

Item No. 8	Classification: Open	Date: 16 November 2023	Meeting Name: Health and Wellbeing Board
Report title:		Update on the Community Health Ambassador Programme	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Sangeeta Leahy Director of Public Health Southwark Council	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Health and Wellbeing Board notes the update on the Community Health Ambassador Programme.
2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board supports the continued work of the Community Health Ambassador Programme.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The Community Health Ambassador programme was commissioned during the pandemic to disseminate accurate COVID-19 related public health messaging. The programme was designed to reach sections of the community not reached by NHS or media sources and was a key part of our Outbreak, Prevention and Control Plan.
4. Further funding for the programme was provided through the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Community Vaccine Champions grant, and more recently through the South East London Integrated Care Board (SEL ICB) health inequalities funding.
5. The Southwark Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy includes the commitment to “*Extend the Community Health Ambassadors Programme, empowering more people to increase uptake of vaccinations and cancer screening and health improvement opportunities in their communities, focusing on areas with poorer health and higher levels of deprivation*”.
6. The programme is delivered in partnership with Healthwatch Southwark / Community Southwark, through the employment of a Community Health Ambassador Officer who coordinates the network on a day-to-day basis.
7. The programme has expanded in size and scope since it was first established. Since the programme’s inception, 277 people have signed up and 148 are currently registered. Ambassadors have been actively engaged in a wide range of health and wellbeing priorities, including

mental health, cancer screening, cost of living support, Long-Covid, and a range of vaccination programmes. Ambassadors have sent out on average 45 messages to their communities on monthly basis through direct messaging, social media posts, face-to-face conversations, handing out leaflets, and more.

8. The aim of the programme is to address inequalities in access to information and services by creating a pool of trained and trusted volunteers that support their communities. The ambassadors also work to ensure that their communities' needs are communicated to statutory services via Healthwatch Southwark, Community Southwark and Public Health.
9. One of the principles of the programme is to invest in the skills and knowledge development of volunteer ambassadors through a comprehensive training. This has included courses on:
 - Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid
 - Adult and Adolescent Suicide First Aid
 - Making Every Contact Count
 - Level 2 Understanding Health Improvement
 - Long-COVID
 - Vaccination programmes
10. In total 42 Ambassadors have taken part in mental health training, 27 have completed Making Every Contact Count training, 28 have taken part in Suicide First Aid training. Five ambassadors also completed a course in community research skills, two of whom went on to support a hospital discharge project.
11. Other key developments within the programme have included the employment of two paid ambassador roles, that are based at Healthwatch / Community Southwark for three days per week. These roles allow more ambassadors to deliver enhanced engagement and health promotion work, with the support of the Community Health Ambassador Officer.
12. There are also paid opportunities for ambassadors to participate in a wide range of events and activities, supporting the Council, NHS and partner organisations to engage more effectively with communities.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

13. The Community Health Ambassador Programme is funded until March 2024 and further funding will be necessary to continue the work.
14. Health and Wellbeing Board partner organisations are well placed to assist in the recruitment of new Ambassadors by promoting the programme to their networks.
15. Health and Wellbeing Board partners are encouraged to request

ambassadors support at future community events or outreach work by their organisations / teams.

Policy framework implications

16. The Southwark Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy includes the commitment to “Extend the Community Health Ambassadors Programme, empowering more people to increase uptake of vaccinations and cancer screening and health improvement opportunities in their communities, focusing on areas with poorer health and higher levels of deprivation”.
17. Through their role in understanding the needs of their communities, and communicating these back to statutory services, the ambassador programme also contributes to other areas of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Specifically, the aim to ‘*Ensure people shape their local areas and services through collaboration and co-design*’.
18. The [South East London ICS People and Communities Strategic Framework](#) sets out three commitments in engagement work:
 - Being accountable and transparent
 - Decision-making and priority setting in partnership with people and communities
 - Working with communities in new ways to transform health and care

The work of the Community Health Ambassador programme is reflective of these principles.

19. The Council Delivery Plan also includes a commitment to continue the work of the Community Health Ambassador Programme, and supports the principle of ‘Creating a People-Powered Southwark’.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

20. The Community Health Ambassadors have made a substantial and valued contribution to the health and wellbeing of their communities. The network of members are broadly representative of Southwark residents (around 73% identify as Black, Asian or minority ethnic), and they are well connected in their communities, with over 80% being involved in a VCS organisation, and over 40% in a faith group. They continue to support a wide range of community events and activities.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

21. One of the aims of the Community Health Ambassador Programme is to contribute to a reduction in health inequalities by ensuring that support and signposting reaches community members who may not be reached through

traditional means of engagement and communication. The programme also aims to increase community trust in the services and messaging aimed at improving health and wellbeing in the borough.

22. The ambassadors come from a range of backgrounds reflective of the wider population of the borough. They work across all population groups within Southwark, particularly those deemed most vulnerable to health inequalities; ethnic minority groups across all ages; older residents and those living in certain localities within Southwark.

Health impact statement

23. The communities represented by the Community Health Ambassadors are significantly disadvantaged by various health inequalities, resulting in poorer health outcomes. The coordination of the network is essential to its efficient operation and will help to ensure that more residents of Southwark are reached in targeted and meaningful ways, which can support the health and well-being of the residents most at risk.

Climate change implications

24. There are no immediate climate change implications.

Resource implications

25. There are no resource implications as a direct outcome of this report.

Legal implications

26. There are no legal implications.

Financial implications

27. There are no financial implications of this report.

Consultation

28. Ambassadors are regularly surveyed and maintain contact through a WhatsApp group, so that they can help to guide the programme and specify which topics are of interest to them and their communities, as well as the training needed to support their work.
29. An in-depth evaluation of the programme by the University of East London has been commissioned, with findings due in the new year. The evaluation will include participatory research with ambassadors, the communities they represent, and partner / stakeholder organisations, to gain a clearer understanding of the impact of programme and to make recommendations to help shape the future development of the work.

30. The objectives of the evaluation are to:
- Explore the impact of the ambassadors on their local communities with a focus on health equity.
 - Develop recommendations for programme improvement, including the ambassadors' experience.
 - Where appropriate, gather evidence for the business case to continue the work of the programme as well as making a contribution to the wider evidence base on the effectiveness of champions programmes.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance

31. None sought

Strategic Director, Finance

32. None sought

Other officers

33. None sought

Background Papers

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Ginette Hogan, Public Health	
Report Author	Ginette Hogan, Public Health	
Version	Final	
Dated	1 November 2023	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director, Finance	No	No
List other officers here		
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	6 November 2023	