

COUNCIL: 26 JANUARY 2023

TACKLING POVERTY, EQUALITY & PUBLIC HEALTH STATEMENT

PUBLIC HEALTH & EQUALITY

HIV Test Messaging Success

Fast Track Cardiff & Vale's Texting 4 Testing Programme has continued to deliver success with 4 Cardiff GP clusters participating in a new wave of testing awareness. Texting 4 Testing is a simple intervention to increase access to HIV testing, improve understanding and decrease stigma about HIV. The programme consists of supporting GPs to send brief HIV testing messages and a link to order a test by text message to all adult patients they have contact numbers for. The patients have the choice to act or not but can find out more about HIV testing and get a free test posted to them to use in the privacy of their own home by following the link: www.shwales.online

The four GP clusters taking part in the Autumn push were North, South-West, East and West with a total of over 70,000 text messages sent. This resulted in 2,311 patients clicking on the HIV test ordering link (figures accurate as of 6 December 2022). A further 32,000 texts messages are in the process of being sent out and it is fantastic that this prevention work is making such progress.

This year's Wales HIV Testing Week, which took place in November 2022, was a great success. The aim of the week is to break down the stigma that prevents people from testing, show how easy it is to get tested and link people to the national free postal testing portal. It is really pleasing to report that the number of people visiting the Sexual Health Wales website to order a test kit tripled during the campaign this year when compared with 2021. As a Council, we have fully supported the campaign with promotion on 23 of the StreetHub units across the city centre. Officers have also been collaborating with Fast Track colleagues in the development of a "HIV 101" booklet, which includes key messages about HIV, including prevention and how to access testing. Copies are still available of the informational leaflet that was in all Community Hubs during testing week. If anyone requires more information regarding this, they can contact the Health and Wellbeing Engagement Manager, Rob Sadler, by emailing: robert.sadler2@cardiff.gov.uk

Covid-19 and Flu Vaccinations

Across Wales and the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (UHB) area, more people have been going into hospital as a result of flu, Covid-19 and its variants and other respiratory viral illnesses. In terms of Covid-19, there was a significant increase in infections over Christmas, including an increase in care home and hospital clusters pre-Christmas; however, the current trend is still unclear. Currently, care home clusters are broadly stable and both hospital clusters and hospital admissions have declined after Christmas.

In terms of flu, cases rose rapidly across Wales before Christmas and while there has been an apparent decline in early January, this should be interpreted with caution given the holiday period. Infection rates passed the 'medium intensity' threshold, which was higher than rates seen in the last three seasons.

A number of actions are being undertaken by Cardiff & Vale UHB, working with partners such as the Council, to address low flu vaccine uptake. These include further communications such as promoting information on GP practice websites about 'how to get a flu vaccine' and the provision of 'Flu Newsletters' for GP practices that include updates and useful resources for publication on social media and websites. The Primary Care Team is also engaging with GP practices to offer support, particularly around uptake by 2-3 year olds and at-risk groups. A letter about flu vaccinations has been sent to all parents of 2-3 year olds and the Mass Vaccination Centres (MVCs) have held mop-up sessions in the last two months for school-aged children. Community Pharmacy Wales has sent a survey to care home and domiciliary care providers to see where uptake is low and they are also planning mop-up flu sessions for nursing/care home staff and domiciliary care staff.

With these seasonal illnesses circulating, one of the most effective ways for those who have gone back to work or school after Christmas to protect themselves and their loved ones, colleagues and communities from serious illness is by getting their Covid-19 and flu vaccinations. Those eligible for their Covid-19 booster are now able to walk into one of Cardiff & Vale UHB's MVCs and receive their vaccination until 31 March 2023.

Anyone who is eligible for the flu vaccine is able to access their vaccination at GP surgeries, community pharmacies or can also walk into one of Cardiff & Vale UHB's MVCs for vaccination from 23 January to 31 March 2023 as part of a mop-up exercise. Co-administration of both Covid-19 and flu vaccinations are possible through the UHB's MVCs.

Sustainable Food Challenge

Cardiff Council in partnership with Monmouthshire County Council are managing a £2.1m Sustainable Food Challenge on behalf of Cardiff Capital Region. The food challenge aims to identify and support innovative projects that can harness the potential of land, technology, and people to increase the sustainable production and supply of locally grown food in the region. Following the submission of 26 bids, three projects have been selected to progress to feasibility stage. There are two projects growing salad and vegetables in controlled indoor environments testing two different growing technologies, and one food redistribution project that will turn surplus food into meals or storable products at scale. Approved feasibility projects will commence this month for completion by June 2023. They will then be evaluated and those showing most promise will receive larger sums of money to implement a pilot project. Given the level of interest in the Challenge, we are also planning to instigate a second round of funding later in the year.

TACKLING POVERTY & SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Tribute to Dan Wilson

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Dan Wilson, one of the longest serving Youth Workers in Cardiff with a career spanning over two decades, who we sadly lost over the Christmas period. Dan was a dedicated professional who touched the careers and lives of so many young people, and Youth Workers in Cardiff. He was committed to the rights and entitlements of young people and advocated on their behalf at every opportunity. He worked in a number of communities throughout Cardiff, where his thoughtful and reflective work touched the lives of so many young people and their families. Many will remember him for his work at Grassroots in the city centre where he worked tirelessly to support young people, many of whom were struggling with day-to-day life.

Youth Excellence Awards 2022

I am delighted to announce that the Cardiff Youth Service collected two awards at the Welsh Government's annual Youth Excellence Awards last month.

Sarah McCreadie from the Council's Digital Team won the 'Digital Innovation' award category for the innovative Cardiff Youth Service 'Discord' platform for young people that was launched last year. The online service offers a safe space for young people to meet with others, access youth work support and engage in youth work activities. Activities have taken place online and offline, including one-to-one support, wellbeing sessions, watch parties, gaming sessions, bowling and a residential to London to visit Microsoft.

Stuart Parkinson also won the 'Equality and Diversity in a Youth Work Setting' award category for his work with the Cardiff Deaf Cool Youth Club. Stuart has been a youth worker for over 20 years and is the lead youth worker based at Deaf Hub Wales, which has been the 'safe space' for deaf people in Cardiff and the surrounding area for over four decades. Stuart has ensured that the ethos of Cardiff Deaf Cool Youth Club is to ensure accessibility for all and, in particular, those who may have experience of isolation, marginalisation, exploitation or discrimination or those just taking the time to find their deaf identity. Stuart assists in the emotional and psychological development of deaf young people by providing them with opportunities to meet strong deaf role models and to enjoy experiences that improve the quality of their lives.

A film, 'The Obstacle', which was created by members of the Cardiff Deaf Cool Youth Club, was also launched at Chapter Arts Centre last month. The film aims to raise awareness of deaf culture and how communication can be improved. Over 70 people attended the launch event, including the young people who took part in the creation of the film, their families, the Council's Director of Education and the new Chair of the Welsh Government's Youth Work Implementation Board. The film 'The Obstacle' can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/7h2jj_HA6UQ. A video of the showcase event can also be found at: <https://youtu.be/Y6wMCWabXGA>.

Youth Provision at Gabalfa Community Centre

Cardiff Youth Service has successfully reintroduced a full-time community youth centre offer at Gabalfa Community Centre in the Llandaff North ward in response to increasing demand for support for young people post-Covid. Community consultation involving young people, the police and the third sector group, Ministry of Life, led to a very successful summer pop-up and residential camp; and now a new youth provision in the heart of the community. The centre operates Monday and Wednesday evenings and, once all staff have been appointed, a third night and monthly weekend activities will be added. In partnership with over twenty members of the Youth Action Group, specific targeted work will also be introduced to help to continue to reduce and eradicate anti-social behaviour and criminal exploitation in the community. Since trial youth centre sessions commenced in September 2022, an average of 40 young people have engaged and are benefiting from the support and opportunities on offer.

Welsh Language Youth Provision

In response to recommendations made by Estyn last year, a new Youth Action Group has been formed to develop an effective Welsh/bilingual youth work offer for young people in Cardiff. Estyn stated that: *“There are good examples of individuals using the Welsh language with young people as part of the youth work offer. However, the local authority does not make effective use of Welsh-speaking staff to enrich and widen the youth service offer. Overall, there is an insufficient proactive offer for young people to engage with the Welsh language and open access youth work through the medium of Welsh is not integrated well within mainstream provision”*. The Youth Service, Welsh medium schools, the Urdd and Menter Caerdydd have come together to lead a partnership to develop and deliver activities in the city. A new Youth Forum will support the work, pending completion of an open consultation exercise to gain information and understanding of young people’s needs within a Welsh/bilingual context. An implementation plan will be available by the end of the spring term 2023.

Advice Services

The Advice Line continue to feel the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis with over 40% of the queries during December relating to financial support for cost of living. Calls increased towards the end of the December with the delivery of the Cost-of-Living support letter. Despite this the answer rate remains high at 94%. The letter, which included information about the help available to those who are struggling with the cost of living, was delivered to all households in Cardiff. This created an increase in demand, with the Advice Line receiving over 250 calls in one day and most of the enquiries were regarding benefit entitlement checks. The team continues to promote the support available to those with priority debt by engaging with internal and external organisations, including Meals on Wheels, Children’s Services and Council Tax, and Citizens Advice, Housing Associations and NHS Teams.

The Money Advice Team has also seen a 265% increase in face-to-face appointments compared to the same period last year. The team is working in collaboration with Citizens Advice, the Welfare Liaison Team and Food and Fuel Champions to be able to meet this demand.

I would urge members to reassure their constituents that if they are struggling with the cost of living, there is help available and to please direct them to our Advice Teams by calling the Advice Line on (029) 2087 1071 or by calling into their nearest Hub.

Fuel Vouchers

Since October 2022, 869 fuel vouchers have been issued by Action in Caerau and Ely (ACE). The Council allocated £50,000 to ACE as part of the Cost-of-Living Discretionary Funding. Demand for fuel vouchers spiked in December when 402 vouchers were issued. It is expected that the demand for support will remain at the same rate for the final quarter of 2022/23, meaning the original funding allocation will shortly be used in its entirety. Work is underway to create opportunities to further increase resources to provide this vital support, including officers working with local businesses to attract additional funding as a continuing legacy of the Together for Cardiff scheme.

Winter Fuel Payments

The advice and benefits team continue to provide winter fuel payments for those who require assistance with their energy fuel payments. To date, the team has received 37,346 applications and made 29,512 payments, which totals in excess of £5.9m. The team is able to make the payments on the same day and, where possible, within hours, ensuring that people are supported as quickly as possible. The team is continuing to work hard and currently has 140 applications waiting to be reviewed.

Into Work Advice Service – Cost of Living Events

Last month, the Into Work Advice Service held a “Winter event” at Eastmoors Community Education Centre in response to the cost-of-living crisis. Over 20 families from the Splott, Tremorfa, Adamsdown and Roath (STAR) cluster area attended the event. Looking to support those in financial hardship, the Into Work Advice Service and Youth Service provided a variety of support and advice at the event, including money advice, food and fuel poverty advice and employment & training support. Other support available was provided by a wide range of partners including Octopus Energy, the Welfare Liaison Team, Careers Wales, Cardiff & Vale College, Welsh Water, Adult Learning and Working Wales. The Into Work Advice Service raffled a free tablet to anyone that signed up for further support to promote their campaign to end digital illiteracy. Both partners and members of the public were very happy with the venue and the warm hospitality that they received, which included fresh homemade soup, pizza and Foodbank bags for those more vulnerable individuals.

Into Work Advice Service – Support for Over 50’s

Last month, the Into Work Advice Service worked in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to support over 50’s jobseekers with building their skills, creating CVs, applying for suitable vacancies, and attending interviews. Ten individuals completed a pre-employability course delivered by Adult Learning, including a Level 2 customer service qualification. I am pleased to say that three jobseekers were able to secure employment following the course, with a further five individuals receiving mentoring support from the Into Work Advice Service.

As part of the packaged support, employers were invited to interview participants who completed the pre-employment project. The team has plans to roll-out the “employable me” course across all three DWP job centre sites in the city. This will ensure that jobseekers aged over 50 are able to receive tailored support in overcoming employment barriers and entering meaningful, sustainable employment.

Councillors Julie Sangani & Peter Bradbury
Cabinet Members for Tackling Poverty, Equality & Public Health (Job Share)
20 January 2023