

READING HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Date of Meeting	18 March 2026
Title	Health and Wellbeing Board Priorities 2026-2028
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report author	Dr Matt Pearce
Job title	Director of Public Health
Organisation	Reading Borough Council
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree that the priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board for the medium term should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Start in Life • All age Mental Health • Healthy Neighbourhoods 2. That the proposed governance model be implemented through existing partnership arrangements with subgroups tasked with developing delivery plans and outcomes frameworks. 3. Appointment of board sponsors for each priority area who will have responsibility for overseeing development and delivery of the plans.

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. This report sets out the three priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board, which it is proposed should be the focus for the Health and Wellbeing Board over the next two years in order to deliver meaningful change in population health.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Local Government Association (LGA) was invited to undertake a review of the Health and Wellbeing Board's governance and working practices to evaluate its effectiveness in improving the health and wellbeing of the local population and reducing health inequalities and make recommendations for improvement.
- 2.2. The review recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board should focus on two or three priorities at a time, which were informed by local need and evidence. This would help the Board to focus its collective resources to delivery meaningful change rather than diluting its efforts across a larger number of activities.
- 2.3. This report outlines the work that has been completed following the LGA review and makes recommendations for areas where the Board could focus its attention in the medium term. It also outlines the governance for effective oversight of each priority and identification of board sponsors.

3. Background / Context

- 2.1 Last year, the Local Government Association (LGA) was invited to undertake a review of the Health and Wellbeing Board's governance and working practices. The aim was to evaluate its effectiveness in improving the health and wellbeing of the local population and reducing health inequalities, and to make recommendations for improvement. A key

recommendation arising from the review was for the Board to have a focus on just two or three priorities at a time in order to drive meaningful change.

- 2.2 There was widespread agreement amongst partners that the Board should be driven by data, with activity informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), intelligence from Healthwatch and patient groups.
- 2.3 A high level 'state of the borough' JSNA was presented to Board Members and other stakeholders at a workshop on 7 October 2025. This was used to generate a long list of potential priorities, which included:
- Healthy neighbourhoods
 - Best start in life
 - Adult mental health
 - People with long term conditions
 - CYP mental health
 - Social isolation and loneliness
 - Smoking
 - Cancer
 - Sexual health
- 2.4 Through a prioritisation process, the following areas were collectively identified as important by health and wellbeing board members:
- Healthy neighbourhoods
 - Best start in life
 - Children and young people and adult mental health
- 2.5 These priorities were identified as there is both national momentum and/or a local requirement to accelerate these areas of work as evidence suggested improvements were needed in health outcomes across these priorities
- 2.6 A second workshop was held on 4 December 2025 to review current activity, possible future options and next steps for the development of delivery plans associated with each of the priorities. Key outcomes are summarised below.
- 2.7 **Healthy Neighbourhoods**
- 2.8 The NHS 10-Year Plan outlines its ambition to establish neighbourhood health services that provide co-ordinated community-based care, focusing on prevention and support for long term conditions. It is anticipated that Health and Wellbeing Boards will have overall oversight of Neighbourhood Health plans and therefore this presents an opportunity for the Board to focus on this area and mobilise their collective efforts.
- 2.9 Neighbourhood health was about more than just health services and it was important to look wider than the NHS services and for communities to be active partners in the design and delivery of neighbourhood services and integrated working
- 2.10 **Best Start in Life**
- 2.11 The 'State of the Borough Report' identified several health outcomes that needed attention across the borough including; maternal obesity, infant mortality, child development, tooth decay, childhood obesity, immunisations, teenage pregnancy and child poverty
- 2.12 The Government had published a [Giving every child the best start in life](#) strategy which required all local authorities to develop and publish best start plans by the end of March 26. This included raising the proportion of 5-year-olds achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) to 75.9%; by 2028 and disadvantaged children benefitting *at least equally* from this improvement. It also required strengthening support for families from pregnancy to age 5, focusing on early intervention.

- 2.13 Good progress has already been made across a number of areas, and it was recognised that there would be opportunities around co-location of services in future.
- 2.14 **Mental Health**
- 2.15 The 'State of the Borough Report' identified a number of outcomes that the Board wished to improve including, child mental health, self-harm, suicide, rates of depression and severe mental illness
- 2.16 It was suggested that there was a need to free up resources from high demand, complex cases and crisis treatment in order to focus on primary prevention. There was also a recognition that more work was needed around suicide prevention and that refreshed action plan was needed.
- 2.17 **Governance**
- 2.18 In order to effective oversight of the three priorities, three partnership groups have been identified to oversee each priority:
- Best Start in Life - One Reading Partnership
 - Children and Adult - All age Mental Wellbeing Board
 - Healthy Neighbourhoods - Reading Integration Board (RIB)
- 2.19 There was widespread support at the workshop for each priority to be allocated a Health and Wellbeing Board Member as a sponsor. They will have responsibility for overseeing development and delivery of the plans and will be accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Health and Wellbeing Board Sponsors will be:
- Best Start in Life – Director of Children Services (RBC)
 - Neighbourhood Health – Associate Director of Place (ICB)
 - Mental Health – Director of Strategic Planning (BHFT)
- 2.20 **Delivery and Resources**
- 2.21 Although Delivery Plans will be developed for all three priorities, development of the Local Neighbourhood Health Plan and Best Start in Life Delivery Plan will be prioritised to meet timescales specified by central government.
- 2.22 Each delivery plan will be fully costed and resources allocated to deliver them. Actions will be focused on local needs, informed by data, and will reflect available funding, aligning budgets wherever possible.
- 2.23 The plans will have SMART measures to clearly indicate where actions and associated targets have been achieved. To support each delivery plan, outcomes frameworks will be developed that include intermediary input and output metrics that will look to shift outcomes. Also, dashboards will be developed to facilitate tracking and reporting of progress.

4. Contribution to Reading's Health and Wellbeing Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Health and Wellbeing Board has responsibility for delivery of the objectives set-out in the [Berkshire West Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021-30](#). The three priorities will not supersede the priorities outlined within the health and wellbeing strategy, but will complement and support delivery of existing priorities.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. There are no general implications for the environment arising from this report; however the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy will have shared and mutual benefits given the cross-cutting ambitions to reduce levels of obesity, eat more healthily and increase levels of physical activity through active travel.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Several officers and members have been engaged in the Health and Wellbeing Board as noted in this report. The proposals include greater community engagement and giving a voice to the seldom heard.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Not applicable.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. Not applicable.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Not applicable.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. The proposals in this paper may incur costs as delivery plans are developed across each of the three priorities. Some of the priority will, or have received additional resources through national funding e.g. family first, supervised toothbrushing.
- 10.2. Any funding will be committed in line with existing grant conditions (where applicable) and will be set within the existing financial envelope of the services.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. As detailed in this paper

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. None

Appendices

None