

# Inequalities Commission

Adult Scrutiny Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024

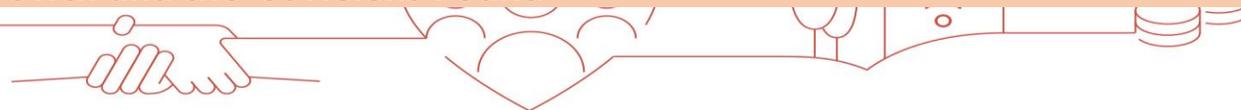
WORKING TOGETHER  
FOR A BETTER BOROUGH,  
WITH PEOPLE AT THE HEART  
OF EVERYTHING WE DO.



# Overview

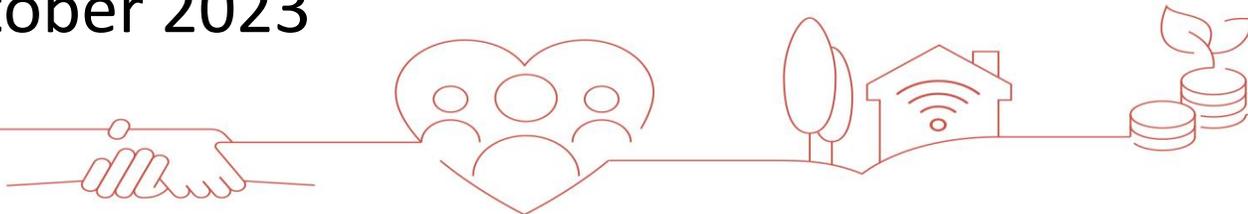
- Spearheaded by the Leader of the Council, Director of Public Health and NHS Local Authority Lead, the Inequalities Commission was agreed via the Peoples Board in September 2021
- This links in with the long-term Borough Strategy (2021-2030), which includes tackling inequalities within four of the six priorities
- The multi-agency commission is independently chaired by the chief executive of the YMCA, Justin Hill, with the Director of Public Health, Ruth du Plessis, as deputy chair
- Sir Michael Marmot's team from the Institute for Health Equity spoke to over 40 system leaders in December 2021 and pairing this knowledge with the "Living a good life in St Helens" event, established the following 8 priorities for the Inequalities Commission:

1	Best start in life, including school readiness
2	Improving the quality of jobs and employment
3	Tackling poverty and low pay
4	Supporting people in distress and tackling isolation
5	Tackling stigma and overcoming barriers
6	Tackling inequalities between and within wards and localities
7	Services being focussed on self-esteem and independence
8	Inclusive growth and the 'St Helens Pound'

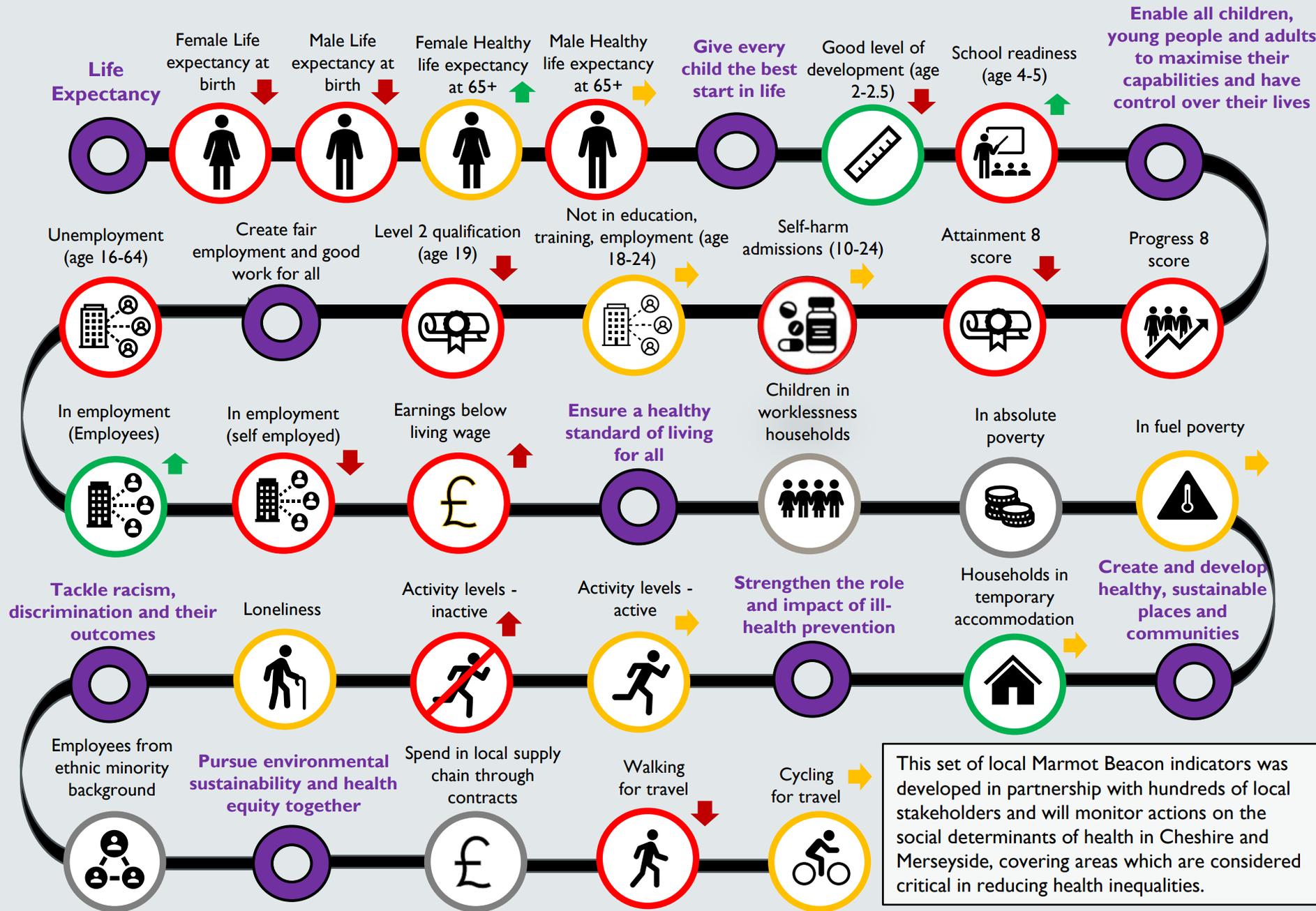


# Regional approach

- In 2022, The Institute for Health Equity released the “All Together Fairer” report, outlining measurable actions for Cheshire + Merseyside to build a fairer, healthier region
- The All Together Fairer regional collaboration brings together public, private and third sector, with ongoing bi-monthly input from the Institute and Sir Michael Marmot’s team
- 22 Beacon Indicators have been identified that are monitored annually, allowing for comparison in inequalities between the 9 local authorities in C+M
- The most recent update of these indicators was presented to the commission in October 2023



# Marmot Beacon Indicators - St. Helens 2024: A comparison to England



## St. Helens Facts

183,200 people live in St. Helens. Around 43% of the population live in the top 20% most deprived areas in England.

Women can expect to live to **80.4 years** and men to **76.7 years**. On average, men will spend **27.9%** of their lives in poor health and women will spend **23.6%** in poor health.

**Key:** Statistical significance compared to England:

**Trend**

- Better (Green circle)
- Similar (Yellow circle)
- Worse (Red circle)
- Missing (Grey circle)

**Trend**

- Improving (Green arrow)
- No change (Yellow arrow)
- Getting worse (Red arrow)

**Sources:** Last update: April 2024

Progress 8 score and Pupils who go on to achieve a Level 2 qualification at age 19 from the Department for Education (DfE). Employment and worklessness from NOMIS. Living wage from ONS. All other data from Office for Health Improvement & Disparities. Public Health Profiles. 2004 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk> © Crown copyright 2024

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This set of local Marmot Beacon indicators was developed in partnership with hundreds of local stakeholders and will monitor actions on the social determinants of health in Cheshire and Merseyside, covering areas which are considered critical in reducing health inequalities.

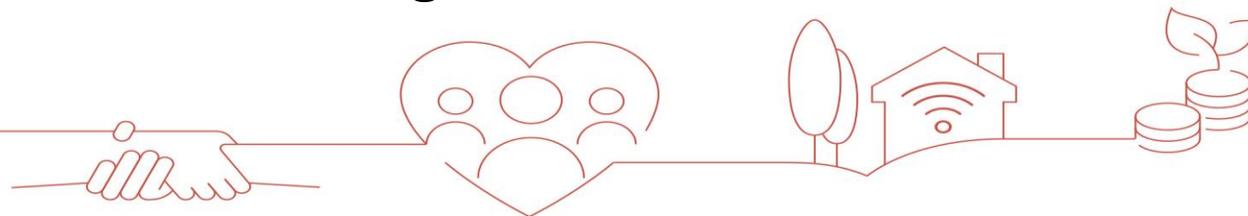
# Principles of the Inequalities Commission

- **Courageous and honest**
  - Say what is right, not what is easy
  - Drive progress and change by providing constructive challenge
- **Evidence-based**
  - Use evidence, from statistics and from people's testimony to inform, scrutinise and monitor progress
- **Listening and accessible**
  - Be visible, accessible and available
  - Listen to those who wish to be heard, especially those with expertise and direct lived experience of inequality
- **Promoting dignity and respect**
  - Tackle the stigma and discrimination associated with inequality
- **Vocal**
  - Speak up for and amplify the voices of people who are not often heard
- **Person-centred**
  - Keep people, their lives, their potential, and their uniqueness at the centre of what we do



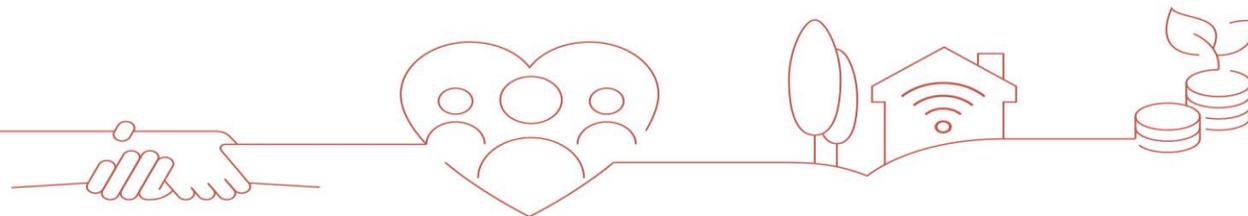
# Approach of the Inequalities Commission

- “A commission can be defined as a group of people who have been formally chosen to discover information about a problem or examine the reasons why a problem exists”
- The commission has high level commitment from key system leaders
- The commission does not deliver projects, but uses information gathered from speaking to local people, experts and using best practice to make recommendations to the system
- The commission has a limited budget, primarily used to facilitate engagement and partnership working, and relies on its partners for delivery of interventions
- Progress is monitored internally through a steering group and the commission reports back to the People’s board at every meeting
- Using data, evidence and expert input underlies all made recommendations
- Listening, engaging with and feeding back to local residents is a key pillar of the commission’s work



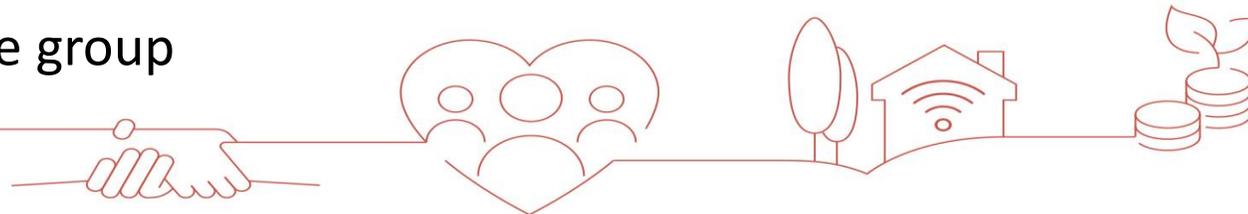
# Engagement with residents

- Engagement in 2021 with local system leaders by the Institute for Health Equity to identify local priorities and areas of need
- Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) supporting two community engagement events with active residents passionate about St Helens in 2022
- Ongoing longer term IVAR research ongoing exploring social isolation and loneliness, with further engagement events in 2023 and 2024
- In 2023, Vibe UK undertook “Reach – Raising aspirations for young people in St Helens” consultation for the commission, with over 1000 schoolchildren from Years 7-9 across 32 sessions



# Best start in Life – influenced delivery of Family Hubs

- Collaboration with expert speakers, such as the author of the “Child in the North Report”, and partnership discussion allowed council to secure funding for Family Hubs
- 2 sites now open and fully staffed as of Jan 2024: Sutton, Central Link
  - Third site in Newton-le-Willows due Spring 2024
- First site showed 66% increase in service users accessing services
- Parent/Carer consultation and regular panel established to shape service and continue engagement with service users
- Launched programmes (selected):
  - BABS – Building attachment and bonds support
  - HENRY – Randomised Control Trial into healthy lifestyle messaging and family engagement
  - Pre-school wheeze group



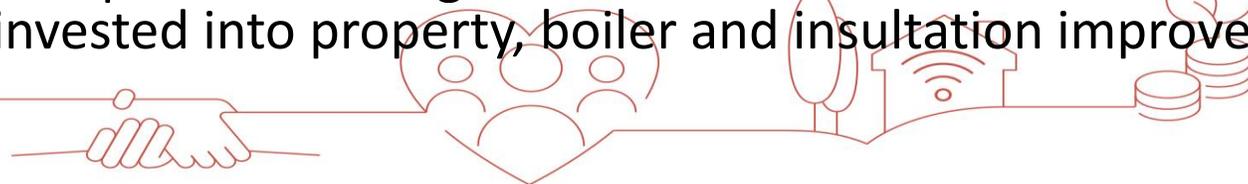
# Food poverty in collaboration with partners

- Task group formed of Public Health, local government, VCSFE, NHS, and Torus
  - Additional £30,000 secured to expand food pantry network
- Food Pantry network expanded from three to 11 sites as of March 2024
- “Your local pantry” model which reduces stigmatisation, improves access to healthy foods while reducing waste
- Uptake mapped against population data and areas of highest deprivation to ensure best coverage for residents
- High demand on sites with some expanding service to 2 days a week
- Mobile pantry van rotating around 4 sites per week
- Community allotment food scheme ongoing



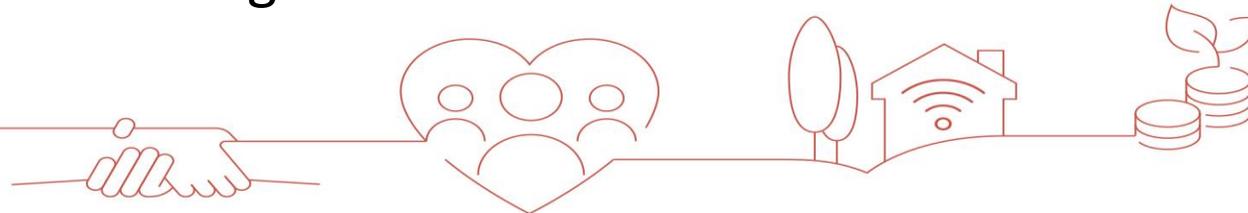
# Fuel poverty

- Restoring the Fuel Poverty Working Group which had ceased activity during the pandemic
- Establishing of 38 warm spaces, now “Welcome spaces” to additionally tackle social isolation, open throughout winter
- Collaboration with Public Health for annual Winter Well Packs, provided to 6000 vulnerable residents with information on cold weather, winter illnesses and Vitamin D supplement vouchers
- “Warm Homes for Lungs” + “Warm Homes for Young Lungs” provide targeted support for residents with respiratory conditions
  - 245 referrals since February 2023
- Continued collaborative work with the Affordable Warmth Team has seen residents provided with support through regional and national schemes
  - Over 1000 individual enquiries resulting in more than £1.8 million in annual benefit gains and over £2 million invested into property, boiler and insulation improvement work



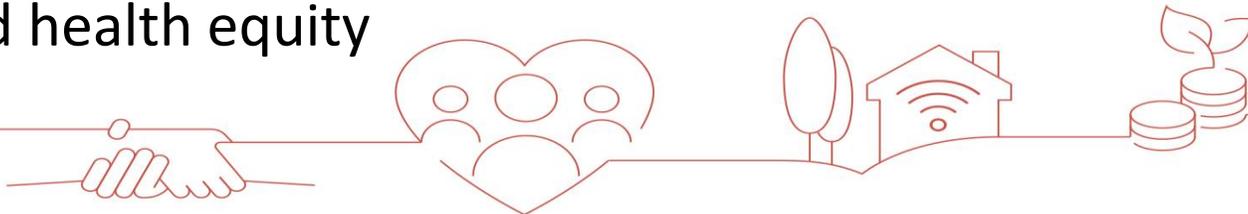
# Other achievements

- Inequalities Commission microgrant scheme
  - Offering between £250 and £500 to local people and organisations tackling inequalities and furthering wellbeing in the Borough
  - E.g. World of Glass was able to put on additional sessions of “create and play”
  - Recipients of grants highlighted an improving relationship between the Council and VCSFE sector
- Supporting partnership work and activities populating the Live Well Directory
  - Online service directory already in use in Liverpool and Knowsley
  - Allowing for up-to-date regional information on activities and services



# Recognition and next steps

- In 2023, the Inequalities Commission won the national MJ award for “a whole council approach to tackling inequalities”
- Following this, the structure of the Inequalities Commission was reviewed to further improve its work, now undertaking 3 action oriented “business meetings” and 3 longer, “deep-dive” workshops
- Following the first workshop in December 2023 on Raising Youth Aspirations, the current planned workshops for 2024 are as follows:
  - Stigma
  - Social isolation, loneliness and distress
  - Local businesses and health equity



# Raising Youth Aspirations in St Helens – Inequalities Commission Workshop Dec. 2023

- Opened by the Leader of the Council and attended by over 40 local partners, including academic guest speakers and members of the youth council
- Presentations from Dr. Robert Hesketh, LJMU and various service providers, including sharing of the “REACH” Youth Consultation results
  - Identified Mental Health, Lack of Opportunities and Money as top 3 barriers
- Afternoon of facilitated group discussion:
  - 4 intervention priorities identified: Mental Health, Improving access to information, Accessibility, Understanding the local context
  - 4 pathways to potential solutions identified: Communication, Schools, Individually tailored support, Targeted vs. Open-access support
- Commitments to change:
  - Creation of Task + Finish group to ensure actioning of workshop commitments
  - Supporting the council in creation of a children’s manifesto
  - Live Well Directory to be populated with youth offers incl. facilitation in two new Youth Hubs



# Current and future challenges

- Securing ongoing and reliable funding in light of financial pressures
- Loss of partner organisations, e.g. St Helens Chamber of Commerce
- Ensuring commitment to change and measurable actions taken after partnership discussions
- Reliant on action by partners while trying to avoid setting up additional long-term task and working groups led by the commission
- Ongoing evaluation of the work of the Inequalities Commission
  - How do we quantify “making a difference” beyond the Beacon Indicators
  - How do current national circumstances, e.g. cost-of-living crisis affect our ability to evaluate local progress
  - How do we engage with the “silent majority” of residents in the Borough

