International
Longevity Centre UK

Greengross Lecture 2026: How communities shape healthier, long lives

Wednesday 2 September 2026

ilcuk.org.uk

What happens next

International
Longevity Centre UK

Remembering Baroness Sally Greengross

Lawrence Churchill CBE
Chair, ILC Trustees

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Chairs welcome and introduction

Sarah Neville
Global Health Editor
Financial Times

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Greengross Lecture 2026
People, Place, Prevention, Power & Politics
How communities shape healthier, long lives

Professor Kate Ardern
Honorary Professor of Public Health Salford University
Former Director of Public Health Wigan Council 2008-2022

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People, Place, Prevention, Power & Politics
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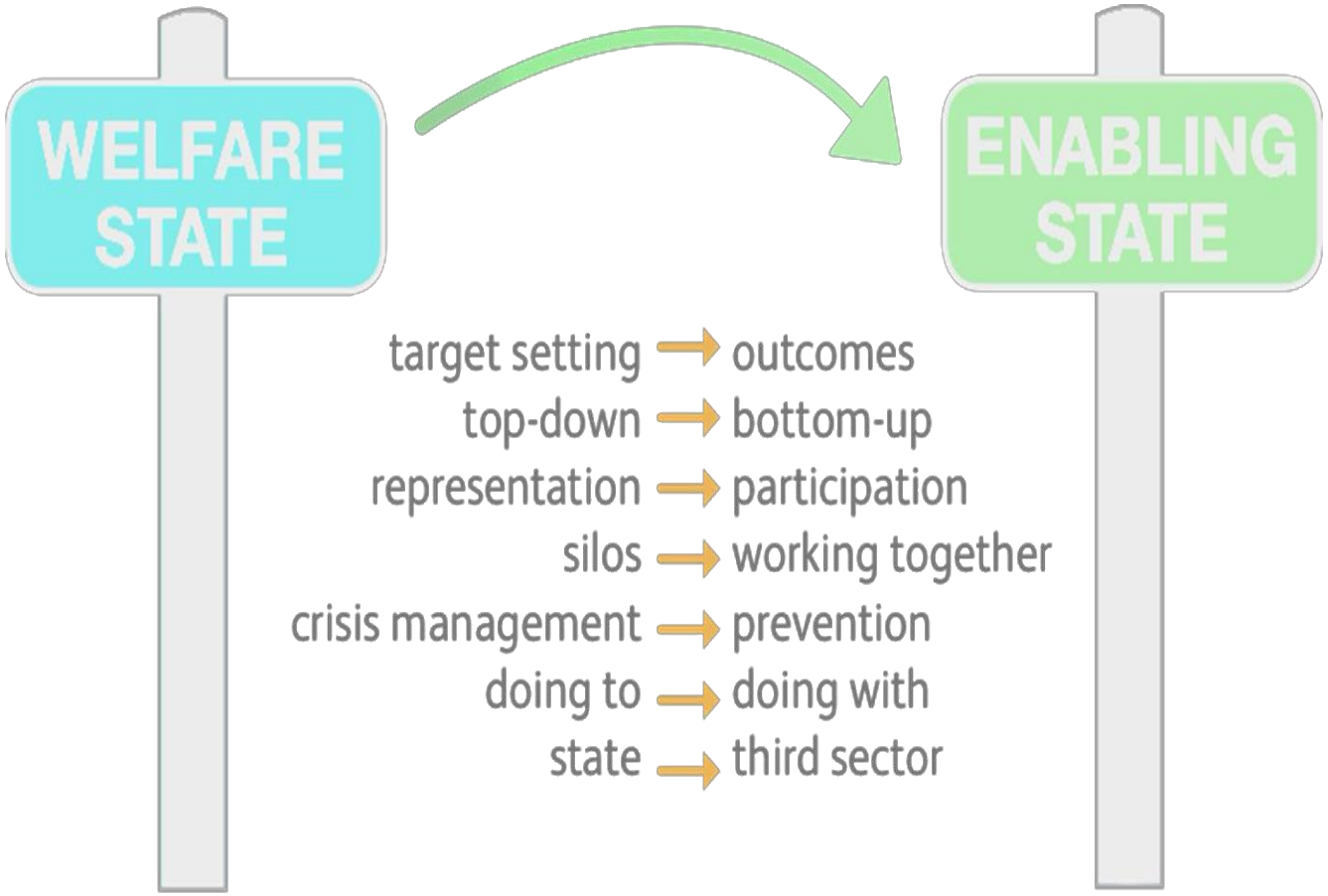
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The 8 Lecture Themes

- People
- Place
- Prevention
- Power
- Politics
- Humanity
- Hope
- Health



What happens if we get it right? *Enabling State*



Example 1: Health Impact Assessment Of Liverpool's Housing Strategy 2003

- "This HIA set out to investigate the impact of Liverpool City Council's Housing Strategy Statement on the health and well being of the residents of Liverpool in order to devise action for maximising health gains and minimising any negative impacts on health status"

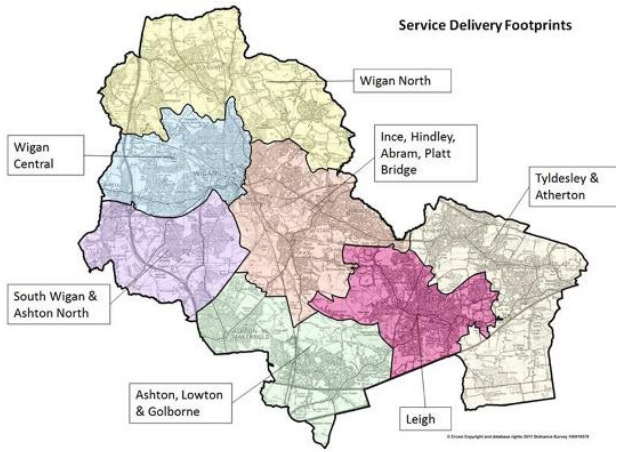
HIA Recommendations

- Health & Safety and Occupational Health training for construction workers
- Proactive occupational health services for front-line staff
- Community consultation and development must address
    - low levels of literacy and numeracy
    - support for front line officers
    - resources
    - local recruitment
- Increased incentives to use brownfield sites
- Green procurement code
- Replacement of lead piping
- Housing development to include sustainable travel plans
- Participation of children & young people in planning housing
- Housing for key workers
- Improve conditions in HMOs
- Health &Advice Note Development

Example 2: Wigan Deal Principles

- Having a **different conversation based on ethnographic training … we worked with an anthropologist to develop this approach to staff development.**
- Knowing your **community** better
- **Co-location of teams** and **partner agencies** in a place
- **Partnership approach** with **VCSE sector, public sector partners,** and **businesses**
- **Connecting to** and **building** community capacity
- Giving the **permission and freedom** to re-design and innovate
- Attitudes and behaviours of staff: **BeWigan behaviours** and **flexible working**





Asset Based Working - 10 Essential Components

- **Strong Narrative** - a simple concept that everyone can understand but is profound in its implications .
- **A belief that this is a movement not a project** - rooting the approach in public service values: “sense of vocation”.
- **Leadership at every level** - commitment and senior sponsorship
- **Workforce culture change** - training and core behaviours that define how we work, whatever the role.
- **A different relationship with residents and communities** - building self reliance and independence
- **Investing in citizens** own ideas, skills and talents – strengthening our community assets
- **Permissions to work differently** - leadership backing: ‘we will support you’
- **Redesigning the system** - testing our systems, processes, ways of working against our principles: ‘do they make the culture and behaviours we want more or less likely?’
- **Enabling staff with the right tools and knowledge** - using new technology to support new ways of working and new roles
- **A new model of commissioning and community investment** - market development and new arrangements for commissioning
- **Supportive enabling functions** - breaking down barriers to progress and facilitating the change

Creating a Culture of Health: System Shift to An Asset Based Approach

"Past": Deficit Based Thinking

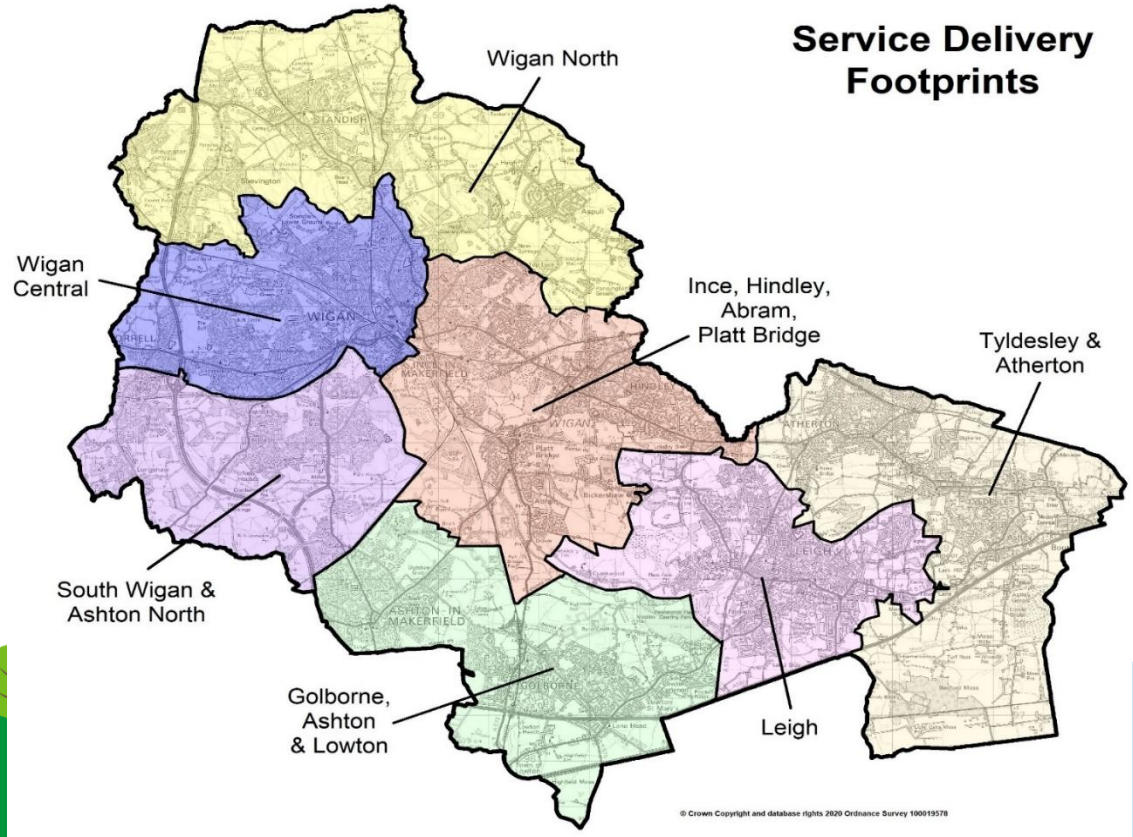
1. Problem orientated
   - How to fix the problem
   - Problems are embedded
2. Us vs Them
   - Do things to people
3. People are a problem
   - People can't be trusted to be in control / make decisions

"Future": Asset Based Thinking

1. Strengths based
   - What can I do, what can you do?
2. We're all in this together
   - How can we co-create community spirit?
3. People have the answers
   - People can control their lives and make decisions

Geography Matters : Wigan's Neighbourhood Integration For Health Care & Wider Public Services

- Population of 30-50k as foundation of integrated health and social care
- Primary Care clustered on this basis
- Healthy Wigan Partnership driving all reform on this basis – integrated community services for adults, mental health community staff etc.
- Twin Townships as a default currency of integration for wider public services – e.g GMP, schools etc. **GPs and Schools are the Community Anchor Institutions**



Bases

- **SWAN** Clifton St
- **Wigan Central**
  Meadows
- **Atherton and Tyldesley**
  Atherton town hall
- **HAPI**
  Hindley library
- **Ashton Lowton Golborne**
  Ashton library
- **Wigan North**
  Shevington library
- **Leigh**
  Leigh library

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Investing in Citizens

Strengthening our communities and assets



“I try and act as a role model. I go for a walk each lunch time. I’ve also talked with family and friends and even placed bowel cancer awareness leaflets in the toilets at church.”

The whole point of community empowerment is a stronger voice, feeling better, making Wigan a better place to be,.

“Most of the group of young Mums had disengaged from school. They had poor literacy, no qualifications and an absence of praise.

“The qualification is the first one she has got. That’s a real achievement. She left the course much more confident and with a qualification she can put on her CV.”

We’ve really embraced it at Electrium. It’s amazing how many people are interested in a healthier lifestyle.”

“You can’t tell someone to give up but you can talk about the benefits of stopping smoking and suggest things that might help.”



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Investing in Place



Galleries



LSV Hub



Haigh Hall



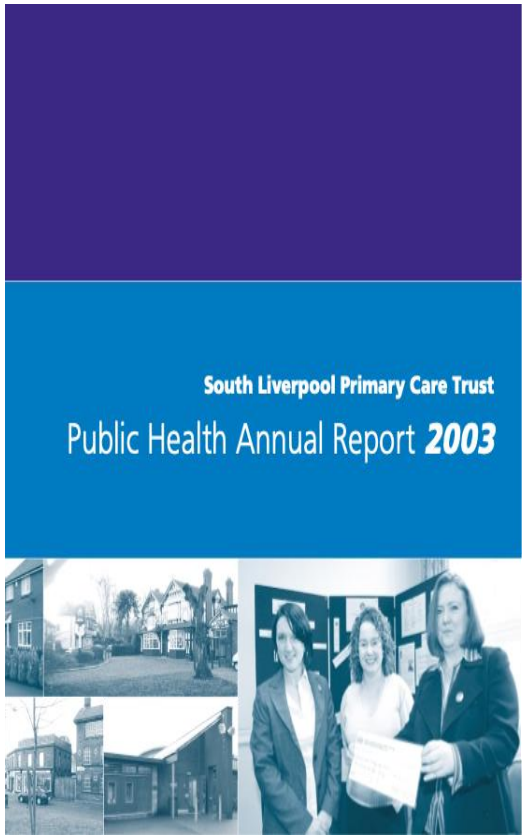
Pennington Flash



Volunteers

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DPH Annual Reports to Borough Annual Public Health Movies



South Liverpool NHS
Primary Care Trust

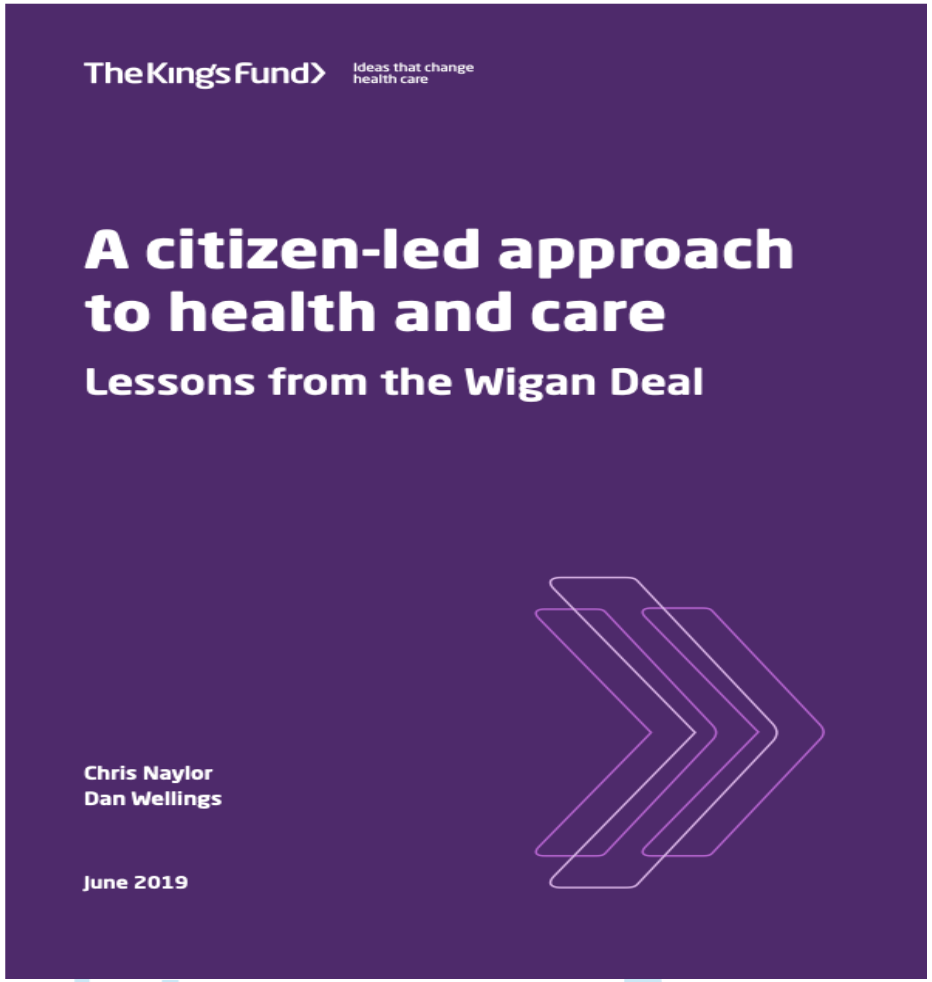
Wigan Public Health movie 2025

Wigan Public Health Annual Report 2016 - 2017

Kings Fund Independent Report on Lessons from the Wigan Deal 2019

- Dan Wellings and Chris Naylor of The Kings Fund undertook an extensive independent evaluation of the Wigan Deal published in June 2019
- https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/projects/lessons-wigan-deal
- https://youtu.be/JcNl5v_DfTU

- My favourite finding was Dan and Chris comment that we'd given staff their vocation back…



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Example 3: Lessons on People, Place, Prevention, Power and Politics from the GM COVID Response

The **whole-system approach** to pandemic response has been essential and should be embraced for the continued ICS development, to deliver a population health system for Greater Manchester, and for future pandemic planning.

Maintaining our local capacities and good practices built during the pandemic will be critical to living safely and fairly with COVID-19, in the face of any future surges or VOCs, and in the face of challenges beyond COVID-19.

Inequalities in the vaccination programme can place groups at greater risk, and we will continue to rely on a hyper-local approach to vaccination and communications around the programme, ensuring that our Evergreen offer is able to reach these communities and reduce inequalities.

Working with communities through hyperlocal approaches and programmes like Community Champions can continue to help us with reaching hard-to-reach individuals and groups, who may be placed at increased risk due to socioeconomic, digital, and linguistic barriers.

Identifying and supporting high-risk groups and clinically vulnerable groups must continue to be a priority, including providing out-of-hours services where needed. It is also critical that we maintain stocks of PPEs and testing kits to support at-risk groups as part of BAU.

Non-pharmaceutical interventions work for more than just COVID, and we must ensure that good NPI behaviours learned during the pandemic are maintained, as much as possible, across the GM population. Whilst some NPIs are associated with harm, those with minimal/negligible harm should be prioritised for behaviour change campaigns (e.g. catch it, bin it, kill it).

Applying The Deal to Health Protection: Wigan's Community Resilience Model

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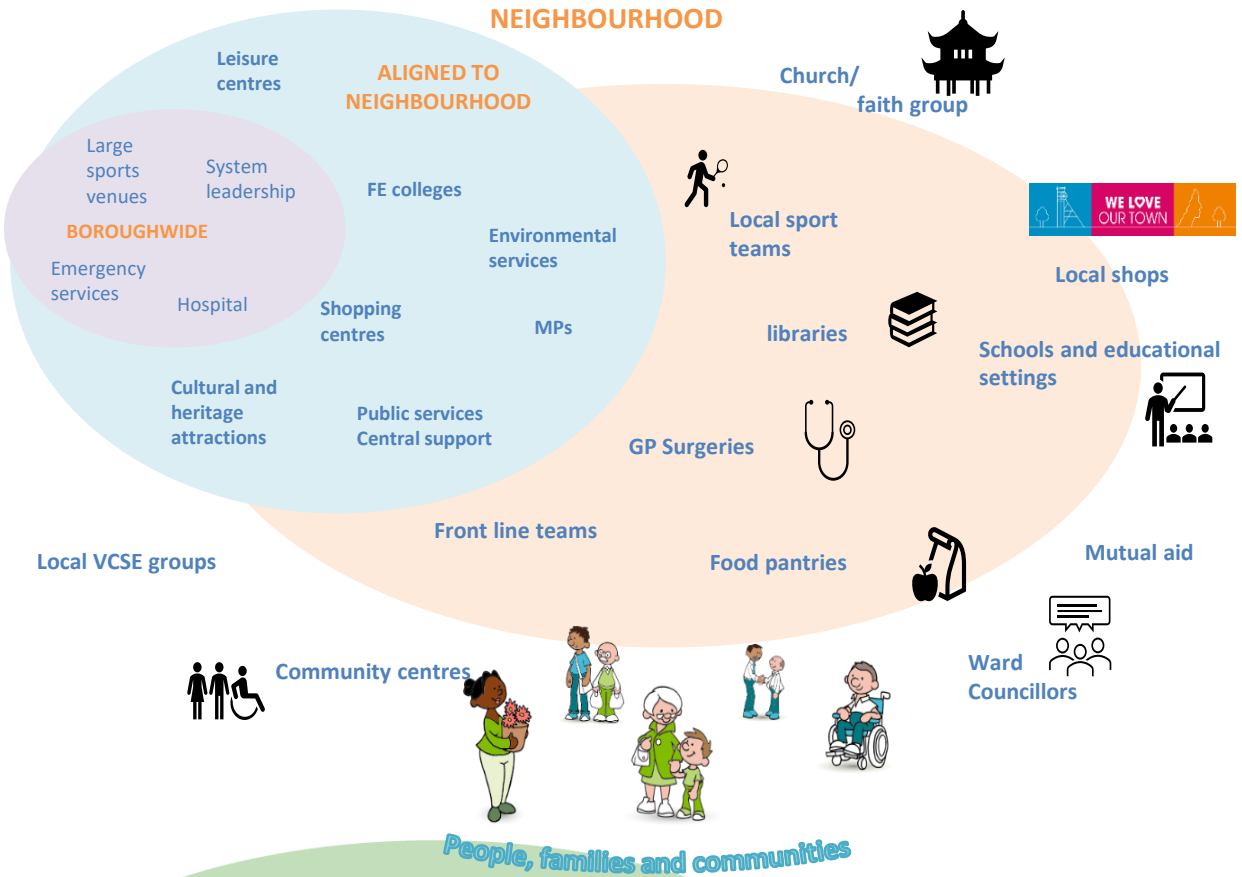
Borough-wide infrastructure

- Central food distribution hub
- Helpline & Contact points, welfare advice
- Logistics, Food and Volunteer Leads
- Deal for Communities –Process and protocol development, central matching of needs, allocations and monitoring support
- Joint Intelligence Unit – Identification of vulnerability, shielded cross reference and performance arrangements
- Wigan Community Partnership Volunteer Bureau

Seven Community Support Hubs

- Twin township Leadership teams
- Voluntary, Community Sector support network
- Food bank networks and provision
- Daily check-ins
- Bringing organisations together
- Matchmaking local volunteers
- Link to mutual aid groups
- Provide local information
- Link with logistics
- Local support infrastructure co-ordination- food, pharmacy, wellbeing advice and comfort calls

Building On Our Success: The Foundations For A More Cooperative Based Neighbourhood Model



Neighbourhood: a dynamic eco-system of people, organisations and businesses interacting as a system

Aligned: central organisations, teams, businesses and services with a link into the neighbourhood

Borough-wide: emergency services, central teams, organisations, businesses, specialists, consultants, which serve all neighbourhoods equally

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“Because Pandemics Begin and End with Communities”

&

“Pandemics aren’t a rare or once in a lifetime event ..they happen frequently”

Kate Ardern

from “**The Unequal Pandemic**”

a documentary from Good Guys Productions commissioned by Debbie Abrahams MP launched in UK Parliament Sept 2023 and available to watch

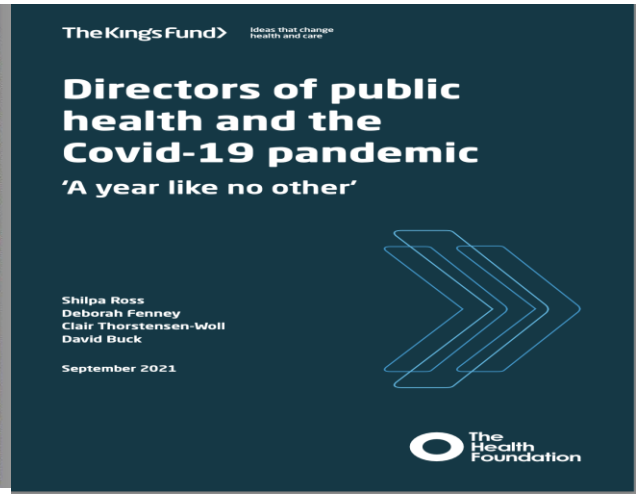
https://goodguysproductions.co.uk/the-unequal-pandemic/

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Politics and Power: Further Reading







www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/shaping-the-covid-decade-addressing-the-long-term-societal-impacts-of-covid-19/
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/historic-and-geographic-patterns-of-health-inequalities/
https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/build-back-fairer-in-greater-manchester-health-equity-and-dignified-lives
https://www.health.org.uk/publications/a-year-like-no-other

Realising the Potential

- '**Marmot Review 10 Years On: Health Equity in England**' made direct correlations between the increase in poverty and poor standards of employment and our deteriorating health as a nation.
- **Community wealth building and community health building** is key– brought into sharper focus by pandemic We've been progressing our Community Wealth Building approach throughout the pandemic and it underpins our recovery strategy
- Health and social care has a significant part to play in this– amazing potential for health anchors to build a more **inclusive economy** by providing good quality, secure jobs to local people and spending money for goods and services locally
- Developed a **collaborative partnership** between the Council, Wigan & Leigh College, Edge Hill University, hospital and primary care to develop career pathways and aspirations for residents, especially young people
- Also greater action on **climate change**, **co-designing** of services & policies with residents and **equality**
- **Place-Based Impact Investing :** leveraging in the power of investing via pension funds and external investors to fund community health and wealth creation .. See the work of the DCMS funded Place Coalition (Wakefield & Southampton pilots)led by the Impact Investing Institute which also leads on the Social Impact Investment Advisory Group

- https://www.impactinvest.org.uk/resources/publications/place-based-impact-investing-emerging-impact-and-insights/

Health is Wealth: A Fast Start for Better Health

- Lord Filkin former chair of the Centre for Better Ageing convened a small group of experts who over the last 18 months have produced 3 reports suggesting how to improve the health of England in the next 5 to 10 years.
- “A Covenant for Health” launched in July 2023 at the Kings Fund setting out the case for a mission on prevention with cross party support.
- “Health is Wealth” published in April 2024 setting out an early action plan on how any new government could make a rapid start.
- “Fast Start for Better Health” recommended the priority actions for the first 100 days of the new government on prevention.

https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/projects/covenant-for-health

Local Leadership is Crucial

- **Devolve** by design and default
- **Empower** People and Communities
- **Targeted Investment** in the places with the worst health

Local Authorities: linked to restoring & rethinking local government finance but national government could help by:

- Redefine health spend and put “health” back into health services which was removed in 2015
- End highly inefficient competitions for small pots of money for siloed goals
- Recognise that levelling up health will need core funding\
- Provide local authorities with longer term funding settlements ..that includes the Public Health Grant
- Design financial flows which incentivise prevention as the Institute for Government sets out.

Why Invest in People, Place and Prevention?

"Acting rapidly & boldly a new government can make remarkable progress to improve the health of our children and of society and so benefit our economy. Many people, many organisations can be engaged with this as a joint mission for better health: it is possible and would be popular. A new government has a mandate for strong action and will never have more political capital to do so. The public want much more action and improving our society's health, developed with local people and places will be popular"

Lord Geoffrey Filkin June 2024

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Final Thoughts

- “Coalition of the Willing”
- Telling the Story of the Place
- Whole society, whole system approach.
- Expert on tap rather than expert on top”
- Geography & History Matter
- Infecting the NHS with Wellness
- Investing in the ideas, talents and passions of local people =

“Citizen-led” Public Health.

https://ilcuk.org.uk/uk-better-lives-index/

https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/understanding-communities-final-report/

https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/projects/lessons-wigan-deal

https://www.mutualventures.co.uk/post/radical-reformers-ep-47

https://vimeo.com/1026581234

Ageing on Adventures in Living 1985

- “Anything we recognise as finite can become more acutely pleasurable, and, as the prospect of available time decreases, the desire to experience life fully and to enjoy all it has to offer may well increase”

Baroness Sally Greengross

Humanity, Health and Hope

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Q&A

Sarah Neville and Professor Kate Ardern

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Final Remarks

Ben Franklin
Deputy Chief Executive
ILC-UK

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