

## **HEALTH WELL BEING AND SOCIAL CARE FORUM - REPORT FOR AREA BOARD**

### **Report of HWBSC Forum activities**

The 14 December virtual meeting of the Health Well Being and Social Care Forum attracted some 19 attendees and, apart from the invaluable sharing of information between Forum members, there were three interesting speakers. The first was from Headway, a local Wiltshire charity helping people with sustained brain injuries. Next, we heard from the Army whose current CO is very keen to engage and collaborate with the local community and is running an outdoor engagement event on 27 July. Finally, we received a presentation from the Living Well Team based at the Avenue Surgery. The real value of these two-hour quarterly meetings lies in the sharing of information across traditional boundaries and the connections made between key individuals with shared interests. A full set of notes is available should Area Board members wish them to be attached. The next Forum meeting is on 8 March.

### **Changes to the function of the Warminster Health Well Being and Social Care Forum (HWBSC Forum)**

Over the last decade, the Warminster area has operated two distinct but related health and well being bodies. The HWBSC Forum membership comprises 40 plus disparate bodies representing professional healthcare staff, charities, condition-specific organisations and some individuals. The Forum meets quarterly and its aim is to share updates and information across organisational boundaries – a survey held last years indicated the immense value gained by members. Traditionally, the Forum holds no funds and is independent of the Council.

The second body is the Health and Well Being Management Group (HWB Management Group) which is smaller body but with some Forum members belonging to both bodies. It meets quarterly, has been ably chaired by Pip Ridout and has been used as an initial filter for spend submissions submitted to the Area Board (though the AB always makes the final decision). The HWB Management Group has a budget and some of this has been used to fund activities like the successful Health and Volunteer Fairs prior to the pandemic.

Following discussion between the two groups, it was agreed that the HWB Management Group would be dissolved as a redundant body with the HWBSC Forum now expected to carry out additional scrutiny on spend proposals. The HWBSC Forum will be an independent body with control of its finances and, as appropriate, will apply to the AB for funding in the same way as other organisations.

It has been agreed that the Chair of the HWBSC Forum (Stephanie Stevens) will submit a written update report to the Area Board.

### **Warminster and District Health Fair 2020**

Following discussions with David Reeves, we have made the difficult decision not to proceed with the postponed Health Fair 2020 planned for 9 April this year. As I write we are still seeing significant numbers of confirmed Covid cases (currently over

100,000 each day) and Covid still has not made a transition from epidemic to endemic. As a consequence, it is possible that subsequent variants may be less responsive to existing vaccines. While it is accepted that we will all have to live with coronavirus (as we have done with influenza), time alone will dictate how the future looks – and ten weeks seems too short to make that judgement.

In addition, the Health Fair is an indoor event where attendees are encouraged to browse and to engage with exhibitors. This sort of close contact carries increased risk to all. While the population is largely vaccinated, it is not clear how long immunity will last and even the vaccinated appear vulnerable to catching Covid. In our view, vulnerable people – who might benefit most - will not want to risk exposure at a potentially crowded indoor event.

Helpfully, the Army is arranging an outdoor Engagement Event on 27 July and has been actively engaging with the HWBSC Forum to encourage exhibitors to sign up. Apart from the outdoor nature of the event, the later date will allow more consideration of how life will look going forward. We have also explored piggy-backing the Spring in the Park event on 1 May but there is insufficient capacity.

Finally, it is possible that – given favourable circumstances – we could hold an indoor Health Fair in, say, September 2022. While the timing would not be optimal – our view is that it is better to do so in the Spring when people are seeking out new things – this is an option that we could explore, if there is sufficient interest.

We realise that there will be a whole spectrum of personal views which may differ from ours. But we feel that, on balance, we do not have to proceed on 9 April and that, to do so, carries risks to both individuals and to the success of the event.

Stephanie Stevens