

Title page

Cheshire West and Chester Council

## **Our changing population – Accessible version**

Professor Helen Bromley Public Health Annual  
Report 2023

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# 1. Foreword

Welcome to my first annual report as Director of Public Health for Cheshire West and Chester. I began my career as a nurse, before moving into academic and international public health. Ten years ago, I joined Cheshire West and Chester Council as a Consultant in Public Health and became a visiting professor at the University of Chester in the same year.

I take a keen interest in any new data and how we can use it to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in our borough. Earlier this year, the full data from the 2021 census<sup>1</sup> was published, showing how our population is changing. In summary, we are becoming older and more diverse in our ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation.

Minority groups often experience worse health outcomes for complex, often connected, reasons. The Council also recognises that individuals often have more than one characteristic that is subject to prejudice or discrimination (race, class, sex, gender identity, disability status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, migration status, faith, etc). This is often termed 'intersectionality'. Therefore, some people can face multiple barriers, or completely different barriers compared to others around them.

We must take steps to ensure that our residents are not disadvantaged due to their characteristics, and to address the health inequalities that we see. Cheshire West and Chester Council recognises that inclusion goes beyond the Equality Act and protected characteristics. Considerable work has been undertaken in a wide variety of areas to ensure that everyone who lives or works in the borough is included and welcomed.

This report is framed around the census changes we are seeing in Cheshire West and Chester, with a particular

emphasis on diversity. I will start the report with an update on activity against the 2022 Public Health Annual Report priorities and recommendations, with my own recommendations for the coming year at the end of the report.

I am delighted to present this report highlighting some of the excellent work going on across our borough, led by the Council and our partners. Together we continue to address ongoing challenges from the pandemic and cost of living crisis, while responding to the needs of our changing population.

**Professor Helen Bromley, Director of Public Health  
Cheshire West and Chester Council**

1. Source: 2011 and 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v.3.0. Further information can be found by clicking on the following link:

[Census 2021 | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

## 2. Progress on past recommendations and priorities from the 2022 report

### Recommendation 1: Access to food

**The Council should continue to support projects such as the Welcome Network who help to develop, coordinate, and support community food provision across Cheshire West and Chester.**

The Council continues to fund the delivery of the Welcome Network Project, supporting community food provision across the borough. The project ensures co-ordinated working across the borough, providing resources, training and support where needed. Moving forwards, this work will be part of a wider food partnership which has an ambition to ensure that everyone in the borough has access to affordable, healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate, and enjoyable food. The food partnership will continue to be led by Cheshire West Voluntary Action and report into the Eat Well Be Active Reference Group.

**Eat Well Be Active** is a programme delivered by partners across Cheshire West and Chester and strategically coordinated by the Council to support those who live, work, and go to school in the borough to be able to access healthy, affordable food, and be active in a way which works for them.

### Recommendation 2: Fuel poverty

**The Council should continue to work with the NHS and other partners to prepare a co-ordinated approach to reducing fuel poverty, recognising its effects on both physical health and mental wellbeing, and in particular the most vulnerable.**

The Council continues to work with the NHS and partners to reduce the level of fuel poverty experienced by residents across the borough. A fuel poverty strategy for the borough is now in place and being delivered in partnership between the Council and partner organisations. Training and information are provided to front line staff ensuring people are aware of the support available, including access to financial support, advice on staying warm, and preventing damp and mould. Sixty places were funded on the National Energy Action (NEA): fuel debt in the community workshop. These places were split between Council front line staff, NHS, Cheshire Fire and Rescue and the Community and Voluntary Sector. This gave staff the skills to enable them to have conversations with vulnerable residents around fuel poverty, staying warm and the support available. Grant schemes, such as the Council's Home Upgrade Grant and national ECO scheme, are available for eligible residents to help improve the efficiency of their homes, reduce energy bills and improve health and wellbeing. Key information for residents can be found on the Council's webpages. To access please click on the following link [www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/homeenergyhelp](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/homeenergyhelp). Mindful of those residents who are digitally excluded, information on available schemes is also made available within the community - for example in libraries and on parish noticeboards.

#### Recommendations 3 and 4: Mental Health and Wellbeing

**The Council should continue to deliver services to support the mental health & wellbeing of those who live, work, volunteer, and study in Cheshire West and Chester.**

**The Council should commission mental health and suicide prevention training for those working and volunteering across the borough.**

The Council worked in collaboration with partners across the NHS, Voluntary Sector, and people with lived experience, to develop the Cheshire West Place All-Age Mental Health Commissioning Strategy 2023-2028. This Strategy sets out the commissioning ambition to drive forward further improvements across the life course. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a training course which teaches people how to identify, understand and help someone who may be experiencing a mental health issue. In 2023, the Council commissioned 13 MHFA courses, which were attended by 163 people from a wide range of organisations. The Council also commissioned Papyrus, a suicide prevention charity, to deliver 12 online Suicide Prevention courses, which were attended by 111 people who work and/or volunteer in the borough. In October 2023, 20 people from a range of organisations completed the two-day Papyrus Suicide Prevention training and fifteen completed a Self-Harm Awareness train the trainer course. In 2024, the newly qualified trainers will roll out self-harm awareness training to their own, and other organisations across the borough.

#### Recommendation 5: Staying Well - Healthy Lifestyle Choices

**The Council and partners should continue to promote the benefits of, and support interventions and activities, that support healthy lifestyle choices including being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight and stopping smoking.**

Supporting residents across the borough to stay well by making healthy lifestyle choices is a priority for the Council. This includes helping people to eat well, be active and maintain a healthy weight throughout their lives. The borough's Eat Well Be Active Partnership brings together organisations with these shared aims in a strategic and coordinated way to support

residents to lead healthier lifestyles. National campaigns around healthy lifestyles are promoted and supported with a local focus including Know Your Numbers week and Stoptober. The Council also works closely with partners and residents to help reduce smoking rates in the borough, and its strategic commitments and actions to reduce smoking and vaping are outlined in the Council's Health Improvement Strategy. To access please click on the following link: [Health Improvement Strategy | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#).

#### Recommendation 6: Staying Well - Be Active

**The Council should continue to work with partners to encourage residents to enjoy the natural environment through Wellbeing Walks, and therapeutic behaviours such as Tai Chi, gardening, and conservation. These activities will contribute to tackling inactivity in adults and support residents' mental wellbeing.**

The Council works closely with partners from across the borough to increase the number of residents who are physically active. Work is wide ranging but includes a full leisure offer, active travel, a well-established walking network, as well as a focus on supporting young children, and women and girls to be active. Work in 2023 has highlighted the importance of a wide range of inclusive opportunities for residents to be active, in ways which suit their interests, needs and capabilities. Some of the activity programmes delivered by the borough's leisure, health, and wellbeing provider, Brio Leisure, are featured on page 13 of this report.

#### Recommendation 7: Inequalities

**The Council should continue to work with partners to tackle health inequalities and support activity to become a**



## **Marmot Community ensuring that the voice of lived and living experience is embedded within the local approach.**

Cheshire West and Chester, along with the other eight boroughs in Cheshire and Merseyside, have been working toward becoming a sub-regional Marmot community since 2022 with their collaborative approach: to access please click on the following link '[All Together Fairer](#)'. The Fairer Future Strategy sets out an ambition to halve child poverty within a 10-year period and address structural inequality within the borough through tackling the root causes of poverty, alleviating the symptoms of poverty, and amplifying the voices of people with lived experience of poverty. The Poverty Truth Advisory Board continues to meet quarterly bringing together key decision makers and community inspirers with lived experience of poverty to address the most pervasive social challenges facing the borough. A multi-agency response to the cost-of-living crisis brings together partners from across the Council, health, and voluntary and community sector to provide targeted support to people most at risk of poverty and financial hardship. The response focusses on addressing fuel and food insecurity, mental health and wellbeing, income maximisation and financial support and improved communications and access to services. Poverty awareness training has been embedded within the induction process of the Council and for frontline teams to ensure residents in need of support are treated with respect and dignity.

### Recommendation 8: COVID-19

**The Council and its partners should ensure that the outcomes of the COVID-19 review are built into plans for the response to future pandemics.**

The Pandemic Debrief Report was published internally in May 2023. Overall, the Council and its partners worked together well

in extremely difficult circumstances over a prolonged period. Recommendations from the report were approved by the Council's Management Board on 26 June 2023. These recommendations cover many areas and will take some time to be fully implemented by the group that was established for this purpose. The main recommendations focus on integrating the learning from the pandemic across all relevant emergency response plans. There is a further focus on improving communication processes between the Council, the public, and elected members, using IT systems to facilitate this. The Council continues to contribute to the national COVID-19 enquiry.

#### Recommendation 9: Vaccination

**The Council should continue to work with partners to ensure fair access to all immunisation programmes and reduce unwarranted variation, with particular regard to the most vulnerable.**

The Council has continued to work with our NHS and other partners across Cheshire West and Chester to improve immunisation uptake and reduce inequalities in access and uptake. Areas of low vaccination uptake and unwarranted variation have been identified and have received targeted digital communication campaigns for flu, COVID-19 and MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccinations. The Council is supporting NHS colleagues with the introduction of additional provision for the School Aged Immunisation Service to increase vaccination uptake in education settings. Responding to the national increase in measles cases, the Council has worked with the early years and education sectors to provide advice and information on measles and MMR to share with staff, parents, and carers. An immunisation framework is in development, initially focussing on MMR, which will be used to

drive improving immunisation uptake and reduce inequalities across Cheshire West and Chester.

### 3. Our ageing population

#### **Census facts:**

- **Our population has more older adults than before. There are now 77,700 people aged 65 or over living in the borough.**
- **From 2011 to 2021 we have seen a 24% increase in the number of older people in Cheshire West and Chester, while England and Wales have seen a 20% increase.**

Older adults make significant contributions to the communities in which they live, however there can be barriers to older people living and ageing well. Ensuring our communities are age friendly is crucial if we want to make sure that everyone can live active, healthy, fulfilling, and independent lives for as long as possible<sup>2</sup>.

Cheshire West and Chester has been part of the UK and World Health Organization network of Age-friendly communities since 2018. The Cheshire West Age-friendly Partnership is a collaborative group made up of residents with lived experience and representatives from the NHS, Cheshire West and Chester Council, the voluntary sector, the University of Chester, and local businesses. The partnership provides a strategic response to the opportunities and challenges of growing older in Cheshire West and Chester.

Throughout 2023, the partnership has been running a variety of projects to celebrate the contributions of older people to the borough, and to help make Cheshire West and Chester an even better place to live and grow older.

2. Department of Health and Social Care, 2023. Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2023: health in an ageing society. To access please click on the following link:

## Case study: Age-friendly Cheshire West Partnership Projects

In early October, libraries across the borough hosted events to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons. These events gave attendees the opportunity to reflect on the past, present, and future of their communities. Feedback was gathered for the Council's Borough Plan consultation. Attendees were also able to receive advice from a range of support services on topics such as lifestyle and finances. [Click here to watch a video of the event.](#)

The website, Live Well Cheshire West, contains a wide range of information about services across the borough, to access please click on the following link: [Live Well Cheshire West](#). This website has been reviewed to make sure it is accessible and easy to use for older adults, and user testing has been carried out by this age group. A new hub has been created on the website to provide information on the Age-friendly partnership, to highlight its projects and encourage volunteers to join, to access please click on the following link: [Age-friendly Hub](#). Resources are also being made available through the hub, including guidelines, to access please click on the following link: [Age-friendly Communication Guidelines](#). These guidelines provide easy steps on how information and communication can be more accessible and inclusive for older people, and how to ensure events are welcoming for older people.

Paid and voluntary employment is an important area of older adult health and wellbeing. Employer Events have brought together local employers and jobseekers aged 50 and over. This has enabled a better shared understanding of job

opportunities and barriers faced by this age group. The events have been motivational, with information shared and a myth-busting session on employment. The Council has worked with West Cheshire College to develop a volunteer scheme where volunteers can support learners, initially in the construction sector. The intention is to expand this to other sectors going forward.

As we move into 2024, the Age-friendly Cheshire West Partnership will continue to work collaboratively with residents and wider partners to:

- support economic participation and volunteering amongst people aged 50 and over.
- reduce the complexity in navigating health, social care, and community-based services.
- support partners to help increase older people's access to healthy and nutritious food.

## Case study: Brio Leisure

### **Facts:**

- 2.3 million visits in 2023.
- More than 5,400 children taught to swim in 2023.
- Winsford Lifestyle Centre was the 2023 winner of the ukactive award for the North Regional Club/Centre of the Year.

Brio Leisure is the face of community leisure, sport and entertainment facilities across Cheshire West and Chester, and its vision is to inspire everyone to lead happier, healthier lifestyles. Its facilities include swimming pools, gyms, and sports halls, offering over 450 weekly fitness classes across the sites.

“Having had a stroke, the class helps me to improve my balance and strengthen my body’s core. A dancing crowd of happy, friendly people - so good for my mental wellbeing.” Participant from the Well Dance class in partnership with Cheshire Dance

Brio proudly embraces the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion and is committed to fostering an environment where everyone, regardless of background, identity, or ability, feels welcome, respected and valued.

**Brio has been working with local partners and communities** to extend the reach of its services as it recognises there are large numbers of people and specific groups with protected characteristics who are unlikely to ever visit one of its leisure centres. Brio’s Active Communities programme uses a range of existing community locations to deliver targeted health and wellbeing activities and services for residents in the most deprived wards across the borough. To date the programme has supported more than 200 people to become more active.

**Brio’s Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme** has provided healthy meals and enriching activities for more than 500 children and young people aged between five and 16 across the borough during the Easter, summer, and Christmas school holidays. The scheme is funded by the Department for Education and is open to families in receipt of benefits related free school meals.

**Brio has supported more than 1,000 visits to leisure centres** to take part in a range of exciting sports camps and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) multi-sports activity sessions.

**This Girl Can classes were introduced** across Brio’s leisure sites to provide bespoke opportunities for women and girls to start or re-start exercising. The classes have played a crucial

role in fostering a more inclusive, diverse, and supportive environment for women and girls to be active.

**Brio offers weight management services** that provide increased access and support for adults with learning disabilities, in recognition of the difficulties that they can face in maintaining a healthy weight.

**Following a consultation process Brio is launching a new website and app in 2024**, designed to be inclusive and accessible. More information on Brio Leisure can be found at the following link: [Brio Leisure - Gyms and Entertainment in Cheshire](#)



## 4. Our ethnic heritage

### Census facts

- **The percentage of residents that identify as being from minority ethnic groups, including white minority ethnic groups such as Gypsy or Roma Traveller\*, has risen from 5% to 9% from 2011 to 2021. This remains significantly below the England and Wales percentage of 26%.**
- **3% (around 11,600) of residents aged three or above do not speak English as their first language compared to 2% in 2011 and 9% in England and Wales.**

\*Defined as 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller or Roma' in the census.

Cheshire West and Chester has a shifting ethnic demographic. There are several reasons for this change:

- The Government's refugee resettlement schemes for Ukrainians, Afghans, and Syrians fleeing war and conflict in their own countries.
- The dispersal of people seeking asylum and waiting for their refugee status to be determined.
- Schemes such as the British National (Overseas) Visa created by the UK government in response to the passing of a new national security law for Hong Kong.
- People from European Union countries who have chosen to live in our borough under the EU Settlement Scheme.
- More than 2,000 foreign students undertaking courses at the University of Chester.
- Other migrants who may have come to Cheshire West and Chester for employment or family reasons.

Migrants will have different needs depending on their reasons for migration and how long they have been in the country. For example, the Council commissioned a pilot psychological treatment programme for Afghan refugees who had experienced significant trauma (Refugee Mental Wellbeing Project for Cheshire West and Chester Council; Arian Wellbeing). However, other support is more generic and ongoing, for example our Hong Kong community, which were featured in the previous annual report.

Work continues to ensure that Cheshire West and Chester becomes a Place of Sanctuary, a welcoming place to those fleeing war and persecution, ensuring that the change in diversity enhances our existing communities and supports them to become more resilient to a changing global environment.

“The Council not only encouraged us to form a constituted group and formalise our entity, but also supported us to organise activities and campaigns focussed on integration as well as promoting the culture of Hong Kong.” Member of ‘Hong Kong in Chester’ group

## Case study: Unlocking Women’s Education, Chester Cathedral

In March, Chester Cathedral invited the Cheshire West Refugee team to join an event to promote women and girls’ education in Afghanistan. Throughout the day the cathedral also raised money for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Volunteers from the cathedral’s congregation help at a Chester primary school where children attend who previously lived at an Afghan bridging hotel in the borough. Working with the school,

the cathedral invited children 'to bring a woman who inspires them to learn' to do a reading during the event.

The school helped the girls to write poems in English about various topics, including how they wanted to be perceived, their fond and positive memories of Afghanistan, and their hopes for Afghanistan and for their own futures. The poems were then also translated into Dari. During the event, the girls stood beside their mums in the cathedral and read the poems in English, followed by their mums reading them in Dari. The event also included continuous readings by women and girls during the day from the Bible and readings about women who inspire learning.

### **Hope & Dreams For Afghanistan (poem)**

We need for everyone:

Peace,

Calm and happiness,

Free Education, excellent learning,

Respect,

Free from the ghost of fear,

Eyes dry of tears,

No more hiding,

Safety and work,

Money, food, water, and electricity for life.

This is our hope for Afghanistan.

## CHAWREC Case study: Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre (CHAWREC)

CHAWREC is the Council's key partner in promoting equality and diversity, and contributing to developing vibrant, safe, and inclusive communities across the borough. CHAWREC manages the Unity Centre in Chester, which is the only multicultural centre in Cheshire West and Chester.

The Unity Centre provides space for communities to meet, access computing and office facilities, and prepare for large cultural events. The borough's calendar of events includes Mid-Autumn Festival, Diwali, Chinese New Year, and Eid. The centre also delivers an array of different activities, including classes (capoeira, knit & natter, Indian Dancing), cultural presentations, health and wellbeing sessions, and successful English language classes.

CHAWREC is a unique organisation which can be greatly impacted by world events, and as such needs to be able to respond to sometimes rapidly changing demands.

In 2023 CHAWREC had to respond to the increased demand for 'English for Speakers of Other Languages' (ESOL), which it provides for all refugees and other migrants settled in the borough. There have been more than 300 learners attending classes in the past year with a range of accredited classes, drop in, and conversation classes. Learners achieved 170 ESOL qualifications, improving employment potential and helping people to integrate. Due to the trust placed in CHAWREC, its staff and volunteers, students often bring a variety of issues to the ESOL classes. These can be around health, immigration, or education, which are then addressed by the diverse, multilingual, and connected team.

The weekly 'Asylum Hub' provides support to asylum seekers feeling isolated. In addition, CHAWREC runs a befriending service. This team undertakes a diverse number of practical tasks to support the families and help identify gaps in provision.

The achievements of CHAWREC as a community organisation are due to the committed team of staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to deliver services in a supporting and caring manner.

"The funding that we receive is fundamental to the stability of the organisation, especially as regards the Unity Centre. The Centre now plays a key role in the community, acting as a focal point for (ethnic minority) communities, especially those who have recently migrated to the area. With the increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees, the provision of a safe space is especially needed and allows us to provide a wraparound support service to individuals." CHAWREC

## 5. Access for all

### Census facts

- **Around 65,900 people in Cheshire West and Chester are disabled under the Equality Act definition, with 42% of these stating that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot.**
- **Disability levels are similar to England and Wales and have remained around 18% over the last 10 years.**
- **A third of households in the borough have one or more disabled person living in their household.**
- **10% (around 32,600) of residents provide unpaid care each week to a friend or relative, with half of those providing more than 20 unpaid hours each week.**
- **5% of residents rate their health as ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’.**

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on the person’s ability to do normal daily activities. This can include hidden disabilities such as mental health, learning disabilities, or neurodivergent conditions such as autism. Disabilities can cause disadvantage to an individual, impacting their health.

This year, the Council celebrated 10 years of the Corporate Disability Access Forum (CDAF) which has facilitated engagement between disabled people and the Council since 2013. A wide range of projects have been undertaken throughout 2023 to improve equality of opportunity, some of which are highlighted here.

- Partnered with Vision Support and other local partners to launch the Cheshire Sight Loss Information Line, a

pioneering service that provides comprehensive assistance and guidance to those living with sight loss.

- Commissioned AccessAble to provide detailed and accurate online accessibility information on more than 300 local venues until 2028.
- Followed the installation of a Changing Places Toilet in Marbury Country Park with further installations planned in Council-run leisure, market, and archive services.
- Installed push buttons for doors from the New Chester Market car park to the market following local stakeholder engagement. “I had visited the New Market car park over the weekend and was overjoyed to see that push pads had been installed.” Member of the NeuroMuscular centre in Winsford.
- Launched the itravel on-demand rural bus service that is fully accessible and allows a resident, or groups of residents to request a bus for a specific journey.
- Commissioned a multi-disciplinary consultancy to carry out four inter-related pieces of work, including accessibility audit elements of Chester city centre, to inform future delivery strategy. Reports are expected to be submitted on the findings at the beginning of 2024.
- Increased access to fixed audio induction (hearing loop) systems and mobile (infra-red) hearing loop systems across Council buildings.
- Funded Live! Cheshire and the Patchwork Company to develop a performing arts project for 50 young people within a wide spectrum of disabilities. The project had a positive impact, giving disabled young people the confidence to face challenges in their daily lives.
- Partnered with Cheshire West Voluntary Action (CWVA), Cancer Alliance, Live! Cheshire, and See Communications to deliver a four-month programme around cancer

awareness and prevention along with easy read resources for people with neurodivergent conditions.

- Worked with Cheshire Constabulary on the Hate Crime Strategy 2022-25, based on the initiative 'You're Safe Here', a scheme to develop a range of premises where staff are trained to support anyone feeling vulnerable. Recruitment and training are underway, with the launch scheduled for 2024.

## Case study: 'Be You' Campaign

The Council is proud of its record on inclusion being a Disability Confident Leader, holding the highest 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework for Local Government, and having been awarded the Navajo Cheshire and Merseyside LGBTQ+ Charter Mark.

Working with a wide range of staff, the Council developed a new brand: 'Be You'. This simple phrase encapsulated what it wanted to achieve: an organisation where everyone can be their authentic self at work. This initiative was launched in the Summer of 2023 with a new focus on the understanding of equality, diversity, and inclusion:

- Equality is the choice - we all have a choice to be fair and treat people fairly.
- Diversity is the fact - we are all different.
- Inclusion is the action - of including and being included.

If we celebrate our differences, treat everyone fairly and include our people in all we do, we will create a culture of belonging. The brand is being used to improve the Council's diversity monitoring rates, as a recruitment and retention tool, and to drive further initiatives such as reverse mentoring.



“I consider myself an LGBT+ ally and work in education and wholeheartedly support SEND inclusion. It is so good to see these positive steps being taken to promote inclusion across these areas.”

“I have an amazing Manager who encourages diversity and ensures that everyone’s needs are met. She has been extremely supportive to me and has always made sure that I have any support that I need to carry out my role.”

Cheshire West and Chester staff members

## Case study: Cheshire West and Chester Libraries

Libraries have always been central to communities, providing warm and welcoming spaces for learning and socialising with inclusivity at the heart of their work. They have had a busy year with just some of their activities around equality, diversity, and inclusion highlighted below.

National initiatives:

January: Holocaust Memorial Day

May: Mental Health Week

May: Dementia Action Week

June: Refugee Week / Great Big Get Together

October: International Day of Older Persons

October: Black History Month

October: Get Online Week

### January

- **Health and Wellbeing Week (January 2023)** – libraries worked with over 50 health partners to provide support to customers and increase their wellbeing, with many new regular support and advice sessions being set up in libraries afterwards.

- **Library iPad Borrowing Scheme (LiBS)** – a new scheme to allow residents to boost their digital skills by borrowing a device from their local library, which is important for those that are digitally excluded. To access information please click on the following link [You can now borrow an iPad from your local library | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

### March

- **World Book Day (March 2023)** – gifting books to school aged children and World Book Day costume swap. For more information please click on the following link: [Libraries are ready for World Book Day 2023 | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

### April

- **World Book Night (April 2023)** – Books for adults gifted to 15 warm spaces groups. For more information please click on the following link: [Libraries gear up for World Book Night | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

### June

- **Library Service of Sanctuary accreditation** – June 2023. One of the first library authorities to gain the ‘Library Service of Sanctuary Award’, granted by City of Sanctuary UK. For more information please click on the following link: [Council's Library Service receives national award for work to support communities | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#) and [Congratulations Cheshire West and Chester Libraries! - Chester city of sanctuary](#)
- **Vivo Care Choices** opened their café in Ellesmere Port Library – Diverse Dine, supporting people with autism, learning disability, or older adults. For more information please click on the following link: [Vivo opens café at Ellesmere Port Library | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

### July

- **Summer Reading Challenge – Holiday Activities with Food**

Four libraries (Frodsham, Helsby, Sandiway and Winsford) utilised Edsential's Holiday Activities with Food funding to provide 351 nutritious meals across the summer holidays to school aged children. This was alongside the enriching activities provided as part of the free annual Summer Reading Challenge. This event was repeated in the winter. For more information please click on the following link: [Libraries boosted reading over summer holidays | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

### On-going events

- **Makaton rhyme times and signage in libraries** – the libraries have a rolling programme of Makaton staff training which primarily focusses on rhyme and story times. In libraries where staff have had more extensive training, there is Makaton signage and staff wear lanyards with the basic Makaton signs on cards.
- **Video tours of libraries** – to support those with extra needs to prepare their visit to the library or where English is their second language. Accessibility guides and social stories are on all individual library webpages.
- **English Conversation groups** - in several libraries as well as providing support for speakers of other languages. For more information please click on the following link: [Support for speakers of other languages | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)
- **eLending resources** for eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines, and eNewspapers to enable access at any time of the day. The eBook resource enables people to enlarge text, change the colour of the background and text type (for dyslexic readers). eBooks in the top languages spoken in Cheshire West and eMagazines and eNewspapers published in different countries.
- **Wellbeing activities** that are open to all. These include art and craft groups, book groups, digital support sessions, knit and natter sessions, scrabble / chess groups.

- **Home Library Service** (10 libraries) delivers books to people who cannot get to a library or who cannot carry books home.

## Case study: 'Nothing about us, without us'

### The Second Cheshire West Learning Disability Conference

A Learning Disability Conference took place for the second successive year, this time at Ellesmere Port Civic Hall. The conference brought together people with learning disabilities and local decision-makers to collectively champion key improvements in the borough. The partnership event had 180 people in attendance during the daytime, of which half were people with a learning disability, and 90 people enjoying the gala dinner and Makaton DJ in the evening.

The overarching theme for the conference this year was "Nothing about us, without us" and focused on quality of life, person-centred care, quality of support, and having a voice. Workshops covered day services, support for those with profound, intellectual, and multiple disabilities, meaningful friendships and relationships, and Vivo's Work and Voluntary Enterprise (WAVE) programme. The feedback from professionals and service users in response to the conference was enormously positive:

"The WAVE Workshop on employment was informative, helpful and made you think about what you might want to do as a job." "It's wonderful to see the confidence it gave to many of the speakers and performers with lived experience."

Several key priorities emerged from the conference which included meaningful friendships and relationships, respite, staying out late, and transport, which were incorporated into pledges for 2024. The conference also reviewed the progress made on last year's conference pledges and reaffirmed the continued commitment to:

- make sure people with a learning disability are involved with new buildings and developments from planning stage through to opening.
- make sure there is easy read information available.
- always listen to people with lived experience and not assume.
- try and get more and better trained social care and health care staff.
- listen to young people, their carers, and their families to get the services in place from an early stage so they can live independent lives.

“It’s fantastic to see an event planned in collaboration with, and for, people with learning disabilities so well attended by the people who matter most.” Alistair Jeffs, Director of Vivo Care Choices

## 6. LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, and other sexual and gender minority identities)

### Census facts

- **A new question in the 2021 census asked residents about sexual orientation.**
- **3% aged 16+ identified with an LGB+ orientation (“Gay or Lesbian”, “Bisexual” or “Other sexual orientation”) in line with England and Wales figures.**
- **0.3% aged 16+ stated in the census they have a different gender identity to their sex registered at birth.**

The Council, recognising both the poorer health outcomes of LGBTQ+ people<sup>3</sup>, and its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, has continued to proactively support the communities in multiple ways. It works with several organisations including Chester Pride, The Proud Trust, and Body Positive/Silver Rainbows, and uses their expertise to improve awareness and visibility. The Council provides LGBTQ+ inclusive youth provision and The Proud Trust delivers training to staff in Childrens Services.

In October 2023, the Council was reaccredited with the Navajo Merseyside and Cheshire LGBTQ+ Charter Mark, in recognition of work to ensure it is LGBTQ+ inclusive, after first receiving the award in 2020. The Charter Mark looks in detail at the Council as an employer, a commissioner, and a provider of services. The assessment covers areas such as policies, procedures and practices, recruitment, monitoring, training, and engagement with staff and stakeholders.

Extensive written evidence is followed by two days of interviews with staff, elected members, and partners. Navajo praised the Council for its honest and open approach, recognising the areas of strength, but also where improvements can be made, and remarked on the considerable progress since the previous assessment.

3. For more information on the Mental Health needs assessment for LGBT people, please click on the following link: [Mental Health JSNA LGBT chapter 2018-02-19 \(cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk\)](https://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/mental-health-jsna-lgbt-chapter-2018-02-19)

## Case study: Chester Pride

Chester Pride is a charity that supports LGBTQ+ people in Chester and the surrounding areas. Although best known for its annual Pride festival each August, it provides many other services. This includes mental health support, information and advice, social groups, and even a Christmas dinner for LGBTQ+ people who would otherwise be alone. The Council contributed funding to the Health and Wellbeing Zone at the 2023 Chester Pride. The zone featured numerous agencies providing advice and information to the estimated 12,000 attendees. The Council stand was well attended and provided information on Public Health initiatives around smoking cessation and healthy weight.

Several of the Council's Public Health commissioned services were also in attendance, including sexual health and drug and alcohol services. Cheshire West and Chester Council supported the event on the day with more than 80 staff, councillors, service users, family, and friends in the parade through the city. This visibility helps to show that the Council is an inclusive organisation.

“With the Council we have built a mutually beneficial relationship to produce effective collaborations on key issues. For example, conversations around mental health have enabled us to identify priority areas of need among the LGBTQ+ community, and advocate to the Public Health department to address these issues.” Chester Pride Charity Management



## 7. Where we call home

### Census facts

- **The census is sent to all ‘household spaces’ which includes residences such as sheltered housing, boarding schools, military bases, and prisons.**
- **The census is also sent to hostels and temporary shelters, but this is only a small proportion of all people that are classified as homeless.**
- **In England & Wales, homeless people living in shelters or hostels were twice as likely to be classed as disabled, and reported bad or very bad health, compared to the general population. For more information please click on the following link: [People experiencing homelessness, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/homelessness/articles/peopleexperiencinghomelessnessinenglandandwales/2019-03-28)**
- **Within Cheshire West and Chester, we have a thriving traveller community, which can be underestimated in the census statistics.**

Having a secure home, where we can feel safe and keep warm, is integral to our health and wellbeing. Where we call home is tied to our identity, whether that is in a permanent location, or a home which can be moved from one area to another such as a boat or caravan. Our homeless and travelling populations continue to suffer some of the greatest health inequalities, and the Council is committed to improving this.

While 90% of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) population now live in houses, this is often in closeknit communities to continue with their cultural traditions. Across Cheshire West and Chester there are two sites for 30 GRT families to live in their caravans. These are permanent pitches that families live

on as their home, much like any other social housing. Some families continue to maintain a travelling lifestyle for all or part of the year, and for those families, there are limited options of where to stop to be able to access services such as healthcare. The Council is in the process of setting up a temporary stopping place in Ellesmere Port. This will provide some basic waste and water facilities for a negotiated length of stay. The Cheshire and Warrington Traveller Team (CWTT), hosted by Cheshire West and Chester Council, covers the four local authority areas in Cheshire. It has commissioned a support/advocacy service from Irish Community Care, which happens every Wednesday in the Portal in Ellesmere Port. A women's health day was held in September in Ellesmere Port and saw 25 women from the GRT community attend. The borough's traveller population also includes around 300-700 people living in boats at any time. Work conducted with partners Healthwatch from 2019-2021 improved access to healthcare for this group.

### Homelessness

Homelessness includes not only those that are 'rough sleeping', but also people that are in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, or those that are staying temporarily with friends and family: often called 'sofa-surfing'.

The Multi-Agency Rough Sleeping (MARS) partnership of statutory and third-sector agencies meets twice each week to provide a person-centred approach for rough sleepers. The cohort has complex needs and as such need a bespoke package of support.

In 2023, the Outreach team was in contact with around 40 people rough sleeping across the borough each month:

- 80% were male.

- The age range was 17 - 73 (average 38).
- Less than 10% of rough sleepers were long term rough sleepers.

Supported accommodation bridges the gap to support people to become tenancy ready. During 2023 the Council has increased the number of supported housing units for homeless people to 160, and in 2024 Curzon House will open to provide 36 units of supported housing within a therapeutic environment. Specialist workers will deliver person centred support to help residents with physical, social, and emotional wellbeing.

Over the last year the Council has experienced more families needing hotel emergency accommodation. Prior to the pandemic the average number of households in emergency accommodation was 42 per month. In 2023 this was 167 per month. Previously, families would only have access to a hotel room, however, this year the Council has ensured that families have access to laundry and cooking facilities. Third sector partners have worked with the Council to support families with children with activities and food support, including during the school holidays.

## Case study: St Werburgh's

St Werburgh's Medical Practice for the Homeless was set up in 2000 when it was identified that Chester had an equivalent number of rough sleepers to Camden, London. It now serves around 350 homeless and temporarily housed individuals in the Chester area.

People that are homeless often struggle to fit into mainstream healthcare services and their health can suffer due to this. At St Werburgh's, there is a secure environment and flexible

appointments such as drop-in, same day, and longer appointments to deal with complex health issues. All services are delivered by highly experienced and trained staff, including those with lived experience.

The team at St Werburgh's include doctors, nurses, and support staff with a range of specialist skills to support physical and mental health. Staff are clinic based or in the community when required, for example to support service users to get to hospital or screening appointments. The medical practice also benefits from regular visits from a dietician, podiatrist and optician.

St Werburgh's works closely with the local homeless and associated organisations, including Chester Aid To The Homeless (CATH), ForFutures housing who are commissioned by the Council, and drug and alcohol services. They offer outreach at the Harold Tomlins Centre in Chester, a drop-in centre run by CATH.

Within the medical practice there is a real culture of communication and flexibility, as well as a determination to engage with patients that struggle to access services, to try to help them as they manage the complex issues they often face.

"Friendly and everyone knows me, not doom and gloom, can have a laugh with staff."

"I am very happy and the best help I've ever had, they listen and seem to care."

"I can just drop in there - they are really flexible and it's run extremely well. They listen to me and support me."

St Werburgh's service users

## 8. Priorities and Recommendations

### Our ageing population

**Recommendation 1:** Age-friendly Programme: The Council should complete a review of Cheshire West's Age-Friendly Programme, to identify areas of strength as well as opportunities for development and future funding. This will help to build upon the existing work undertaken and focus the future direction of the Age-friendly partnership.

**Recommendation 2:** Age-friendly Survey: Cheshire West's Age-friendly Strategic Group should arrange to undertake an Age-friendly follow up survey in 2025, as per the requirements of membership of the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. This will set out to identify the progress that has been made since the Age-friendly baseline survey was conducted, and to identify areas for future focus.

### Our ethnic heritage

**Recommendation 3:** Diverse communities: The Council should work with partners to continually improve its knowledge and understanding of the needs of its diverse communities, so that it can develop further knowledge of vulnerabilities and health conditions. This should be facilitated by reviewing and improving communication, practices, and systems to develop better access and engagement with communities.

**Recommendation 4:** Sanctuary: Work collaboratively to ensure Cheshire West is a place of safety and sanctuary for refugee and migrant communities.

## Access for all

**Recommendation 5:** Accessibility recommendations: The Council should realise accessibility consultancy recommendations in Chester City Centre, with accessible signage, mapping, and wayfinding.

**Recommendation 6:** Sensory impairment provision: The Council should continue to prioritise and improve sensory impairment provision across its services. This is needed to ensure that residents with a sensory impairment can access Council services and receive a positive experience.

**Recommendation 7:** Council workforce: The Council should continue to champion equality, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation and seek to identify if there are any areas of the Council with less diverse representation. Training of staff on diversity awareness is integral to continuing to foster an inclusive workplace.

## LGBTQ+

**Recommendation 8:** Strengthen relationships: The Council should build on established relationships with LGBTQ+ organisations to continue to identify key issues affecting communities, so it can support all its residents regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

## Where we call home

**Recommendation 9:** Traveller population: The Council should develop a framework or strategy to promote better outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in the borough, including those on unauthorised encampments, and end any discriminatory practice.

**Recommendation 10:** Homelessness: The Council should strengthen links between the housing department and health partners through partnership working in the Homeless Reduction Board and other relevant groups.

Our short film is available to watch at the following link: [Public health | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

End of document.