

Independent Review of Health and Wellbeing Fora in Northamptonshire





Contents

Summary 3

Key findings 4

Recommendations 6

Background..... 6

Method 7

What people told us 8

One to one interviews - what people told us 30

 Structure and governance of the Fora..... 30

 Fora output discussions..... 32

One to one interviews - summary 32

Acknowledgements 34

About Healthwatch Northamptonshire..... 35

About Connected Together CIC..... 36

Appendix - Fora Chairs/Officers met by Simon Barter 37

Contact us 38



Summary

The Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Fora enable engagement with a broad range of public sector and voluntary organisations in seven districts and boroughs in the county:

- Corby
- Daventry
- East Northamptonshire
- Kettering
- Northampton
- South Northamptonshire
- Wellingborough

However, it was felt that across the county the Fora varied considerably in the way they operate and in what they have been able to achieve.

Although, recently the Fora have been brought closer to the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board and there is willingness to align county strategy with local needs more effectively in the future.

Healthwatch Northamptonshire was asked to conduct a quick independent review of the Fora and produce this report. In all, 57 surveys were completed by attendees of the Fora only and eight one to one interviews carried out with Chairs and Officers across all seven localities.

With some minor changes in focus, alignment of Terms of Reference (ToR), a consistent framework to measure and demonstrate impact, good leadership and additional administrative support, the Fora could continue to serve a really useful purpose in coordinating local groups to have a more positive impact on health and wellbeing across the county.

The current programme of bidding for Public Health funds has also injected impetus and purpose into the Fora's operations.



Key findings

- 88% of people who attend the Fora are regular attendees
- 63% think the right people attend **their Forum**
- 68% think there is clarity and purpose for the Forum they attend
- 77% are aware of their Forum's Terms of Reference and 53% think all the Forums should have the same Terms of Reference
- Only 7% (4 people) currently feel 'very connected' to the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board, the majority, 60% only feel 'somewhat connected'
- 54% do not feel that they can influence the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board however, 98% think that they **should** be able to influence the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board
- 60% feel that the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board influences what their Forum does and 89% feel that the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board **should** influence what they do
- Only 47% said that their Forum aligns its priorities with the Northamptonshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy with 14% disagreeing and 39% saying that they did not know
- 79% said that working on their Forum's priorities made a difference and 68% said their Forum makes a difference to the health and wellbeing of the population they serve
- 86% think that all the District/Borough Health and Wellbeing Fora **should** have a similar framework to measure and demonstrate impact
- 74% think the Forum they attend meets regularly enough to be effective and only 26% (15 people) would want to meet more regularly
- 70% think that their Forum needs additional support to be more effective
- 77% do not feel that they know enough about what other Fora are doing and 86% do not feel that other Fora know enough about what they are doing
- 51% think that the Fora should continue once 2 Unitary Authorities are set up in Northamptonshire, with only 18% saying 'no and' 32% saying don't know



Additional findings from one to one interviews with the Chairs and lead officers across the Fora:

- The Fora vary in how they operate, and exist outside any county governance system
- The main role of the Fora is information sharing and networking and they struggle to generate outputs through member activity
- The membership of the Fora positively includes people from the health, council and voluntary sectors. This represents the local community well. Having GP/Federation, Hospital and school representatives was seen as essential though it has been hard to gain members from schools
- The Fora relies on administrative support provided by local councils at no cost, without which they cannot operate
- The recent Public Health funding has energised the Fora into action and can be a platform for future operations
- Strategic alignment with the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board and county strategies and standardised Terms of Reference and planning documents is welcomed to create an effective and integrated approach



Recommendations

1. Bring the Fora closer to the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board in terms of governance and strategy, while still allowing a good degree of local independence and activity
2. Standardise Terms of Reference, planning documents and frameworks to measure and demonstrate impact
3. Ensure there is primary and secondary health and also school representation in all Fora
4. Identify areas of duplication and opportunities to work together and share information effectively
5. Encourage and support regular dynamic individual and joint meetings and workshops focusing on key priority areas
6. Build on the energy created by the Public Health bids and create a county Health and Wellbeing budget for future Fora bids with clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Background

Local Health and Wellbeing Fora have been established for some time in Northamptonshire. However they all appear to work very differently, e.g. Terms of Reference, formats, priorities and outputs/outcomes.

With the countywide move to create two new Unitary Authorities it is an ideal time to review their functions, membership, impact and how they relate to the county's strategic and statutory Health and Wellbeing Board.

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) commissioned Healthwatch Northamptonshire as an independent statutory body to carry out this review.



The objective of this project was to review all seven Fora within the county using a short survey and a structured interview with either the Chairs and/or lead officers within the localities based upon their personal availability.

The success criteria were outlined as a greater understanding amongst the localities of their present and potential interactions, leading to recommendations for improved collaborative working.

Method

The aim of the project was to get a minimum of 50 responses to the survey from Fora attendees only, and to carry out at least seven one to one interviews within the localities. The raw data was shared with NCC as soon as possible and the final report with recommendations to be produced within eight weeks of the project commencing.

The main constraint was that it was a quick, time limited project. However we achieved 57 responses to the survey and held eight one to one interviews in March 2019.

Simon Barter, Board Member and Volunteer for Healthwatch Northamptonshire, met face to face and held the one to one interviews with the Chairs and Officers of the seven Fora. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss how each Forum operates currently and how they could potentially work in the future, in relation to local and county strategy and structure. This ensured consistency as much as possible across the interviews. Simon has been on the Healthwatch Northamptonshire Board for over two years and is Healthwatch Northamptonshire's Fora coordinator. He is also a member of the South Northants Forum and has attended the East Northants Forum.

Only the Chair of South Northamptonshire was unavailable.

The discussions included how the Forums operate, attendees and outputs as well as the alignment with the Health and Wellbeing Board and county health and wellbeing strategy.

No demographic data was requested to be collected.



What people told us

Overall 57 attendees from across the Fora completed the survey and additionally one to one interviews were held with eight people - six Chairs and two officers across all seven localities (Appendix).

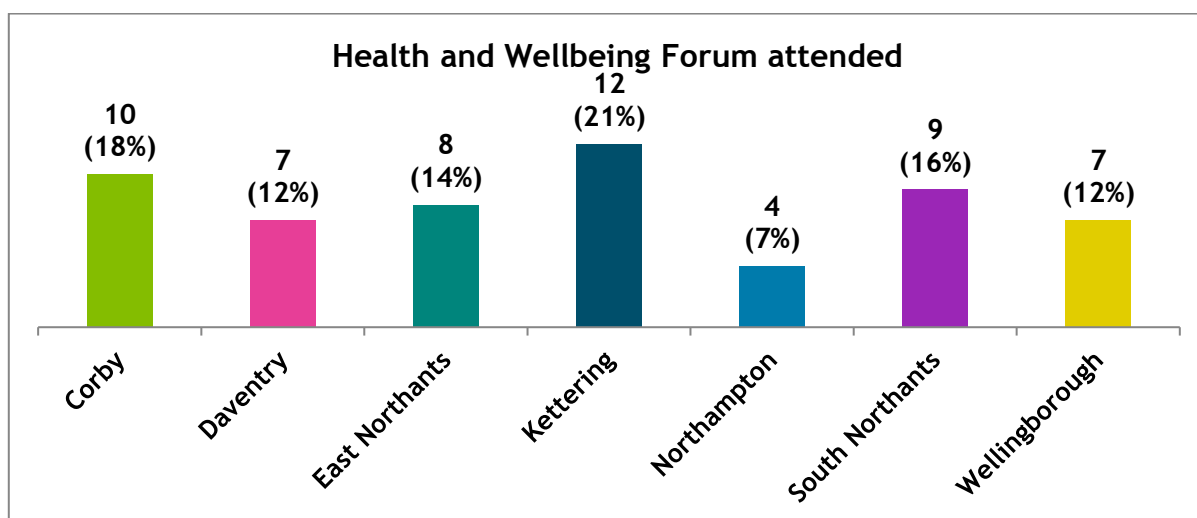
All figures given are percentages of the answers received for a particular question, unless otherwise specified.

Illustrative comments to the open questions are included in this report. All other comments and data have been anonymously shared with Northamptonshire County Council who commissioned this independent review.

Independent Review of Health and Wellbeing Fora in Northamptonshire

Q1: Which Health and Wellbeing Forum do you attend: (if you attend more than one please complete a separate survey for each forum)

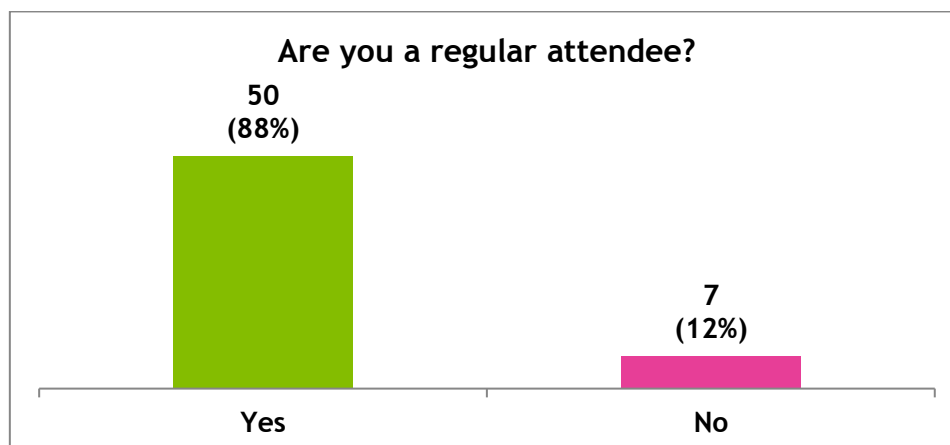
	Responses	
Corby	18%	10
Daventry	12%	7
East Northants	14%	8
Kettering	21%	12
Northampton	7%	4
South Northants	16%	9
Wellingborough	12%	7
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0





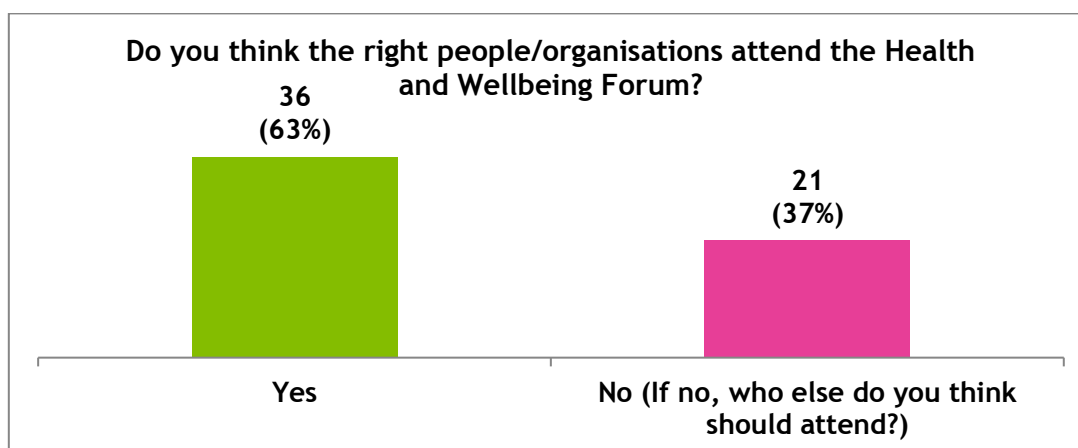
Q2: Are you a regular attendee?

	Responses	
Yes	88%	50
No	12%	7
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



Q3: Do you think the right people/organisations attend the Health and Wellbeing Forum?

	Responses	
Yes	63%	36
No	37%	21
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



The 21 people who said 'no' to this question overwhelmingly stated that more health representatives should be attendees at the Fora. It was suggested that greater representation on the Fora was needed from:

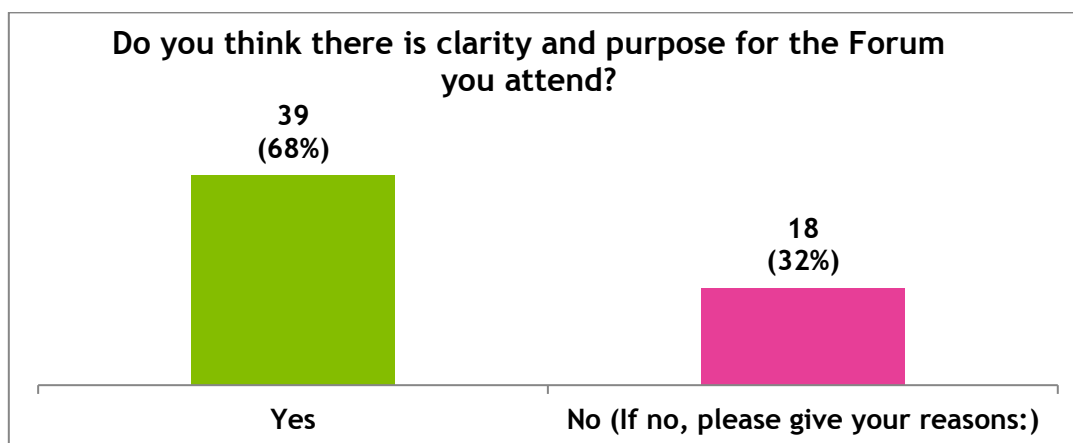
- GPs/Primary Care
- Mental Health



- CCGs/local Trusts e.g. KGH (Commissioners and Providers)
- Pharmacies
- Smaller groups, e.g. Homestart
- Tenant associations
- Patient participation groups
- Children and young people
- Education/school nurses
- Social care
- Third sector
- Public

Q4: Do you think there is clarity and purpose for the Forum you attend?

	Responses	
Yes	68%	39
No	32%	18
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



There was a mixed response to this question. The majority of respondents think that there is clarity and purpose but it appears to be dependent on which Forum they attend.

Some comments received:

“There is some work to do on this area, but we are gradually working through with Forum members to seek clarity and clearly identify priorities”

“Needs to improve its structure, process and governance protocol”

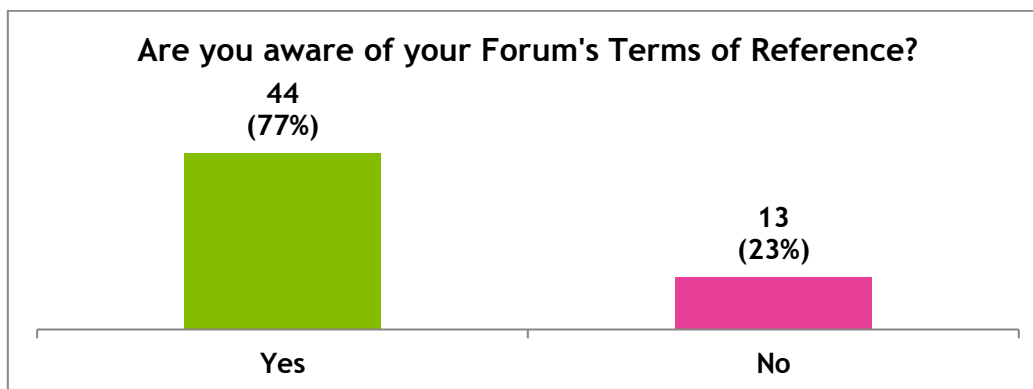
“I asked for ToR but never received them!”

“The Forum is clear that it is an independent, multi-agency, non-statutory, networking meeting. NCC seem to think that we are a statutory delivery group”



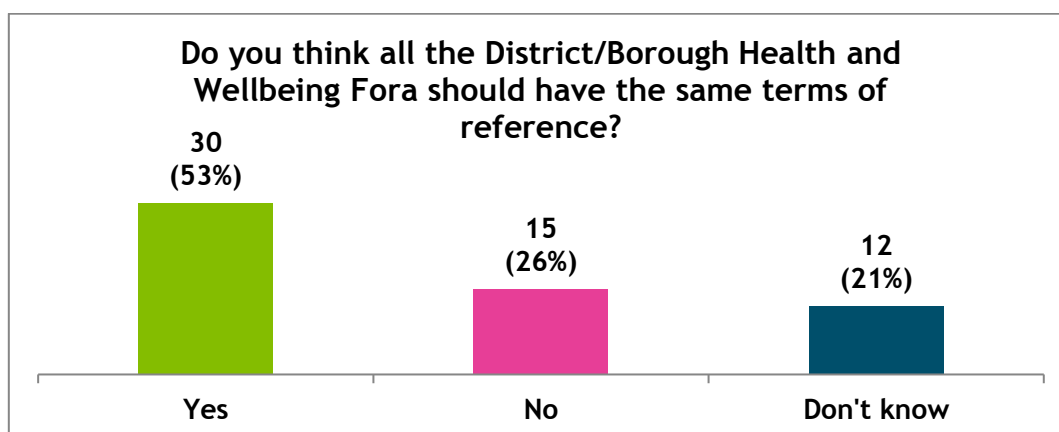
Q5: Are you aware of your Forum's Terms of Reference?

	Responses	
Yes	77%	44
No	23%	13
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



Q6: Do you think all the District/Borough Health and Wellbeing Fora should have the same terms of reference?

	Responses	
Yes	53%	30
No	26%	15
Don't know	21%	12
Please give your reasons:		42
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



The majority of respondents thought the terms of reference (ToRs) should be the same across the Fora for consistency and governance purposes. However, there was also a general consensus within the 42 additional comments provided wanting the Forums to still be able to allow for locality variations:



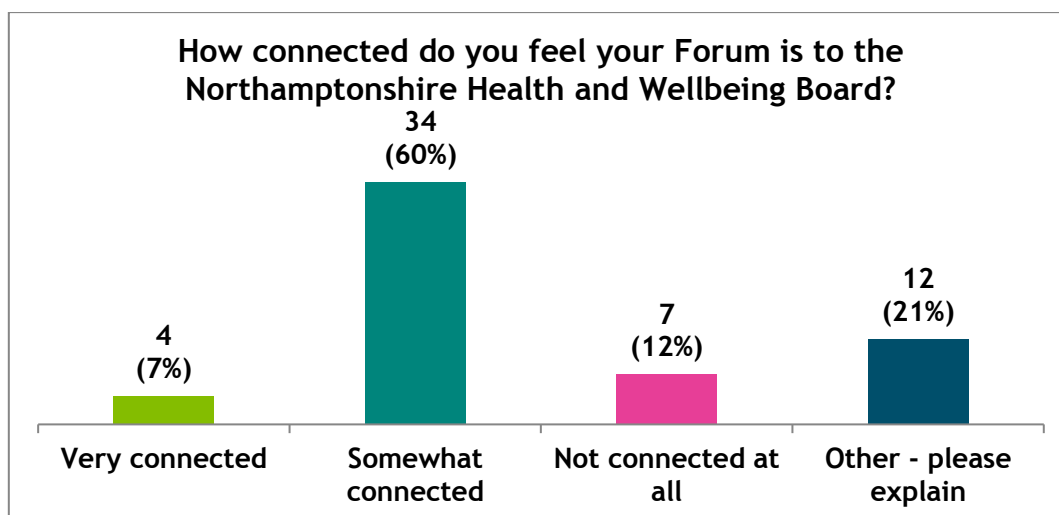
‘To a certain degree they do need to be consistent but then they need to reflect the locality needs and priorities based on the HWB Strategy, JSNA, Local PHE profiles etc.’

‘Same ToRs but different work plans’

‘Having the same ToR would ensure each Fora has a similar and consistent approach, but then local factors need to be taken into account’

Q7: How connected do you feel your Forum is to the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board?

	Responses	
Very connected	7%	4
Somewhat connected	60%	34
Not connected at all	12%	7
Other - please explain	21%	12
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



The majority of respondents (60%) only feel ‘somewhat connected’ to the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board. 12 people gave additional comments, although most said that they weren’t sure or did not know:

“It would be useful to have regular feedback from the Health and Wellbeing Board to the Forums so there is a good flow of two way communication”

“Not sure how close Kettering Forum is connected as I have only attended a couple of times”

“No idea”



“It is only a downward connection as Fora are delivering as per the HWB strategies and the governance protocol flows down; however, there is no upward governance structure”

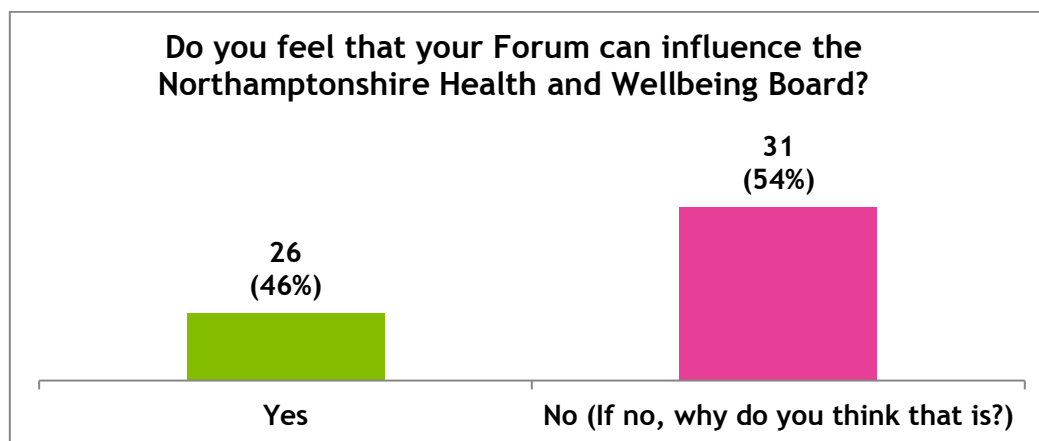
“The situation is better than it used to be but still feels quite disconnected”

“Just don’t know”

“I think it has improved with the Chairs Forum”

Q8: Do you feel that your Forum can influence the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board?

	Responses	
Yes	46%	26
No	54%	31
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



The majority of people (54%) felt that they were not able to influence the Health and Wellbeing Board. There were a variety of reasons why people felt this way:

“Lack of tangible link”

“Don’t feel we have any authority or status to influence. The Chairs need to communicate two ways with the Board”

“Little feedback from the Board so difficult to respond”

“Forum doesn’t have enough people of seniority for HWB to respond to it”

“I am relatively new but so far have not seen any evidence of a reporting system or the presence of a Board member at our meetings”

“Unclear how the Board operates and seems remote from local issues”



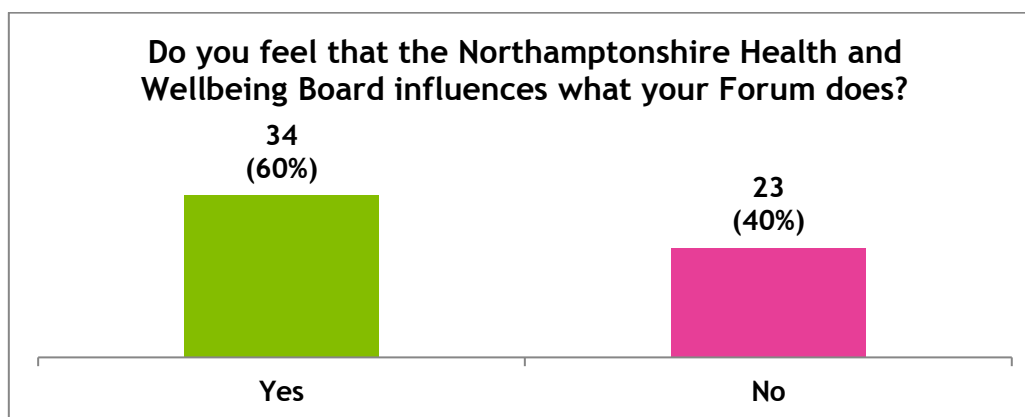
“Because the question is irrelevant given the current political situation. A future question might be: What should be the relationship between the Board and the Fora”

“Only through the Chairs’ Forum”

“There does not appear to be a clear link from the Fora to the main Board, there are no obvious opportunities to feed into it or have information passed back to members”

Q9: Do you feel that the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board influences what your Forum does?

	Responses	
Yes	60%	34
No	40%	23
Why do you think this?		42
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



Slightly more people (60%) did feel that the Health and Wellbeing Board influenced the work of their Forum, although there were also a number of mixed comments ranging from ‘not sure’ or ‘don’t know’ to a better understanding of the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board overarching strategy for the county.

“But I have no evidence of HOW it does”

“Through the main strategy only which helps determine our priorities”

“Again, really couldn’t tell you”

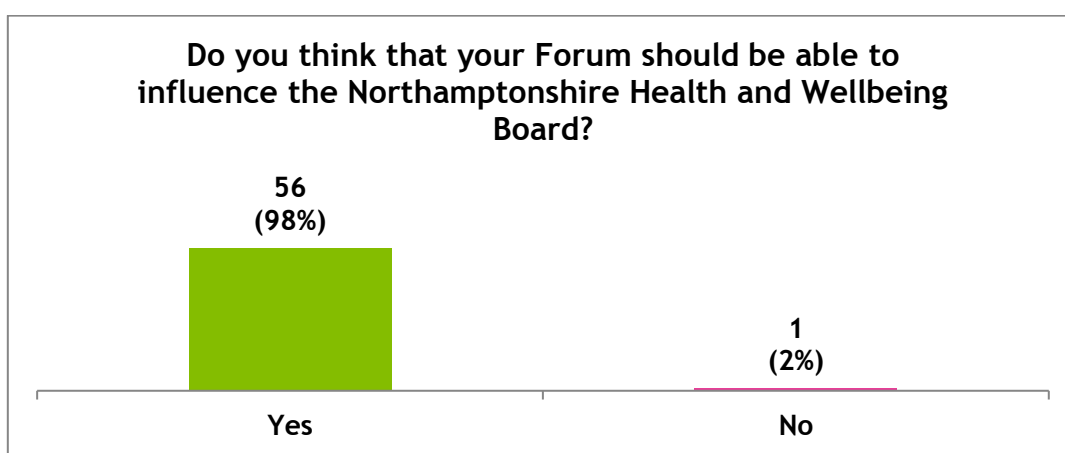
“Through ensuring that their aims and outcomes are reflected through our group and the communication of how this is achieved”



“To an extent - this is not always known as not always aware what key messages are passed or not passed to local groups - both groups do need to listen to each other”

Q10: Do you think that your Forum should be able to influence the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board?

	Responses	
Yes	98%	56
No	2%	1
Why?		42
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



An overwhelming 98%, of people thought that they should be able to influence the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

“The Forum and Board should have clear purpose and links which feed and influence each other”

“We are the local reps and understand local need so influence should be important but don’t feel able or comfortable to provide it constructively without feeling isolated”

“The HWB can benefit from this level of insight and information, and be better placed to enact the priorities set out in the HWB strategy”

“If the Northamptonshire strategy and programme is to mean anything real, there must be a ‘golden thread’ from the top to the bottom of structures”

“To enable local issues to be considered”

“It is important to be able to maintain a local perspective and have this reflected in decision-making at the county level”

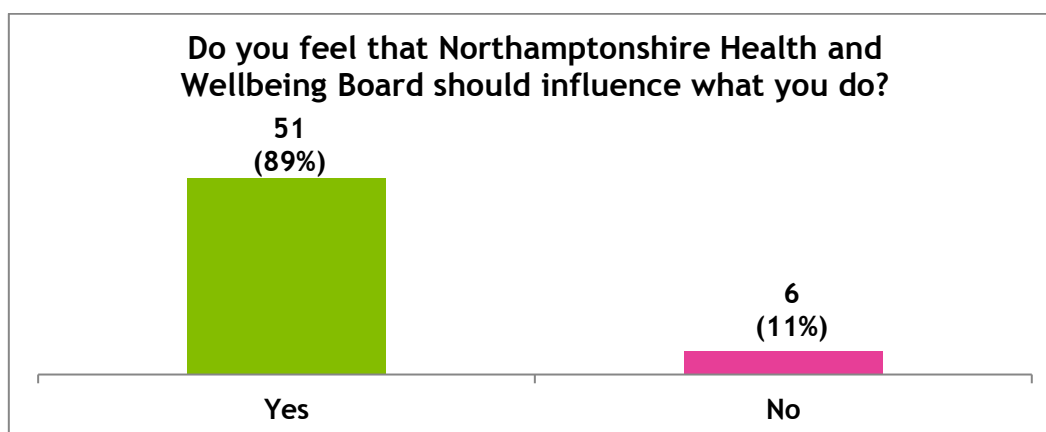


“The Board should be listening and taking into account the local issues which are discussed and moved forward at the Forums. The Board should be a supportive mechanism as well as guiding and providing data on which local decisions can be made. I think it will work best when it is a two way street and information, ideas and feedback flows both ways”

“We are there representing our community from our different organisations and therefore are the voice reflecting what we are delivering for our community”

Q11: Do you feel that Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board should influence what you do?

	Responses	
Yes	89%	51
No	11%	6
Why?		44
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



Overwhelmingly, 89% of people also felt that the Health and Wellbeing Board should influence what the Fora do.

“It helps support the long term aims for the borough and the county”

“To a certain degree they should be able to ‘support’ locally rather than directly instruct what should be done”

“It should give direction through JHWS and JSNA and should be an accountable Board for local Fora. This would streamline the functioning and the Board”

“It is the body responsible for improving the health and wellbeing of local people through promoting greater integration and partnership between the NHS, public health and local government”



“Again, the golden thread of connectivity between policy and strategy all the way from the top to the bottom and operational delivery needs to reflect my (local) needs”

“Vice versa”

“It is a two way process”

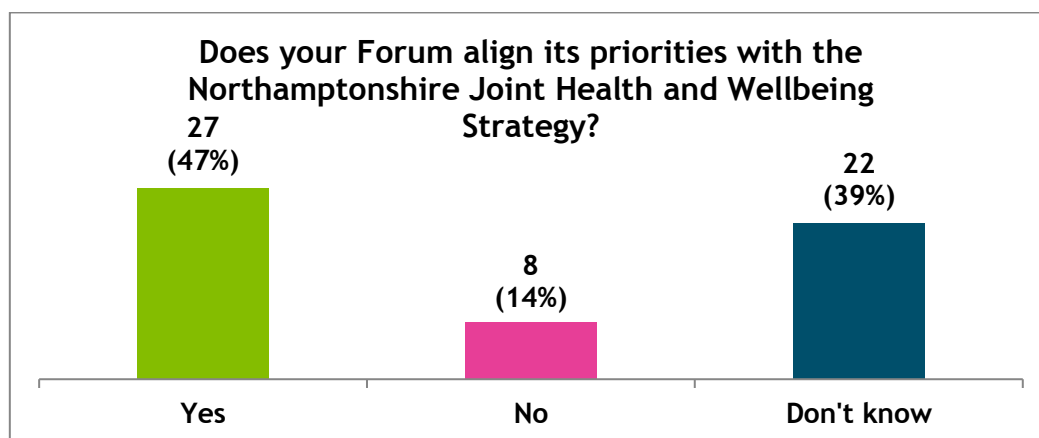
“Yes, delivery of public health outcomes”

“Yes, but not entirely. The Forum still needs to be bespoke to the area”

“Because otherwise each is operating in a vacuum and attention is spread too thinly. For example, the Board started a valuable piece of work on ACEs, which was reported at the January 2018 meeting, but this has not been taken forward by the Fora, as far as I am aware”

Q12: Does your Forum align its priorities with the Northamptonshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

	Responses	
Yes	47%	27
No	14%	8
Don't know	39%	22
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



Again, this question provided a mixed response and it is clear that a lot of people who attend the Fora do not know if their local priorities align with the county’s joint health and wellbeing strategy.

Q13: What do you believe are your Forum’s key achievements in the last 2 years? Please list.

This question also generated a mixed response of both positive and negative comments, some of which are below:



“I have only been part of the group for the last year and I am not aware that the group has achieved anything tangible”

“Networking/signposting/knowledge sharing is the main benefits of the Forum at the moment”

“Again have only attended a couple of Forums so would not know”

“Networking - lack of direction and meeting hasn't really allowed for achievements”

“The action planning and delivery of local directory of services that precedes the county's social prescribing work”

“Effective joint working on pre-diabetes target”

“Good collaboration on promoting health and wellbeing of older people”

“Meeting regularly: maintaining and growing the network of members; co-ordinating Public Health funding bids”

“Linking organisations working locally”

“Don't know”

“Not sure it can actually deliver much though”

“Bring people together to share information”

“I am a fairly new member and as yet have not seen any specific achievements. However, the recent availability of funds locally have helped by providing resource and guidance to begin to achieve things the Forum would like to do. While it is not always necessary to have financial resource to deliver actions, it is often the case that finances are needed to kick start projects and initiatives to gain evidence of success”

“A conference for older people - social isolation”

“Working together on local issues”

“Greater communication between statutory and voluntary sector organisations”

Q14: How does your Forum set its priorities?

Again, this produced a very mixed list of responses, with some Forum members very clear on how the priorities are set and some with very little knowledge of how the priorities were either set or agreed:

“From what I understand they were set back in 2015 and as Chair I am taking the opportunity with the Forum to review this in the coming meetings”



“We have recently done some work on priority setting which was led by NCC. I felt this work was very useful and I understand the Chair is going to continue with this so we can make progress”

“Again, not sure as was not there at the beginning”

“Should be negotiated but I don’t think it is”

“We are working with Public Health at the moment to do that”

“Based on the JHWS, JSNA and local public health profile”

“Unsure but should utilise PH intelligence alongside HWB priorities”

“Through discussion and consultation with members and with reference to available data - PHOF - including PH infographics headlines, PHE Local Health Profile, etc.”

“At Forum meetings?”

“By consensus”

“Considers some of the HWB data available - but can feel fairly superficial”

“It tends to be what partners are doing rather than set collectively”

“It hasn’t since I attended, but following requests priorities and monitoring of achievements will be agenda items moving forward”

“The council provides a range of priorities which are agreed by the Forum”

“Not sure”

“As a group”

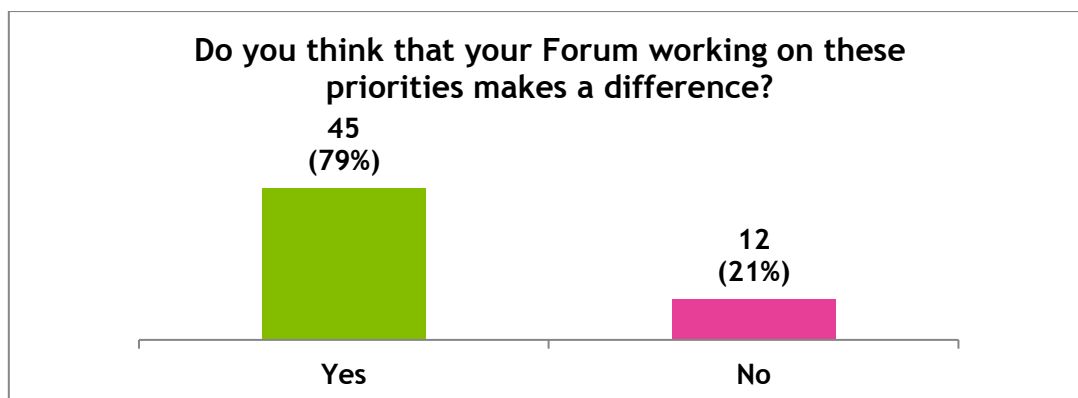
“Forgotten”

“Through consultation”

“By using the county strategy and then in the development of the local plan”

Q15: Do you think that your Forum working on these priorities makes a difference?

	Responses	
Yes	79%	45
No	21%	12
Please give your reason:		43
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



Most people (79%) were very positive about the priorities they were working on making a difference locally. Again, the 43 comments that supported this were mixed regarding their concerns:

“Hope we can make a difference”

“It ought to do”

“Provides a useful means of co-ordinating local resources and knowledge”

“Prioritising areas partners see as essential”

“Understanding of the locality is substantial and they are therefore best placed to align local needs to the HWB priorities”

“With the PH funding and projects aligned to this we are hoping to make a real difference”

“If it was not for the council and one of the voluntary sector agencies the social isolation project would not have taken place. It is the council, and its officers who are taking tasks forward and working on initiatives”

“Forum has limited influence over resources and decision making”

“It encourages collaborative working and sharing of resources to meet shared goals”

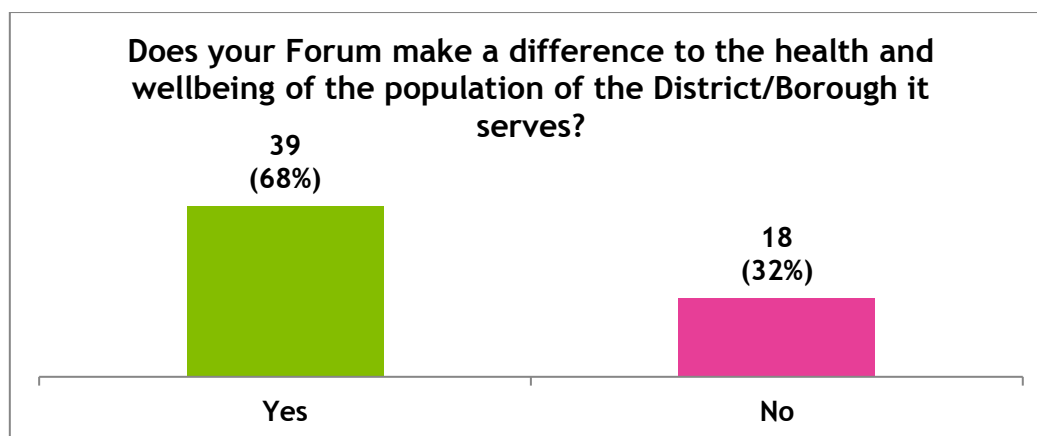
“Difficult to say. How do you measure impact? There are a lot of presentations at the Forum from a wide range of services, so it does provide a medium for information exchange. However, very little in terms of deliverable actions from the Forum”

“Not yet but it will this year”



Q16: Does your Forum make a difference to the District/Borough it serves?

	Responses	
Yes	68%	39
No	32%	18
Please give your reason:		43
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



68 of respondents think that their local Forum makes a difference to the local population’s health and wellbeing although many of the 43 additional comments expressed were negative and cast some doubt about actual achievements to date:

“Nothing tangible yet....”

“It should do with better guidance and support”

“Partners on the Forum in their work I have no doubt make a difference, it would be good as a collective to be able to make a bigger impact!”

“Some change in PHOF indicator re diabetes”

“However, often these targets and activities are very long term on measuring outcomes”

“In a small way with joint working”

“I believe so, the population benefits from more joined up approach from those that attend”

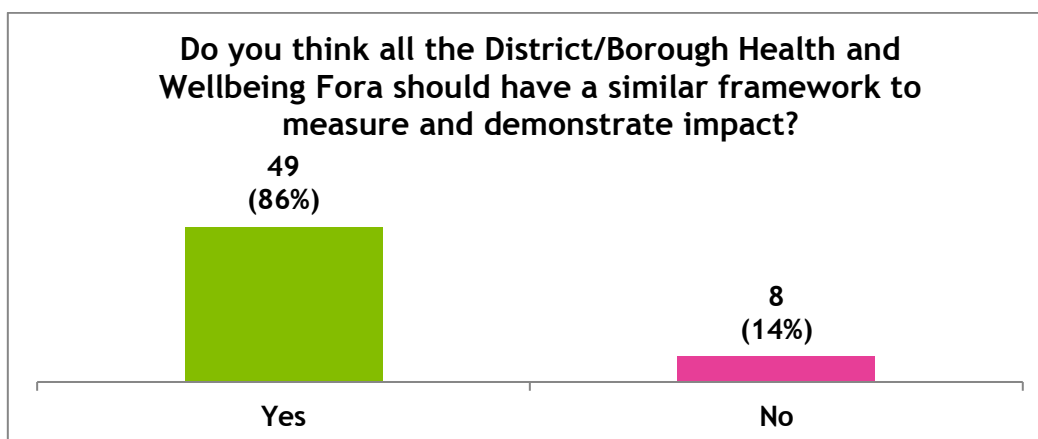
“A small contribution via the NVCA but not much difference without the commissioners and key officers from all the statutory agencies”

“All the work done benefits someone and with limited capacity and funding organisations can only do what they can with these resources. So yes, the Forum makes a difference but how much and whether we can work smarter can be up for debate”



Q17: Do you think all the District/Borough Health and Wellbeing Fora should have a similar framework to measure and demonstrate impact?

	Responses	
Yes	86%	49
No	14%	8
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



Most people (86%) think that the local Fora should have a similar framework to measure and demonstrate impact.

Q18: How does your Forum currently demonstrate impact?

Out of the 57 responses the majority were negative comments, e.g.:

“I’m not aware that it does”

“Not sure’ x 10 people”

“Do not have adequate information to comment”

“Don’t know yet’ x 5 people”

“It doesn’t’ x 5 people”

The more positive comments where the Fora were working better included:

“Through the action plans/blueprints”

“Partners share achievements at meetings”

“Via minutes”

“By evidencing projects and sharing this at meetings”

“We work to previously agreed outcomes but some are not as SMART as I would like”



“We used to record all activity taking place for each priority. But this became a very onerous and time consuming exercise for all concerned and it didn’t really measure impact. It was also difficult to gather the information from all services”

“Actions achieved against targets although it has been difficult getting some organisations to complete and report back on the health plan”

Q19: Which tools does your Forum use to measure impact?

Again, out of the 57 responses there were mainly negative responses:

“Don’t know’ x 6 people

“Unsure’ x 11 people

“It doesn’t’ x 3 people

The more positive comments were:

“A range of methods - again not 100% sure”

“Reporting against outcomes is qualitative and no actual ‘tools’ are used”

“Various surveys, consultations, partner workshops”

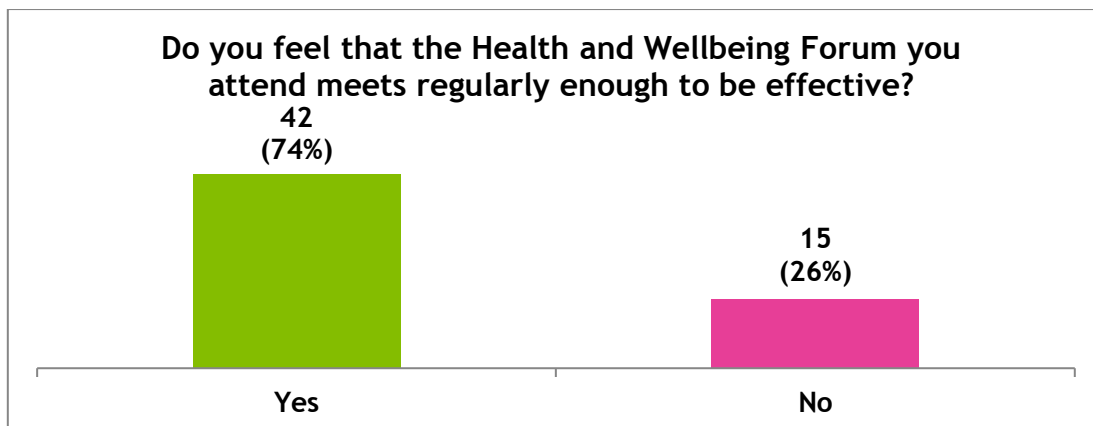
“Updates. Meetings, statistics”

“A Google Docs spreadsheet where partners contribute their achievements towards the various blueprint priorities”

“Actions delivered, numbers of people impacted, all actions have different measures”

Q20: Do you feel that the Health and Wellbeing Forum you attend meets regularly enough to be effective?

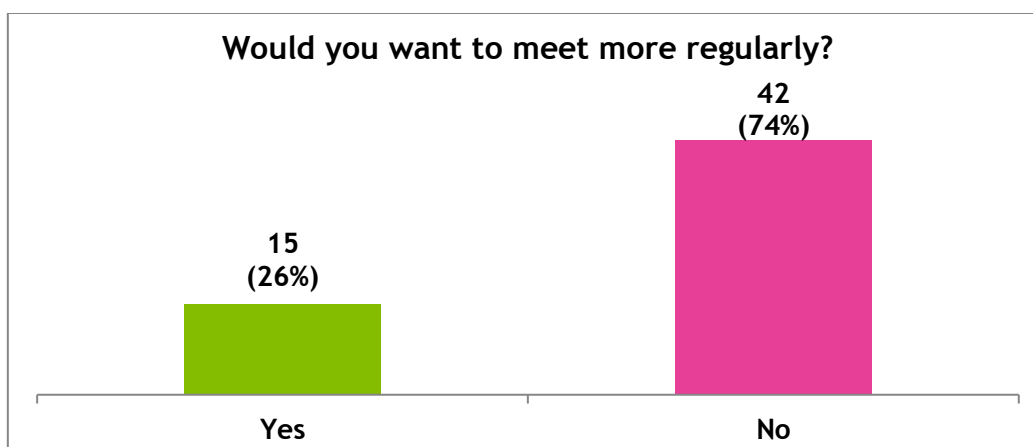
	Responses	
Yes	74%	42
No	26%	15
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



The majority of respondents (74%) felt that the local Fora meet regularly enough to be effective, although the Fora do have different meeting schedules across the county.

Q21: Would you want to meet more regularly?

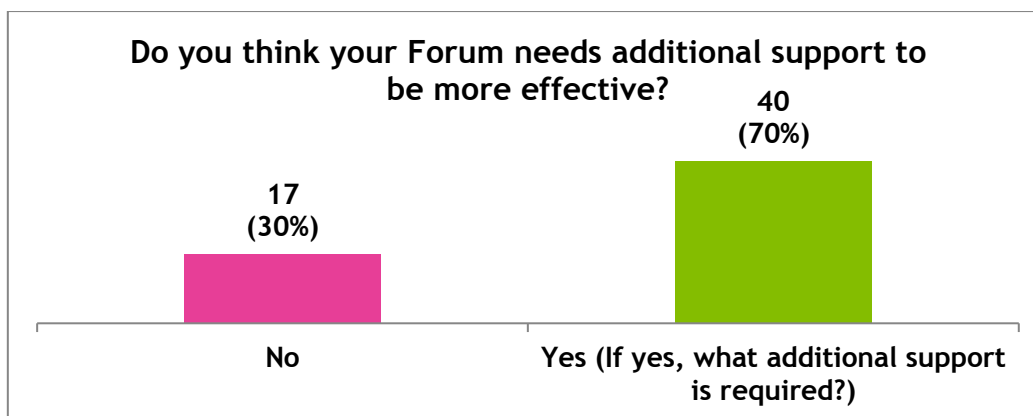
	Responses	
Yes	26%	15
No	74%	42
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



The majority of respondents (74%) did not want their Fora to meet anymore regularly than at present.

Q22: Do you think your Forum needs additional support to be more effective?

	Responses	
No	30%	17
Yes	70%	40
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



The majority of people thought that the local Fora need additional support to be more effective. There were a range of opinions given about what that additional support might be going forward. All anonymised data and comments have been shared with NCC, however a few of the ideas/comments were:

“We need clear links and direction from HWB and clear ToR which are reasonably consistent with other Fora but can account for locality”

“Setting of direction and priorities. More awareness of what else is going on in the community to avoid duplication”

“Making the most of resources already in place rather than starting new ones”

“Administrative support’ x 6 people”

“Evidence informed outcome measures could be shared across the county”

“A steering group would help”

“Sometimes having the right senior people at meetings saves time and is more effective”

“Financial support/funding’ x 7 people”

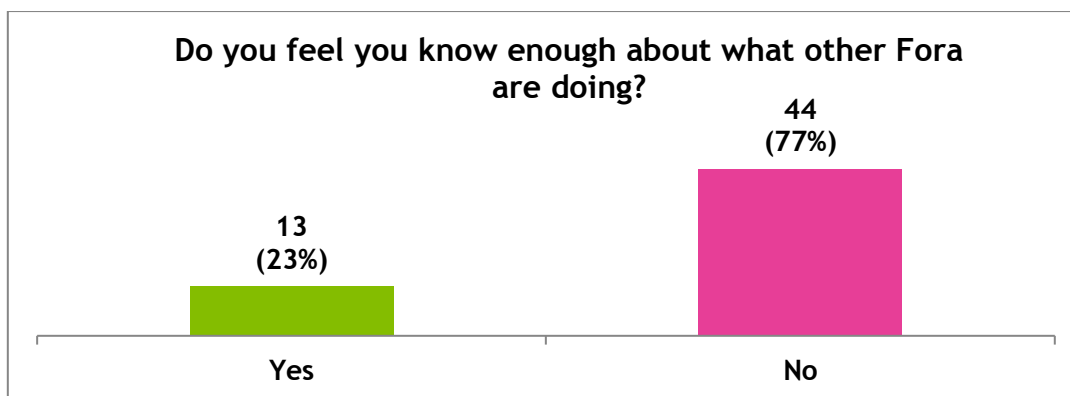
“The current process of applying for funding has given the Forum more focus and we have valued the support of the health and wellbeing officer from NCC”

“Support in measuring impact”

“Direction from the Board and STP”

Q23: Do you feel you know enough about what other Fora are doing?

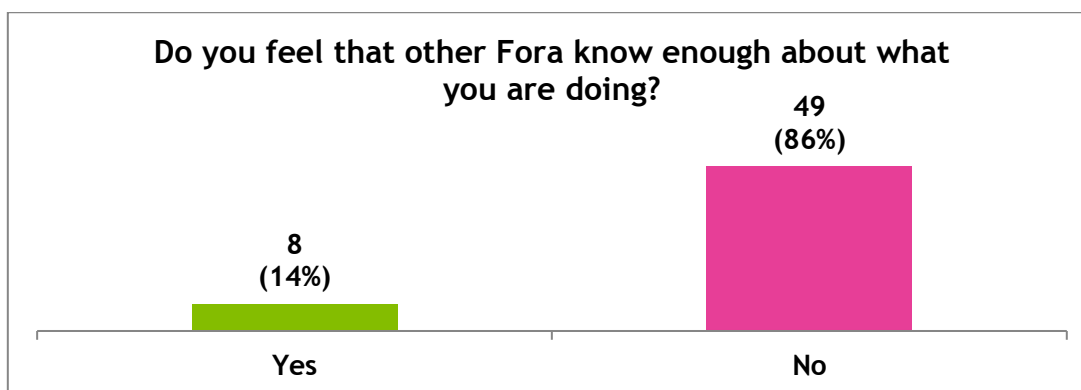
	Responses	
Yes	23%	13
No	77%	44
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



77% of people didn't feel that they knew enough about what the other Fora were doing, possibly leading to duplication of activities.

Q24: Do you feel that other Fora know enough about what you are doing?

	Responses	
Yes	14%	8
No	86%	49
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



Similarly, 86% of people did not feel that the other Fora know enough about they are doing. Addressing this would also avoid duplication.

Q25: What do you gain most from attending your Forum?

Most of the comments received were positive, with the focus on partnership working, networking and information sharing. Only a few people felt that they were 'unsure' of the benefits of attending the Fora.

“Networking’ x 11 people”

“Information sharing/gathering’ x 10 people”

“Understanding services within the Borough being delivered”.



“An understanding of partners’ services and local knowledge on what is being delivered or any changes to service provision”

“An opportunity to work with local people with insight and expertise, and able to influence some of the wider determinants of health as well as work on specific projects”

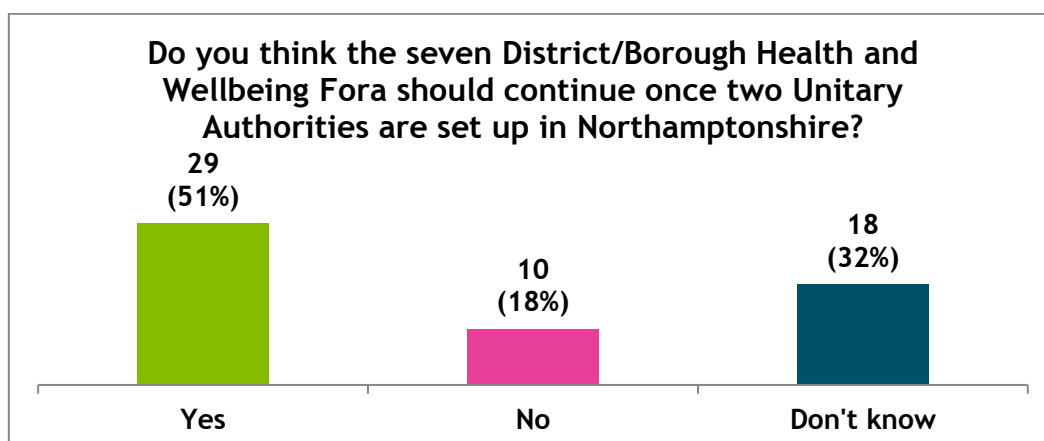
“Building relationships with other members and as a vehicle to get feedback/influence bids we have made to, for example, the Big Lottery for a project to support people whose health and wellbeing are affected by their circumstances”

“As an observer from outside the ‘health/welfare’ sector I am constantly surprised at the untapped potential for sharing expertise which the Fora reveals”

“Understanding what wonderful work is happening within the town and trying to connect it better. Networks too”

Q26: Do you think the seven District/Borough Health and Wellbeing Fora should continue once two Unitary Authorities are set up in Northamptonshire?

	Responses	
Yes	51%	29
No	18%	10
Don't know	32%	18
Why?		41
	Answered	57
	Skipped	0



This question was evenly split between those people that think the Health and Wellbeing Fora should continue once the 2 unitary authorities are set up (51%) and those that said ‘no’ or ‘don’t know’ (49%).

Some concerns were raised about the importance of retaining a local focus for local issues to be raised and heard coming through strongly:



“Local issues still need to be heard”

“It is important for areas to have an identity still and each borough is unique”

“Localities will still have local issues and need a voice”

“Each unitary should have its own Health and Wellbeing Board, with high level buy-in from key partners. It could have sub-groups for specific projects or areas. It could hold a networking/reference group event once or twice a year to engage all the other partners2

“The health and wellbeing needs of residents across Northamptonshire are different depending on which district/borough you live in. This needs to be reflected in separate Fora”

“Good question. This is the first time this has been raised openly with me! But the work done by the Fora so far should not be wasted!”

“But not as they operate now. A different operating model is needed that is a commissioning group and can make real change, where resource is provided”

“This will depend on how services are to be delivered in the future - if a locality focus on need still remains, then yes”

**Q27: Is there anything else you would like to tell Healthwatch Northamptonshire about the Health and Wellbeing Forum you attend?
18 additional comments to the survey were received:**

“I am really impressed by the commitment and resilience of the people and organisations who have continued to attend during a period of considerable organisational change”

“Kettering Forum has a wide membership and meetings are well supported. Investment in voluntary sector members who are delivering Social Prescribing as well as being links to local people is a factor to be celebrated and continued in a local context”

“Joint commissioning should be stronger, especially with Public Health”

“I would like to attend more meetings rather than just special ones”

“It is well organised and structured and seems to have good engagement with partners but it doesn’t seem to be able to instigate much direct partnership action”

“It would be beneficial for the Forum to also report to the Kettering Futures Partnership (KFP) to avoid duplication of effort, to influence inclusion of health and wellbeing issues into planning and to achieve synergy across partnerships”



“I would just like to say that ***** has made a huge difference to this Forum. ***** has improved focus and public health links. ***** is very committed and cares about both organisations and the area in which the Forum covers”

“With all its failings, from what I know, it is still the most effective of the seven”

“Good, proactive group”

“I consider the Daventry Forum to be key to ensuring the identification of local health needs and the means to achieving a collaborative approach to meeting those needs”

“It’s very productive”

“The council room is the wrong shape to enable you to engage with others effectively. Also, too many attendees to create an engaging session, more a lecture”

“Daventry Forum is well attended with well engaged attendees who are keen to work together”

“I have started to attend the South Northants Forum and they seem to use a good method for capturing impact which could be shared with others”

“It is not clear whether there will be, or whether there should be two Health and Wellbeing Boards to cover the erstwhile county. What is important is to keep the ‘localness’ of any replacement Fora so that organisations and people are able to make a difference where they live and work and to feel that that is what they do”

“The meetings are frustrated by lack of data. How do we know what we, or the Board, are achieving if we don’t have access to data that will inform us? How can the Fora plan future work if we only have intuition on which to base decisions. Without this crucial information we are just talking in the wind”

“We need a strong and dynamic Chair”

“Corby has a very well attended Forum and has been an example of good practice throughout Northamptonshire with different initiatives”



One to one interviews - what people told us

Structure and governance of the Fora

- The Fora are chaired by a mixture of council officers, GPs and voluntary sector individuals. Most of the Chairs have been in the position for over two years so have good experience of managing their Forum. The Chair and Vice Chair positions are rotated in some Fora and elected in others.
- The administration (invitations/minutes/venue etc.) is usually supplied by the local council - free in terms of resource/room supply/expense. This is seen as crucial to the Fora for example, the Northampton Forum stopped operating when the council support was withdrawn. Recently, in East Northants, the Forum almost stopped operating until council resources were made available. In Kettering, they are hoping to have Health and Wellbeing Officer support for the Forum from this summer. There is also a strong dependency on the commitment and energy of the council officer who supports the local Forum.
- Each Forum has Terms of Reference (ToR) to support their governance arrangements and those received are available on request from Healthwatch Northamptonshire. They vary in content and substance, not using a common framework, although some have recently been reviewed.
- Some of the ToRs state the Fora is the 'local constituent' of the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board. This is an assumption as there is no direct governance between the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Fora. This highlights the confusion about the status of the Fora. Many outside and some inside the Fora assume that they are local 'sub-committees' of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- The attendees of the Fora are a mixture of local authority (Borough/District Council/Town Council), health (CCG/Public Health/GPs), emergency services, volunteer groups, charities and Healthwatch Northamptonshire. The number of attendees varies from 12 to over 30. This was generally seen as a good representation of local groups, with only schools not being represented in most areas. Local GP, GP federation and hospital representatives are seen as essential attendees. However, while it is encouraging to have a large number of local attendees, a really high number is seen as often deterring engagement within meetings. There was some concern that the representative attendees can change regularly and some, particularly from the voluntary sector, did not have the authority or confidence to make decisions and/or offer to be part of task and finish groups.



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- The Fora meetings are mainly held in council chambers or committee rooms. Committee type rooms were seen as better than chambers as the latter does not lend itself to engagement between attendees. In Daventry, Forum members suggested round table sessions at the end part of meetings to agree tasks. In Kettering they are trying to hold meetings in different venues.
 - The frequency of meetings varies between every 6 weeks and 6 months. It was generally thought that meeting 2-3 months apart was most productive as any less frequent would lead to inertia. South Northants accepted a council proposal in September 2018 to only meet every 6 rather than 3 months but this is now being reviewed. Recently some meetings have been more frequent due to the availabilities of Public Health monies that the Fora can bid for.
 - The Fora invite speakers from relevant organisations that members suggest or have approached the Forum.
 - In Kettering, the Forum members have been invited to free training sessions arranged by the council and also run a workshop about the Public Health data, all well received. In Wellingborough, efforts have been made to theme the meetings with relevant speakers.
 - Some Forums have formed planning groups (e.g. East Northants) to tackle priorities, although with variable success/outputs depending on the commitment of the members of each group. The Chairs are now trying to make the Fora more strategic and focus on key priorities.
 - The Fora Chairs and Officers are invited to attend the Fora Chairs Group meetings held every two months. The GP Chairs find this meeting hard to attend as they only have limited time to give to Fora business. The new Chair of the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board, Professor Nick Petford, is widely welcomed and seen to have brought greater direction and alignment between the Board and the Fora - recently asking for KPIs from each Forum. Some Fora personnel have met outside the Chairs meeting to assist each other.
 - There have been some discussions in the past about merging some of the Fora e.g. South Northants and Daventry, however this did not take place.
 - In Daventry, the Forum was recently asked to review itself and the conclusion was that members felt the Forum had a useful function in terms of networking and information sharing and was worth being part of.
 - Information passed to Fora members varies. Some Chairs/Officers create regular summaries from reports they receive/see.
 - Concerns were raised that the forthcoming unitary changes may affect how the Fora operate and align to other organisations **but how is unclear at this time.**



“The key role of the Forum is to represent all the non-statutory/health bodies and join up with the statutory bodies effectively” *Forum Chair*

Fora output discussions

- The Fora have found it hard without identified/allocated budgets, resources and volunteers to take on tasks to create deliverable action plans in all areas, so providing KPIs to the Health and Wellbeing Board will be difficult at this point. South Northants has a blueprint document showing local activity against priorities but struggles to gain member input and commitment to actions. Corby also has an action plan.
- The South Northants Activity Map was well-received by other Fora as a valuable initiative, but this was funded through local council money.
- The recent offer by Public Health, with a short timescale (spend any monies provided by March 2020) has energised the Fora. They are being supported by Public Health to create bids that meet the stated criteria and so have a good chance of being approved. How each Fora is managing this process varies. Wellingborough quickly submitted a bid as the project was already being developed. East Northants arranged a series of meetings, supported by Public Health to discuss, agree and submit bids. Other Fora emailed their members, asking for proposals and will discuss those received at forthcoming meetings.
- There is a risk of duplication of proposed local activities with those being managed by other county/national organisations if there is insufficient awareness of what every organisation is doing/planning. One example is the preschool ‘Fledgling’ activity proposals in Daventry that they were then advised is Department of Education responsibility.

One to one interviews - summary

- All welcomed the review and the opportunity to discuss the purpose and operation/outputs of their own Fora. They recognised the need to make the Fora as effective as possible and align to the Health and Wellbeing Board and county strategies.
- The Fora have evolved locally without being part of any formal and aligned governance within the county Health and Wellbeing structure.



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- The Fora are very dependent on local council support, without which they struggle to operate at all e.g. Northampton.
 - They require fully committed and strategically minded Chairs and Officers to make the Fora successful.
 - They need to meet regularly and efforts made to make the meeting content strategic and varied to engage with members, using relevant external input, and hold interactive sessions.
 - The Fora are more aligned now to the Health and Wellbeing Board due to the new Chair's direction and welcome this. Some see the Fora as sub committees of the Health and Wellbeing Board with aligned activities with a local emphasis/relevance.
 - Before the Public Health funding was offered this year, the Fora's main purpose and achievement was useful information sharing and networking between local health and wellbeing and related organisations.
 - Efforts to create some impactful activity have been generally unsuccessful due to the lack of financial/people resource and the commitment from the Fora members.
 - The Public Health bid process has really energised the Fora and could create a real 'step change' in how they operate and the impact they can make on their locality's health and wellbeing.
 - There may be some duplication of activity and bids between the Fora. The Health and Wellbeing Board and Public Health should help identify where the Fora can work effectively together.
 - All welcomed standardised ToR and planning documentation The Health and Wellbeing Board could help support this along with summaries of plans and performance with KPIs across the Fora. This would help create an integrated county health and wellbeing plan that could be more effectively managed and monitored.
 - There is some concern about what will happen after March 2020 in terms of available financial support. An allocation per Forum each year would be welcomed.
 - There is no clear understanding of how the forthcoming unitary changes could affect the Fora, the Health and Wellbeing Board and other organisations. However, there is a clear belief that the Fora will continue to have a role and purpose.
 - It would be beneficial for Fora members to receive regular updates on county-wide health and wellbeing activities and progress through the Health and
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Wellbeing Board/Collaborative Stakeholder Forum. An online forum could also be created to encourage engagement between Fora members.

- Inter/combined Fora sessions would also be welcomed on key topics.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank:

- the Chairs and Officers of the county Health and Wellbeing Fora for their time and valuable input
- Northamptonshire County Council and Public Health for commissioning this independent piece of work
- Simon Barter, Healthwatch Northamptonshire Board member and volunteer, for speaking to Chairs and Officers of all seven Fora in his own time
- All the Fora attendees that responded to the survey



About Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Healthwatch Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to monitor (known as “Enter and View”) health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care.
- We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using lots of different ways of finding out views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.
- Where we do not feel the views and voices of Healthwatch Northamptonshire and the people who we strive to speak on behalf of, are being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.





About Connected Together CIC

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch Northamptonshire.

The remit of the Connected Together CIC includes:

- Contract compliance
- Legal requirements
- Financial and risk management
- Sustainability and growth
- Agreeing strategy and operations
- Agreeing policies and procedures

Connected Together CIC is a social enterprise and a partnership between the University of Northampton and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. It aims to be first for community engagement across the county of Northamptonshire and beyond.



Connected Together
First for Community Engagement





Appendix

Fora Chairs/Officers met by Simon Barter

Corby

Tansi Harper - Chair (Also Chair NHCP Collaborative Stakeholder Forum)

Daventry

Ed Cooke - Chair (Environmental Health Manager - Daventry District Council)

Alan Burns - Fora Officer (Community and Partnerships Manager - Daventry District Council)

East Northants

Alan Armson - Chair (Also Chair of SERVE charity)

Kettering

Hazel Webb - Chair (Community Services/Administration Manager - Kettering Borough Council)

Northampton

Dr Tom Howseman - Chair (Locality GP)

South Northants

James Taylor - Health and Wellbeing Officer - South Northants Council

Wellingborough

Dr Chris Ellis - Chair (Locality GP)



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