



# Dudley Health & Wellbeing

Longer, safer, healthier lives for all



## Strategy 2017-2022 Evaluation Report

# Foreword

Dudley's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-22 set out our local health and wellbeing priorities for our residents and the approaches that would be taken for everyone in Dudley to live longer, safer and healthier lives.

It focussed our energies on what we believed would have the biggest impact on reducing the effects of disadvantage and increasing the strength of our communities at that time.

Our chosen 3 goals were:

- Promoting a Healthy Weight
- Reducing the Impact of Poverty
- Reducing Loneliness and Isolation

We also identified four principles to inform the way organisations, communities and individuals could work together, what they could do and how they could show they had made a difference to health and wellbeing in Dudley. These principles were:

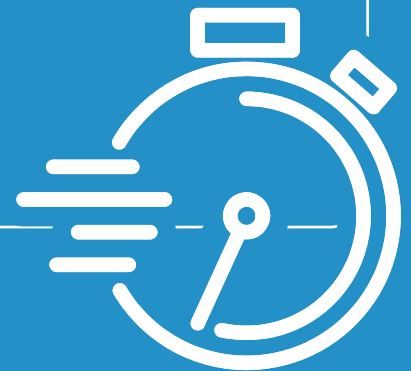
- A new relationship with communities
- A shift to prevention
- A stronger focus on joining up health and care services
- A stronger focus on what the strategy has achieved

Since the Health and Wellbeing Strategy was launched in 2017, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living pressures have adversely impacted on our ability to achieve these goals. During the pandemic, many people experienced increased social isolation and loneliness. Studies have shown that there was also a decrease in physical activity and increased eating and snacking. Loss of income and rising costs of food, energy and petrol have increased economic hardship for some communities, making it more difficult for people to stay healthy. As elsewhere, the persistent inequalities in Dudley have been exposed and amplified, and particularly for those living in poverty, older people, people with disabilities, and young people.



Through these unprecedented times, however, we have seen organisations, communities and individuals in Dudley building new relationships and working in partnership to keep our residents, businesses and communities safe, keep vital services running, and proactively supporting communities who have been most severely impacted. The partnership working and “can do” attitude that emerged during the pandemic is closely aligned to the guiding principles of our Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

This rapid evaluation looks at how we have done in achieving the 2017- 2022 strategy goals. The findings have been gathered from across Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board partners and includes evidence from across the lifetime of the strategy. It includes resident engagement and storytelling allowing us to capture our residents’ lived experiences and find out what supports and enhances people’s health and wellbeing such as access to green spaces, having strong relationships and connections with others, having opportunities to contribute and give back, to be creative and learn new things, and having a sense of purpose. We have reflected on what went well and what we should do differently or continue to focus on to make recommendations for the next strategy.



Even without a pandemic and increases in the cost-of-living it was always going to be challenging for us to achieve the ambitious goals that we set out in 2017. Despite our best efforts, and as in other areas of the country, we have seen increases in poverty, social isolation and loneliness and continued increases in children’s weight.

Our reflections on what we have and have not achieved will help us with our new strategy and plans. We remain hopeful, however, that by working together we can build on the opportunities to work with our communities to create positive and long- lasting change, maintain and build upon our strong organisational partnerships for the benefit of residents, and that over time we will improve the health and wellbeing for all Dudley residents.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "I. Bevan". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Cllr Ian Bevan

Chair of the Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board

# GOAL...

## Promoting a Healthy Weight

### *Why was this priority important?*

In 2017 statistics showed that being overweight and obese was increasing among primary school children in Dudley, with weight gain starting at an earlier age and inequalities between different areas locally.

Promoting a healthy weight saves lives as obesity doubles the risk of dying early.

Obese adults are seven times more likely to develop diabetes than adults of a healthy weight. People who are obese are more likely to get physical health conditions like heart disease and are also more likely to have poorer mental health, for example, living with depression.

### *What did we do?*

We made a significant commitment to promoting a healthy weight, supporting a system-wide approach for both adults and children. Comprehensive pathways and services have been developed enabling residents to access the support they need to lose weight, and training packages have been rolled out across the system. This included training over 100 health and care professionals on "How to raise the issue of weight", training Parks Physical Activity Advisors on height/weight measurement and brief interventions, and Leisure Services staff in breastfeeding resulting in our Leisure Centres gaining UNICEF baby friendly accreditation.

# Our services for promoting healthy weight include:



## Case Study: Healthy Weight in Pregnancy <sup>2</sup>

A pregnant woman with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 48kg/m<sup>2</sup> and weighing over 130kgs was first seen by the Healthy Pregnancy Team at 10 weeks gestation. She did not have time to focus on her wellbeing as she was busy looking after her other children.

*"With support this pregnant woman had a healthier pregnancy and healthier weight. She had a healthy new-born baby at term. At the 3 weeks postnatal check this mum had lost over 20kgs compared to her first pregnancy weight and accepted the offer of further support from Dudley's 'Let's Get Healthy' 12- week programme of diet management and exercise".*

## Healthy Pregnancy Service

The Healthy Pregnancy Support Service supports pregnant women from becoming overweight or obese before, during and after pregnancy. The aim is to help all women who have a baby to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and a healthy lifestyle, by adopting a balanced diet and being physically active. The service works alongside midwives in community antenatal clinics and can also see women on a one-to-one basis in their homes, to support women and their families to make healthy choices.

## Self-help Healthy Weight Packs

Over the past 5 years, 80% of families in Dudley requesting support with their weight have chosen to use our Self-help Healthy Weight Packs. For some families this low-level support, which they can manage themselves, will be sufficient to enable them to make lifestyle changes. For others, it is a 'stepping-stone' to accessing more specialised services.

## Child Weight Management Service

During COVID-19, child weight management services, including those provided by our health visitors and school nurses were paused. This provided us with the opportunity to review the services and reflect on whether there was a better way to promote a healthy weight for children. Support was offered and available to all school children, with Slimming World for the very overweight – the term Dudley parents prefer to be used – older teenagers.

# In 2022 it was agreed that:

- Healthy weight support for children and young people, and their families, should be available to all and not just to those with a higher body mass index.
- The focus should be on nutrition, having a healthy relationship with food, and supporting physical activity as part of everyday life rather than just losing weight.

These services and the focus on providing support to all who want it have ensured that:

- There is a preventative approach to obesity and ensures that every family can access support
- A child's weight status should not be the only assessment made to determine whether a family requires lifestyle support/intervention
- Less of a focus should be on weight and more emphasis placed on healthy lifestyle
- The removal of the stigma which may help engage more families

## Case Study: Family Support with Weight Management

A local family with two children required healthy eating support. They had a face-to-face appointment with the Healthy Family Lifestyle Service, at a location easily accessible to the family. SMART goals were set together with the children around eating well and moving more. The family completed all 7 sessions and have been referred to the Phases physical activity programme for further support.

Over the years, the understanding of how to promote a healthy weight has evolved nationally and Dudley has been proactively involved in developing this understanding, and particularly around the importance of community involvement. There is now widespread recognition that a "whole systems approach" is required to tackle obesity and promote a healthy weight. It needs to include addressing the wider determinants of health such as the environment in which we live enabling us to be able to actively travel — by bike or by walking, access to healthy and affordable foods, and regulation around the sugar content of drinks and foods.

Dudley was one of four pilot local authorities recruited to work with Leeds Beckett University and Public Health England to test a "Whole System Approach to Obesity Prevention." Our involvement in this programme not only transformed how we tackled obesity in Dudley it also contributed to national guidance on promoting a healthy weight.



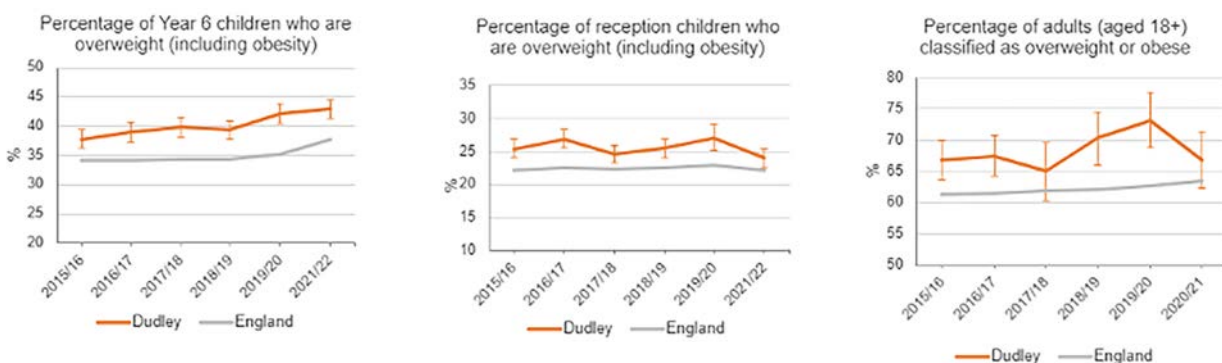
# What difference have we made?

Despite the significant effort and investment, levels of obesity have not reduced as we would have liked in Dudley. In fact, levels of obesity continue to increase for children in year 6 (figure 1). This is similar to what has been seen in other areas in England and indeed globally.



Figure 1

## Changing prevalence in overweight and obesity in Dudley and England over time



A key legacy of the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board has been the mainstreaming of conversations locally, as has happened nationally, about system approaches to tackling obesity and the importance of the wider determinants of health on people's ability to maintain a healthy weight. Engagement with residents has consistently shown that they value the borough's green and blue space, and the council continues to invest in these areas. Additionally, as new transport links are established with the Dudley Metro stations, there is work ongoing to enable "active travel" to get to them to encourage more cycling and walking.

We have also shifted our approach to put more emphasis on having a healthy lifestyle – which may also help to reduce the stigma associated with obesity, the importance of good mental health in being able to achieve this, and the recognition that interventions need to support the whole family to make a positive change. As a consequence, our services have been redesigned and continue to be adapted. Finally, the understanding and approaches from tackling a complex issue like obesity have been increasingly applied to other areas of work, including poverty.

# GOAL...

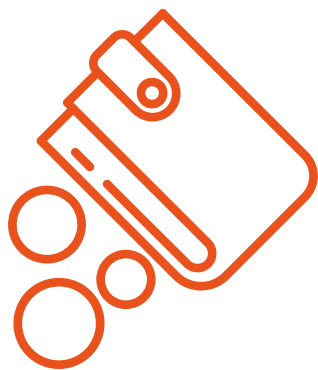
## Reducing the Impact of Poverty

Why was this priority important?

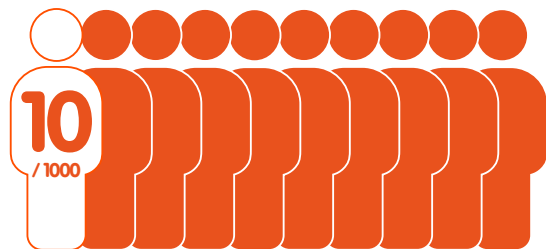
**23%**

of young people aged under 20 live in **poverty** in Dudley compared to **20% in England.**<sup>(2013)</sup>

We know that living in poverty is a key driver of poor health and wellbeing and impacts on the healthy life gap between areas in the borough.



Dudley has **higher unemployment** than England and people stay unemployed for longer. Dudley is also less economically productive.



people in Dudley (16-64) claim long term job seekers allowance **compared to 4/1000 in England overall.**

We know that rewarding work is good for people's health and wellbeing, keeps them connected with others and out of poverty. It underpins our 3 goals.<sup>(2016)</sup>

We recognise that living in poverty is a key driver of poor health and wellbeing and underpins the healthy life gap between different areas in Dudley. When the 2017- 2022 Strategy was being developed, Dudley had more young people living in poverty and a higher unemployment rate than England.

## What did we do?

Given the complexity of addressing poverty and learning from our work on promoting a healthy weight, we recognised that we needed to start taking a "whole systems approach" to poverty. This began by assembling a steering group of key stakeholders to coordinate and steer the poverty work and to develop a roadmap, and ensure a whole systems approach was being implemented. Issues that were identified included people getting access to services – improved communications have helped to address this; and navigating the system – better interagency signposting has helped as has a referral platform managed by Citizens Advice Bureau. Although progress on the roadmap was interrupted by the pandemic, the established steering group and partnership continued through the pandemic response and the more recent cost-of-living pressures.



The COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of-living pressures have meant that we have had to be reactive to the immediate needs of residents to be able to afford food, housing and energy.

Through the pandemic, welfare support was offered to residents required to isolate under government guidance. Although similar support was available in all local authority areas, our Dudley offer provided more comprehensive support, and has been kept in place for longer than most, if not all local authorities in the region. From August 2020 to February 2022, we offered support on 96,609 different occasions for people testing positive for COVID-19, with support given 2,130 times.

Following on from the pandemic, Dudley Council has worked with voluntary and community partners to distribute government funds to support households who have been most impacted by the increasing cost-of-living, distributing £6.7million between October 2021 and March 2022 to our most vulnerable residents to provide immediate support. The Council has developed a central information point on its website for residents, with over 100,000 visits.

A key success of the Household Support Fund has been how it has been made easy for residents to access financial support, which

is often through vouchers that can be redeemed at supermarkets. So far we have supported more than 115,000 households including 90,000 with children and 10,000 with a pensioner.

The Citizens Advice Bureau now deliver Cost of Living hubs in 3 sites in Dudley that offer a wraparound service to residents that goes beyond emergency support of food vouchers. They include a whole suite of support focusing on prevention and more sustainable support options including advice on budgeting, grants and benefits, how to save money via efficient fuel and energy usage.

## Welfare support provided

- 151 residents provided with mental health support
- 1138 provided with financial support
- 514 provided with food support
- 5 referred to Adult social care
- 328 signposted to other support services



## Case Study: Household Support Fund

Client A came to the hub needing help due to leaving work recently. She claimed Universal Credit and did not have any food or money. There was only £2 on her electricity meter and she had poor mental health including a breakdown a few weeks prior to her visit.

“We triaged the client and noticed she was very anxious and struggled with crowds. We took her to a quieter space to complete a needs-based assessment and shared with her the Making the most of your money on a 1:1 basis. She was eligible for a Housing Support Fund voucher of £75 and a fuel voucher worth £49 to top up her electricity meter. The client was grateful for the help”.

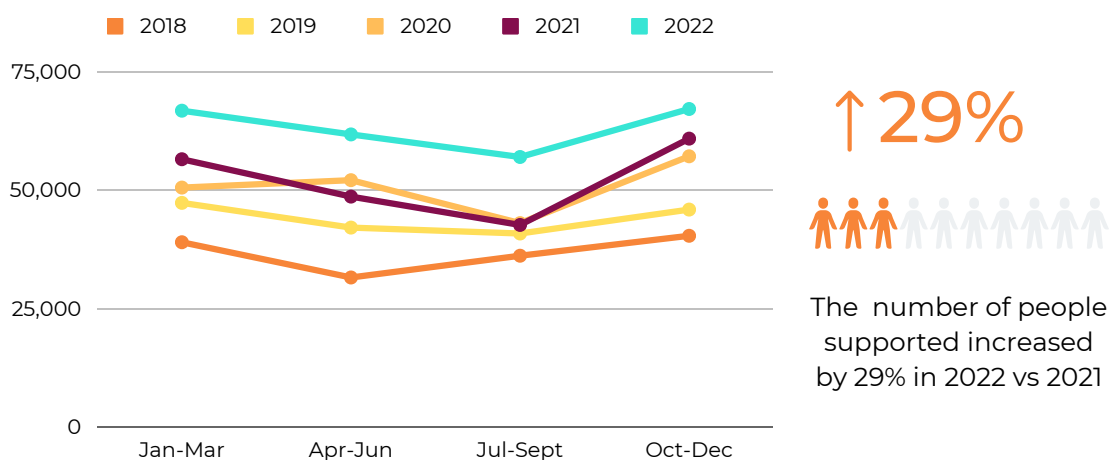
# What difference have we made?

These initiatives which have been delivered through a partnership approach have provided a vital mechanism for immediate support for Dudley's most vulnerable residents. Having this partnership in place enabled a quick response to the surge in demand for support experienced as the cost-of-living has increased, as exemplified by the large increases in people relying on foodbanks (figure 2).

Figure 2

## Meals Distributed from 2018 - 2022

The comparison of the number of meals distributed in each quarter between 2018 - 2022



A new Strategic Mitigating Poverty Partnership has now evolved from the original group that was set up by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Partnership aims to use data and evidence to encourage the Dudley System to help support people in poverty and help lift people out of poverty. The partnership will coordinate the ongoing work including work in schools and communications around the cost-of-living webpage and e-updates.

Dudley will be working with the charity Children North East to pilot their Poverty Proofing the School Day tool in local schools. Poverty Proofing the School Day is a powerful tool for identifying the barriers children living in poverty face to engaging fully with school life and its opportunities. Focused on listening to the voices and experiences of young people, it offers a pathway for schools to address often unseen inequalities within their activities, helping them reduce stigma, break the link between educational attainment and financial background, and supports schools to explore the most effective way to spend the Pupil Premium.

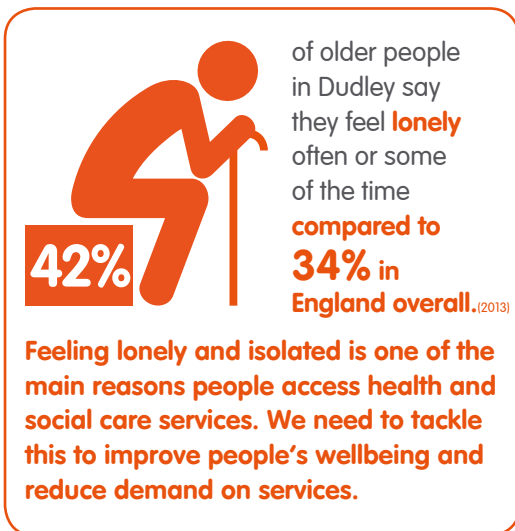
Researchers will conduct consultations with students, parents, staff and governors to understand the challenges they face, in an inclusive, straightforward and supportive process. We will then complete a Poverty Proofing audit and will identify pathways to reduce the impact of poverty on students. Schools receive a thorough written report and action plan to inform impactful decision-making, and receive accreditation pending a follow-up review. The process will also include training for staff and governors on the causes, consequences, and impact of poverty on children, young people and their families and ways to identify and mitigate barriers in their roles.



# GOAL...

## Reducing Loneliness and Isolation

### Why was this priority important?



There has been a growing recognition that loneliness is a serious problem, with far reaching implications, not just for individuals, but also for wider communities. Loneliness is a serious condition which can detrimentally affect a person's mental and physical health, increasing the pressure on a wide range of council and health services.

At the time of developing the 2017- 2022 Strategy, we knew that disproportionately more older people in Dudley said they felt lonely compared to the national average.

### What did we do?

A multi-agency group directed a system wide approach to strengthen partnerships and address loneliness and isolation. The group identified, developed and implemented the following initiatives with the initial focus on older people.

- An online Dudley Community Information Directory was developed to enable communities and local people to be able to share activities, events and groups, helping people to connect with each other. The directory was developed because local people said there was lots going on in the borough but people don't know about it.
- A Voluntary Sector Innovation Fund stimulated activity within the voluntary and community sector. It provided funding and networking opportunities as well as sponsors who supported the lifetime of the project.
- Volunteers were matched with older people to provide regular contact and friendship for older people through a befriending scheme.
- A loneliness e-learning module was launched in November 2018 to raise awareness on the issue and impact of loneliness and isolation. Nearly 350 people who work alongside communities or meet with people in their role were trained to make every contact count, enabling them to identify someone who might be experiencing loneliness and signpost for help and information.

We have also developed a number of specific services that have supported people who are socially isolated or lonely, providing a gateway into mental health services, social care, adult learning and community groups.

### **The Pleased to Meet You Service**

The Pleased to Meet You (P2MY) service launched in 2017/18 and is available to people aged 65 years or over and younger people at risk (e.g., people with an illness, disability, mental health issue or a carer), with referral from their health or care professional.



Activities included a chat helpline and involving people in local community groups. These groups helped with social connections, offering companionship and volunteering opportunities. Examples of practical support:

- assisting people to set up online accounts for services,
- completing forms for assessments,
- getting practical aids at home and
- 72 hours of support for people discharged from hospital.

The service receives an average of 50 enquiries each week with a third of these contacts receiving support for 6-12 weeks. Almost 3,000 people received support during 2020/21-2022/23.

### **Connecting Older People Programme**

The Connecting Older People (COP) programme included engagement sessions exploring the values which were important to older people. Community groups joined in and shared their project ideas. Local residents listened and decided who received the funding by voting at the event and a variety of projects were funded including:

- health and wellbeing sessions
- social groups
- arts, music and theatre clubs
- support groups
- improvements to local green spaces

These projects helped older people to take part and contribute, as well as building relationships, making friends and staying in touch.

## Integrated Plus

Integrated Plus has helped people with complex health needs connect with community assets by embedding social prescribing in GPs aligned to the six Primary Care Networks in Dudley.

Social Prescribing seeks to address people's needs in a holistic way - recognising that people's health is determined primarily by a range of social, economic and environmental factors. It also aims to support individuals to take greater control of their own health and wellbeing. Acknowledging this, Social Prescribing is most usually defined as: "A way for local agencies to refer people to a Link Worker. Link Workers give people time, focusing on 'what matters to me' and taking a holistic approach to people's health and wellbeing. They connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support."

The approach combines a flexible, non-clinical, holistic package of support which focuses on the whole person's needs to jointly find solutions to problems faced. Support is independent, impartial and usually provided in people's own homes, so that the service can build a true picture of the person, their living conditions and family support networks. Staff have a 'can do' approach and attitude as the service is not tied by organisational boundaries and cultures. Quality time is spent with people, actively listening to their needs and aspirations. Staff ensure people are accessing services appropriate to their needs and help them to navigate the health and social care system. Evaluation of the service has shown that costs are being avoided through reduced use of A&E and other NHS services.

## Scams Team

A new Scams Team was launched in 2017/18 by Dudley Council's Trading Standards primarily working with vulnerable residents who often find themselves victims of financial scamming. As part of the team's remit, the team work closely with social services and engage with potential scam victims in Dudley, to raise awareness, improve reporting of scams and stop financial abuse. The Team also refer people to services such as social workers, occupational health, mental health, and signpost people who feel lonely and isolated to local activities in the borough.

The Scams Team have adopted a proactive and preventative approach by:

- Providing talks to community groups
- Developing 'friends against scams' and 'scams champions' training
- Shared information via an information package and quarterly e- newsletter
- Continued to deliver the approved trader's scheme, and Fix-A-Home brochure

Dudley Scams Team have reached 1,541 people with an estimated saving of £9 million.

## Facts

- Scams affect millions of people across the UK.
- People who are scammed often experience loneliness, shame and isolation
- Only 5% of victims report being scammed
- The average loss is £1,000 per victim
- Older victims are 2.4 times more likely to die or go into care within two years of being scammed

# What difference have we made?

The thing that stands out the most is that all of our initiatives have been building up the informal and formal networks between organisations. They reach out to lonely individuals, make every contact count with opportunities for talking and understanding, and then refer and signpost to supported access. The person is the centre of any intervention offered which helps to promote independence.

Although national data demonstrates little or no change in the percentage of adults reporting feeling often or sometimes lonely, locally we know that each service has demonstrated the effectiveness of their intervention. The activities and interventions have also had a broader positive impact on health and wellbeing, beyond loneliness and social isolation.

Some of the initiatives were not specific to addressing loneliness and isolation, however, by the process or activity itself, they have made a significant contribution to the goal. The members of this group have now re-established as a 'social connectedness network' and continue to invest in addressing the impact of loneliness and isolation in Dudley.

# Recommendations

The evaluation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-22 has highlighted the following recommendations for the new strategy:

Build on the community response to the pandemic and Dudley's community assets to generate sustainable community-driven responses for long term improvements in health and wellbeing.

Embed an approach to reducing health inequalities and identify more effective interventions proportionate to need across all goals.

Build on Dudley's strong local partnerships, with each HWB partner clear about their role in delivery, and providing opportunities for new partners to be involved in improving health and wellbeing.

Make a shift from services being delivered 'to people', to 'doing things together' with co-design and co-production – requires all partner organisations to work differently.

Continue work to tackle poverty as it is a key driver of poor health and wellbeing outcomes.

A greater focus on prevention, including enabling healthy behaviours and addressing the wider determinants of health.

Ensure monitoring and evaluation throughout the lifetime of the strategy and sharing of progress, which includes capturing the views of our communities.

Continue taking a whole systems approach – applying systems thinking, methods and practice to better understand challenges and identify collective actions.

Build our capabilities as a system, particularly in digital and workforce alongside specific interventions.