

Report of the Director of Public Health

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023: Domestic Abuse

Summary

1. The production of a Director of Public Health Annual Report is a statutory duty set out in the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Every upper tier and unitary local authority Director of Public Health has a statutory duty to produce an independent report in their role as the chief advocate for the health of the local population and the local authority has a duty to publish it. The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care approved the publication of the report at their decision session on 15 November 2023.
2. Directors of Public Health (previously Medical Officers of Health) have been producing annual reports on the state of the health of the population of York for over a century and these can be found in the city archives.
3. For 2023, the report is focused on the important issue of domestic abuse. A copy of the report is attached as an Annex.

Background

4. The World Health Organisation has identified domestic abuse as a major public health issue which has a profound impact on victims, survivors, and wider society. The prevalence of domestic abuse was vividly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic with an increase in the number of cases being reported across the country and here in York.
5. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, for the first time, created a legal definition of domestic abuse and also set out a requirement for the establishment of Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards

(LDAPB). In response to the Act, the Director of Public Health has established a York LDAPB as a multi-agency group to co-ordinate a city-wide approach to tackling domestic abuse. The report covers some of the key areas the Board has been working on together and where people can access help.

Main/Key Issues to be considered

6. The Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023 is structured in such a way that it provides the reader with a national and local context for domestic abuse, including definitions of the types of domestic abuse and the impacts on victims of abuse over the short and longer term. An overview of local commissioned services for domestic abuse is provided together with an explanation of the governance arrangements for work on domestic abuse in York.
7. The report makes four recommendations:
 - a) Develop a new domestic abuse strategy which is evidence based and informed by the work of the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards for York and North Yorkshire.
 - b) Increase awareness of domestic abuse and introduce targeted learning to young people about abusive behaviours.
 - c) As domestic abuse support services are re-commissioned ensure that their work reflects the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and that they are inclusive and accessible to all victims.
 - d) Work to capture the voice of domestic abuse victims and survivors to help inform service provision and local partnership working.
8. The implementation of these recommendations will be overseen by the Safer York Partnership.

York: The Pandemic Years, Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020-2022

9. The 2023 annual report has a section in chapter 8 which summarises the work being undertaken to address the recommendations in the 2020-2022 Director of Public Health Annual Report. These recommendations are listed below:

- a. Public Health must build on the city-wide partnership working relationships developed during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and lead the development of a York strategy for 'Living with Covid' to be adopted by all city partners.
 - b. The Director of Public Health to establish a York Health Protection Committee with responsibility for ensuring that the city has the necessary plans in place to respond to large scale events such as future pandemics, disease outbreaks and the health impacts of adverse weather events, learning from the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. The York Health Protection Committee to present an annual report to the Health and Wellbeing Board on progress together with recommendations for action.
 - c. Children and young people in York, and across the country, have been particularly badly affected by the lockdowns and other restrictions over the past two years. The 2022 School Survey into the Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People in York has identified a number of needs that will have to be addressed if we are to succeed as a city in giving every child and young person the best start in life. The Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Board should use the findings in the 2022 school survey to inform the development of a new children's plan for York that is adopted by all key partners.
 - d. We know that that the COVID-19 pandemic has had wider impacts on the health behaviours of some residents. Alcohol consumption has increased, the numbers of people reaching recommended levels of physical activity have gone down and many people are struggling with their mental health and extra weight gained during lockdowns. It is recommended that the council's Public Health team continue to lead an evidence-based approach to tackling these issues across the city working with individuals, families, communities, and our partners in focusing our collective efforts on those who need the help most.
10. A brief summary on progress made over the last year against each of these objectives is included in the report and I encourage Board members to read this section of the 2023 annual report for further information.

11. Given the city is still experiencing some of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the Board may wish to commission the Director of Public Health to produce further more detailed reports on progress against any of these recommendations.

Options

12. There are no options to consider. The production of an independent Director of Public Health Annual Report is a statutory requirement.

Strategic/Operational Plans

13. The report is linked to the York Community Safety Strategy 2023-2026 which has identified domestic abuse as one of its priorities. There is a general link across to the York Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032 and the City of York Council Plan 2023-2027 because of the health inequalities impacts experienced by victims of domestic abuse and the need to tackle these as part of the new Domestic Abuse Strategy and implementation plan currently in development.

Implications

14. There are no specialist implications in this report.

Risk Management

15. There are no risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

16. The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to:
 - i. Receive the report.
 - ii. Agree to support the recommendations.
 - iii. Note the progress being made on the recommendations of the 2020-2022 Director of Public Health Annual Report.

Reason: It is a statutory requirement for the Director of Public Health to produce an annual report and the Health and Wellbeing Board need to be aware of the recommendations within it.

Contact Details

Author:

Sharon Stoltz
Director of Public Health
Sharon.stoltz@york.gov.uk

Chief Officer responsible for the report:

Sharon Stoltz
Director of Public Health
Sharon.stoltz@york.gov.uk

Report ✓ **Date** 14 November 2023
Approved

Wards Affected: All

Annexes:

Annex A – Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023