



Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
Date: 9th October 2013
Subject: Statutory Role of the Director of Public Health

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 The purpose of this note is to outline the Statutory role of the Director of Public Health for the City Council.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the content of this report and to receive a verbal update from the Director of Public Health

3 Information/Background

The role of the Director of Public Health (DPH) is set out nationally by the Department of Health (*Directors of Public Health in local authorities: roles and responsibilities, Department of Health, 2012*).

This states that the DPH is a statutory chief officer of every council with public health responsibilities (upper tier authorities), appointed jointly with the Secretary of State for Health. The DPH is the principle advisor on all health matters to both elected members and officers.

National guidance states that the DPH should:

- Be the person who elected members look to for leadership, expertise and advice on a range of issues from outbreaks of disease, emergency preparedness and improving local people's health.
- Provide the public with expert and objective advice on health matters
- Promote action to improve health across all ages, working with council colleagues including those with responsibility for children and adult social care/
- Work with other partners to make sure there are tested plans in place for the wider health sector to protect the local population from risks to public health
- Be an active member of the Health and Well-being Board
- Take responsibility for the management of the council's public health services, which include sexual health services, drugs and alcohol services, smoking cessation services and school nursing
- Play a full role in their authority's action to meet the needs of vulnerable children
- Contribute to and influence the work of local NHS commissioners

Directors of Public Health have corporate accountability to the local authority chief executive. They also have professional accountability to their professional body. This is either the General Medical Council (for medically qualified DsPH) or the UK Public Health Register. Local authorities

are expected to make sure that their DPH is professionally qualified and keeps up to date with professional practice, as defined by their professional body.

There are a number of statutory requirements that the Director of Public Health must carry out by law (2012 Health and Social Care Act). These are set out in appendix 1

The Director of Public Health also has a responsibility to write an Annual Report each year, setting out key health issues in their area.

What does this mean in practice?

The post of DPH has now been a formal responsibility of the council for just over six months. Key areas of work which have been carried out in this time include:

- Putting in place a cross-programme of work to reduce health inequalities (Coventry as a 'Marmot' city)
- Developing a programme of work to support community asset based working
- Expanding the NHS Healthchecks programme
- Working with key partners to protect vulnerable groups during this summer's heatwave, and evaluating what difference this made
- Producing the Annual Report for 2013
- Implementing plans to reviewing key public health services to make sure these are effective and meeting local people's needs
- Developing new ways to support healthy behaviours and mobilise people to take more physical activity
- Supporting the Health and Well-being Board

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Appendix 1: Statutory Responsibilities of the Director of Public Health

Section 73A(1) of the 2006 Act, inserted by section 30 of the 2012 Act, gives the Director of Public Health responsibility for:

- all of their local authority's duties to take steps to improve public health;
- any of the Secretary of State's public health protection or health improvement functions that s/he delegates to local authorities, either by arrangement or under regulations
- their local authority's role in planning for, and responding to, emergencies that present a risk to public health;
- their local authority's role in co-operating with the police, the probation service and the prison service to assess the risks posed by violent or sexual offenders; and
- such other public health functions that the Secretary of State specifies in regulations.

As well as these core functions, the Acts and regulations give the Director of Public Health more specific responsibilities from April 2013:

- Director of Public Health is a mandated member of the local health and wellbeing board (section 194(2)(d) Of the 2012 Act);
- the Director will be responsible for their local authority's public health response as a responsible authority under the Licensing Act 2003, such as making representations about licensing applications (a function given to local authorities by sections 5(3), 13(4), 69(4) and 172B(4) of the Licensing Act, as amended by Schedule 5 of the 2012 Act).