

Title of report: Re-establishing the Health Protection Assurance Forum

Meeting: Health and Wellbeing Board

Meeting date: 13 March 2023

Report by: Director of Public Health

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose:

- For the Board to receive and comment on the Re-establishing the Health Protection Assurance Forum report.

Recommendation(s)

- That the Board considers and comments on the report

Alternative options

1: The Board could choose not to consider this report, however given the importance of the subject matter it is presented to this meeting.

Key considerations

- The function of Herefordshire's Health Protection Assurance Forum (HPAF) is to provide the assurance that the health protection functions listed below are in place and working as they should. It does this on behalf of the Local Authority Director of Public Health and reports into the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 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
- Herefordshire's HPAF was paused in 2020 because health protection staff and organisations were re-deployed to respond to the immediate threat of the COVID pandemic (March 2020 onwards). The Forum was paused while other COVID-focussed groups – both strategic, tactical and operational – were stood up.
 - A benefit of that single focus was that it forged new and close working relationships across the health protection system in attempts to protect local residents from the harms of COVID infection. The downside, was that the focus shifted significantly away from other health protection work, including preventative activity, like adult health screening programmes and childhood immunisation. Without high performance and close assurance in these areas, health risks are being stored up that will be realised in the future.
 - As partners began to re-gain some non-COVID staff capacity over the summer of 2022, and the phase of living with COVID began, the forum was re-established.
 - The first meeting was held in July 2022 and the forum has met twice since. The focus to date has been foundation building after the three year interruption, by:
 - Establishing new terms of reference
 - Updating membership due to significant staff turn-over, and new organisations being formed since 2020 (e.g. UK Health Security Agency, and Integrated Care Boards)
 - Establishing a new information flow from partners to allow quarterly or yearly monitoring of selected health protection outcomes, where data allows
 - Understanding and sharing risks across the partnership
 - Reviewing public health outcomes framework indicators to evaluate how Herefordshire health protection outcomes compare objectively with England, our Region and Local Authorities similar to our own.

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

There are no general implications for the environment arising from this report.

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) Facilitate 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.

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

- Health and wellbeing boards are responsible for encouraging integrated working between health and social care commissioners, including partnership arrangements such as pooled budgets, lead commissioning and integrated provision.
- Their purpose is to establish collaborative decision making, planning and commissioning across councils and the NHS, informed by the views of patients, people who use services and other partners.
- The functions of the Health and Wellbeing Board are set out in paragraph 3.5.24 of the constitution.

Risk management

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

Consultees

Matt Pearce (Director of Public Health), Hilary Hall (Corporate Director Community Wellbeing).

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Re-Establishing the Health Protection Assurance Forum

Background papers

None