

Adapt Achieve Altogether



Delivering services and supporting
our community during COVID

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Figure 3 - Halton’s life course statistics updated for 2021 included as a pull out section in the back of the report

Acknowledgements

This year's Public Health Annual Report is about recognising all of the things that help to keep us as healthy and well as possible. In thanking people both within the Council and our local community, inevitably, there will be people that are not mentioned but who made an important contribution – to their family, friends, colleagues, patients and people they meet in everyday life. So we would like to start this report with the biggest thank you to the Halton community.

We must also recognise the brilliant staff who work for the Council, our partners and local voluntary organisations. The team of people that help to keep people well and safe is a cast of many and all have made personal sacrifices to keep looking after people during the pandemic.

This report shares some of the stories, learning and challenges that 2021 brought and how services across the borough adapted to keep supporting the people and communities of Halton.



Foreword

Dr Ifeoma Onyia, Director of Public Health



One of the most widely recognised definitions of public health was created by Sir Donald Acheson in 1988. He was the Chief Medical Officer for England from 1983 until 1990. He said “Public Health is the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society.”

Each year, the Director of Public Health is asked to write a report outlining the work of the year, and make recommendations for the coming year. For this public health annual report, my first as Director of Public Health in Halton Borough Council, I want to focus in on how the organised efforts of the council, its partners and the community helped to combat the spread of COVID-19 and support the most vulnerable in our community. Public health is not just what one team can do, but what we all do on a daily basis to keep ourselves and others healthy and protected from harm.

2021, like the year before, was dominated by COVID-19 and the need to evolve, much like the virus, in our response. In the report I highlight the work done by different teams who often worked behind the scenes, like many unsung heroes of the pandemic just doing their job to ensure the right services were delivered. Public health has hopefully changed from being seen as a single team and should be seen as a way of working across traditional boundaries. The report picks up on the importance of communication, regular information, making connections with people and partnership working.

This report is intended to thank each and every person who supported our community in Halton. There are stories that we won't see here. I am sure we all know about neighbours who reached out with offers of help and support and they are public health heroes too. The report has been written at a time of great optimism where it looks likely that we can live with COVID-19 but we should not lose sight of the things that got us to this point, and that there are opportunities to build on and strengthen these ways of working in order to deliver even more health benefits to the people of Halton.

Dr Ifeoma Onyia
Director of Public Health and Health Protection

Welcome to the Public Health Annual Report for 2021

Cllr Marie Wright, Portfolio for Health



Welcome to the Public Health Annual report for 2022 and welcome also to Dr Ifeoma Onyia, our new Director of Public Health. We were very pleased to be able to promote Ifeoma from within our excellent public health team here at Halton Borough Council. Trained as a GP and a Fellow of the Faculty of Public Health, Ifeoma has a wealth of public health and medical experience as well as extensive local knowledge which will enable her to be a valuable guide in all of our work to promote and protect good health for all in Halton.

As this year's report is focusing on all those things that contribute to wellbeing and opportunities to be healthy, I would like to recognise all of the residents, colleagues across the Council and partner organisations such as the NHS, Police, Fire and our brilliant voluntary organisations. Away from the critical frontline work to protect people from COVID, there has been an army of people who have stepped up during the last year to keep people housed, fed, looked after, safe from harm and to keep normal everyday activities such as going to school, work and leisure possible during a global pandemic. I would particularly like to recognise our local teachers and school staff who not only managed to keep teaching our children throughout the pandemic but also supported many families who were struggling due to COVID illness and isolation, giving people valuable information, connecting families to other services and handing out COVID tests. Thank you.

I am truly grateful that since writing in last year's report when we had only just been given the green light to come out of another lockdown, this year we are confidently moving forward and away from the extreme restrictions that COVID imposed on us all. The majority of Halton residents have now had at least one COVID vaccination and people continue to come forward for 2nd, 3rd, 4th and booster jabs. This has significantly contributed to people being able to look forward to holidays at home and abroad for well-earned rests and to see friends and family that have been sorely missed over the past two years. (Please see our COVID support information including travel info here www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/health/livingwithcovid).

We know there are still many challenges for the Council and our community. People are still grieving, coming to terms with changes in health, work and socially and most of us are trying to get back to a new normal after such a turbulent time. We continue to support people across the Borough who need our help and we'll be connecting with residents and partners in meetings, events and our public health bus will be regularly visiting local shopping centres and communities throughout the summer.

I look forward to this next year and working with colleagues to recover our services, activities and opportunities for everyone to enjoy good health.

Cllr Marie Wright
Portfolio Holder for Health



The 'Social Determinants' of Health

We all now understand the devastating impact a widespread, severe infectious disease can have on ourselves, our families and our communities. We also saw with COVID-19 how people's different circumstances, such as their job or where they live, affected their chances of catching or being harmed by it. As we move away from this global pandemic, we need to remind ourselves that health, for a whole community or population, is influenced by much more than just the presence of viruses or bacteria.

In England, as well as elsewhere, many of the other health challenges people face, like heart disease, mental ill-health, obesity and diabetes, affect some people in our community more than others, just as we saw with COVID-19. It is generally agreed that these differences are influenced by the social, economic and environmental conditions that people experience every day, (referred to as 'the wider determinants of health' Fig.1). These are defined by the World Health Organization as "the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age". Fig 1 (below) shows the main groups of those conditions which affect health in a simple diagram.

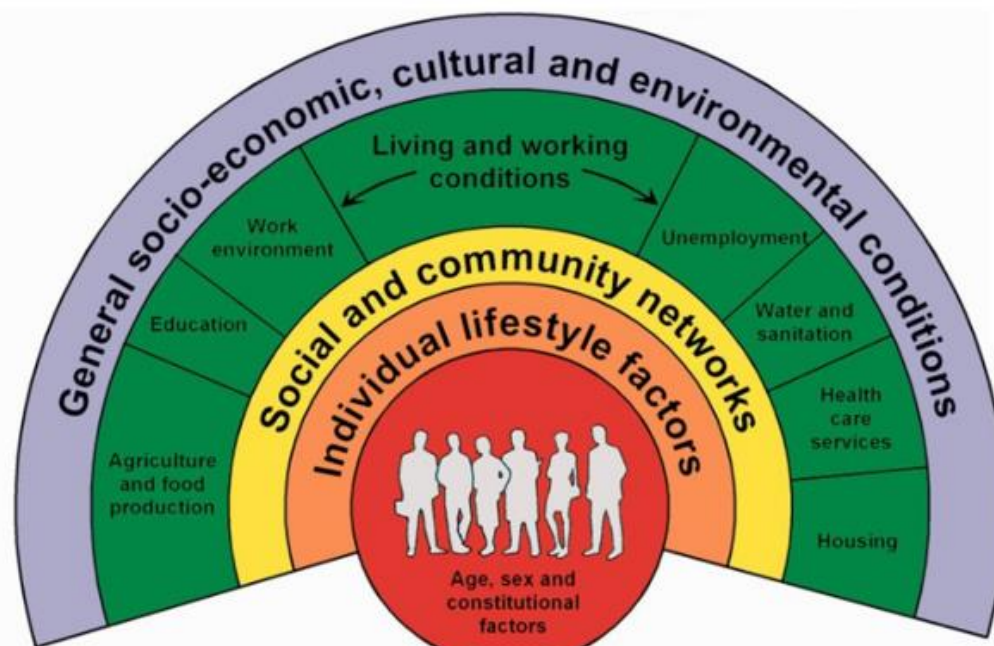


Figure 1: the Dahlgren and Whitehead model of health determinants
Source Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

Many of these aspects of our lives can have a much greater impact than medical care on how long and well people live. Medical care is often not needed until a person is already unwell but a person living in good conditions is less likely to get ill in the first place. A statistic which demonstrates this in general is the difference in people's average life expectancy in different local areas. Between the most and least wealthy Local Authorities in England, men living in the poorest areas die, on average, 9.3 years sooner than those in the wealthiest.

This is also seen in Halton where life expectancy is 11.1 years lower for men and 8.6 years lower for women in the poorest areas. Such unequal outcomes are termed Health Inequalities and we know that COVID-19 has made these much worse.

It is thought that the choices people make in their lives such as diet or smoking, and social factors which affect those choices such as education and jobs are the biggest things that affect someone's health. That said, health services delivered by GPs and in our hospitals are still important. It is part of local councils' duty to improve health of their local communities and reduce inequalities where possible. Luckily, they are well placed to influence many of those challenges to people's health which aren't due to individual things like age or genetics, which are often outside individual people's control. Work across the Council already has a large influence on these challenges for our local communities. Figure 2 shows a number of different areas of council work which can have a positive effect on local people's health and wellbeing:

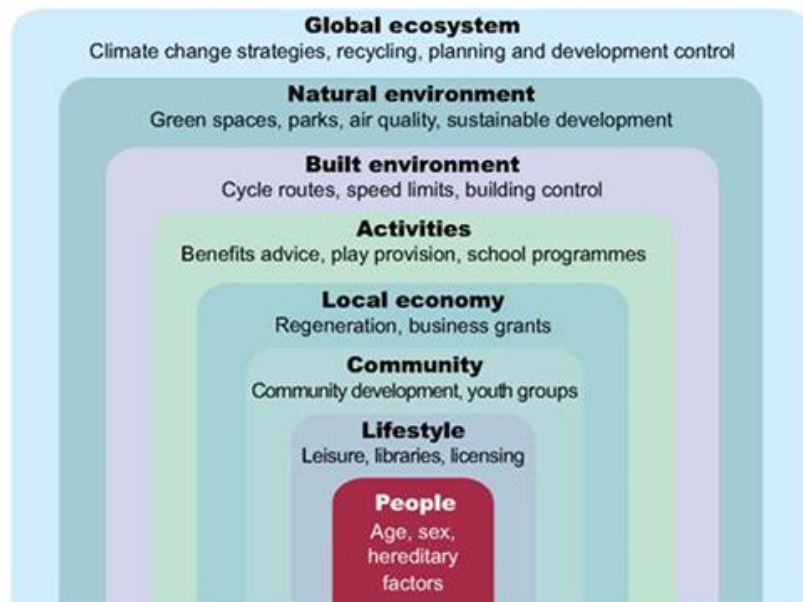


Figure 2. Health inequalities and population health
Source: NICE Local Government Briefing LGB4 2012

These 'social determinants of health' are, therefore, involved in many aspects of day to day life. Every one of us faces different challenges with them, some simple and some more complicated. Everything that we do as a council has some effect on our residents' health and this has never been more apparent than over the last two years. With the Council's teams working together, we know that more of those things can be improved. Going forward, we should remember that the health of the people who live in Halton is affected by all of our organised efforts and make sure that this is part of all of our future work. The recommendations from the recent regional work by Prof. Sir Michael Marmot and his team are currently being discussed as part of this focus.

Also see Figure 3 – in pull out section at the end of this document for the Halton life course statistics.



Dealing with COVID-19 together

COVID-19 testing across Halton Communities

The Council's COVID-19 testing team had to be quick to adapt to the ever-changing challenges posed by the pandemic. COVID-19 testing in the community began in December 2020 with the rapid set up of the two 'no symptom' test sites at Grangeway Community Centre in Runcorn and Ditton Community Centre in Widnes.

Later in 2021, thanks to the development of tests that could be completed by people at home, the majority of people were preferring to do their own tests rather than travel to a testing centre. The two test centres were closed in November as a result.

Around 65,000 tests were carried out at the sites while they were in operation. These identified over 1,000 positive cases and helped to reduce the number of people becoming seriously ill and needing hospital treatment.

We were aware that there were some members of the community who were struggling to access COVID-19 testing for a variety of reasons. We ensured that tests could be given out to anyone who needed them, but especially, those who were at highest risk of developing serious illness if they contracted COVID-19. Regular deliveries of test kits were made to businesses, schools, voluntary organisations as well as supporting NHS and Care colleagues to ensure enough test kits were always available.



A big part of reaching people was the use of our 'Public Health Bus' which allowed us to be present in local communities and help people with getting tests, booking COVID-19 vaccinations, explaining latest COVID guidelines and information as well as signposting for help with any other health concerns such as giving up smoking, losing weight, reducing blood pressure and support with diabetes.



Handing out free COVID-19 test kits and giving advice

The team became regular friendly faces in Shopping City, Trident Retail Park, Co-op at Hale Bank and Morrison's in Widnes as well as lots of other community venues across the Borough. We found that lots of people were glad to be able to ask questions and enjoyed a chat especially during lockdowns and restricted socialising.

All of this work wouldn't have been possible without the support of our local community and many business owners including the Co-op at Hale Bank, Morrison's in Widnes, ASDA in Runcorn, Shopping City and The Queen of Hearts Pub in Murdishaw.

THANK YOU

Thank you also to colleagues from teams across the Council and other organisations who are based at Grangeway Community Centre who rushed to help us move thousands of test kits when the community centre was flooded after a very heavy rain storm.

As we move into a new phase of 'living with COVID-19', we are working with partners to continue this work in the community and offer a range of services and support including blood pressure/health checks, signposting to advice for help with fuel/energy use and costs, extra help with household budgets such as help with food costs at the social supermarkets, where to get help if you need mental health support as well as advice and helping to [book COVID vaccinations](#) – it is never too late to get a jab and is still the best protection from COVID-19.



Reaching our temporary and transient residents

Halton is a temporary home for many people and it was vital that we helped people to receive COVID-19 testing and vaccinations easily. With help from Halton's Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Team, we reached our local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and were able to offer on-site testing and delivery of home test kits with regular support to explain how to do tests, answer any questions and get people information and help if they needed it.

Community members told us they preferred text/mobile information and we created a video which explained all about the COVID-19 testing which could easily be shared.

Representatives from the community also offered to share information and encourage testing and vaccination which really helped to reassure people and ensure as many people were protected as possible.



Through this initiative we have strengthened relationships with the community and continue to share information and services that support good health for all.

Caring for asylum seekers in Halton



The Public Health Team also delivered a bespoke testing programme for our Asylum Seeker community, some of whom are required to stay at a local hotel and others are living in the local community. Many people seeking asylum have limited or no English language so many materials were translated. Community links proved vital in helping to keep people safe and work from our community development team and local voluntary organisations including The British Red Cross, A Better Tomorrow and Islamic Relief.

Working with the local Primary Care Network, 344 COVID-19 vaccinations were administered to our asylum seeker population in Halton. This relied heavily on the support from voluntary organisations [The British Red Cross](#), [A Better Tomorrow](#) and [Islamic Relief](#).

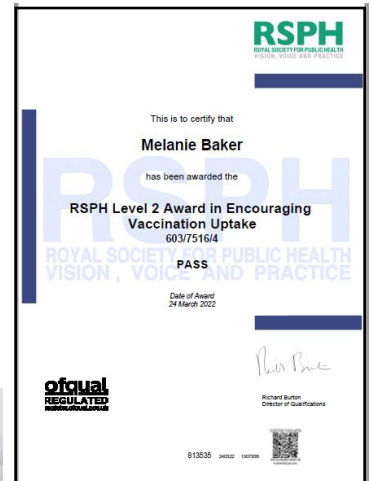
The success of this programme relied on collaborative working and careful planning to maximise engagement and uptake. Specific considerations include translated information about COVID-19 vaccine, addressing individual's questions and concerns as well as being mindful of cultural and religious factors.

Community vaccine champions

The public health team have trained over 60 'vaccine champions' in Halton by working with a wide range of local organisations and individuals. These include GP receptionists, midwives and health visitors, faith leaders, interpreters, care home managers, workplace managers, pharmacy staff, contact tracing team, community centre and voluntary staff.

The training accredited by the Royal Society of Public Health gives them the skills and confidence to be able to have conversations with people they come into contact with through their different areas of work to support vaccination uptake. This cross-sector working is crucial in supporting those who are still hesitant about the vaccine to talk through some of their concerns and help them to access vaccinations.

Halton Borough Council has led in this field by being one of the first local authorities to use the training course.



Pregnancy talks

Getting help with making the decision to get the COVID-19 booster





The vaccine keeps your teen safe.

The MHRA has advised that the COVID-19 vaccine meets the high standards of safety, effectiveness and quality required and has authorised its use for those aged 16-17. Encourage your teenager to book their jab today.

For more information go to nhs.uk/CovidVaccine



Age 75 or over?

If you had your first booster 6+ months ago, you can now get a second booster.

BOOK YOUR SECOND BOOSTER WHEN INVITED.



Pregnant women who get a symptomatic COVID-19 infection are two to three times more likely to give birth to their baby prematurely.

GET BOOSTED NOW

nhs.uk/covidvaccination

Going the extra mile to connect people and services

As well as continuing to provide the usual daily transport services for those needing to get to school, health or care venues and the delivery of the Community Meals on Wheels service, the Transport Department also stepped up to offer their support for a vast range of tasks and needs within the community, from the very start of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Transport Service worked with colleagues from across the Council including Widnes Stadium, the Community Shop, Contact Centre, Emergency Planning Team, Adult Social Care and Public Health to ensure that people, supplies and equipment were moved around the Borough to where it was needed. The team also worked with external transport companies to get additional vehicles and staff to ensure clients were moved around quickly and safely.

Geoff Hazlehurst, Divisional Manager for Logistics said, **“There’s a brilliant ‘can-do’ attitude amongst the Transport Service staff and they really stepped up to help during the pandemic. They provided an invaluable, demand responsive service working in collaboration across departments, often out of hours, to ensure the most vulnerable within our community received essential supplies such as food parcels or medication. I am very proud of our team and would like to thank each and every one for their hard work and dedication to public service”.**

Some examples of the range of tasks the team helped with:

- Emergency food parcel deliveries, 7 days per week
- Prescription collection for shielded individuals
- Collection/delivery of PPE and other equipment
- Vaccination transport for shielded individuals
- Vaccination transport for Seafarers arriving in to Runcorn Docks
- Short notice school transport for children with COVID positive parents
- Collection/delivery of large bulk food orders from supermarkets
- Shuttle transport for refuse drivers
- Transport for supported housing residents to testing sites
- Delivery of thousands of donated Easter eggs across the Borough



Supporting people to self-isolate

Throughout 2021, there was a legal requirement for people testing positive for COVID-19 to stay at home for at least five days. This was usually unexpected and left many people juggling essential tasks such as looking after family, being able to work and earn money, getting food and energy top ups all whilst isolating at home and often feeling quite poorly.

The Halton Outbreak Support Team continued telephone support calls, however, at various points during the pandemic, the high number of positive cases meant that not everyone was able to receive a telephone call from one of the team. We wanted to make sure that every single person who tested positive for COVID in Halton had the essential information when they needed it so they could get help quickly and easily.

We developed an automatic e-mail which was sent out the day after we were advised of a positive case. In most cases, this was still in the early part of people's self-isolation period. The e-mail gave people direct links and quick access to the team and the help on offer as well as links to more information about coping with COVID-19 and if other services were needed such as adult social care, mental health support and linking to local voluntary services.

During the year, 8,300 people received an e-mail offering support with the majority looking up further information on applying for the self-isolation grant. Around 2000 applications were made for the £500 grant with nearly £1M awarded to people in Halton.

People were also given practical support in the form of emergency food and energy vouchers, free school meal vouchers, help with paying for prescriptions and school transport. Our children's centres also provided craft packs for children having to stay at home.

One local mum commented, **"Public health and transport staff were brilliant and sorted assistance within 24 hours. I can't thank them enough for assisting getting my daughter to school so she didn't miss out on her education."**

1 Financial Help

£500 self isolation payment – this is for people who are working, on low incomes and have lost income due to self isolation. Apply online here - www.halton.gov.uk

If you don't qualify for the above, you may be able to apply for a £500 discretionary self isolation support payment which are considered on a case by case basis. Apply online here - www.halton.gov.uk

There are also other support schemes to help anyone in extreme hardship/crisis. More information is here - www.halton.gov.uk/benefits

2

Our Discretionary Support Team may refer you to urgent practical help such as food delivery/heating vouchers and other support available from the Public Health Team.

3

If you do not meet the criteria for the financial help or have immediate need, we may also offer urgent practical help. Please do get in touch with the Public Health Team if you have been unsuccessful for a £500 grant or would like some advice.

Our contact tracing and support team may also contact you to understand your needs.

4 Urgent Practical Help

- Food vouchers which can be used for online shopping to get essential food supplies if you are close to running out, were expecting to do a shop or your budget can't stretch to online shopping delivery.
- Get food or medicine supplies delivered/collected
- Heating vouchers or electricity cards to help you top up and keep the lights and heating on.
- Help to pay for transport such as a taxi to take children to school or for other family members that rely on you to be able to get to work/education.
- Household equipment if there's an urgent need/breakdown/no other means for cooking/washing etc.
- Connecting you to a range of local services that can also provide help to you and anyone you provide informal care for.

Please note - no direct cash payments can be made via this scheme





Adapting our lives

Supporting our right to vote during COVID-19

At the very beginning of the pandemic in 2020, the Elections Team were in the midst of preparing for local elections for all of the Halton Borough wards as well as running elections for the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Liverpool Regional Mayoral office. It is always a busy time so it was incredibly unusual for the whole thing to be postponed due to COVID and lockdown.

The team quickly shifted their efforts to supporting residents who were clinically and extremely vulnerable by making calls, helping with co-ordination of supplies and using their excellent administration and organisation skills to support the Council and community wide effort to look after people. Meanwhile, our Councillors and elected representatives continued their service for what was undoubtedly their most difficult year ever, supporting all aspects of life in their wards and doing their best for local residents.



Moving into 2021, everyone had to prepare to run an election during a pandemic, allowing people to exercise their democratic right to vote in a safe and secure way.

Paul Beaumont, Deputy Elections Manager said, **“There is no handbook on how to run an election during a major global emergency, we definitely had to think on our feet and work closely with colleagues from across the Council and our local, regional and national election administration colleagues to ensure people could be confident to come out and vote in May.”**

A large number of venues such as schools and village halls together with around 300 members of staff and temporary volunteers all had to be co-ordinated and able to work in a safe way. Extra equipment too was required and the team had to buy specialist kit quickly and cost effectively.

Paul added, **“There are some things you never think you will need to run an election such as sneeze guards but we found ourselves buying all sorts of safety gear and working with our Health and Safety Team to get all the PPE for the staff working in the polling stations. Everyone pulled together to make it all work and we were pleased to see near normal levels of turnout on the day of the election. I would like to say a big thank you to the team, our councillors and to our community who pulled together in such a difficult time.”**



Educational psychology – supporting families affected by COVID-19 trauma

The educational psychology service provides trauma support to families who have been seriously affected by COVID. Supporting children, parents and schools across Runcorn and Widnes, the service have taken an innovative approach in delivering parental wellbeing support to those in need and referred from other teams.

The wellbeing experience is a psychoeducation group intervention that brings parents from different backgrounds together. It is delivered by two educational psychologists and an assistant educational psychologist and it aims to support parents to understand their own emotional health needs helping them to address pain and seek support from others. We are additionally, delivering two trauma conferences to school staff in the autumn term to help more people understand the impact of trauma on development and learning for children, families and communities. The aims of these activities are to create connection, support, understanding and empathy within our communities through empowering people within them.



The specialist teacher team within inclusion have complimented this approach with continued focus and development of nurture provision in schools. They have continued to provide quality training and peer support opportunities throughout the pandemic (both virtually and face to face) to respond to the growing need for nurture in our schools and settings.

There has been a renewed focus on working with parents and ensuring the mental health and wellbeing of all stakeholders is prioritised. We have developed a number of new toolkits and resources added to the [Local Offer](#) – a resource for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities (SEND), their parents, carers and professionals. There has also been awareness raising sessions with our Parent Carer Forum and an online interactive session to support better understanding of the benefits of nurture.

Environmental Health and Trading Standards

The Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams adapted to deliver services in support of the council's COVID-19 response including enforcement of COVID-19 business restrictions, outbreak management and contact tracing.



However there remained significant demand for existing services such as housing standards, noise nuisance, pest control, food safety, door step crime, scams awareness and consumer advice. In fact, some services received a significant increase in demand with people spending more time at home. The number of complaints about noisy neighbours increased by 73% in 2021 compared with 2019. The number of requests for rat treatments increased by 40% in 2021 compared with 2019.

Restaurants, takeaways and pubs had to adapt to business restrictions and moved to takeaway, online and home delivery. This resulted in a significant demand for advice from the food safety team to support that transition. In total 182 new food business were registered between 1st Jan 2020 and 31st December 2021. Many of these are small self-employed micro businesses.



The trading standards service issued a number of alerts to protect consumers from COVID-19 related scams including fake emails and texts relating to contact tracing, COVID-19 tests and vaccine passports. The service continued to protect consumers by investigating the activities of rogue traders and responding to consumer concerns. One significant case resulted in a product recall of unsafe LPG cylinders that had been illegally filled.



Keeping essential services open

Many of our Council staff were 'essential workers' and many were required to come into work and open up services which people rely on. Many Council and community buildings were open to provide COVID support services such as handing out tests, food or other supplies and local people also wanted to get back to some of their normal lives and do important activities.

Our Leisure Centres had major challenges to adapt services so that people could still have their sports time and stay fit and active. Often rules were changed at short notice so there was a continual update of ways to operate and also communicating these changes to the public.

The Halton Stadium became home to a PPE hub which supplied people with essential equipment throughout the pandemic and COVID Vaccination clinics were also regularly held at the stadium. Stadium staff stepped up to re-organise important events from Sports fixtures to Council meetings. The Brindley Theatre also provided COVID support and adapted quickly to enable people to enjoy shows where possible.

One of the most important events in our lives is to get married and staff at the Council's Registration Service supported hundreds of local couples who wanted to get married in Halton and who had to rearrange their big day more than once in many cases. There was even more pressure to keep everyone in attendance safe but more importantly, able to celebrate their big day with loved ones and friends, especially after periods of enforced separation and isolation for many. Being able to get together was a much needed boost to social connections, mental health and having positive things to look forward to.



Keeping our public spaces and green places clean, tidy and open to all

During COVID and particularly in times of lockdown, being able to get into nature, green spaces and local parks was a lifeline for many people. Having access to outdoor spaces has a significant positive impact on health, encouraging exercise, fresh air and helping to take our minds off worries and pressures.

Keeping these local places clean, tidy and open is the work of our Streetscene and Parks Teams who came into work throughout COVID to manage the land, pick litter, cut grass, weeding, hedge trimming, planting and cleaning equipment such as skateboard ramps and children's play areas.

Often, this was challenging for the staff involved and at times, very worrying to come into work when everyone else was told to stay at home. There were staff shortages due to COVID which put pressure on everyone able to work and some staff even took on extra work to support other vital work such as refuse collections.

Many staff in both Streetscene and Parks teams have worked in Halton for many years and all demonstrate a high level of public service and dedication to the local area. We are very grateful for this work and for their contribution to the health of local people and communities especially through the COVID pandemic when that work was especially difficult. Thank you!



Apprenticeship Support Team

The activities run by the Apprenticeship Support team have been diverse this year. In addition to advertising Apprenticeships on the [Be More](#) website they have held more than 40 virtual presentations with [Youth Obligation Groups](#) in job centres across the region.



More than 30 schools have enjoyed talks about how apprenticeships could be a route to their first job. Pre-COVID the team would visit the school, but now virtual presentations have been developed together with learn live broadcasts harnessing digital technologies to inform pupils. September also saw the launch of plays in schools delivered by a [professional theatre company](#). It tells the story of Sophie and her journey to become a trained Fire, Emergency and Security Systems Technician. Eight performances to date have proved successful and different performances are being developed that will premier later in 2022.



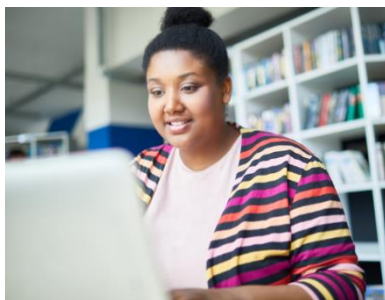
The Apprenticeship Support team have also helped to develop the Liverpool City Region Youth Task Force. This task force will help 18 to 30 years olds into employment. Each local authority area will have a hub providing face-to-face support from trusted organisations working with young people. This is a national initiative and one of the first Youth hubs opened at [Merseyside Youth Association](#) in Liverpool City Centre in May 2022.

Adult Learning Service

During the pandemic, the Council's Adult Learning Service worked tirelessly to ensure that learners were well supported to continue with and complete qualifications remotely.

Wider community learning provision linked to well-being, including courses such as 'Mindfulness' and 'Coping with Stress', was provided to really support the mental health of those residents that had been adversely affected by COVID, particularly during lockdown restrictions.

Additionally, the team introduced an online 'Interior Design' course, to support people to improve their homes and working spaces – with so many people working or being confined to their homes, this upbeat and useful course helped support learners, particularly those on a budget. Learners really appreciated having a positive focus during a difficult time and the course received some excellent feedback.



The service introduced the online platform Microsoft Teams to ensure that learning across all curriculum areas could continue. This also allowed people who were isolating to continue to have contact with others and provide some structure and meaningful activity, where they may otherwise have been completely isolated and have no contact with anyone.

Adult Learning tutors ensured they stayed in regular contact with learners both over the phone and via Teams and offered support and signposting where people may have been struggling with a particular issue or challenge whether that be their mental health and well-being or worried about their financial situation. When centres did open to allow for specific support to be provided, tutors were able to leave homework for learners to pick up at designated times. Similarly, once complete, learners were able to drop their portfolios off, again at designated times. This was all carried out in line with latest COVID guidance and maintaining 'huddles' but was really valuable in ensuring learners were still able to pass their exams, despite the many challenges that COVID-19 brought.

In addition to continued delivery of adult learning provision, the Adult Learning Team's Learner and Data Services staff assisted the Public Health Team in making just over 150 welfare calls to Halton residents who had been categorised as Clinically or Extremely Vulnerable (CEV). During the calls the staff completed an online form which recorded details of the call. The Learner and Data Services staff found this task both challenging and rewarding at the same time. They felt like they were really making a difference to people, some of which had no one else to talk to due to the pandemic.



Looking after jobs and business

A safe port in a global storm

Seafarers from all over the world dock in the port at Runcorn and for many this would be one of their only opportunities to get a COVID-19 vaccination. With unpredictable sea conditions and time limited docking, it was a race against time to coordinate the ship arrival with the vaccine being removed from the fridge and getting the jabs into the arms of the sailors.

Through extremely close collaboration and communication between the Port Authority, Primary Care Network, public health team and Halton's Transport team, the vaccine was delivered and given to the sailors shortly after the ship docked.



(photos 1&2 by Rosalind Smith)

There were definitely some touch and go moments but thankfully, all worked out with some very relieved and happy sailors who managed to get their vital protection against COVID.

This work showed the global scale of the threat and was a great example of how people and organisations in Halton contributed to protecting people from around the world from COVID-19.

Helping to prevent workplace COVID-19 outbreaks – seminars for local businesses

Early in 2021, in partnership with the Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise, webinars were given to businesses on key topics to support through the COVID-19 pandemic. Managers and business owners heard presentations from experts within the Public Health Team including how to identify outbreaks and further actions in case one occurs, how to prevent outbreaks, local testing offers, local mental health support, regulatory oversight information, local and national offers for grants, isolation support offers available for staff and their families.

There was also opportunities for follow up questions and for businesses to get in touch with the team easily and quickly.



From industrial ovens to COVID testing – Widnes firm takes on the challenge

Widnes based industrial oven manufacturer Genlab had to adapt quickly following a COVID-19 shutdown which affected staff and their families as well as vital business income.

Genlab had previously worked with the Council's Public Health Team to improve workplace health and wellbeing and were keen to do whatever possible to prevent further shutdowns and keep their staff safe and customers supported.

Staff were trained to safely and accurately conduct COVID testing on-site as well as putting in place extra hygiene and cleaning measures. Staff were also supported if they were self-isolating and encouraged to take up COVID-19 vaccinations.



All of this work paid off when faced with a similar situation of trying to keep production going against a backdrop of rising numbers of COVID-19 cases in the local community. With workplace testing in place, a small number of staff without symptoms were identified and supported to stay at home. This helped to keep the workplace COVID free and allowed staff to work safely and keep production going.



Phil Crompton, Finance Director for Genlab said, **“My biggest worry through the pandemic has been the welfare of our staff and their families and we wanted to do everything possible to keep them safe and well. I worried about our customers too as our products are used in a range of industries including laboratory and science settings so it was vital that we kept production going to ensure our customers were able to source the essential equipment they needed.”**



Keeping the lights on – help with money

Test and Trace Self-Isolation Support Payments

Money and health have a strong link and whether someone is able to cope with health issues will almost certainly be affected by sudden and unexpected drops in income. This was certainly the case during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Council's Benefits Team were on the frontline of administering a range of national and local financial support schemes.

A key part of this work was working through the thousands of applications for the £500 Test and Trace Self-Isolation support payments that could be made if someone was unable to work due to testing positive for COVID-19 or were a close contact of someone who was ill or had tested positive.

The Test and Trace self-isolation support payments were paid for the period 29/9/20 – 30/4/22 and the table below shows the numbers and value of payments issued by Halton Borough Council.

When should you self-isolate?

Here's what to do if:

You've had a positive PCR test:



You need to **self-isolate**, even if you've been vaccinated

You have symptoms of Covid-19:



You should **self-isolate** and **take a PCR test** even if you've been **double-jabbed**

Self-Isolation Payment Awards	Self-isolation Support Payment For those working and on a means tested benefit	Self-isolation Discretionary Support Payment For those working and not on a means tested benefit
No. of awards	1,385	563
Amount paid in total to local residents	£692,500	£281,500

Direct Payments

The Direct Payments Team supports over 800 people who choose to have their care and support needs met through a direct payment of their care allowances rather than receive a service commissioned by the Council. Many of the people who use this service are extremely vulnerable and the team were very conscious of this and went over and above during the pandemic to ensure that people were still able to get the care and services that they needed.



An important part of this work was to ensure that clients were provided with appropriate PPE for their carers by taking the requested orders and collecting/dropping off the PPE to clients' homes. The PPE orders/deliveries are still part of the valuable role that the Direct Payments Team provide today.

Purchase to Pay Team

From the start of the pandemic, the Purchase to Pay team were fully committed to supporting all of its suppliers in order to help them to maintain cash flow and to protect jobs. Even though the team had to work from home, we were still able to ensure that payments for supplier invoices and to care providers were made every day.



Additionally, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Council took the decision in March 2020 to accelerate payments ahead of terms for all supplier invoices until 20 July 2020. We've continued to pay a number of care providers ahead of terms since the pandemic.

During the pandemic a number of suppliers of PPE equipment would only deliver the items if payment was made in advance. This made it difficult early on for the council to obtain this equipment. Our team were just in the process of developing a new card payment system at the time of the COVID-19 outbreak. We were able to fast-track the implementation of the new system and procure PPE supplies by making payments in advance by card, ensuring that the Council could access and distribute this equipment where it was most needed.



During the pandemic we were mindful that our residents could no longer make cash payments to us due to our offices being closed. Therefore, the Income Control Team introduced a new way for residents to make these payments. We partnered with PayPoint which has provided residents with facilities to make cash payments at over 50 local outlets. This has helped ensure that these individuals did not fall into debt, when they were unable to make payments at the One Stop Shops.



Helping others

Lessons learned in Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care (ASC) services work with a range of commissioned providers to meet the care and support needs of the residents of Halton. This includes direct care provision such as domiciliary care; residential and nursing care and supported living services.

Throughout the pandemic ASC worked closely with commissioned providers to ensure they were able to continue to delivery services, monitoring key developments and supporting change. A significant step in this was to help them to look at 'lessons learned' following COVID-19 outbreaks.



Through the 'lessons learned' approach, a series of 17 case studies were shared across the sector to ensure that providers were able to reflect on practice and prevent and manage outbreak effectively themselves. The methodology in working with providers to develop case studies was empathetic and focussed on the learning to be taken from the situation. Providers were commended for positive measures taken to halt the spread of infection and for devising process and protocol for preventing further occurrences of COVID-19 cases in their setting.

An evaluation report of the approach was devised in the summer of 2021 and a further 'light touch' lesson learned approach was taken to supporting providers with outbreaks during the Omicron wave. 'Lessons learned' also included settings who had not had outbreaks, to look at the good practice in place and the messages that could be shared across the sector.



In early summer 2021 one such establishment was engaged with to hear about their experiences of the pandemic to date and its impact on the services.

One recent, isolated case had been detected in the setting and the home were able to successfully isolate the resident to prevent further spread. At this time testing regimes were well embedded and the service cited this as a key factor in the swift action taken in containing the situation.

The setting felt they benefitted from having a small team who worked closely with each other and offered support to each other. The manager said that the staff have been really careful about their movements.

Some were initially very worried and management ensured they communicated with everyone regularly to update on protocols. Some individual support was needed where staff had particular anxieties.



Many staff had found the situation stressful at the start of the pandemic but feels that as time has gone on it's become a little easier to predict requirements and monitor needs. They emphasized that their experience of the pandemic has involved a steep learning curve for all the team.

Many of the home's residents previously accessed community-based activities and it was felt that rapid withdrawal from these had been a significant factor in evading outbreaks early into the pandemic. They felt that most residents had coped well with changes to their lifestyles and routines.

Activities were devised around the home and its grounds so the residents have not been negatively impacted in terms of their interests. The home have supported bingo and movie nights, and other party events and residents have been accompanied on short walks or taken out for car drives with staff.



The setting supported social contact as needed. Most residents were able to do this independently and had their own phones. The home benefitted from having a small number of residents who see each other as family. This has meant that no one has had any particular issues with feeling isolated.

They felt that residents have also coped well with testing regimes and swabbing was openly talked about and has become part of day-to-day language.

In terms of infection control, extra cleaning regimes have been stepped-up throughout the pandemic and for this setting this was mainly done at night by waking night staff. The manager said that everyone's been on-board with additional cleaning. Alongside staff protocols service users have been prompted to hand wash and social distance and this is now habitual.

The service invested in PPE at an early stage into the pandemic and access to clean masks, gloves and aprons was made at areas around the building. All staff have had vaccines.

Recommendations back to the sector from this setting were around action taken pre-emptively and promptly at the start of the pandemic. In particular the restriction of movement was felt to be a key factor in avoiding any outbreaks. While the setting has been fortunate to not have had an outbreak they've also been consistently vigilant and upheld ongoing adherence to the regimes established. The setting acknowledged that their capacity and facilities, being a small home, have helped them to stay COVID free, however they also recognised the hard work put in by the staffing team to maintain this status.



Helping people to be healthy – inside and out

The COVID pandemic has affected everyone and it is recognised that regardless of whether you contracted COVID-19 or not, there has been an impact on people's health, whether that's putting on a few pounds during lockdowns to struggling with mental health caused by isolation, financial stress or bereavement.

Halton's public health team were keen to ensure that people had access to mental health support services at a time when there is great demand for this type of help. We were successful in our application for Government funding to support 'Prevention and Promotion of Mental Health' and were awarded £270,000. This enabled services to offer support for at least two years including:

- Bereavement support to adults
- Bereavement support to children, young people and their families
- Support to those struggling with financial insecurity and debt
- 5 ways to wellbeing activities to improve children and young people's mental health and wellbeing
- Pilot outreach programme to engage young males in wellbeing activities
- Parenting programme co coordinator



Mental Health Information Point



Are you worried about your mental health, or someone you know?

The Halton Mental Health Info Point has details of local and national organisations and websites that can help with a range of mental health issues.

www.halton.gov.uk/mhinfopoint

We have also been able to support the online mental health resource [Mental Health InfoPoint](#) which provides an easy to use service for people needing advice on a wide range of mental health support including for parents, families and young people.

Thank you to all our staff

All throughout the pandemic, staff from across Council services have continued to visit people at home and community venues and make site visits to make sure people had access to the services and help that they needed. Much of this work is unseen and often can't be shared publicly because many of the people being supported are vulnerable in some way.

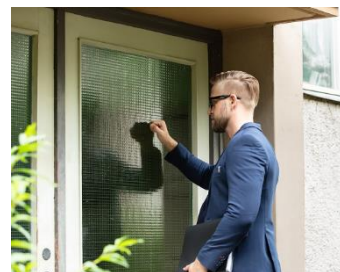
Our social care teams for adults and children continued to do their best in very difficult circumstances to ensure that families were supported, women and men were safe from domestic violence and children were placed in temporary foster care when they were unable to stay at home.

Our health improvement team visited people who needed help to manage their diabetes and ensure that they were able to stay safe at home.

Our environmental health officers had to visit homes to check on complaints about noise, rats and accommodation issues, collecting evidence to present in court cases which continued throughout the pandemic.

Our libraries continued to provide a vital source of entertainment, education, knowledge and resources as well as enabling a range of interest and support groups than run each week.

Our children's centres provided dedicated COVID support such as putting activity packs together for children who had to self-isolate and weren't able to go to school or nursery. Staff at the centres are often a first port of call if a family is struggling and this continued throughout the pandemic.



Our Holiday Activity Fund team worked with local organisations to ensure that activities could safely continue through the school holidays and that children had access to healthy meals if schools were closed. Over 26,700 meals were provided to local children, helping to keep them fed, well and able to enjoy life whilst not being able to get to school.

Our planning officers and building control officers made site visits where necessary to ensure that applications were carefully considered and buildings were safe.

Many staff took on extra duties and helped out in other teams which has strengthened working relationships, skills and knowledge across the Council.

Thank you to you all for helping to keep everyone who lives and works in Halton as safe, well and healthy as possible.

Update on priorities for 2020-21

Recommendation from 2020	Update
Halton should continue to work as one whole system on our Roadmap to Recovery.	The development of One Halton - an integrated way of working across the local authority, local NHS and voluntary sector has already started to define new ways of working to better support local people and works to improve health in Halton.
Halton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy should be revised to reflect the impact of Covid-19 on health inequalities.	This work was completed by Dr Matthew Taylor and presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Read the latest Health and Wellbeing Strategy here .
Halton should continue to find innovative ways to connect with the local community and protect them from infectious diseases.	The Public Health team working in conjunction with other organisations through One Halton has commissioned an innovative community volunteer scheme which will be supported by the voluntary sector in supporting people at grassroots level to improve health outcomes.
Halton should build on the joint working with the voluntary sector to deliver community based messages and encourage grassroots projects to improve health.	
Halton should continue to monitor infections, be vigilant to new variants and encourage the whole population to be vaccinated with a particular emphasis on hard to reach or reluctant cohorts.	The Public Health Halton Outbreak Support Team (HOST) continues to work with our partner organisations including UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to monitor for reports of new COVID-19 variants and supports the vaccination of the most hard to reach, offering advice and support



Recommendations

- Teams in Halton should continue to be prepared to respond to COVID-19 quickly if needed and continue the work to support residents to be vaccinated.
- Innovative collaboration and cross-sector working has helped keep safe through the pandemic. We should continue to build on and strengthen these relationships to improve population health and wellbeing in Halton and tackle the widening of health inequalities.
- We should continue to invest in supporting the most vulnerable and those who cannot easily reach our services

Further information

Finding out more

Traditionally Public Health Annual reports would contain a set of statistics and information about health. Much of this is readily accessible through our dedicated JSNA website:

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/health/JSNA.aspx>

thank
you
for your
support!

Public Health Annual Report for 2021

Public Health Team

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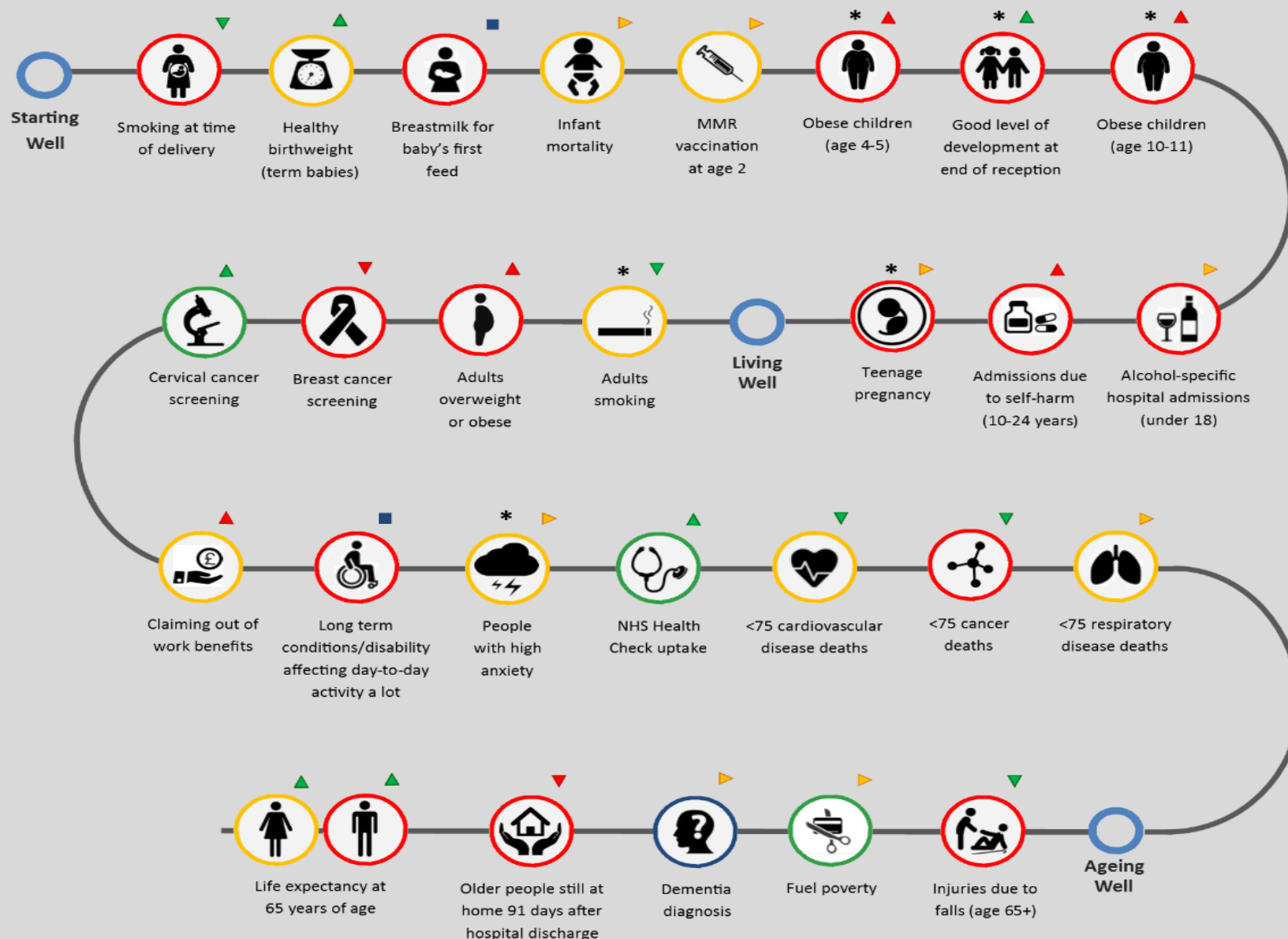
0151 511 5200

Halton's life course statistics Figure 3 below has been used in previous annual reports to show some of the main challenges facing people who live in Halton and has been updated with the latest available figures:

Halton's life course statistics 2021

A comparison to the North West

* INDICATES NATIONAL DATA COLLECTION HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY COVID-19



HALTON FACTS

Population

About **129,400** people live in Halton.

By 2041, this is projected to change:

age 0-14 ↓ 11%
age 15-64 ↓ 5%
age 65+ ↑ 38%

Deprivation

48.7% of Halton's population live in the top **20%** most deprived areas in England.

Child Poverty

19.6% of children aged 0-15 live in relative low income households

KEY

Direction of travel

- ▲ Improved since last period
- ▶ Similar to last period
- ▼ Worse than last period
- No Comparator

Statistical significance to North West

- Better
- No different
- Worse
- Lower

For more information, please contact Halton Borough Council's Public Health Intelligence Team: health.intelligence@halton.gov.uk

Icons made by Flaticon and available here: www.flaticon.com
Concept developed from Gateshead PHAR 2013/14 and Leicestershire PHAR 2015

Figure 3 Halton's Life course statistics
Source: Halton Public Health Evidence and Intelligence Team 2021