
Health and Wellbeing Board

16 July 2025

Report of the Director of Public Health

**Telling the story of Women's Health in York – a Health Needs
Assessment****Summary**

1. This report presents the Women's Health Needs Assessment 2025, which is a picture of York's strategic needs around women's health and equality, shaped around six key areas which lay out systemic barriers, promote gender equity and improve well-being for women in the city.
2. As part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process which the Board oversees, the Public Health team lead a number of topic-specific needs assessments each year.

Background

3. While women generally live longer than men, they often spend more years in poor health. Their health is disproportionately affected by factors such as financial hardship and caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, many healthcare systems and pharmaceutical treatments have historically been developed without fully accounting for women's specific needs.
4. This Health Needs Assessment (HNA) pays particular attention to women from groups known to experience poorer outcomes or additional barriers to care, such as those affected by deprivation, minority ethnic status, or complex social needs.
5. This HNA complements the Women's Health Strategy for England 2022-2032, building a clearer, York-specific picture to support local decision-making around commissioning and service design.
6. In 2024, Healthwatch York invited women to share their health experiences to improve future services. Their report – Women's

Health: Stories of Women's Experiences in York and North Yorkshire – will be presented to the board alongside this item, and covers a wide range of topics which overlap with this report, while also highlighting the need for a more prominent focus on women's health within healthcare services.

Main/Key Issues to be Considered

7. The aim of a Health Needs Assessment is to identify unmet health and care needs within a given population—in this case, women—and recommend the changes necessary to address them. It is a systematic, data-driven approach used to:
 - Describe population health issues
 - Identify health inequalities and gaps in service access
 - Set priorities for effective resource use.
8. The purpose of this Health Needs Assessment (HNA) is to build system-wide awareness of unmet health needs among women in York, with a particular focus on those experiencing social marginalisation. Our aim is to embed learning from this process into the working practices of our own commissioned services and influence wider commissioning and service design across the local health and care system.
9. The UK Supreme Court recently ruled that the legal definition of "woman" under the Equality Act 2010 is based on biological sex assigned at birth. This document uses the statutory definition, in part because much health-related data aligns with that approach. However, a trans and non-binary data and insights group has been convened and, along with partners such as Healthwatch feeding in the views and experiences of residents, will publish further data in the future of the health needs of other gender identities as part of the JSNA process.

Consultation and Analysis

10. Given the breadth of the topic, the HNA focused on areas where the Council and its partners can directly influence change—through commissioning, funding decisions, and collaborative action. Our aim was to use data, lived experience, and service feedback to highlight key issues and inequalities affecting women in York.

11. Over 20 interviews were held with key stakeholders – both in person and virtual. From this several topic areas were highlighted as areas of concern for women in York.
12. These topics became the focus of the HNA, and data was collected where possible to explore the issues and set out what the evidence says.
13. Writing this HNA was not without its challenges, in particularly the lack of readily available data, and as such the document should be viewed as a starting point, not a final answer. The process of gathering information from a range of sources to build a clearer picture naturally involves challenges and limitations and the work presented is exploratory. The lack of easy access to high-quality, comprehensive data is a key reason why the assessment was necessary in the first place, and one of the key findings of the work is the need to ensure all health data is disaggregated where possible, as releasing data solely on ‘persons’ can limit efforts to tackle gender-based health inequality. This work reflects an ongoing effort to understand and address the needs of women in York.

Strategic/Operational Plans

14. The Council Plan: One city of all 2023-2027 has aspiration for York to be a Health generating City for both adults and children and reduce Health inequalities which can only be achieved if the issues specific to the health of women are addressed.

Implications

- **Financial:** There are no known financial implications of this report
- **Human Resources (HR):** There are no known HR implications of this report
- **Equalities:** Every human being has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. We have a legal obligation to develop and implement legislation and policies that guarantee universal access to quality health services and to address the root causes of health inequalities, including poverty, stigma and discrimination. The right to health is indivisible from other human rights - including the rights to education, participation, food, housing, work and information.

This HNA and follow on work will help the council to ensure equity of access to services for women.

- **Legal:** There are no known legal implications
- **Crime and Disorder:** There are no known crime and disorder implications
- **Information Technology (IT):** There are no known IT implications
- **Property:** There are no known property implications
- **Other:** There are no other known implications.

Risk Management

15. The purpose of this Health Needs Assessment (HNA) is to build system-wide awareness of unmet health needs among women in York, with a particular focus on those experiencing social marginalisation. Our aim is to embed learning from this process into the working practices of our own commissioned services and influence wider commissioning and service design across the local health and care system.
16. Despite the data challenges, we can confidently conclude that there is an unmet need for more detailed, gender-specific data collection to better address the health and care issues that affect women in York.
17. We intend to monitor for evidence of impact following publication and encourage all system partners to reflect on how they can respond to the findings, as to do nothing or maintain the “status quo” will result in the continuation of poor outcomes for women in York.

Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked:

- Note and discuss the report
- Consider the challenges system partners face to address poor health outcomes for women in the city, using the six key priorities outlined in the report as its focus.

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Report
Approved

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Date 7/7/25

Chief Officer's name
Title

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Wards Affected:

All

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Annexes

Annex A - Women's Health in York: A Health Needs Assessment June 2025.