

Wiltshire Council

Health and Wellbeing Board

23 May 2024

Subject: Canal Walk & Boater Survey Report

Executive Summary

In September 2023, 40 Wiltshire Council Officers and external partners walked the length of the Kennet and Avon Canal in Wiltshire to have strengths-based conversations with boaters and to publicise a survey looking at the health and wellbeing of boaters living on the canal in Wiltshire. A report has been produced with the results from the survey which we present today.

Proposal(s)

It is recommended that the Board:

- i) notes; the results of the survey and;
- ii) that board members circulate the report within their networks.

Reason for Proposal

Boaters are a seldom heard community about which the council have limited knowledge. This comprehensive survey is the first of its kind to be completed within this community and seeks to add valuable knowledge and insights into how they live. Its findings will be helpful in planning future services for this community.

Kate Blackburn Director of Public Health
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Purpose of Report

1. To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with an overview of an Outreach & Engagement project, a survey of the boater community and to present the report of the survey findings.

Relevance to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

2. Supports all four themes of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, with relevance to working towards the Tackling Inequalities and Localisation themes.

Background

3. Boaters are a seldom heard community, and it is recognised that nomadic communities will often be living with wider health inequalities than those in the general population. The valuable insights gained from the survey will assist in planning local services and support, to better meet their needs, ensure their voices are heard and help to support reducing health inequalities in this population.

Main Considerations

5. Overall, boaters describe a supportive and resilient community, and enjoy a lifestyle perceived to be low impact and in beautiful surroundings. However, they have clearly identified some challenges including access to clean water, facilities for refuse and sewage disposal together with difficulties in accessing some mainstream health and care services due to not having a permanent address.

Next Steps

6. The report concludes with several recommendations. Work to progress these will be carried out through the Traveller Reference Group.

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