

# Title of report: Health Protection Assurance Forum Annual Report 2023

**Meeting: Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Meeting date: Monday 4 December 2023**

**Report by: Sophie Hay | Health improvement practitioner**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to update the Health and Wellbeing Board on health protection system performance, achievements, and risks for 2023, as well as areas of focus for 2024.

In Herefordshire, the Health Protection Assurance Forum (HPAF) is a partnership group that helps enable the Director of Public Health to fulfil their statutory role in seeking assurance that satisfactory arrangements are in place to protect the health of the local population.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) **Health and Wellbeing Board to note the content of the report and are aware of the key findings, performance, risks, achievements and future priorities of the Health Protection Assurance Forum;**
- b) **Identify and feedback to Health Protection Assurance Forum whether the Health and Wellbeing Board require any further follow up reports, or updates, on key health protection activities.**

## **Alternative options**

1. The Board could choose not to consider this report

## Key considerations

### Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update the Health and Wellbeing Board on our health protection system performance, achievements, and risks for 2023, as well as areas of focus for 2024.

In Herefordshire, the Health Protection Assurance Forum (HPAF) is a partnership group that helps enable the Director of Public Health to fulfil their statutory role in seeking assurance that satisfactory arrangements are in place to protect the health of the local population. It also reports into the Health and Wellbeing Board to identify key issues and challenges facing our local population and where partnership working might help address those challenges.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the HPAF was temporarily stood down and replaced by a range of COVID specific groups. In April 2022, the group was re-established to fulfil the statutory role of the Director of Public Health in seeking assurance that arrangements are in place to protect the health of the local population.

Health protection functions expected of a local health systems as a whole, include:

- Emergency preparedness,
- Resilience and response
- Communicable disease control
- Risk assessment and risk management
- Risk communication
- Incident and outbreak investigation and management
- Monitoring and surveillance of communicable diseases
- Infection prevention and control in health and care settings
- Delivery and monitoring of immunisation and vaccination programmes
- Environmental public health and control of chemical, biological and radiological hazards

The local authority has a specific statutory duties around:

- Prevention
- Planning and preparedness
- Environmental health
- System assurance

An outline of key messages for each of the eight topics covered in this report are given below.

#### Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

- Internationally, antimicrobial resistance is one of the top 10 global public health threats. Local action is important to maintain the effectiveness of common antimicrobial drugs over the long term, including in Herefordshire.
- In Herefordshire and Worcestershire combined, the number of cases of antimicrobial resistant infection has remained relatively static between 2021/22 and 2022/23. However, 5 of the 6 infectious agents monitored are higher than agreed thresholds.
- The focus for 2024 will be reducing AMR case numbers below these agreed thresholds.
- This will be done by implementing the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System (ICS) AMR reduction strategy.

#### Immunisation programmes

- In general, Herefordshire's pre-school and school-aged routine vaccination programmes achieve performance in line with England averages, and local authorities similar to our own.

- Both pre-school and school-aged programmes were affected by COVID but have bounced back to pre-pandemic levels. However, uptake in the pre-school routine programme has been declining slowly over many years, while uptake in the school-aged programmes has relatively static. There are notable exceptions within those trends.
- For example, the school HPV vaccination programme was severely affected by the pandemic in Herefordshire but has recovered back to be one of the highest performing in the country. HPV vaccination coverage achieved the recommended  $\geq 90\%$  target for girls although coverage in boys was lower (85 to 89%). Both were a lot higher than the England average of 62% for boys and 67% for girls.
- Flu vaccine coverage among those aged 65 and over in 2022/23 has also remained high at 83.8%, the highest in the region and comfortably over the 75% nationally set target.
- Priorities for 2024 include increasing MMR dose 1 and 2 coverage above 95%, with particularly emphasis on dose 1 (currently 93% in 2022/23), which provides the majority of protection. Measles is making a resurgence nationally in unvaccinated groups and in response, Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS are developing a measles elimination plan.

#### Population screening programmes

- Herefordshire typically performs similarly to the national average across most national screening programmes, and tracks their long-term upward or downward trends.
- The programmes were differentially affected by the pandemic. For example, antenatal and newborn screening (ANNB) screening, cervical screening and bowel screening were minimally impacted.
- By contrast, Abdominal Aortic Aneurism (AAA) screening, diabetic eye screening programme (DESP) and Breast screening were more impacted, building up significant backlogs.
- The breast cancer screening programme in particular went from stably achieving over 75% coverage before 2019, to less than 60% in 2021 and 2022.
- Cervical cancer screening coverage is also on a downward trend, reducing about 5% over a decade both in Herefordshire and nationally.
- In 2024 the focus is on improving backlogs from the pandemic and maintaining focus on known inequalities in screening update during that recovery. This will take local and national action, including implementation of the National Screening Strategy, due shortly.

#### COVID-19

- COVID-19 vaccination remains the most important tool in reducing the risk of ill health as a result of COVID infection, particularly in those at higher risk of worse outcomes from infection due to age, existing illness or other vulnerability.
- As of 23 September 2023; 437,165 COVID-19 vaccinations have been taken up in Herefordshire.
- A total of 19,211 (75%) of eligible people have received a spring 2023 booster, higher than the England average of 70%.
- Our future focus will be to continue to promote COVID-19 vaccination to those who are eligible, where season boosters are recommended and available.

#### Sexual health

- Overall, the rate of sexually transmitted infections diagnosed among residents of Herefordshire in 2023 (322 per 100,000) was less than half the England average (694 per 100,000).
- Specific areas where Herefordshire does less well than England include HIV testing, the number of people with a late HIV diagnosis, and the proportion of 15 – 24 year olds screened for chlamydia.
- Risks include recruitment and retention of sexual health staff due to Herefordshire's rural location and patient access to sexual health services
- The focus for 2024 includes further promotion of sexual health screening in schools, and investigating the reasons behind the HIV testing and late diagnosis figures. New services are planned, including a new virtual clinic, as well as a review our young person's walk in clinic, to ensure it's meeting the needs of users.

### Drugs and alcohol

- Alcohol use accounts for the highest proportion of individuals seeking treatment locally
- There has been a rise in the number of drug and / or alcohol related deaths in Herefordshire. As a result, the Herefordshire Recovery Service is establishing a new Drug Related Death (DRD) panel
- Future focus includes building better links with GP practices and offering drop-in alcohol clinics and assessments from their premises to aid further referrals and promote the availability of support.
- Exploring and identifying ways to provide earlier intervention to alcohol users before they become dependent, to reduce the risk of them developing liver disease in the future.
- Continuing to provide training for other professionals regarding Brief Interventions, which can support early discussions about motivation to change.

### Tuberculous (TB)

- Herefordshire continues to be a low incidence area for TB, averaging between zero and six cases per year since 2000.
- This poses resilience and efficiency challenges for the specialist TB service locally in prevention and response
- Nationally and locally TB vaccine is not routinely offered, but continues to be provided on the NHS when a child, or adult, is thought to have an increased risk of coming into contact with TB. This was the case locally for 63 individuals in 2021/22, down from 144 a year earlier.

### Environmental hazards to health, safety and pollution control

- COVID had a significant impact on the delivery of Environmental Health services. As a result a COVID-19 recovery plan was successfully implemented.
- There has been a small reduction in the number of reportable accidents and incidents and in year health and safety visits conducted by Environmental Health in 2022/23.
- Food premises with a food hygiene rating score at 3 (satisfactory) or above have remained consistently high (2022/23, 98.2%)
- Herefordshire has a high number of poultry farms and processing facilities, increasing its risk of avian flu outbreaks. There were four such avian flu outbreaks requiring environmental health visits in 2021/22, including to ensure biosecurity measures were in place.

## **Community impact**

In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these is an important strategic choice to make sure outcomes are achieved. The council needs robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure its outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best use of resources whilst still enabling efficient and effective operations and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review

## **Environmental Impact**

This report helps to contribute to the following [environmental policy commitments](#) and aligns to the following success measures in the County Plan.

- Reduce the council's carbon emissions
- Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions
- Improve the air quality within Herefordshire

## **Equality duty**

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this is a decision on back office functions, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

## **Resource implications**

There are no resource implications associated with this report. However, the resource implications of any recommendations made by the HWB will need to be considered by the responsible party in response to those recommendations or subsequent decisions

## **Legal implications**

**The Health and Wellbeing Board carries out statutory functions as required by the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The Boards functions are set out in Part 3.5.22 of the Council's constitution. Risk management**

There are no risk implications identified emerging from the recommendations in this report.

Any specific system risk/s identified within the body report are included within the Health Protection Assurance Forum's risk log and will be monitored and reviewed by Health Protection Assurance Forum partners on a quarterly basis.

## **Consultees**

- Members of the Health Protection Assurance Forum
- Contributors to the Health Protection Annual Report
- Public Health Leadership Team
- Matt Pearce (Director of Public Health)

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Health Protection Assurance Forum Annual Report 2023

## **Background papers**

None identified.

## Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published

Governance	Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	Date 24/11/2023
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 24/11/2023
Legal	Sam Evans	Date 22/11/2023
Communications	Luenne featherstone	Date 21/11/2023
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 21/11/2023
Risk	Jo Needs	Date 24/11/2023

Approved by Click or tap here to enter text. Date Click or tap to enter a date.

[Note: Please remember to overwrite or delete the guidance highlighted in grey]

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.