

Final Report

# Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities

December 2021

Agreed by Full Council – 26 January 2022

## **Foreword by Councillor David Howarth, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee**

The Scrutiny Committee selected this review because health inequalities are important for the quality of life of our residents. Whilst we found that South Ribble is relatively affluent, this does mask a number of issues around deprivation, low income, food poverty and ill-health. This reduces the life expectancy in the Borough with some residents living an additional 9 years in one ward when compared with another ward only 4 miles away.



We have explored all of these issues and come up with a series of recommendations to help tackle health inequalities. These recommendations include the Council building on recent initiatives, strengthening partnership working and using data to provide a local holistic approach and embedding health inequalities into everything we do.

I would like to thank my fellow task group members and all the stakeholders we have met from our partners, agencies and Members and staff. We've heard some inspiring stories of the commitment and dedication of some of the charities and volunteers who work for the benefit of our residents. I would like to commend them for all the great work that they do. The Cabinet Member, Councillor Mick Titherington has also been invaluable in supporting the review and we are grateful for his help.

It would be remiss of me not to say how disappointed the task group was that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) were unable to engage with us or provide information to support our review.

Finally, we hope that the outcomes from this review lead to more of a concerted effort to reduce health inequalities and support our residents even more in the future.

Councillor David Howarth  
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee & Task Group

## Members of the Task Group

The following Members were appointed by the Scrutiny Committee to undertake this review:

- Councillor David Howarth (Chair)
- Councillor Will Adams
- Councillor Colin Coulton
- Councillor Matthew Trafford
- Councillor Karen Walton

## Rationale for the Scrutiny Review

The health of residents in South Ribble is varied, with deprivation rates relatively low. However, there are health inequalities in South Ribble with men in the least deprived areas expecting to live on average 5.7 years longer than men in the most deprived wards and for women this difference is over 6.3 years.

Following the period of austerity following the financial crash and future implications for the economy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is felt that a scrutiny review of economic and income deprivation is appropriate. There are also tangible links between economic and income deprivation with people's mental health and wellbeing.

The task group has therefore agreed to look at this, find out what the real issues are in South Ribble and what more can be done to tackle them in a partnership approach.

## Objectives for the Review

- To understand the true scale of health inequalities in South Ribble and how economic/income deprivation impacts this
- To assess material and economic impacts on health and mental wellbeing
- To highlight issues around deprivation and health inequalities
- To explore existing initiatives and assess their effectiveness

- To investigate different initiatives and models for improving health equalities and assessing how effective they could be in South Ribble
- To identify levels of accountability for health inequalities linked to economic deprivation
- To produce a series of recommendations to Council to improve access to high-quality healthcare and support for all residents

## Links with Corporate Plan

There is a strong desire by the current administration to improve health and wellbeing for residents in South Ribble and the Scrutiny Review Task Group on Health Inequalities will compliment this work.

The revised Corporate Strategy for 2021/22-2022/23 explicitly expresses an intent to reduce health inequalities and ensuring that the Council continues to support the most vulnerable.

The work of the Scrutiny Review will also support the Council's vision of *"A healthy and happy community, flourishing together in a safer and fairer borough that is led by a council recognised for being innovative, financially sustainable and accountable."*

It will link with the following Corporate Priorities:

- Thriving communities
- A fair local economy that works for everyone
- Good homes, green spaces, well places

## Methodology Adopted

### Meetings with Stakeholders

The Task Group met with the following stakeholders as part of its review:

- Councillor Mick Titherington, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing – South Ribble Borough Council
- Nigel Evans – MP for Ribble Valley
- Katherine Fletcher – MP for South Ribble
- Jennifer Mullin, Director of Communities – South Ribble Borough Council
- Rebecca Heap, Communities Manager – South Ribble Borough Council
- Andy Bamber, Revenues Manager – South Ribble Borough Council

- Alison Salisbury, Customer Services Team Leader – South Ribble Borough Council
- Jennifer Clough, Investment and Skills Manager – South Ribble Borough Council
- Howard Anthony, South Ribble Partnership Manager
- Guy Simpson, Advice Services Manager – Citizens' Advice Bureau
- Wendy, Lostock Hall New Day Church Food Bank
- Andrea, The Base In Broadfield

### **Site Visit**

Councillor Will Adams spent time with the Lostock Hall New Day Church Food Bank talking with volunteers, agencies and food bank users' and feedback to the group on the learning.

### **Review of Documents**

The Task Group reviewed the following documents and evidence sources as part of their review:

- 2013 'Mind the Gap' Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities
- 2014 Update on 'Mind the Gap' recommendations
- LGA's Social determinants of health and the role of local government
- Government white papers
- National research
- Independent research and papers
- LG Inform
- 2010 Marmot Report '*Fair Society, Healthy Lives*'
- The Marmot Review: 10 Years On
- Corporate Plan

### **Events Attended**

Members of the Task Group and officers attended the following events as part of their research:

- 'A Wellbeing Economy: Could this be a gain as we emerge from COVID-19?' webinar
- North West Employers' Meet Marmott event

## Key Findings

In reviewing all the evidence from the review, the Task Group found the following:

- The Universal Credit process does not help residents in need in the way they sanction applicants and delay payments being made which can lead to vulnerable residents having to access food banks, approach loan sharks and has an adverse impact on mental health.
- The majority of the actions from the Scrutiny Committee's last review of health inequalities in 2013 have been completed with the only outstanding ones being around local targeted support to deal with issues in individual needs. Improved provision and presentation of localised health and wellbeing profile information could be broken down to Community Hub level and allow a tailored approach to needs.
- The other outstanding action from the original review is the Council embedding health inequalities and considerations in to the everyday work and decision-making of the Council through carrying out impact assessments and prompting Members and officers to think through and see what can be done to improve health inequalities.
- The Council has done a great deal over the last two years in support residents in need through the following initiatives:
  - South Ribble Together Hub as part of the COVID response
  - Providing food parcels to families in need
  - Bringing the leisure centres in-house with a priority of community delivery, but more is needed on the pricing policy for these facilities to encourage participation
  - Creating a food bank network and funding.
  - Holiday Activity Programme
  - Reducing the amount paid as part of the Council Tax Support Scheme
  - Approach to community wealth building
  - New Credit Union
  - Uniform swaps
- There some good practice examples of partnership working through South Ribble Partnership such as data sharing as a result of COVID response, reducing digital isolation. Further work would be helpful ensuring Referent is embedded and that a social prescribing model is put in place with GPs, leisure and other health partners.
- The number of young people in employment has decreased as a result of COVID with the number of apprenticeships also going down, which the Council could

help with. The Local Plan review also provides an opportunity to require developments to do more the increase employments and skills development.

- Encouraging residents to access support was an area of development whether that be access to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, knowing what was available and how to claim and also having a small discretionary fund to help with emergency and incidental expenses to provide support to those in need. Governance of this would be important and it was felt that local agencies might be best placed to administer this in a way that helps those most in need.
- Sadly food banks play an important part in ensuring the families can eat in the borough, with concerns about how sustainable this is in the absence of changes to the benefits system mentioned earlier. The work on the Food Bank Network has been helpful and it is felt that this could be developed further to include community larders and co-operatives.
- This review found that mental health was a major issue for our residents with some projects being undertaken by the Council, including Mental Health First Aid training for front-facing staff and some councillors. It was felt that an overview for Members would be useful with a view to providing Members with more in-depth training should that be appropriate on a Member by Member basis.
- Road safety and the number of road casualties and deaths remains high when compared with other Lancashire districts and continues to be flagged as part of the health profile. This is of concern to the Task Group and is suggested worthy of a further more in-depth review with partners such as the Police & Crime Commissioner's Office, Lancashire Road Safety Partnership and health bodies etc.

## Recommendations

Based on the research and findings from the review the Task Group make the following recommendations for the Council and Cabinet to consider:

1. The Council uses its influence with the Local Government Association and other bodies to encourage the Government to change the approach taken to Universal Credit to help residents and reduce the need to access food banks.
2. Health Impact Assessments be required as part of all decision-making processes, policy development and project management frameworks.
3. My Neighbourhood Community Hubs be provided with health and wellbeing data, including areas of deprivation and encouraged to consider projects focusing on improving health and wellbeing.



4. A Scrutiny Review of Road Safety is established to work with partners.
5. A social prescribing model, similar to that in operation in Chorley, is developed and implemented.
6. A review of pricing policies for leisure facilities is undertaken and schemes to provide access to and affordability of leisure centres be created in a similar model to the Holiday Hunger and HAF Programmes.
7. A re-launch of the Council's Apprenticeship Factory takes place to focus on the development of apprenticeships amongst partners and other major employers within the borough are encouraged.
8. As part of the review of the Local Plan consideration be given to designing planning policies that require developers to provide more support to apprenticeships and providing more local skilled job opportunities.
9. The Citizens Advice Bureau be asked to undertake outreach programmes and satellite sites across the borough as part of their performance monitoring to receive council funding.
10. The Council mounts a publicity campaign to encourage the take-up of benefits to those eligible.
11. A small discretionary Hardship Fund be created to be administered by local agencies, possible Citizens' Advice Bureau, to help with incidental and emergency funds that might help those in need of support.
12. The Council supports the establishment of Food Clubs, Co-ops and Community Shops across the borough to reduce food poverty
13. A Member Briefing be held on Mental Health First Aid and an introductory session provided to communicate an overview of the training.

## **Further Information**

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