

Councillor Jim Beall, Chair of the HWB
Neil Schneider, Chief Executive
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council,
Municipal Buildings,
Church Road,
Stockton-on-Tees,
TS18 1LD

17th March 2016

Dear Jim and Neil,

Health and Wellbeing Peer Challenge 26th – 28th January 2016

On behalf of the peer team, I would like to thank you for the courtesy and support we received during the recent Health and Wellbeing Peer Challenge.

The Health and Wellbeing Peer Challenge is part of the Local Government Association's (LGA) Health and Wellbeing System Improvement Programme. It is based on the principles of sector led improvement that:

- Councils are responsible for their own performance and improvement and for leading the delivery of improved outcomes for local people in their area
- Councils are primarily accountable to local communities (not government or the inspectorates) and stronger accountability through increased transparency helps local people drive further improvement
- Councils have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole (evidenced by sharing best practice, offering member and officer peers, etc.)

Challenge from one's peers is a proven tool for sector led improvement. Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council were:

- Philip Simpkins, Chief Executive, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr. Adam Ogilvie, Leeds City Council
- Frances Cuning, Director of Public Health, North Lincolnshire Council
- Joe Gannon, LGA Associate
- Dr Fu-Meng Khaw, Director, Public Health England East Midlands
- Satvinder Rana, Programme Manager, LGA

Scope and focus of the peer challenge

The purpose of the health and wellbeing peer challenge is to support councils in implementing their statutory responsibilities in health, by way of a systematic challenge through sector peers in order to improve local practice. It also supports health and wellbeing boards to become more confident in their system wide strategic leadership role; to have the capability to deliver transformational change; to develop effective strategies to drive the successful commissioning and provision of services; and to create improvements in the health and wellbeing of the local community.

Our framework for the challenge was five headline questions:

1. To what extent is the purpose and role of the health and wellbeing board (HWB) established?
2. How strong is work with key partners to develop system leadership?
3. To what extent is the HWB ensuring the delivery of the health and wellbeing strategy?
4. To what extent is there a clear approach to engagement and communication?
5. To what extent is the HWB enabling closer integration and the change to a cohesive and effective health system?

Within these five headline questions, we have tried to specifically address the key areas you asked us to focus on i.e. where you are in your journey, how well the council is interacting with key partners and how well partners are interacting with each other, and how well health and wellbeing priorities are embedded into the council's services.

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement focused. The peers used their experience and knowledge to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and observed, and the material they read.

This letter provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation delivered by the team at the end of their on-site visit. In presenting this feedback, the peer challenge team acted as fellow local government and health officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. We hope this will help provide recognition of the progress Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council and its Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) have made whilst stimulating debate and thinking about future challenges.

1. Headline Messages

1.1 Elected members, staff and partners gave a consistent story about the health and wellbeing system in Stockton. There was a shared view of the broad ambitions for the place and what needed to change within and across the system to deliver your ambitions. This was positive and provides a very good basis from which to develop your improvement plan.

- 1.2 We found there to be good partnership working in Stockton. You have the right organisations and the right calibre of people on your HWB. The people we spoke to demonstrated ambition, commitment and passion to improving the health and wellbeing of the local population. There is clear commitment to working in partnership and fully utilising the capacity and assets that exist in Stockton. We heard about the good work that is going on at operational levels within and across organisations and were told about initiatives such as 'Warm Homes', 'Healthy Hearts' and the work being done through the sports team with people with learning difficulties.
- 1.3 There was evidence that the health and wellbeing agenda is being taken seriously and that it is a priority across the health and wellbeing system in Stockton. We also heard a common and strong desire from everyone we met to improve and strengthen the system for Stockton. To do this it is recommended the HWB becomes braver and step up to its role as the system leader that drives forward some of the big issues around demand management, service improvements, transformation, integration and the work around prevention and early intervention.
- 1.4 We believe you have the ambition and the capacity to take on this strategic and system-wide leadership role. You now need to harness this energy and be confident in delivering a sustainable health and care system that is fit for purpose and forward looking with the health and wellbeing of your citizens at its core. Our view is that if you can create the time and space to do some creative thinking and have some of the difficult discussions around money and service reconfigurations in a safe environment then you can reap the rewards.
- 1.5 We were told that one of your biggest challenges in Stockton is health inequalities where the life expectancy gap for men is 17.3 years and for women 11.4 years. Addressing this is a huge challenge and your health and wellbeing system needs to be geared up to making real progress in narrowing the gap. This will invariably mean putting a greater focus on wellbeing by jointly tackling some of the wider determinants of health in a strategic and co-ordinated way. In view of Stockton's growth and regeneration agenda and the impact this can have on the health and wellbeing of the local population, we think this is an opportune time to get the HWB more aligned to the social, regeneration and growth agenda.
- 1.6 You have a number of the key components of a successful HWB in Stockton. For example, you have a strong legacy of partnership working to deliver tangible results, and there is a whole system wide desire to develop the purpose and role of the HWB to provide real leadership within your health and wellbeing system. We would therefore urge you to capitalise on these and refocus your efforts to enable you to move forward at pace.

2. To what extent is the purpose and role of the health and wellbeing board (HWB) established?

- 2.1. There are strong partnerships in Stockton and the HWB has the right partners around the table with a good spread of representation. Relationships among partners are good and trust and collaboration is high. There has been continuity of membership so far and regular attendance at Board meetings from partner organisations at sufficient seniority. People who attend and present at HWB meetings find the discussion invigorating.
- 2.2. People spoke positively about the HWB and about each other across the partnership. You have strong, committed and visible leaders within your system. People spoke highly of the Chair of the HWB, the Director of Adults and Health (formerly Director of Public Health), and the leadership within the CCG; all of whom are very well respected. Their expertise, commitment and passion to the health and wellbeing agenda is noted by partners and external organisations.
- 2.3. However, we think the HWB could be much more effective in its system leadership role. It needs to be driving delivery and focusing on outcomes; and it needs to be able to 'tell the story'. There is a strong commitment to improve and a will to make the HWB more responsive to some of the big issues and challenges. This is because there is widespread ownership of what you are aspiring to in Stockton and what you are delivering.
- 2.4. What came across strongly from everyone we talked to is that there is a real desire for the HWB to be more strategic and innovative in how it conducts its business. It needs to identify and drive the big ticket items around demand management, integration and service transformation. It also needs to operate as a partnership of equals that discusses the big health and social care issues facing Stockton. People wanted more clarity about what the HWB is about, what it is trying to achieve, and how it is doing. They would like to see it more tightly wired into the rest of the council and the wider external partnership arrangements.
- 2.5. When we looked at what was being delivered on the ground we came across good examples of work being done by partner organisations, but this was being done in silos and was not being joined up at the strategic level to enable you to drive the health and wellbeing agenda across Stockton and assess what difference you are making. The HWB is not sufficiently sighted on the wellbeing work being carried out in service departments of the council, and therefore is not able to evaluate how the wider determinants of health are being addressed.
- 2.6. The HWB is supported by a number of sub groups, commissioning groups, and partnerships focusing on adults and children. However, membership of these sub-groups is resource-intensive and appear confusing with a lot of duplication and unclear lines of accountabilities to the HWB. We were also told about the council's broader partnership

structure, but what was not clear was the HWB's position within it. Nor was it clear how the HWB related to the adults and children's safeguarding boards and the community safety partnership in a formal way.

2.7. We think the time is right for you to refresh, refocus and re-energise the HWB. Our recommendation is that you look at the following areas to make changes:

- a) The purpose of the HWB needs to be clearly understood and its position as the system leader established. There should be clarity about the roles and responsibilities of Board members to the Board so that they are coming together to drive service improvements and help deliver the JHWS in partnership. This will involve a culture shift in the way the HWB operates and our recommendation is that you use future development sessions of the HWB to work through how the Board acts and works as a team.
- b) Develop a shared narrative for health and wellbeing in Stockton and an effective delivery and accountability structure so key stakeholders have a better understanding of the Board's responsibilities and authority. This would include strengthening the performance management structure underpinning the delivery of the JHWS so that there is clarity and an understanding of who is the single person responsible for providing leadership on a particular action. Your implementation / delivery plan should identify lead officers and Board sponsors for each of the priorities as well as outcome based performance measures against specific actions and projects, which are then monitored on a regular basis.
- c) Clarify protocol arrangements with key partnerships such as the Safeguarding Children Board, the Safeguarding Adults Board, the Safer Stockton Partnership, and the Local Strategic Partnership to ensure communications and align strategic priorities. We recommend that you look at the linkages between all these strategic partnership boards in order to establish where roles and responsibilities lay and how each can support the work of the others so that duplication is minimised. This has potential to create capacity in the long run and lead to better outcomes for people whose lives you are trying to improve.
- d) Make the HWB meetings feel less council dominated by alternating meetings between council and partner environments, and by structuring agendas less like a council committee meeting agenda and more like a discursive and decision making forum with a greater focus on reports that call for strategic debate, initiate action and drive decisions.
- e) Develop a dashboard and a stronger implementation/delivery plan to help the HWB manage performance against the JHWS. This dashboard should also be used by scrutiny and similar functions in other partner organisations to scrutinise and manage performance. Consider how to ensure that the performance framework behind the

JHWS is clearly understood by all stakeholders within the system, and its links with the council's overview and scrutiny function and equivalent accountability structures in partner organisations established. We would recommend that you keep your performance management arrangements simple.

- f) Agree a communications and engagement plan that feeds into all partner organisational strategies to enable the HWB to communicate key messages to the community, staff, providers and partners. The communication and engagement plan will also help you to handle sensitive matters around service reconfigurations and system redesign that are around the corner; as well as demonstrating accountability back into the corporate governance arrangements within partner organisations and the council, particularly cabinet.
- g) Ensure the HWB maintains a balance around providing leadership across the system; championing health improvement and wellbeing; and pushing for better services. All three elements are important to improving and protecting the health and wellbeing of the local population.

2.8 We believe that the above changes will help you to provide more focus, collective drive, effective communication and pace to turn your ambitions into real measurable impact on the ground. Because of the commitment and strength of relationships in Stockton, getting your HWB working as effectively as it can right now is key to addressing the wider determinants of health in a significant and sustainable way. There is a real urgency around doing all that now because you have all the right ingredients in place to be successful.

3. How strong is work with key partners to develop system leadership?

3.1 There is strong day to day joint working across the system in Stockton. For example, we heard about initiatives such as 'Warm Homes, Healthy People Programme', 'A Fairer Start', 'Breast Feeding Welcome', the 'Health Initiatives Programme', the 'Better Health Awards' and examples of joint commissioning; which all demonstrate people joining up to deliver services on the ground. You have good relationships among partners at the operational and strategic levels and these provide a good platform for strong system leadership. You experienced this through the Better Care Fund (BCF) process, which was smoothly signed off. Everyone we met was focused on improving health and wellbeing outcomes for local people.

3.2 Your key service providers are represented as full members of the HWB, which provides opportunities for them to be involved in the strategic discussions about the health and social care system in Stockton. You have separated the commissioning of services to 'Commissioning Partnerships', thereby ensuring that provider involvement in discussions at the HWB does not compromise commissioning decisions.

- 3.3 To strengthen your partnership working further we suggest that you put in place arrangements to enable organisations not on the HWB to be able to engage with and contribute to the work of the HWB, e.g. Fire and Rescue Service. Similarly, the council's wider functions and service departments also need to be engaged with the HWB in a systematic way to meet key objectives of the JHWS and the priorities of the HWB. This is not to say they should all be members of the HWB, but there needs to be a mechanism through which these organisations can engage with the Board and help to deliver its broad objectives as detailed in the JHWS.
- 3.4 We also recommend that you find ways to ensure 'equal partnership' among members of the HWB in membership, agenda setting, forward planning and agreement of the big ticket items. This should be more than inviting items on the agenda before meetings to actively involving them in determining the big issues of debate for the HWB. All partners should be able to propose items that are in line with the JHWS and contribute to the Forward Plan. This can be addressed through a review of processes, and forward planning. We think if you had a robust implementation and forward plan for the delivery of the JHWS then this will help you to engage with partners in a more co-ordinated way and have more meaningful discussions at the HWB. In addition, you should review the representation of the council on the HWB and give consideration to rotating the position of vice/co-chair of the HWB to ensure that the Board is not seen as too council dominated.
- 3.5 We were told that you have not yet had discussions about integration and service transformations. All of the key agencies in the system are facing very significant financial problems and you will not be able to fulfil your ambitions unless resources are moved (utilising the BCF) to where they need to be and services are transformed. Creating the space (probably through closed door sessions) to have difficult but open and honest discussions about the money, service integration and transformation is therefore critical.
- 3.6 To do this we recommend you have less frequent formal meetings of the HWB (currently meets monthly) and use some of the time together as development sessions for the HWB. These sessions should provide an opportunity outside of the formal Board meetings for members to talk freely and discuss how improvements can be made to enable partners to work together. It will also provide an opportunity for Board members to reflect on the priorities, discuss strategies and approaches to dealing with the challenges, and consider the extent to which the Board is driving the achievement of outcomes.
- 3.7 In view of the changes recently made to the senior staffing structures of the council, the greater geographical footprint the CCG will operate across, and the impending movement of some key personnel from the HWB; we were left wondering if your senior leadership capacity will be robust enough to support delivery across the breadth of the health and wellbeing agenda. You have strong system leaders and it is clear that they are

driving much of the work around health and wellbeing, so it is important to put in place effective succession planning arrangements by investing in future leaders to make sure that there is resilience across the system.

4. To what extent is the HWB ensuring the delivery of the health and wellbeing strategy?

- 4.1 Your JHWS maintains an oversight of the six Marmot Principles and focuses on the shared priorities of 'Giving every child the best start in life', 'Addressing ill health prevention' and 'Getting the infrastructure right'. The JHWS is backed up by a comprehensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which is accessible and easy to read. This provides a good picture of Stockton and the health and wellbeing needs of the local population.
- 4.2 You also have other strong strategic plans in place that clearly articulate your aspirations, for example the council plan for 2015-2018 identifies health and wellbeing as one of its nine priorities. We were told that this plan acts as the key strategic driver for service plans across the council and health and wellbeing objectives are built into service plans. However, we could not find the link in how the delivery of the health and wellbeing objectives of the council plan and service plans find their way to the HWB. We therefore recommend that you now begin work to align these and the JHWS so that there is connectivity between them on paper and implementation on the ground. In addition, the HWB should also seek alignment of partner organisations' plans to the JHWS so that there is a system-wide approach to delivering the agreed strategy.
- 4.3 Although the wider determinants of health are well understood by all the partners and there is appreciation that addressing these are critical to the prevention of ill health, we think you can do more in this area. By closely aligning the priorities of the JHWS to service plans of council departments and partner organisations, and then inviting updates and performance information on what is being achieved you will be bringing together whole system involvement, passion and commitment. Furthermore, you could also scale up your Public health team's work with service departments to help embed the principals of the JHWS across the council.
- 4.4 Your JHWS generally lacks an effective delivery and accountability structure. You have a HWB action plan in place, but there is no JHWS implementation/delivery plan in place that identifies lead officers and/or Board champions against each objective. Nor does it have any performance data or updates on progress around projects to enable the HWB to determine progress being made in delivering its key objectives and priorities. So actually monitoring the difference the JHWS is making is not happening at the moment. We would therefore urge you to develop an implementation/delivery plan into an aligned and robust mechanism by which you can deliver your objectives and manage performance.

4.5 We were pleased to note that you have carried out independent evaluations of some of your health and wellbeing programmes, particularly the evaluation of the 'Health Initiatives Programme'. We think this is good practice and you should carry out more of these external evaluations for your significant programmes, where resources allow.

5. To what extent is there a clear approach to engagement and communication?

5.1 You have a committed Healthwatch with links to patients and service users and an active voluntary, community & social enterprise sector (VCSE) in Stockton, both of whom are standing members of the HWB. We heard and read about the various activities they are engaged in and the work they are doing to bring the patient/service user and community perspectives to the HWB. For example, the 'Annual Conversation' and the 'Youth Parliament' demonstrate the way these partners help to engage and communicate with service users.

5.2 In addition, the seminars using ward-based data on health and wellbeing provided to elected members of the council were positively received and the allocation of £5,000 ward budgets to address local health and wellbeing issues at the neighbourhood level are to be applauded. Similar update sessions have been held with GPs and the lead GP for the HWB undertakes regular development sessions with general practices. Through these initiatives you have been able to demonstrate how health and wellbeing issues can be tackled at the neighbourhood level with elected members acting as community champions in their wards.

5.3 From this we sensed that there are a lot of good things happening in Stockton, but they are not always joined up and presented in a clear and consistent message to communicate your health and wellbeing priorities and achievements. We therefore recommend that you develop clear messages about what you are doing around your priorities of smoking, alcohol, obesity, domestic violence, and breast-feeding and communicate this widely and collectively through the partner organisations so that the public becomes more aware of what services and support is available to them.

5.4 Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees, Catalyst Stockton-on-Tees and the broad network of committed VCSE organisations can all be supported to reach out into the community and help deliver your messages. You can do this by finding creative ways to involve them not just in the debate and discussions around how you collectively work to improve the health and wellbeing of your local communities, but also in evaluating impacts and building resilience within your communities.

5.5 The role of your health scrutiny function can be developed so that it can both engage with the public and demonstrate accountability back to the public. Clearly, as in many local authority areas, there is work to be done on thinking this through. We therefore recommend that support be

provided to overview and scrutiny to consider the benefits of aligning and coordinating its work plan with the HWB themes. This will enable it to scrutinise the delivery and impacts of the priorities of the HWB. It can do this by scrutinising work through commissions and deep-dives around key work programme areas, the JHWS and identified health and wellbeing issues in Stockton. In doing this you will need to ensure that the scrutiny committee is supported with the necessary data and performance information for it to scrutinise effectively.

6. To what extent is the HWB enabling closer integration and the change to a cohesive and effective health system?

6.1 There is a clear willingness and commitment to provide seamless health and care services for the citizens of Stockton. Your front line staff told us about some good examples of integrated working at the operational level. People are getting on and finding creative and more innovative ways of working and making the Stockton £ stretch further. At the strategic level people spoke positively about the BCF planning process and some of your new integration initiatives are showing early promise, for example, Multiple Disciplinary Services and the Dementia Hub.

6.2 However, we were told that you have not yet had the difficult discussions about money. You will know that in the near future there is likely to be a budget gap across the health economy. As the leaders of the system you need to start thinking about what you will do when you have to make severe reductions in your budget. We recommend that, as part of your HWB development programme, you discuss that and together develop your options to deal with it. Some of the options you might consider could include closer integration of services; smarter partnership working; an absolute focus on demand management, prevention and early intervention; and dealing with the wider determinants of health in a much more systematic, co-ordinated and planned way.

6.3 To do this well, you should quickly develop a shared vision on what the local health and wellbeing landscape will look like and how health and social care will be delivered across Stockton in the future. This can then feed into your Sustainable Transformation Plans for 2017. Your service users and citizens must be central to your plans for future integration and service transformations to ensure that services are planned around the service user and not around organisational structures. This will mean maximising independence and quality of life, helping people to stay healthy and well for longer, and providing clearer and simpler pathways to services.

6.4 Whilst integration of your services should have regard to austerity issues they should not be finance driven; but if delivered correctly they will provide financial benefits to all key partners. Service improvements and improving the health and wellbeing of the local population should be the main driver.

6.5 We were told about the council's ambitious organisational transformation plans and we spoke to some members of the 'Transformation Team'. You have a dedicated team of senior professionals in this team and we suggest you should think about how you can use this resource and capacity to assist you with some of your service integration ambitions across the health and wellbeing system, particularly around workforce planning and maximising physical assets. In addition, you should also identify what resources and expertise might be available from partners to deliver the integration agenda. This will ensure that you are approaching service integration in a systematic and co-ordinated manner to enable a positive outcome that benefits the council, partners, providers and most importantly the public.

6.6 When we spoke to some of your service providers they spoke enthusiastically about the programmes they were delivering, but said commissioning and procurement arrangements operated in silos. To drive out efficiencies and develop collaborative organisational cultures we would encourage you to be bold and push forward your plans for joint and integrated commissioning across health and social care. In doing this we recommend you develop your model of joint commissioning by looking at what other places are doing and learning from them.

7. Moving forward

In moving forward our key recommendations are:

1. *Collectively clarify the purpose, role, remit and scope of the HWB and ensure everyone understands it.* Partners in the system should meet together and think through what you want the Board to be; what functions it should carry out; where the lines of accountability lay; and how the Board can best be organised to deliver those requirements. They should also be clear about the roles and responsibilities of Board members to the Board and how different stakeholders can engage with the Board and promote its ambitions.
2. *Position the HWB as the system leader and progress health and social care integration at pace.* You should do this by refreshing your JHWS and developing a strong narrative about the future shape and operation of the health and wellbeing system in Stockton. The HWB should then be supported to take the lead in addressing the big ticket items. This narrative and the HWB's ambitions for Stockton should be backed up with a clear delivery plan and communicated widely.
3. *Put in place a robust implementation/delivery plan and a performance management framework with clear accountabilities.* Your implementation/delivery plans should have clear targets, actions and responsibilities to sit underneath your JHWS. Make sure there is clear strategic alignment between the JHWS and your service plans, strategies and corporate delivery arrangements. Support the delivery of these priorities with an integrated and robust performance management framework that is aligned with corporate performance management frameworks of all partner organisations; and ensure performance

information is available to the HWB, scrutiny and other partners in order to measure impact and ensure accountability to the public.

4. *Review capacity, membership and support architecture around the HWB.* This should be done with the aim to clarify accountabilities, improve effectiveness, achieve balance in membership, and avoid duplication to boost capacity. Membership of the HWB should also be mindful of the potential churn in the system and have succession planning in place.
5. *Clarify relationships with statutory boards, council committees and the wider partnership structures.* The communication and reporting lines to and from the HWB to other partnership boards and the corporate governance of the council and partner organisations should be mapped out clearly so that it can discharge its statutory responsibilities.
6. *Develop a communications and engagement plan.* This should assist the implementation of the JHWS and the design of your future health and wellbeing system. It should also help to clarify what messages you are all taking into your organisations and what messages you are sending out to the public.

Next steps

The Council's political leadership, senior management and members of the HWB will undoubtedly wish to reflect on these findings and suggestions before determining how the Council wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of continued activity to support this. Mark Edgell, Principal Adviser for North East, Yorkshire and the Humber & East Midlands, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association and he can provide access to our resources and any further support. Mark can be contacted at mark.edgell@local.gov.uk (or tel. 07747 636 910).

In the meantime, all of us connected with the peer challenge would like to wish the Council every success going forward. Once again, many thanks for inviting the peer challenge and to everyone involved for their participation.

Yours sincerely,

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On behalf of the peer challenge team