait days or weeks, they will go to A&E.'

'GPs are no longer accessible, especially if you are working.'

Some individual respondents also commented that they felt that GPs could offer more health checks as part of a preventative service.

'Offer FREE full health screening (including lifestyle assessments).'

Another theme particularly relevant to CCGs, that was raised by both individual respondents and composite organisational responses, was the need for a greater focus in the strategy upon mental health care.

'Mental health/ mental wellbeing should also be considered as a priority within the first year.'

'[I want] Support at a resource centre from a mental health team/pyschiatrist/CPN/talking therapies, as nothing at all available at the moment.'

Some also commented on the importance of quick access to drug and alcohol services in order to reduce the harm caused by substance and alcohol abuse:

'Access to counselling and practical help early and providing mechanisms and training for GPs to address the issue and spot it early are a priority.'

'All drug and alcohol services need to have capacity to accept referrals at the point an individual chooses to take part as the service users have to be ready to accept control of their substance misuse and this can quickly change if they have to wait months to get any support.'

The importance of the CCGs working in partnership with other organisations was also stressed:

'Stop commissioning services in isolation—all public health commissioning should be the result of full engagement and joined up at a local level'.

Messages for the County Council: Public Health

Throughout the engagement exercise the importance of education was stressed as a key preventative measure and this is a particularly relevant message for Public Health. This focus on education encompassed both education surrounding healthy lifestyles, particularly for children, and education on the appropriate use of health and social care services.

'It may take a generation to work through the system but the younger the child introduced to healthy living as a way of life, the better.'

'Is there a way of having something set up to educate people (including children) to use the correct facility (i.e. 999, 111, chemist etc).'

Within the engagement the support for education involved not only more general education surrounding healthy eating and lifestyles, but also support for education surrounding drug and alcohol abuse.

'Make people aware of what to do if somebody has overdosed or what to do when seriously drunk. I.e. if they're being sick over themselves and there is a chance this will obstruct their breathing - put them in the recovery position.'

'More education in school - perhaps take people who have had an addiction in to schools to talk to the children.'

Although, in general, respondents indicated strong support for education, particularly early education, the attitudes surrounding 'health promotion' were sometimes complex. Some respondents felt that health promotion campaigns, particularly campaigns aimed at adults, were not targeted enough and there was a perception amongst some that they were expensive and ineffective.

'Stop spending or contributing money on short-term health drives. The majority of adults know that overeating, smoking and drinking will harm their health. Put money into educating school age and preschool children about this.'

'A lot of health initiatives come across as the state preaching in a non-targeted way.'

Another strong message, particularly relevant to Public Health, was an enthusiasm from both members of the public and professionals for exercise initiatives.

'[there should be] free gym sessions and free sessions on weight reduction'

Messages for County Council: Children's services

There were messages that were specifically relevant to County Council with regards to children's services. Many individual respondents commented on what they considered to be inadequate nursery provision, there was also strong support for Children's centres.

'More nursery provision. Parents are caught in a trap - they work to pay the bills but most money is going on private nursery facilities.'

'Children's centres staying open and not being cut back by local councils. They are excellent places with all kinds of help available.'

'As a parent, it is really important to have local community facilities (toddler / playgroups) and that the funding is maintained. Good for the child to have access to other children but good for parents who can liaise with other parents to ensure that people are not isolated and maybe health visitor community work visiting to address any concerns. Happier parents make happier kids.'

In addition, many participants in the engagement stressed the importance of parenting classes and added support for parents.

'Parenting classes for everyone as parenting doesn't come naturally - you have to learn it.'

'Educate future parents in school about parental responsibility and child care. It's too late after the child is born very often.'

Messages for County Council: Adult's services

In addition to children's services, some messages can be viewed as specifically relevant to the adult services of the County Council. For example, through the engagement exercise some stressed the need for enhanced community transport services.

'Access is a big issue we need to consider how we enable effective transport initiatives that reduce isolation and improve connectivity' (Tamworth Health and Wellbeing Board).

'Keeping active physically and mentally - transport is crucial in rural areas.'

A further point was the importance of providing support for carers, including carers of those with problems involving alcohol or drugs.

'As we cannot force those who need help to take help, ensure wellbeing of the carer' (Lichfield & District CVS Forum).

'As someone who works in the local community I can tell you that young people just don't have the cooking skills (some don't even know what a cheese grater is!)' (composite response conducted by Tamworth Borough Council)

'As we cannot force those who need help to take help, ensure wellbeing of the carer' (Lichfield & District CVS Forum).

With regards to the responsibility of the County Council towards the frail and elderly, a recurrent theme was the necessity of high quality domiciliary care, with some commenting upon issues such as the training of carers and the amount of time they have available to care.

'Good quality care in the person's home which is affordable. Currently, my grandfather receives half an hour care for which he pays £14 per half hour. The carer cannot give adequate personal care in such limited time and the service user cannot afford to pay for longer.'

'Ensure carers are correctly trained and that wherever possible they see the same people.'

Messages for District Councils

One issue that was strongly and repeatedly raised through the engagement was the importance of appropriate housing for health and wellbeing, particularly with regards to the frail and elderly.

'Ageing population demographically but sheltered housing complexes do not seem to be getting built at the rate their needed. A person who is vulnerable can remain independent then with their own very important front door.'

'Develop a County wide model for Extra Care and Sheltered Housing which ensures such housing can be delivered in a sustainable and quality driven way' (Tamworth Health and Wellbeing Board).

'Consider schemes to support owner occupiers downsize their home or adapt their homes appropriately'

In relation to children, District Councils were regarded as having a crucial role in supporting troubled families to ensure that children in Staffordshire get the best start in life.

'Provide targeted support to vulnerable families—providers and District Council's are well placed to deliver/shape this' (Tamworth Health and Wellbeing Board)

Messages for police and fire services

The Staffordshire Fire and Rescue services participated strongly in the engagement exercise and highlighted the importance of their role in accident prevention.

'Those who have the responsibility to commission services must understand the difference between early intervention and prevention... Whilst accident prevention is mentioned in the strategy it should be reflected more strongly.' (organisational response, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue services).

With regards to reducing the harm caused by drugs and alcohol, the police service was perceived by many as having a key role in the enforcement of laws surrounding drug and alcohol abuse.

'Zero tolerance approach to underage drinking and smoking' (Lichfield District Strategic Partnership).

Messages for NHS England

Many of the points raised in relation to the CCGs, for example support for increased GP access and health checks, also overlap with the role and responsibilities of NHS England. However, another issue raised, which would more specifically require the support of the national body NHS England, is that of setting a national minimum price for alcohol. However, this was a contentious point in the engagement with many respondents stating opposing views.

'Influence government to change licensing laws and minimum pricing' (Staffordshire Fire & Rescue service)

'Government policy has made it OK to drink whereas smoking rules have become stricter... US policies around the purchase and use of alcohol are much stricter—could we learn from these?' (North Staffordshire CCG Patient Congress)

'Why penalise those that enjoy a drink responsibly?'

Messages for the public

When members of the public were asked about their role in improving their own health, and the health of their communities, many did express commitment to lead healthier lifestyles.

'I have taken action to improve my own health and wellbeing by walking and joining one of the council run exercise classes which is excellent value for money and very well organised.'

'I keep trying to do as much as I can. I won't give in and give up. Even with my disabilities, I try to keep myself as well and active as possible.'

'I would personally benefit from a GP MOT and access to decent cogent medical information on particular topics.'

Many respondents also discussed the various **volunteer roles** they were already involved in and ideas for new volunteering projects that they wanted support to undertake.

'I am a member of Burton Fibromyalgia support group, Patients participation group, been on Expert Patients course, more support groups are needed to help with patients with long term conditions learn to cope and help themselves.'

'I want to start up a day care nursery to help parents and prepare kids for school. This is currently proving difficult due to funding and lack of premises in the area.'

'I would volunteer to transport the elderly / infirm to hospital / doctor if it was made easy. (I.e. The County Council should insure the risks and just let people get on with it).'

Another important message raised in relation to members of the public was the necessity of using Accident and Emergency services appropriately.

'A&E should only be for that, accidents and emergencies.'

Messages for everybody

Many of the key messages raised by the engagement exercise could not be raised as the specific responsibility of any one organisation but as a consideration for all of the key organisations in the health and social care landscape. One such message was the importance of reducing social isolation to improve health and wellbeing, particularly for the frail and elderly.

'More befriending / home visits, often old people are just lonely and crave company but are often not able to get out to socialise.'

'Opportunities range from lunch clubs/ craft groups/Tea dances / Universities of the 3rd age/ volunteering/ exercise groups. Also ensure continuity of care for those who cannot leave their homes but who need our services so that a relationship develops and the impact of loneliness and isolation diminishes in that person'. (Lichfield District Strategic Partnership)

An organisational response from the Campaign to end loneliness stressed:

'Research has demonstrated that the effect of loneliness on mortality exceeds the impact of well known risk factors such as physical inactivity and obesity, and has a similar influence as cigarette smoking.'

Another key message for all relevant organisation is the need for improved Information Advice and Guidance (IAG).

'Improved Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) for young people and their parents. It is important to differentiate the messages (to children and adults as children grow older and go through different transitions' (Lichfield District Strategic Partnership).