Summary of Public Health Programmes in Tower Hamlets

Overview

The Council receives a public health grant from the Department of Health to support the public health programme. In 2016/17 the grant is £36.833m. This pays for all the public health work including the public health staff team in the Council.

Public Health commissions services that help to support good health at different stages of the life course and also to support healthy communities and healthy environments. To find more detail about the different areas of commissioning please scroll down below.

Healthy Maternity and Early Years
Healthy Children and Adolescents
Healthy Adults
Stopping Smoking
Long Term Conditions
Sexual Health
Healthy Communities and Environments
Pilot Programmes

Summary

Healthy Maternity and early years

Early years, including pre-birth, is a critical period for laying the foundations for lifelong physical and mental wellbeing. For this reason, investment in supporting the health of 0-5 years, pregnant mothers and young families is a priority.

By far the largest investment in this area is in the Health Visiting service. This is a universal service available to all families with young children and provides support to ensure that all 0-5 year olds have a healthy start in life. Health visitors play a crucial role in helping families with all aspects of child and family wellbeing including, parenting, maternal mental health and infant emotional wellbeing, infant feeding, healthy weight, healthy eating and active play, managing minor illness and reducing accidents, immunisation, child development, behaviour and school readiness and early identification of need.

The service is provided at four levels: level 1 health promotion and partnership working in the community, level 2 a universal service that makes individual contact with all families pre-birth, at a new baby visit and at 6-8 weeks, 9-12 months and 2-21/2 years, and levels 3 and 4 universal plus and universal partnership plus for families needing additional support.

The Family Nurse Partnership programme provides more intensive support to first time teenage mothers from early pregnancy until the child is age 2 years.
This reflects the greater support needs of this group to ensure good health outcomes for both mother and child.

Breast feeding has significant health benefits that can last into adulthood. These link to both emotional benefits and physical health benefits (including protection from infection as well as reducing risk of obesity and diabetes in later life).

Mothers often need support and information in starting and maintaining breastfeeding. In addition, an environment that supports breast feeding is important. The baby feeding support service works in the community to help mothers with breast feeding and the UNICEF baby friendly programme aims to ensure that hospital and community services actively support and promote breast feeding.

Oral health is an important priority for improvement in Tower Hamlets as by the age of 5 levels of decay are higher than elsewhere and this is linked to lifelong poorer oral health. Healthy eating, in particular reducing the intake of foods and drinks high in sugar, developing good tooth brushing habits early in life and application of fluoride varnish are important in laying the foundations of good oral health through life.

The Healthy Teeth programme aims to ensure as many young children (reception year and year 1) as possible receive fluoride varnish and a dental screen. The Brushing for Life programme provides support to inform young families about developing good brushing habits early in life.

Health visiting, breast feeding and oral health programmes are the main areas of ongoing public health investment in early years. Other areas of funding support these programmes either through additional targeting in high risk groups or enhancement of provision.

Better Beginnings, is a pilot to improve emotional wellbeing of parents and babies in the first year of life. The findings of this pilot will inform how to strengthen support across all early years’ services.

The Healthy Start Vitamins programme aims to improve uptake of the universal health start vitamin programme in pregnant women and 0-4 year olds (in the context of evidence of high levels of vitamin D deficiency in the borough). Following a review, this will be delivered primarily through children's centres.

The Healthy Eating and Physical Activity programme provides targeted support in the most deprived areas of the borough to support parents to provide healthy food for their families and promote active play where aspects of the physical environment may provide restricted opportunities.

The Healthy Early Years Accreditation programme aims to ensure that statutory and independent child care settings are implementing the best evidence to provide a health promoting environment for 2-5 year olds.
Healthy Children and Adolescents

Childhood and adolescence are an important period in life for embedding lifelong habits for good mental and physical health. School and family are critical settings for promoting these habits and most of public health investment at this life stage focusses on influencing these.

School aged children

In schools, by far the biggest investment is in the school health service (school nursing). School nurses work in state funded schools in the borough and have responsibilities for the health and wellbeing of 5-19 year olds in school settings. Their roles include health screening of all children at school entrance, promoting health and wellbeing, delivering immunisation programmes, providing advice on common childhood health conditions and addressing safeguarding issues.

The Healthy Lives team (based in the council) delivers the healthy schools programme which complements the role of school nurses by focussing on whole school approaches including teaching children through the schools curriculum about health and wellbeing issues such as healthy eating, physical activity, smoking, drugs and sexual health. Their work is informed by the national health schools programme which sets out a framework for how schools can be settings to promote health and wellbeing.

School nursing and healthy schools are the main areas of ongoing public health investment in schools. Other areas of funding support these programmes through enhancement of provision.

Embedding cycling into daily life for children provides health benefits through childhood but also lays the foundation for continuing the habit into adulthood. The Active Cycling in Schools programme enhances the cycle training that already happens in school by actively working with children, staff and parents to increase the numbers cycling to school.

Mindful schools is a pilot based on growing evidence that mindfulness (a technique for promoting mental wellbeing) can improve mental and physical health in school children. The pilot involves training teachers about mindfulness in order for them to be equipped to deliver sessions to school children.

Families

By the age of 10-11, 1 in 4 Tower Hamlets children is overweight or obese. The main areas of investment for children and families relate to weight management, improving diet and increasing physical activity in family setting.

The area of greatest investment in this area is MEND, a child and family weight management programme. This identifies children who are overweight
or obese and delivers activities in community based settings such as schools and children's centres to promote healthy eating and exercise from 0-16 years.

The Active Play (5-13) programme engages families and promotes the use of assets based in estates to coordinate play sessions for children aged 5-13 and also to identify or reclaim new areas for play.

Adolescents

Schools are an important setting for preparing children and adolescents for the physical and emotional changes that they experience at puberty. The public health investment in healthy schools provides additional investment in ensuring high quality sex and relationships education (SRE) in schools. In addition, there is investment in peer led approaches to delivering SRE.

As well as the sexual health services for adults explained below there is a service targeted specifically at young people recognising poor sexual health in this group and the barriers they have to accessing mainstream adult services.

There is also investment in helping prevent children and young people starting to smoke both through peer led approaches and education in schools (through the Healthy Lives team - see above).

Healthy Adults

As stated previously, Tower Hamlets has amongst the highest level of early deaths from cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung disease and liver disease. Linked to deprivation, it also has high levels in the population of risk factors for poor health linked to smoking, physical activity, diet, problem drinking, substance misuse and risky sex.

The aims of the set of public health investments for adults in the borough are to help people to establish positive health habits, to reduce behaviours harmful to health and also to identify health conditions early and take action.

Stopping Smoking

Stopping smoking is amongst the most important measures that an individual can take to improve their health. Tower Hamlets has amongst the highest levels of premature death from smoking related diseases and this is why this has been an areas of prioritised investment.

The Tobacco Cessation programme combines universal provision of stop smoking services across the borough through community pharmacists and general practices with services targeted at high need groups. The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) tobacco project currently focusses particularly on BME groups with high smoking prevalence (e.g. Bangladeshi and Somali people. The Specialist Smoking Cessation service is targeted at smokers who require
extra support to quit (e.g. heavy smokers, people with severe mental illness). On an annual basis, Tower Hamlets services help 1500-2000 people quit.

In addition there is investment in enforcement of tobacco legislation which included tackling the widespread availability of illegal tobacco, underage sales and enforcing the smoking ban on smoking in enclosed spaces.

**Long Term Conditions**

For people who are overweight or obese, losing 5-10% of body weight results in health benefits related to better general wellbeing, reduced risk of conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and osteoarthritis as well as better outcomes for people who already have these conditions.

The **Fit4 Life programme** is the main area of public health investment around adult obesity and focuses on helping those facing the greatest health risks from obesity to achieve a healthier weight. The service has four elements. The **Fit4Life Centre** receives, assesses and follow up referrals. The service may refer to other services in the community or if more specialist support is needed will refer to **Fit4Life weight management groups** in the community or for people at particular high risk (e.g. if they have accompanying health conditions) to specialist adult weight management services (tier 3) which provide intensive lifestyle and psychological support. There is also a service for people with disabilities who may need additional support.

Identifying people who are at high risk of health conditions or who have early disease is important in improving health outcomes. For example, early identification of risk factors for heart disease, diabetes or stroke such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and lifestyle risk factors such as obesity and smoking can enable people to seek support to address these issues and therefore reduce risk. In addition, late presentation of cancers is an important factor in the lower survival rate from cancer in the Tower Hamlets population.

The main area of public health investment in relation to early identification of risk is the **NHS health checks programme**. This is delivered in primary care and over a five year period aims to call in all 40-75s to review risk factors for cardiovascular disease (e.g. heart disease and stroke) and provide appropriate medical and lifestyle support.

In relation to cancer, NHS England is the main commissioners of cancer screening services. However, public health has provided some additional investment through the **cancer public engagement programme** which through local community groups aims to increase awareness of cancer signs and symptoms in the population. There has also been investment in promotion of bowel cancer screening through primary care but the impact of this has been limited.
**Sexual Health**

Tower Hamlets has the eighth highest levels of sexually transmitted infections in the country as well as amongst the highest levels of HIV. This highlights the need to promote good sexual health in the population, promote safe sex practices and provide high quality accessible sexual health and contraception services.

Public health investment in sexual health and HIV encompasses sex education in schools, promotion of good sexual health, targeted sexual health promotion in high risk groups, contraception services and treatment services in primary care, community and hospital based services.

By far the biggest cost of this relates to the provision of genitourinary medicine services (GUM). These relate to open access services for identification and treatment of sexual health issues provided by hospital trusts. These services can be accessed anywhere by Tower Hamlets residents and charged back to the council. The cost of these services has been rising and in 15/16 it was £5.5m (compared to £4.8m in 13/14).

**Contraception and Sexual Health (CASH) Services** are also an area of significant investment. These provide services including testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, contraception and sexual health advice, contraception services and pregnancy testing. They are provided in hubs and satellite clinics across the borough. As well as the service for adults there is a service targeted specifically at young people recognising poor sexual health in this group and the barriers they have to accessing mainstream adult services.

**General practice and pharmacies** are also important and accessible settings for provision of contraception services, cost effective testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infection and condom distribution. Providing investment in effective sexual health services in these settings is an important component of containing costs in the more expensive GUM and CASH services.

Groups in the population at particularly high risk of sexual ill health include men who have sex with men, people from Black African communities, people from Black Caribbean communities, people living with HIV, sex workers and victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence. There a number of areas of investment that provide targeted sexual health promotion in these group e.g. enhanced sexual health promotion in high risk groups, sexual health promotion in commercial sex workers, living will with HIV, health promotion in undiagnosed HIV.
Public health has conducted a number of pieces of work engaging with residents around issues affecting their health and wellbeing. This has highlighted barriers to leading healthy lives such as lack of easy access to affordable healthy food but has also identified the range of assets within communities (e.g. physical resources, networks, organisations, local champions) that have the potential to help people lead healthier lives.

There are a number of investments that seek to address some of these environmental barriers and to develop community led approaches to promoting health and wellbeing in communities.

The Health Trainers programme is the main area of ongoing investment to help promote health in adults in the borough through a community development approach. It is commissioned on a locality basis through community based organisations. Health trainers are recruited from the community and work at individual and group level helping people to reflect on how their current lives impact on their health and supporting changes to adopt a healthier life. Health trainers work with over 10,000 contacts a year.

The Can Do programme provides support to develop community led solutions to overcoming barriers to healthy eating, active lives, mental wellbeing and creating health environments. Individual projects are based on proposals from local residents.

The main investments to increase accessibility to health food in the borough are the Food for Health Awards which accredits food outlets (including fast food outlets) that meet a set of criteria for healthy food preparation. The Buywell programme works with market traders and local food outlets to increase availability of fruit and vegetables in areas where access is limited. The Food Growing Network is small grassroots investment to coordinate a network of organisations in food growing to increase the range and quality of food growing across the borough.

Pilot Programmes

In addition to these areas of ongoing investment, there have been some pilots to build evidence on how to address issues such as developing a business case for healthier fast food, developing community led approaches to tackling loneliness and helping frontline health providers to recognise housing issues linked to health. These services are not part of the current consultation.

Summary

Public Health programmes are commissioned mainly through providers in the NHS or the voluntary sector or delivered directly by the council. Table 1 sets out the public health aspirations and the main ways in which the public health grant is used to support each of these across the life course.
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<tr>
<th>Life course</th>
<th>Public health aspirations</th>
<th>Main areas of PH grant allocation (bold = high spend areas)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternity and early years</td>
<td>More parents: • enjoying good health and wellbeing</td>
<td>Externally Commissioned: Family Nurse Partnership and Health Visiting (from October 2015 – £7.7m) Breast feeding (£471k) Parents and infant wellbeing (£160k) Active play (£54k) Healthy start vitamins (£44k) Fluoride varnish (£150k) Internal funding to directorates: Early years accreditation (£50k)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More 0-5 year olds: • laying foundations for lifelong physical and mental wellbeing o early attachment o healthy early nutrition o development through play o good oral health o fully immunised • free from health harms o impacts of tobacco, alcohol, drugs o neglect or abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childhood and adolescence</td>
<td>More children and adolescents: • practicing and embedding habits for lifelong physical and mental wellbeing o foundations for mental wellbeing o life skills for fulfilling relationships o regular physical activity o healthy eating o good oral health • free from health harms o tobacco, alcohol, drugs o neglect or abuse</td>
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<td>Adults</td>
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<td>Healthy Environment and communities (all ages)</td>
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