

From: Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
Dr Anjan Ghosh, Director of Public Health

To: Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee – 12 July 2022

Subject: **Public Health Communications and Campaigns Update**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This paper reports on the campaigns and communications delivered through the KCC public health team in 2021/22 and outlines plans for the remainder of the financial year. Plans for 2022/23 are currently being drawn up.

The report notes the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic communications response and other Public Health priorities. A community engagement programme is planned for 2022/2023 to listen and understand the health and wellbeing needs of Kent residents. This will include the impact of the pandemic, alongside other societal pressures and economic conditions. The feedback from this engagement programme will inform the public health priorities and the new strategy due to be published in 2023.

Recommendation: The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to:

COMMENT on and **ENDORSE** the progress and impact of Public Health communications and campaigns in 2021/22 and the need to continue to deliver throughout 2022/23.

1. Introduction

1.1 Marketing and Communications activity has played a critical role in supporting our residents during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our statutory warn-and-inform responsibilities, as lead for the Kent Resilience Forum Outbreak Control Management Plan, has seen Kent County Council's (KCC) Director of Public Health and the KCC communications team at the forefront of media and PR, social media and marketing, stakeholder and partnership engagement. The profile of Public Health in the public consciousness has risen significantly as a result of such an unprecedented two years. There is a renewed sense of

personal and community responsibility and much more interest in public health issues from the media, across social media and directly from residents.

- 1.2 There are clear links between some health lifestyle issues and more severe symptoms of the virus, including smoking, obesity and mental health and wellbeing.
- 1.3 Marketing and Communication activity has continued to focus on three main drivers:
 - Promoting healthier behaviours and self help
 - Giving information and advice
 - Promoting local services where available and also highlighting online and digital support.
- 1.4 This paper covers communications activity for 21/22, along with key activities and plans for this financial year.

2. Covid-19 Communications

- 2.1 The media spotlight on Kent and KCC's Director of Public Health has been considerable since March 2020.
- 2.2 Numerous media briefings and interview opportunities over the past year were carried out, alongside reactive media statements, proactive media releases and considerable social media content and communications activity with partners and stakeholders as part of our role on the Kent Resilience Forum.
- 2.3 KCC took a leading role in the communications throughout the pandemic, representing KCC at – but also leading on behalf of the system at the Covid Tactical Command Group and Strategic Command Group, the Health and Social Care cell, Testing cell, Enforcement cell Health Protection Board, and the symptom-free testing cell.
- 2.4 Communications were carefully co-ordinated with partners from Medway Council, Public Health England (now UKSHA), the NHS, district and borough councils, and central Government including the Department of Health and Social Care.
- 2.5 The launch of symptom-free test sites in December followed by further sites being rolled out across the county, and then the introduction of the Kent Local Tracing Partnership received local, regional and national attention.
- 2.6 Surge testing in the ME15 area received a national media focus and we worked with colleagues from Maidstone Borough Council, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Service among others to respond to and manage the intense media interest while communicating with residents and other local stakeholders.
- 2.7 The 'Don't Be The Reason' campaign was launched to encourage public adherence to the rules following the end of the first lockdown, and the lead up

to Christmas where case numbers were increasing – before the variant was discovered. An online survey was introduced on Kent.gov.uk and collated public opinion around the rules of lockdown and how people felt they were able/not able to comply with them. The second iteration of the survey also explored public feedback about the symptom-free testing that had been launched. Over 12,000 people filled in the survey over a period of 6 weeks and the invaluable insight into people’s opinions and behaviours was used to adapt campaigns activity further. 4 surveys were carried out online throughout the pandemic, and it was clear that our residents were keen to give feedback and engage with us which was very encouraging.

- 2.8 Creative assets have been designed, developed and shared with partners across Kent for use across social media and digital channels. They focussed on different rules and different audiences and themes such as Christmas, young people and university students. Alongside traditional organic marketing channels, a campaign advert was played across digital and local radio channels over a period of 6 weeks to encourage uptake of testing, and reinforce the importance of social distancing, good hygiene and wearing face coverings.
- 2.9 Relationships with supermarkets were established and Morrisons supermarket offered (for free) the inclusion of leaflets in every home delivery from throughout the winter of 2021. The subject of the leaflet was symptom-free testing and Kent Together, following Government advice for more people than ever to shield.
- 2.10 Advertising screens at Bluewater and Ashford shopping outlets were secured for free, as part of the retail’s commitment to helping protect shoppers.
- 2.11 Targeted paid for social media advertising was carried out for each district to invite people to come forward for symptom-free testing.
- 2.12 Digi-vans were hired in four districts to promote symptom free testing in local areas. These digital adverts were very successful and recognition rates across those attending symptom free tests in some areas was as high as 5% (usually it is around 1%).
- 2.13 KCC published daily case numbers, with a district breakdown for over 2 years. www.kent.gov.uk/covidcases gave a more accurate understanding of case numbers, positivity rates, take up of local testing sites and more recently vaccinations. This page became pivotal in the public understanding of the picture across Kent.
- 2.14 Health inequalities were a priority for, and local Covid Champions were the connection to specific communities via outreach engagement activity. We supplied Protect Kent materials on Kent.gov.uk in multiple languages, and easy read formats, and we translated national material from central government websites to ensure our diverse Kent communities stayed informed.

- 2.15 Health inequality research will form the basis of the next step inclusive campaign and communications engagement, finding new innovative ways to reach people who are most at risk of serious illness.

3. Public Health Campaigns and Communications 2021/22

- 3.1 While the pandemic was the focus for public health activity, we also continued to create and deliver marketing campaigns for our key public health priorities. Overview of activity:

- Mental health and wellbeing – promotion of Every Mind Matters online tool and Live Well Kent Services.
- Suicide prevention - ongoing targeted promotion of Release the Pressure helpline and text service.
- Children mental health wellbeing - support and sharing of Headstart Kent, Kooth and partners' campaigns and promotions.
- Adult obesity - One You Kent and 'Better Health' healthy weight campaign.
- Alcohol awareness campaign – promoting the 'Know Your Score' online tool and local support services.
- Smoking cessation campaign – signposting to 'One You Kent' local support services.
- Child obesity - Change4Life Facebook 10 Minute Shake Up and Food Scanner App promotions.
- Sexual Health – young people awareness raising campaign
- Severe weather communications – heatwave alerts during the summer and focus on cold weather public health communications (also includes the flu immunisation campaign).
- Pregnancy and breastfeeding - Support 'Get Ready for Pregnancy' campaign and signposting to Beside You.

3.2 Mental Health and Wellbeing – Release the Pressure, Live Well Kent & Every Mind Matters

- 3.2.1 Campaigns for Mental Health Awareness Week in May and World Mental Health Day in October signposted to local support services including Live Well Kent, One You Kent and Every Mind Matters at www.kent.gov.uk/everymindmatters
- 3.2.2 Themes have included exploring nature, tackling loneliness, and finding tools and local support to empower people to find help with anxiety, stress, low mood and sleep issues; specifically identifying new mental health and wellbeing concerns which may have risen during and following the impact of Covid-19 and lockdowns/restrictions on people's lives.
- 3.2.3 Creative assets have been developed for different campaigns and themes and channels used which included Kent Online, Heart FM, Community Ad magazine, Spotify, social media platforms.

- 3.2.4 There is an 'always-on' organic promotion of the NHS 'Every Mind Matters' online tool at www.kent.gov.uk/everymindmatters
- 3.2.5 We also share promotion of Headstart Kent and Kooth mental wellbeing campaigns for children and young people including for Children's Mental Health Week in February.
- 3.2.6 KCC Public Health has ongoing promotion of the suicide prevention 'Release the Pressure' campaign through Google Adwords and paid-for promotion accompanied media and PR work for World Suicide Prevention Day in September. Channels included Kent Online, Heart FM, Community Ad magazine, Spotify and social media.
- 3.2.7 A further targeted promotion through mobile phone adverts was held in May 2022 for specific age and geographical audiences identified by the KCC Suicide Prevention lead.
- 3.2.8 Paid-for promotions have always resulted in an increase to the numbers of people visiting www.releasethepressure.uk for information on the text service and helpline.

3.3 Adult Obesity - One You Kent/Better Health (healthy weight services)

- 3.3.1 With the support of partners, new creative assets were developed including videos from support services around the county and these formed the basis of a campaign aimed at raising awareness of adult obesity and healthy weight lifestyles.
- 3.3.2 A countywide campaign was launched in January with a second burst in March; further target audiences identified as men between 45 and 64 years and women between 55 and 74 years. Deciles 1 and 2, areas of deprivation.
- 3.3.3 Paid-for promotion included a range of media, digital and social media channels: Kent Online; Heart FM radio adverts; Facebook; online sites for Kent Football league clubs and Kent Cricket Club; Spotify and geo targeted mobile ads. This has been complimented with adverts in print and online publications including Thanet Times and Community Ad magazine.
- 3.3.4 Partners were also encouraged to share the campaign through their own channels to increase reach and engagement.
- 3.3.5 We have also supported campaigns by partners, sharing social media posts for KCHFT led outreach activity for NHS Health Checks.

3.4 Alcohol Reduction – 'Know Your Score' online tool promotion app

- 3.4.1 The 'Know Your Score' Audit C online tool at www.kent.gov.uk/knowyourscore has been refreshed and new creative assets have been developed to support

awareness raising campaigns for Alcohol Awareness Week in November and this was repeated in Dry January. A further campaign burst is due to run in July, signposting to support services through commissioned providers CGL, Forward Trust and One You Kent.

- 3.4.2 Key messages continue to raise awareness among all drinkers about long term health messages including stroke and impacts on mental health, work and relationships. As with previous campaigns, content is targeted at key behaviours rather than specific age ranges. Channels for promotion included Kent Online, Heart and Smooth FM, Community Ad magazine, Facebook and Spotify adverts, geo-targeted mobile adverts and MTW Hospital magazine, along with media and PR opportunities plus encouraged sharing by partners across Kent.

3.5 Child Obesity - Change 4 Life/Better Health Families

- 3.5.1 The national 'Change4Life' campaign has been renamed 'Better Health Families' and www.kent.gov.uk/betterhealthfamilies has been amended accordingly. We continue to support national campaigns locally – raising awareness of childhood obesity by focusing on primary school aged children. This includes local promotion of the '10 Minute Shake-up' summer promotion and the 'Food Scanner app' in the winter.
- 3.5.2 Locally we continue to promote key messages around healthy eating, reducing sugar, being more active and awareness of dental/oral health care through the @BetterHealthFamiliesKent Facebook page.
- 3.5.3 We encourage KCC's Children's Centres, the Kelsi school bulletin and partners to share content through their own channels.

3.6 Smoking Cessation – One You Kent services promotion

- 3.6.1 New creative assets were developed for two bursts of campaign activity, timed to support the national Stoptober promotion and No Smoking Day in March, signposting to One you Kent commissioned support services. Where paid-for channels allowed, audiences were further targeted in key geographical areas of Kent as identified by the Public Health Specialist where smoking rates are high and above average.
- 3.6.2 Channels used included Facebook advertising, Spotify, Kent Online sponsored advertorial content, Spotify, Smooth and Heart FM adverts, Ladbible, and geo-targeted mobile adverts plus A0 posters across East Kent hospitals. 'What the Bump?' smoking campaign materials were used through the Mumsnet platform.
- 3.6.3 Key messages focused on the physical and mental health harms of smoking plus the financial impact and the quitting benefits to these. The call to action signposted people to www.kent.gov.uk/smokefree where there is information of One You Kent support services plus self-help tools including the NHS Quit Plan app.

3.6.6 The KCC PH Campaigns team also designed leaflets for Live Well Kent service users re smoking cessation support services.

3.6.7 There is an always-on organic sharing of social media posts and we support national campaigns including local NHS assets from the Lung Cancer Alliance. We will be working with health partners to develop future multi-agency campaigns aimed at women who smoke during pregnancy.

3.7 Sexual Health – Young People ‘Your Sexual Health Matters’ campaign

3.7.1 The ‘Your Sexual Health Matters’ campaign in August 2021 focussed on 16 to 24-year-olds with the objectives of raising awareness of healthy relationships, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy, alcohol, signposting to local support services at www.kent.gov.uk/sexualhealth

3.7.2 Creative designs were developed with input from commissioned partners and targeted advertising channels included Spotify, Facebook, Acast radio and LadBible.

3.7.3 This led to an increase in visitors to www.kent.gov.uk/sexualhealth compared to previous years (except 2020 where Covid affected services so online support increased); an uptake in registrations to the Get It condom programme and orders for online STI test kits.

3.7.4 We aim to engage further with commissioned providers including KCHFT and the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust for further campaign opportunities.

3.8 Winter Campaign

3.8.1 KCC has a “warn and inform” responsibility during cold weather alerts and leads on the communications for public health messaging. We also support national government and NHS campaigns, providing partners with appropriate social media, marketing and digital assets for level two and three alerts in Kent during the winter cold weather periods, offering advice and signposting support to enable residents to manage their health during extreme weather conditions.

3.8.2 Messaging this year also incorporated reminders of Covid messaging. We also continue to support the NHS ‘Stay Well This Winter’ and national NHS flu campaign.

3.9 Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

3.9.1 The ‘Get Ready for Pregnancy’ campaign materials from KCHFT and Beside You website social media assets continue to be shared through KCC

platforms. We also share national 'Start4Life' campaign assets organically through KCC social media channels.

4. Financial update

- 4.1 £368,000 was spent on campaign and marketing activity in 2021, £130k from the revenue budget allocation, with the rest funded from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund.

5. Conclusion and Next Steps

- 5.1 It is anticipated that campaigns and communications will continue to focus on the Covid response as well as the new and emerging responsibilities for the KCC Public Health Director and team.

- 5.2 We will be developing key Public Health campaigns based on priorities identified by the Director of Public Health. These include:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing – adults and children
- Obesity – adult and children
- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Health Checks and high blood pressure
- Sexual Health
- Breastfeeding and infant feeding
- Seasonal health – heatwave and winter

- 5.3 Data, insight and localised information will be used to shape these campaigns.

- 5.4 Previous successes and learning will be integrated in future campaigns, focussing on the most effective communications methods and channels to target key groups and issue areas, and on the benefits of developing and utilising social media and digital platforms.

- 5.5 It has long been recognised that long-term change requires long term, consistent messaging, and it is important to continue working with local partners and nationally with UK Health Security Health Agency (UKHSA) to create and deliver consistent Public Health campaigns and marketing activity.

6. Recommendation

Recommendation: The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to:

COMMENT on and **ENDORSE** the progress and impact of Public Health communications and campaigns in 2021/2022 and the need to continue to deliver throughout 2022/23.

7. Contact details

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