

**Ward:** n/a

**Portfolio:** Community Health

**FROM:** Cllr Heather Shearer, Cllr  
Helen Sprawson-White & Cllr Laura Waters **Date: 27 September 2021**

**SUBJECT: Mental Health Champions Report**

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Report Sign off	Seen by:	Name	Date
	Chief Executive Officer	Tracy Aarons	12 April 2021
	Group Manager	Claire Malcolmson	12 April 2021
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>Despite the outbreak of Covid-19, Mental Health Champions have continued supporting Mendip communities in their role via linking with MDC officers, community groups and other organisations.</p> <p>The pandemic created new challenges as well as opportunities to both the communities and the champions in terms of exploring, reducing the stigma and creating awareness of mental health issues and support available, especially in response to Covid-19.</p> <p>While face-to-face events could not take place, close work with the Mendip Health and Wellbeing Board and Scrutiny Deprivation Working Group produced new connections, projects and ways of sharing information.</p> <p>This report covers the period from May 2020 to April 2021.</p>		
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<p>That Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>note progress has been made by Mental Health Champions;</li> <li>endorse the continued promotion and facilitation of events and activities, including room provision wherever possible in line with the latest Government guidance.</li> </ol>		
<b>Direct and/or indirect impact on service delivery to our customers and communities</b>	<p>Directly supporting the community through raising awareness and effective signposting to services. Indirect impact of training and raising awareness of staff and members resulting in more effective delivery of services.</p>		
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	<p>Any provision to co-ordinate the actions of Mental Health Champions is delivered within existing resourcing or external funding sought. Due to the pandemic, no events or activities were organised by the Champions that incurred any additional expenses.</p>		
<b>Climate Change Risks and Opportunities:</b>	<p>There is a direct link between climate change and health. Many interventions that support positive mental health, social inclusion and wider wellbeing focus on community activities that also contribute positively to behaviour changes that make a positive impact on the Climate Change Actions.</p>		

<b>Legal Implications:</b>	none
<b>Crime and Disorder Implications:</b>	none
<b>Equalities Implications:</b>	Members Equality Group is monitoring the work of the Mendip Health and Wellbeing Board and by extension, the work of the Mental Health Champions, to ensure no groups are unknowingly excluded or unintentionally discriminated against.
<b>Risk Assessment and Adverse Impact on Corporate Actions:</b>	none

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mendip District Council (MDC) is committed to working with local organisations and communities to facilitate ongoing support and awareness around mental health and wellbeing.

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 with the resulting lockdowns throughout 2020 and into 2021, the role of Mental Health Champions evolved and shifted to looking at more virtual support for the mental health of the residents as well as employees in Mendip while plans are being made for the recovery phase of the pandemic when more face-to-face support will be possible.

The work of the Champions centred on their involvement in local Coronavirus resident support groups, working with the council officers in cluster groups, linking in with relevant organisations and sharing signposting information via a number of digital channels as well as supporting the vaccination programme.

The champions are supported by the Community Health Coordinator and Policy Officer.

## **Mendip Health and Wellbeing Board**

Cllr Heather Shearer, Portfolio Holder for Community Health, continued working on using the Mendip Health and Wellbeing Board (MHWB) as the forum for the new Neighbourhoods Board in Mendip.

To ensure equal representation on the Board for looking after mental health of all residents in Mendip, Cllr Shearer also worked with representatives from the former Early Help Advisory Board to have early help agencies represented on MHWB. This further reflects the council's commitment to mental health as part of the Corporate Priorities to Make Mendip a Fairer Place.

## **End Loneliness Project**

The Champions have been working with the members of the MHWB and the End Loneliness Project as part of the Scrutiny Deprivation Working Group programme to ensure collaboration is at the heart of their approach to championing mental health.

Poor digital connectivity, lack of public transport and the cost of transport that is available, alongside the various Covid-related restrictions limiting social contact are all increasing loneliness and isolation.

Therefore, a lobby letter was sent to central Government where MDC suggested increased investment in public sector transport and digital infrastructure, so that Mendip

residents feel connected both by physical means via travel and digital means online in the fight to end loneliness and promote social inclusion.

The work around loneliness has now been embedded in the health and wellbeing work of the council. A range of awareness events are being planned once Covid-related restrictions are lifted. In the meantime, digital channels are being used for signposting support information and building awareness.

First special issue Health and Wellbeing Bulletin to members and parishes was created following the Mendip Health and Wellbeing Board meeting in October 2020 with the focus on alleviating loneliness. The bulletin shared information on the work of the organisations attending quarterly meetings of the Mendip Health and Wellbeing Board. This is now a regular quarterly issue that both directly and indirectly targets loneliness issues alongside the wide range of health and wellbeing topics.

## **Health and Mind Matters Event**

The Health and Mind Matters Event, planned to take place in the Council Chamber in October 2020, had to be postponed due to Covid-related restrictions.

Prior to the pandemic and resulting restrictions, organisations other than Mendip District Council, or in partnership with the council, organised and provided events. In some cases, the Council Chamber was provided free of charge where those events supported the council's corporate priorities around mental health, such as the Health and Mind Matters Event, which received positive feedback both from stall holders and attendees.

As the country's Covid vaccination programme is progressing and restrictions are gradually lifting, future events will continue to be of great value to the residents and would help meet the council's priorities through collaboration, promotion as well as celebration of the work in and by our communities.

## **Creating Awareness**

The Champions are committed to supporting MDC in being a good employer with regards to the mental health of staff and contractors as well as elected members. They support connector training provided by Health Connections Mendip which is now in the plan for member training.

Issues such as loneliness and stigma around mental health conditions continue to be the focus of the champions' work to encourage more open conversations and signposting to support organisations and services through the internal communications for MDC employees and members alongside individual contacts with residents.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, Mental Health Champions have continued supporting Mendip communities in their role via linking with MDC officers, community groups and other organisations.

Thus, the recommendations of this report are for Members to:

- note progress has been made by Mental Health Champions;
- endorse the continued promotion and facilitation of events and activities, including room provision wherever possible in line with the latest Government guidance

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