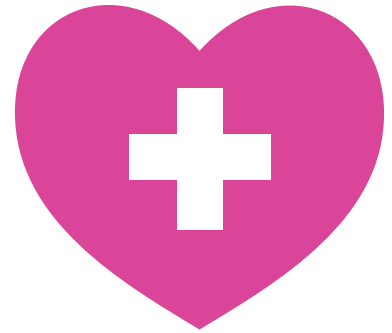


# Public Event - Meet Public Health Liverpool

**June 2021**



## Introduction

On Thursday 17th June, we held an online event for the public, called 'Meet Public Health Liverpool!' Thanks to their key role in working to stop the spread of Covid-19 during the pandemic, more people have become aware of the work of Public Health, both locally and nationally. We thought it would be useful to hold an online event with Public Health Liverpool, to give local people an opportunity to learn more about the other work they do in the city. Two members of staff from Public Health Liverpool, Sophie Baird and Sue O'Looney, attended the event to talk about their work and answer questions from attendees.

The meeting was attended by 13 people, including Sue and Sophie. Members of Healthwatch Liverpool staff and Healthwatch Liverpool volunteers also attended, to both facilitate the meeting and take notes during the session.

## About Public Health Liverpool

At the start of the event, Sophie and Sue gave a presentation giving an overview of the work that Public Health Liverpool do. The presentation covered the role of local Public Health teams, the work that Public Health do in Liverpool, and how they do this work.

The Public Health Liverpool team is based in Liverpool City Council. The Council has a statutory (legal) obligation to appoint a Director of Public Health for their area. The core purpose of Public Health is to help people in Liverpool to live longer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives. They do this by working to improve and protect people's health, reduce health inequalities, and provide population health information and advice.

Local Public Health teams have a number of statutory responsibilities, which they have to do under the law. This includes ensuring the provision of Health Visiting services; sexual health services; drug and alcohol harm reduction, treatment & recovery services; NHS Health Checks; health protection information and advice; and providing public health information and advice to the local CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group).

Additionally, in Liverpool, the local Public Health team do number of additional pieces of work. This includes ensuring the provision of school nursing services, weight management services, stop smoking services and the Exercise for Health programme. Public Health Liverpool also work with partners to address social determinants of health; reduce health inequalities; improve mental health and wellbeing of local people; and improve vaccination and screening uptake.

**Social determinants of health** are non-medical things which can also have a big impact on our health. These include housing, working conditions, unemployment, education, access to food, and more. Because they have such a big impact on our health, addressing the social determinants of health is a key part of helping people live longer and healthier lives.

**Health inequalities** are unfair and avoidable differences in health across the whole population and between different groups in society. Health inequalities can include things like differences in life expectancy between people who live in different areas, or who are from different racial or ethnic backgrounds. Health inequalities are often influenced by **social determinants of health**.

There are a number of ways that Public Health Liverpool do this work. As well as directly commissioning (buying and paying for) some services, they also work closely with local partners, particularly in Liverpool City Council and Liverpool CCG. They also use their position within the Council to provide expert advice to decision-makers and to influence local decision making. They review data and evidence on local health inequalities.

More in-depth information about the work and aims of Public Health Liverpool can be found in the following places:

- + Liverpool's Public Health Annual Report
- + The local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- + Health & Wellbeing Strategy, which is due to be updated
- + Liverpool's Public Health commissioning strategy, which is currently being drafted
- + City Plan Liverpool
- + Liverpool CCG's One Liverpool Strategy.

## Q & A

Following the presentation about the work of Public Health Liverpool from Sophie and Sue, we opened the meeting to questions and discussion from attendees. This following section of the report provides an overview of those questions and discussion.

+ **Question: How do Public Health work with the CCG?**

*In Liverpool, Public Health and the local CCG work together in a number of ways. They work together on strategy, and Public Health provide advice and guidance on health protection issues. Liverpool CCG and Public Health also co-commission services locally. Both organisations receive funding from the Department of Health, but the CCG tends to focus on specialist services whereas Public Health's remit focuses on the whole population and health protection.*

+ **Question: Is there a health and wellbeing meeting that the public can attend?**

*Yes, this is the Health and Wellbeing Board. Details about the Board and dates for future meetings are available on the Liverpool City Council website.*

+ **Question: what is the best way for academic researchers to reach under-served sections of the population in mental health research?**

*It depends on what group of people researchers are interested in speaking to. Public Health Liverpool and Liverpool CCG commission different mental health services, and general community and wellbeing groups may be a good point of contact for groups of people who aren't using services. Healthwatch*

*Liverpool may be able to suggest the most appropriate or potentially useful contacts/community organisations or make introductions to Healthwatch colleagues in other parts of the Liverpool City Region or elsewhere in England.*

**+ Question: Does Public Health have any involvement with services providing legal support, advice, guidance or signposting in their work to reduce health inequalities?**

*Currently, Public Health Liverpool doesn't directly work with such services. However, staff working within services commissioned by Public Health will signpost service users to such organisations, as well as offer advice and guidance. Advice and guidance services are very welcome to attend the Treatment and Recovery Working Group, which is part of Public Health's drug and alcohol services - the group is very interested in the impact of benefits, social care, and other similar factors. Commissioned food banks also try to provide wrap-around support for those who use them.*

*The Liverpool City Plan, which has recently been published, is looking to take a whole city approach at reducing health inequalities. The aim is for third sector agencies, private providers, the local NHS, and the city council to all work together on this.*

**+ Question: Do any services apart from Sanctuary Family Support provide family support around drug and/or alcohol use?**

*Unfortunately, no. Decreases in funding have had an impact on specialist services although mainstream services do try to provide support to families and schools do still deliver drugs and alcohol work. For support around young people, YPAS deliver specialist mental health services as part of a CAMHS contract but this is not specific to addictions. Young Addiction has been re-branded as We Are With You.*

**+ Question: How can the newspaper 'All Together Now' work with Public Health and local organisations to put public health messages across to its readership? The paper publishes 70,000 copies every 8 weeks and has approx. 250,000 readers across Merseyside, Cheshire and Lancashire.**

*The main problem for organisations when using publications, including 'All Together Now', to highlight their work is a lack of budget. Within Public Health as well, published messages will need to be approved by the communications and marketing team. However, details can be circulated to all Public Health staff, so that individual teams are aware of the newspaper, and via the North West Coast Clinical Research Network.*

**+ Question: Does Liverpool have a Suicide Strategy?**

*Liverpool is developing its own Self Harm and Suicide Strategy, along with a Suicide Oversight Panel, and works closely with the Liverpool Mental Health Strategy Group on this. Liverpool Public Health has also been working with regional (Cheshire and Merseyside) Public Health colleagues on the regional 'No More' strategy since 2015 and supports Mersey Care's 'Zero Suicide' strategy. Suicide Awareness/Prevention training is offered to all frontline staff, and data is collected and evaluated across the region to understand which approaches are most effective.*

**+ Question: How does Public Health address health inequalities, especially inequalities in life expectancy across Liverpool?**

*Covid has brought health inequalities to the fore. Public Health aims to reduce health inequalities, including those in life expectancy, by adopting a targeted approach called 'proportionate universality'. Under this, services are universal (they are offered to everyone) but more or less support may be offered to people, depending on their level of need (they are proportionate to need). For instance, the health visiting service has 3 levels of support, based on need. Drug and Alcohol services in Liverpool are*

*one of the few services in the country to offer support to young people, to provide inpatient beds and a prison service, as well as the Share Care system for people who are stable and supported by their GP. Public Health commissions services from the preventative through to the complex, from brief advice and guidance through to inpatient services. Whilst they always start with whole population based prevention services, Public Health Liverpool recognise that this is not always enough to reduce inequalities, and services provider higher levels of support are also needed.*

*Joint and integrated commissioning and partnership work also supports the reduction in health inequalities, particularly where patients or service users have multiple needs. The City Plan embeds this by aiming to use resources across the city, from across all sectors (health, social care, and charities/the third sector), and takes account of social and economic determinants of health. In their most recent annual report, Public Health Liverpool also recommended that every Council policy should include an assessment tool to ensure that the policy is able to tackle health inequalities.*

**+ Question: How is all this monitored? How do we know these policies work?**

*It's often difficult to monitor, because it's very hard to accurately measure every single time a policy impacts a person's life. Public Health does a lot of work which involves reviewing data, examining trends in health data and inequalities over time, measuring data from Liverpool against data from other similar Local Authorities and against the Public Health Outcomes Framework.*

*Public Health are also aiming to work more closely with communities, both to encourage community development, and also to get information and feedback about the impact local policies have on people. Future work with communities will be looking at bringing services into local communities, so they are more integrated and localised. This work may take more time than anticipated because of the impact of Covid.*

*Over the past decade, austerity and funding cuts have affected a lot of Public Health work. However, more recently, some services and initiatives which were previously de-funded have been re-developed and re-funded. An example of this is a local initiative called ADA, which brings together the drug and alcohol team with the criminal justice system. More long-term funding needs to be found for this work, however.*

**+ Question: What would Public Health's spending priorities be in an ideal world?**

*A healthy start in life, and putting everyone on an equal footing to achieve our potential - a basic answer, but difficult to achieve in practice. The dream would be to move to just having to focus on prevention so that demand for the NHS and social care services would be much lower.*

**+ Question: Does the public have any say in what Public Health spend their money on?**

*Public Health Liverpool are currently drafting their new commissioning strategy. Although lots of the work that Public Health fund locally is statutory, there is room within the Public Health budget to fund additional services locally. Public Health Liverpool would welcome any feedback or suggestions on where Public Health Liverpool should spend their funding.*