Appendix 4 - Creating a Mentally Healthy City Forum Highlight Report

1.1   Context

1.1.1   The Health and Wellbeing Board established the 'Creating a Mentally Heathy City Forum' (CMHC) to focus actions on improving mental wellness across the City. The emphasis on upstream prevention; creating a City where everyone, at every age, and in every community can achieve their potential and prosper.

1.1.2   The aim of the CMHC is to work with strategic partners, stakeholders, Third and Voluntary sectors, Academics, and Faith Groups to improve mental wellbeing.

This includes access to mental health services for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups through the programmes mentioned in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), the call to action in the Prevention Concordat, and the Suicide Prevention Strategy, along with other HWBB Fora: Creating a City without Inequality; Creating a Healthy Food City; and Creating a Physically Active City.

1.1.3   The scheduled bi-monthly meetings were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic as has the ongoing work with regards to mental health and wellbeing throughout response Covid-19. The Forum last met on 10th June 2020, since then communication has been on a virtual basis via the LinkedIn.

Public Health resource has been diverted to focus on health protection and on a work programme at population level, aimed at reducing the risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. The forum is currently stepped down until June 2021.

1.1.4   Full Council ratified The Birmingham Suicide Prevention Strategy which sets out a series of key priorities bringing together partners knowledge about groups at higher risk of suicide; applying evidence through effective interventions and recognises the autonomy of local organisations to decide what will work best in Birmingham with its ambition for zero suicides.

This work programme, too, has been disrupted and a refresh of the strategy and action plan will be undertaken at the next, currently unscheduled meeting.

1.2   Current Circumstance

1.2.1   The Covid-19 crisis poses the greatest threat to mental health since the second world war, with its impact set to last years. The combination of the disease, its social consequences and the economic fallout are having a profound effect on mental wellbeing and it will continue until long after the pandemic is under control.

1.2.2   At the start of the pandemic, demand for mental health services dropped as people stayed away from GP surgeries, hospitals and support organisations, or thought treatment was not available. The dip has been followed by a surge in people seeking help and it shows no sign of abating. There is greater

demand for services and a need to provide help across the life course.

1.2.3   The Public Health Covid-19 Wellbeing Cell launched the BHealthy series of webinars which was supported by sector experts and local partners. Their aim was to improve community health and wellbeing and reduce the risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19.

They included behaviour changes, advice on how to handle long-term conditions, lifestyle changes e.g. smoking, alcohol, gambling, and advice on managing mental health and wellbeing issues.

The webinars were aimed at professionals who had direct reach to communities through their trusted relationship with community leaders, social prescribing links workers, and faith leaders who could disseminate messages on improving the health and wellbeing of local people.

There were two webinars specifically aimed at mental health and wellbeing: [Getting Mind Ready](#) and [Sleep](#) which can be found on the Healthy Brum YouTube channel. Together they have been viewed over a hundred times.

1.3.4   Inequalities within our communities have been highlighted further by Covid. The areas with the greatest Covid mortality and the highest rates of Covid infection – which often corresponds to areas of greatest deprivation are where we have particularly high rates of mental illness.

1.3.5   Loneliness and isolation are a cause for concern which was exacerbated as a result of almost a year of restrictions such as lockdown and social distancing measures, depriving people of elemental human contact.

A combination of the first lockdown, shielding for the most vulnerable, Care Home visit prohibition, self-isolating as a result of guidance messages as well as isolating due to Covid infection has spread fear for their own wellbeing and highlighted the social need for togetherness.

1.4   Next Steps and Delivery

1.4.4   To re-establish both the CMHC Forum and Suicide Prevention Advisory Group as soon as practicable, in the most appropriate way, to progress in earnest discussions on moving forward post pandemic.

1.4.5   Review and fresh both the purpose, strategy and group membership to ensure both are pertinent post Covid-19.

1.4.6   An Options Paper and draft Emergency Mental Health Plan are being developed as an interim measure during the ongoing COVID-19 response.

Options have been put forward which aim to prevent and respond to the different needs on services (both mental wellbeing and suicide prevention) highlighting the need for alternative services and encourage communities to come together – inject the *blitz spirit a*nd help each other and reduce isolation and foster greater compassion and kindness.

Initial thoughts are that the plan would take a life course approach and include Neurodiversity and a Universal theme where the focus would be Bereavement services, LGBGT, BAME. This will ensure mental wellness and inequalities in mental wellbeing are addressed.

1.4.7 To hold a workshop as soon as possible to co-develop the plan with CMHC Forum where partners and stakeholders are encouraged to participate and sign-up to actions and encourage others to participate in the development of the Emergency Mental Wellness Plan.

- To deliver on the actions at pace and ensure regular shared updates to Creating a Mentally Healthy City Forum and the Health and Wellbeing Board

- The CMHC Forum will oversee and support the development and delivery of the action plan / framework to deliver a measurable impact upon citizens in Birmingham and regularly brief the Health and Wellbeing Board on progress.

1.4.8 Birmingham is committed to becoming a City where everyone can enjoy good mental and physical health. A place where people can make positive choices and take personal control of their wellbeing and flourish to the best of their ability.

A collaborative and whole system approach is being taken to support every citizen to thrive, have a sense of self, hope, connection, and wellbeing.