

WMCA Wellbeing Board

Date	Tuesday 6 September 2022
Report title	Include Me WM – Citizens Voice
Portfolio Lead	Cllr Izzi Seccombe – Wellbeing Board Chair
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Recommendations for action and decision:

The Wellbeing Board is asked to:

- Advise on how members could support in strengthening the local to regional citizen voice by linking to local authority, emergency services and NHS networks.
- Discuss the Include Me WM Citizen Panel priorities and advise on its role to gather further evidence and influence on needs, barriers
- Continue to champion the commitment to being an exemplar region in improving the Health Outcomes of disabled people and co-development of future initiatives with the panel.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This paper sets out the growing purpose and impact of the WMCA's Include Me WM Citizens Network and Panel.
- 1.2 It provides a summary of the Include Me WM Citizen Panel 2022/23 priorities which have been developed following consultation with its members and highlight the importance of both sport and physical activity in health outcomes and some of the additional barriers which prevent people getting active. The Panel and Network will work to influence WMCA and other partners' work.
- 1.3 It seeks Wellbeing Board members views on the Panel can help in making the WM an exemplar region and in improving the health outcomes of disabled people and the role that Board members can play in achieving it.

2. Include Me West Midlands

- 2.1 In Spring 2019, the Wellbeing Board approved the 3 year, **5 Include Me West Midlands priorities** following an inquiry into reducing the high levels of physical inactivity of disabled people in the West Midlands. These priorities are where the WMCA could have

the greatest impact, promoting a commitment to best practice and working to address those wider determinants of health preventing disabled people getting active.

- 2.2 The WMCA funded this work through £200k from Sport England, which included the secondment of Mark Fosbrook from Activity Alliance to manage this work. These priorities included:
 - 2.2.1 **Include Me WM Pledge & Supporter Network** – An organisation commitment to engaging better with disabled people and being connected to other likeminded organisations. To date, 99 organisations have pledged their commitment as Supporters from Local Authorities to sports clubs and community organisations and led to a targeted community sports club trial to accelerate inclusivity. We are waiting for the final evaluation report.
 - 2.2.2 **Impact Supporters Network** – Supporters come together to share their impact, encourages new ideas, what has worked and what hasn't and why in encouraging coproduction with disabled people. For example, Wolverhampton University Leisure Centre identified a lack of awareness of audiences on these issues. Through this work, they connected to the University Student Administration Team, which enabled them to gain a greater understanding and made improvement in programming to disabled people. This has increased participation levels within the University and the local community.
 - 2.2.3 **Supporting Health & Social Care** – Activity Alliance studies show that disabled people are more likely to be active when referred by a trusted source, such as a healthcare professionals. With Active Black Country, the WMCA has trialled research to identify and trial potential solutions to increase referrals to physical activity. Providing quick and simple physical activity information connected to existing patient system is a practical solution that could be accelerated with local partners.
 - 2.2.4 **Travel without Barriers** – One of the identified barriers is access and confidence in using public transport. A WMCA and Sport England funded pilot tested different ways to make public transport a barrier free experience. Using different digital interventions such as alerts and clear route planning, it highlighted that one digital automated solution is a possible solution for citizens which can remove several barriers; however, it also highlighted the need for increased training and support for staff. This is starting to be explored with Transport for West Midlands.
- 2.3 The focus of this paper then is to take the above priorities and early successes and improve upon them by placing disabled people at the heart of the conversation and planning, through the **Include Me WM Citizens Network and Panel**.

3. Include Me Disabled Citizens Network and Panel

- 3.1 The Disability Rights UK report ⁱ for the WMCA on disabled citizen engagement highlighted it was “essential that we work with disabled people to develop services that work, and the lack of support and structure has seen an already large inequality gap grow wider”.
- 3.2 In response to this and the lockdown during the pandemic, the WMCA's Include Me WM Facebook page was launched and has since grown to 1196 members providing guidance and clips on getting active and connecting communities. Midland Mencap led work for the WMCA in creating a WM Citizen Network (CN), connecting existing groups and forums of disabled people and a Citizens' Panel to represent the needs of disabled people in physical activity policy and delivery.
- 3.3 An innovative inclusive recruitment process such as allowing Panel membership applications to be submitted in different formats and a training session to all applicants on understanding the landscape, intersectionality and looking through the lens of others, enabled us to recruit 13 Citizens Panel (CP) members. This has helped to connect and

listen to people and networks, draw from their own lived experience to share knowledge on the barriers and solutions.

- 3.4 Midland Mencap have Citizen Network Connector to build relationships and connect with existing groups, networks, and individuals, a potential reach to over 21,000 disabled people in the region. There is not a consistent spread geographically or by impairment and needs to continue to build the reach and develop relationships to be more consistent.
- 3.5 The Citizens Network and Panel pilot phase has demonstrated the potential opportunity to connect better than ever before with our disabled citizens to identify and address the most important issues. The initial Panel and Network remit has been about identifying the barriers and solutions to get more disabled people active. This has revealed that the biggest barriers to getting active are the wider determinants that impact on a disabled persons day to day life.
- 3.6 Examples of this wider work include responding to the WM Mental Health Commission and providing insight on accessible housing in the west midlands to inform the Health of the Region Design Sprint work and evidence to inform the Health Devolution work.

4. A WM wide Citizens Voice

- 4.1 The potential reach and depth of engagement with disabled people is reliant on a more connected approach which has the potential for even greater change, understanding local government and NHS disability networks and the benefits of a connected local to regional voice to address inequalities. The WMCA is seeking Wellbeing Board guidance on local networks to engage with. Also, agreement for the WMCA to develop the case and benefits for such a larger and more significant voice.

5. Include Me WM Citizens Panel 2022/23 Priorities

- 5.1 The Panel recognise that action is needed at a service level to improve opportunity, at system level to enable disabled people to have a positive impact and at society level to challenge negative attitudes and behaviours.
- 5.2 To reflect this wider thinking the Panel has developed its own priorities for 2022/23 working with the wider Citizen's Network, highlighted below. The Panel is encouraging action from the WMCA and other networks such as the Regional Disability Stakeholder Group to deliver against these priorities.
 - 5.2.1 **To understand the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on disabled people.**

The CN share their lived experiences and evidence. The cost of living has exasperated the number of people in poverty, with half of all people living in poverty being disabled or living with a disabled person. On average disabled people face an additional £583 costs per month compared to those without a disability. The cost-of-living crisis means that more disabled people are having to make difficult life choices on rent, eating and heating.

The CP would like the WMCA and Local Authorities to work with them to understand the impact and explore how disabled people are now left behind through this crisis. Also, to use the CP and Network to gain views and insight on what matters to them.
 - 5.2.2 **To promote safe, inclusive, accessible and enjoyable walking and cycling.**

The CN identified there remain many physical barriers preventing disabled people walking and cycling e.g., not wide enough pavements, signage, café chairs and tables. The CP would like the WMCA and Local Authorities to work with them to find practical solutions and to encourage more disabled people to use the walking and cycling routes.
 - 5.2.3 **To encourage disabled people to play their part.**

The CN shared their concerns about having their voice heard and be involved in discussions and decision making providing a diversity of thought on the challenges and opportunities.

As well as expanding the network as described above and help in encouraging all

services and facilities are inclusive and accessible. The CP would like to explore how they can connect better to local and regional forums such as Net Zero, Race Equality Taskforce.

5.2.4 To empower disabled people to be more active by making it a viable and positive opportunity.

Along with the wider determinants of health, the CP wants to continue to influence work to remove the psychological (how they have been treated in the past/how they are welcomed); logistical (location of the opportunity and cost) and the Physical (accessibility) barriers which make getting active less viable. For example, a disabled person who had been selected to from the B2022 Queens Baton Relay turned it down because of the fear of being seen as too active and lose essential benefits. They are seeking additional gaps between those disabled people who rely on care and support and those who do not.

The CP are committed to codeveloping a shared sport and physical activity vision to create positive change and make activity a positive choice, as well as through the CN connect citizens to local opportunities such as the Wolverhampton University Leisure Centre example above. The CP wants help to address the fears in losing benefits because of getting active.

5.2.5 To encourage homes to meet disabled people's needs

The CN identified that most homes are not created as accessible and are encouraging change where housing is able to reflect different and accessible needs. Finding suitable accessible housing to rent or buy is a big challenge.

The CP wants to continue to work with the WMCA and local authorities through the agreed Design Sprint work to look at issues and potential solutions on accessible housing.

5.2.6 Disabled People and Net Zero Pledge

The CN acknowledged that they have a part to play in the region of achieving Net Zero. However as mentioned in previous points this is not always possible. For a variety of reasons, quite often a car is the only option for disabled people to get around. With rising fuel costs and a climate emergency an electric powered vehicle would be a positive option. For those accessing Motability find that there could be a significant saving over 3 years but this is reliant on having accessible EV charging infrastructure in place. Also, disabled people often have additional support needs that require an increase in electricity usage at home. However sustainable energy sources are quite often too expensive for disabled people.

Along with being better connected to existing networks, it aims to establish a disability Net Zero group to ensure disabled people voices are heard and there are opportunities for disabled people to play their part in the region achieving their target.

5.3 This is a challenging agenda for which the CP are seeking the views of Wellbeing Board members on how they could support such as connecting to local and regional networks. Working together to understand needs and deliver change that would evidence the West Midlands as an exemplar region in improving the health outcomes of disabled people.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no additional legal implications.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications.

8. Equalities Implications

8.1 The risk of lifestyle factors on disabled people and those with long term health conditions are well documented and under acknowledged. Addressing these inequalities at time when the spotlight is starting to shine on how disabled people were not adequately supported during the pandemic is the right thing to do as well as placing WMCA and the region at the front of the movement. Measures will be regularly monitored, evaluating and learning will inform future planning and priorities.

9. Inclusive Growth Implications

9.1

Fundamental	Indicator	Justification
Climate Resilience	Accessible and viable opportunities developed for disabled people to play their part in achieving Net Zero.	Opportunities do not consider the needs of disabled people enough. Eg: EV Charging points, cost and suitability of adapted cycles/ e-power wheelchair attachments.
Affordable Safe and Connected Places	Clearly developed standard based on disability needs assessment. Connected communities developed with an inclusive approach from the start.	Not enough suitable housing stock to meet the needs of disabled citizens. Not able to be connected into communities due to social and physical barriers.
Education and Learning	Reduction in the disability skills gap.	Disabled people in WM are three times as likely to not have the essential skills.
Health and Wellbeing	Reducing the fairness gap, removing the fear of being active.	Disabled people half as likely to be active. Disabled people not being active for fear of losing benefits.
Equality	Removing inequalities at a services, system and societal level	Disabled people are some of the most disproportionately impacted across most areas of life.
Inclusive Economy	Reduction of the disability pay gap. Moving WM out of bottom 3. Increase in disability employment.	WM residents paid lowest amount in Country Employing disabled people enables diversity of thought and an affinity from other disabled people.
Power, Influence and Participation	Increase in coproduction opportunities with disabled people. More disabled people in influential positions.	Disabled people not being considered or listened to. Lack of active lived experience at senior levels.

10. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

10.1 Include Me WM expands the wider West Midlands geography with some targeted work within the constituent authority areas reflective of investment and need.

11. Other Implications

11.1 None

12. Schedule of Background Papers

12.1 None

ⁱ Disability Rights UK [Moving the West Midlands Forward report](#) (2020) for the West Midlands Combined Authority.