

<b>Report title: Health Determinants Research Collaboration</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> Essex Health and Wellbeing Board	
<b>Report author:</b> Alastair Gordon	
<b>Date:</b> 20/03/2024	<b>For:</b> Information Only
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

### Purpose of Report

1. This report provides an update to the board on the progress of the HDRC following the successful bid award in November 2023.
2. This is the first update since the successful bid award. It aims to make partners aware of emerging plans for collaboration, and of what to expect over coming months as the programme develops.

### Recommendations

3. This report has been provided for information. However, if there are specific partners/ colleagues with whom HWB Board members wish the HDRC to engage at this early stage, we would be grateful if you could share details with Alastair Gordon ([alastair.gordon@essex.gov.uk](mailto:alastair.gordon@essex.gov.uk)).

### Background to the HDRC

4. The HDRC Greater Essex is a partnership between Essex County Council, Southend on Sea City Council, Thurrock Council, the University of Essex and Anglia Ruskin University. It will see the development of a new, nationally recognised centre of research excellence hosted within ECC. The HDRC is funded for five years by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). A £5m award was confirmed in November 2023.
5. The overall aim of the HDRC Greater Essex is to improve health outcomes through research. It will focus on delivering, and securing additional funding for, research on themes related to the economic, social and environmental factors that affect health outcomes (the wider determinants of health). The aim is to undertake collaborative place-based research projects, in-step with local partners, with a focus on the priority issues affecting those parts of Greater Essex where health outcomes are poorest.
6. The HDRC's operating model will see a new Delivery team, hosted within ECC, bringing together academic and local authority researchers to deliver a

programme defined by a multi-partner leadership board. This board includes senior local government officers, Directors of Public Health, senior officials from Essex's three Integrated Care Systems, from local universities and members of the public and voluntary sector. This Leadership Board will oversee the HDRC's research work, engaging with local agencies and strategic partnerships to ensure they can influence the research programme.

### **Mobilisation and progress so far**

7. Work to mobilise the HDRC is at an early stage. Contracts have been signed with the NIHR and officers are working to establish formal agreements between ECC and university partners. We hope to begin the process of recruiting new employees into the Delivery team in March 2024.
8. We have identified four broad thematic workstreams to structure future research. These focus on:
  - economic and labour market factors affecting health;
  - educational factors affecting health;
  - environmental factors affecting health; and
  - vulnerabilities affecting health.

Each workstream will benefit from the leadership of a senior academic from a partner university.

9. These workstreams will provide structure to our work, but the specific issues to be addressed, and the research questions to be explored, have yet to be defined. These will be developed through a process of dialogue and engagement with stakeholders across the system over the next six to nine months. We expect that dialogue with system partners on the definition of future research priorities to gain momentum in summer 2024.
10. Ahead of this, the HDRC Director and the academic researchers working within the HDRC are:
  - a. reaching out to partners to raise awareness of the initiative and to begin initial discussions on local priorities and challenges; and
  - b. reviewing existing sources of insight and intelligence on the needs of communities, including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, local research and wider sources of insight and community intelligence.
11. If there are specific partners/ colleagues with whom HWB Board members wish the HDRC to engage at this early stage, or specific sources of evidence that should be considered in the early review work, the team would be grateful if details could be shared with the HDRC Director (Alastair Gordon [alastair.gordon@essex.gov.uk](mailto:alastair.gordon@essex.gov.uk)).