

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 – 11 July 2023

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 activity which supports the delivery of public health priorities in 2023/2024

The report notes the summer preparedness communications response and other public health priorities. The paper also notes the continued partnership working with the health and care system to engage residents on the interim integrated care strategy.

Recommendation: The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the progress and impact of public health communications and campaigns in 2023 and the need to continue to deliver throughout 2023/2024.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Marketing and communications activity continues to play a critical role in supporting our residents and providing trusted and timely information about public health priorities throughout the year. Proactive communications have so far managed the impact of severe weather, infectious outbreaks, the resurgence of Avian flu and reminders of immunisations programmes, among many others.
- 1.2 As part of the council's statutory warn and inform responsibilities, the Public Health and Marketing and Resident Experience Teams ensure continued awareness of threats to health as they arise, particularly Strep A and measles over the last six months. The subject of public health continues to dominate the news agenda, and cabinet members and senior officers are often called upon to talk about, and provide statements to highlight, key messages which encourage healthier behaviours and help residents stay safe and well.

- 1.3 Marketing and communication campaign 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 highlighting online and digital support.
- 1.4 This paper covers communications activity for 2023, along with key activities and plans for this financial year.

2. 'Warn and Inform' Health Communications (including severe weather, infectious diseases and immunisations)

- 2.1 Winter pressures across Kent meant continued proactive and reactive communications as the trusted source of public health information and advice for residents, along with supporting our NHS colleagues with specific vaccinations and healthcare focus areas including Covid-19, flu and Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) immunisations.
- 2.2 'Summer Preparedness' communications activity includes support and sharing of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) national campaign and Met Office 'Weather Ready' materials. We will also lead on 'warn and inform' messages in the event of a yellow, amber or red heat health alert – sharing media and social media content through partners across the county. Kent County Council (KCC) also takes the lead in media interviews, with cabinet members and the Director of Public Health offering strong, visible public leadership to Kent residents.
- 2.3 Communications for any outbreaks are carefully co-ordinated with partners from Medway Council, UKHSA, the NHS, district and borough councils and central government departments. Considerable communications activity continues with partners and stakeholders as part of our role on the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF).
- 2.4 Health inequality research will form the basis of the next step for 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 2023/2024

- 3.1 Overview of activity from January 2023:
- 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's mental health and wellbeing - support and sharing of Headstart Kent, Kooth and partners' campaigns and promotions.
 - Alcohol awareness summer campaign – promoting the 'Know Your Score' online tool and local support services.

- Smoking cessation campaign – signposting to ‘One You Kent’ local support services for Stoptober.
- Vaping and young people campaign – working with Trading Standards and key partners in education and youth hubs
- Severe weather communications – heatwave alerts during the summer.

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

3.2.1 Mental Health Awareness Week in May 2023 was supported with a multi-agency media release and organic social media, signposting to local support services including Live Well Kent, One You Kent and Every Mind Matters at www.kent.gov.uk/everymindmatters The main theme included tackling anxiety and finding tools and local support to empower people to find help.

3.2.2 We also share promotion of partners’ campaigns such as Kooth mental wellbeing for children and young people including organic promotion through social media at the start of exam season in May.

3.2.3 KCC Public Health has ongoing promotion of the suicide prevention ‘Release the Pressure’ campaign through Google Adwords. Targeted mobile adverts have also been used in areas of concern identified by the Suicide Prevention leads. The paid-for promotion in December 2022 saw an increase in calls to the Mental Health Matters helpline.

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

3.3.1 Further creative assets including videos are being developed with partners around the county and these are used as part of an always-on organic promotion aimed at raising awareness of adult obesity and healthy weight lifestyles.

3.3.2 A countywide campaign in January focused on physical activity and healthy eating including meals on a budget with adverts targeted to key areas identified by Public Health leads. Reach exceeded 1million and over 800,000 impressions were served with 30,000 engagements. There were 6.2k page views of www.kent.gov.uk/healthyweight during January 2023 – this is nearly half of all page views since April 2022. Public Health Commissioners report an increase in weight referrals during the campaign period – up 35% compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 21% compared to the previous year.

3.3.3 Partners are encouraged to share the campaign through their own channels to increase reach and engagement. KCC’s Marketing and Resident Experience (MRX) Team continue to join the multi-agency communications group set up as subgroup workstream for the Whole Systems Obesity Approach.

3.4 Alcohol Reduction – ‘Know Your Score’ online tool promotion app

3.4.1 We will be supporting Alcohol Awareness Week in July 2023 with a campaign promotion of the ‘Know Your Score’ Audit C online tool at www.kent.gov.uk/knowyourscore.

3.4.2 Drugs and alcohol services provide invaluable support to people in Kent. In order to improve residents’ awareness of the services available in their area, KCC is bringing together commissioners, providers and local voluntary sector partners to develop an online hub for information and support, including vital referral pathways.

3.5 Child Obesity - Change 4 Life/Better Health Families

3.5.1 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 new ‘Healthy Steps’ email programme.

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 (plus Vaping and Young People)

3.6.1 We promoted One You Kent commissioned support services for No Smoking Day in March. Channels used included Facebook advertising, Spotify and Google AdWords.

3.6.2 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.

3.6.3 A public awareness campaign is planned for autumn 2023 targeting children of all ages. KCC’s Public Health, Trading Standards and MRX Teams are currently working with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), NHS and other partners to gather insight and understand more fully people’s attitudes towards vaping across the county. More information on this campaign will be reported in the autumn cabinet committee paper.

4. Summer Preparedness Campaign and Heat Health Alerts

4.1 KCC has a “warn and inform” responsibility during heat health 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 during a yellow, amber or red heat health

alert, offering advice and signposting support to enable residents to manage their health during extreme weather conditions.

- 4.2 Messaging this year incorporate the new alerting system and supports the UKHSA 'Beat the Heat' and Met office 'Weather Ready' campaigns.
- 4.3 Draft media release and social media content including video clips are ready for sharing in the event of a heat health alert, through KCC communications platforms, internally to directorates such as social care and education plus key partners and stakeholders.

5. Integrated Care System

- 5.1 KCC is one of the system leaders for communicating with residents about the development of Kent's health and care system. The interim Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy has been published and a series of engagement events are taking place to understand initial high-level feedback on the key principles in the strategy.
- 5.3 All four Health and Care Partnerships (HCP) are operational, developing plans specific to each of the geographically split areas. Communication is an integral part of each HCP and KCC will jointly lead the activity to promote the integrated health and care services for residents. More information on how the emerging health and care landscape is communicated to residents will be available in future reports.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The allocated funding for campaign and marketing activity in 2023/2024 is £110,000.

7. Conclusion and Next Steps

- 7.1 We continue to develop key public health communications activity based on priorities identified by the Director of Public Health. These include:
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing – adults and children
 - Obesity – adult and children
 - Smoking and vaping
 - Alcohol
 - Health Checks and high blood pressure
 - Immunisations and infectious disease outbreaks
 - Sexual Health
 - Breastfeeding and infant feeding
 - Seasonal health – heatwave and winter
- 7.2 Previous successes and learning will be integrated into future campaigns, focusing on the most effective communication methods and channels to target key groups and issue areas, as well as on the benefits of developing and utilising both social media and digital platforms.

- 7.3 It has long been recognised that for long-term change requires long-term, consistent messaging, and it is important to continue working with local partners and nationally with the UKHSA to create and deliver consistent public health campaigns and marketing activity.

8. Recommendation

8.1 Recommendation: The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the progress and impact of public health communications and campaigns in 2023 and the need to continue to deliver throughout 2023/2024.

9. Background Documents

None

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