

Health and Wellbeing Board Chairman's Annual Report 2020/21

Chairman: Cllr. Dr David Jefferys
Vice-Chairman: Cllr. Robert Evans

The Covid -19-SARS 2 global pandemic has placed public health and wellbeing at the very centre of our national focus over the last year. The Bromley HWB was one of the first virtual meetings held by Bromley Council in April 2020 just after the first lockdown began. During the municipal year 2020/21 the Board has held 5 virtual meetings. The virtual format has overall worked well and there has been a much-increased attendance from all Board Members and from other stakeholders. This is excellent given the great pressures on health care partners.

Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWB) were established in 2012 through the Health and Social Care Act Chapter 2 with a defined composition and a range of statutory responsibilities. Boards are required to oversee the development of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), receive, discuss, and publish the reports of the Adult and the Children's Safeguarding Boards and undertake a Pharmaceutical Strategic Needs Assessment (PSNA). The Board also has a statutory duty to overview and sign off on the Better Care Fund and Improved Better Care Fund.

The Bromley HWB undertook all these statutory roles during the municipal year. The Safeguarding reports highlighted important learnings from the effects of the pandemic, and these were discussed in depth. During the year Lynn Selwood resigned as the Independent Chair of the Adult Safeguarding Board. The Board wrote to thank her for her great contributions to the work of the Board and to the residents of Bromley. Teresa Bell has been appointed as the new Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board and we were pleased to welcome her to her first HWB meeting in February. Work recommenced on the PSNA submission which had been paused by the Government because of the first wave of the pandemic. Subsequently the required report has been postponed by the Government because of the impact of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. This important report will be an important topic for the municipal year 21/22.

The Board received in depth reports on the response to the pandemic from health and care partners at every meeting. At the July meeting the HWB asked if it could receive detailed weekly briefings, which were readily provided and subsequently issued to all Councillors. This proved to be most valuable. The Board discussed a range of specific issues related to the pandemic as it evolved. These included the plans and procedures for track and trace in Bromley at the July meeting, the plans for influenza immunisation for last winter, when it was feared that influenza might add significantly to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (in the event this proved to be a very low level flu season). We also provided comments on the Bromley Council Pandemic communication programme. With the impressive roll out of wider testing in the Borough, selected members visited to safely observe the testing sites. The development of the several vaccines during the autumn has been a remarkable scientific achievement. We discussed the potential immunisation rollout in our

December 3rd (2020) meeting and closely followed the very impressive delivery of the vaccine programme across Bromley. We were given weekly updates on the programme and were delighted to see the biweekly comprehensive updates to Councillors which was set up mainly at our suggestion. The cooperation and collaboration by all partners including the third sector and so many volunteers have been very impressive, and the Board has expressed its admiration and gratitude to all involved.

The Board has also considered the wider impact of the pandemic. This will be a very important on-going matter of the highest priority. We have considered mental health resilience, the provisions for managing the long Covid syndrome and the physical and mental long-term sequelae of this virus. The impact on loneliness and social isolation and the impact on both vulnerable adults and children and adolescents were considered in depth. We received a confidential briefing from the BSCP and the Strategic Threats to our younger residents. There was also a detailed update on mental health from Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust.

During the year we agreed to appoint King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust and Bromley Healthcare Partners to become participating (but non-voting) observers of the Board. The pandemic meant that progress on some of the JSNA priority tasks were delayed as staff were engaged on other priority tasks, but we did not lose sight of these since the Priority Area Action Plan issues cover cancer services, dementia, childhood obesity, diabetes, adolescent mental health and falls in the elderly. All these have been impacted either directly or indirectly by the pandemic.

Attention was also given non-Covid matters amongst which the following were considered. These included the adoption of the Bromley Public Health Annual Report for the civic year 19/20; there were regular updates from the Integrated Commissioning Board; the development of the Bromley Health and Wellbeing Centre; Health and Wellbeing issues for armed forces veterans living in Bromley. There was also a presentation from the London Child Obesity Taskforce. This led the Board to establish a new Obesity Task and Finish Group. This recognised that obesity was a major risk factor for both the mortality and morbidity from the Sars-2 Coronavirus and put in place a programme to encourage residents to reduce weight under the slogan "don't wait to lose weight". This was launched in September and a further promotion was made in January / February 2021.

The Chairs of the London HWBs previously met bimonthly to exchange best practice and be briefed on pan London initiatives. These meetings were increased to monthly (and for a period fortnightly meetings) to address issues of the pandemic. The Chairman attended all these meetings on behalf of Bromley.

I would like to highlight the contribution all Members of the Board made during this most challenging year. The Board brings together the key partners in the health sector, social care, the voluntary and third sector along with Healthwatch Bromley and the Independent Chairs of the Children and the Adult Safeguarding Boards. This

model served us very well during the pandemic. The engagement with the third sector and the amazing network of volunteers across Bromley is particularly welcomed and appreciated.

Looking to the future the Board already had a full agenda. The Covid-19 pandemic has emphasised the critical role of public health. It has accentuated several matters of concern already being taken forward, especially dementia care and mental health and mental wellbeing. It has been encouraging to see the increase in walking, physical exercise and cycling during the lock down periods and the support neighbours and local communities have given to the lonely and isolated. We are seeing our parks being appreciated as places to promote wellbeing. There is a renewed attention upon obesity as a major public health imperative. Public Health has become an essential part of our lives and this is likely to remain over this year and into the future. In April 2021 the pandemic is easing but is not over, we face major challenges with the restart of NHS services, the next phase of the Covid-19 immunisation programme and the possibility of vaccine booster doses being required to maintain immunity levels and to combat possible new variants of the virus alongside the enhanced flu immunisation programme for winter 21/22. We can be confident however that the Bromley HWB is well placed to take forward the agenda of further improving health and wellbeing for all who live and work in Bromley.

Councillor David Jefferys
Chairman, Health and Wellbeing Board