

# CABINET BRIEFING REPORT

The Director of Public Health Annual Report 2025:  
The Health and Wellbeing of Women in Plymouth



## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Directors of Public Health have a statutory requirement to write an independent annual report on the health of the communities they serve. This year's annual explores key areas for women and girls' health in Plymouth as framed around the Thrive Plymouth Petals of Healthy Body, Health Mind, Healthy Places and Health Communities. The report considers the wider determinants of health rather than traditional aspects such women's reproductive health which is often focussed on.

The report has been informed by a combination of routinely collected data (intelligence) such as that held by the Office of National Statistics, alongside locally held feedback and information (insight). The biannual School Health Related Behaviour Survey for example, provides unique insight in the experiences of girls in Plymouth. Local organisations have contributed significantly to the report through sharing their ideas on what keeps women healthy in Plymouth and what might get in the way of women keeping healthy in Plymouth. This has been done with a particular emphasis on those Plymouth women, who are often underrepresented or hidden through collecting their lived experiences and voices.

## 2. BACKGROUND

In the 2024 Director of Public Health annual report, women in Plymouth were highlighted to have one of the worst healthy life expectancies, when compared to women in similar areas, despite having the highest-ranking overall life expectancy. Although women in the UK on average live longer than men, women spend a significantly greater proportion of their lives in ill health and disability and less time in 'good health', when compared with men.

## 3. KEY FACTS

- **134,784** women live in Plymouth.
- **1 in 10** women are from a minoritised ethnic group.
- Almost **1 in 4** women in Plymouth (**23.4%**) are considered 'disabled under the Equality Act' (**31,885 women and girls**). This is significantly higher than the England average of **18.7%**.
- Women in Plymouth can only expect to live **67.6%** of their lives in 'good health'. This compares to the England average of **74.5%**.

- The top three causes of death for Plymouth women are: cancer, dementia, and chronic lower respiratory disease.
- In 2023, **157** Plymouth women aged under-75 years died from causes considered preventable. This equates to **13** women each month.
- **1,330** young women in Plymouth are not in work or education compared to 1055 young men.
- **36,000** Plymouth women are likely to be subjected to at least one form of harassment in a year.

#### 4. SUMMARY

Women and girls face several structural and cultural challenges, many of which may not be unique to Plymouth. Themes specific to Plymouth within the report include

1. A need for better access to women specific healthcare, this includes better access to the HPV vaccine for girls in Plymouth and further focus on the direct and indirect harms of alcohol.
2. The benefits and challenges women experience from living in a coastal community. Blue and green spaces are valued by women in Plymouth, but access can be a challenge for some groups.
3. The impact of work, health and economic wellbeing on women in Plymouth, who not only earn less than men in the city on average, but also less than women in other areas when compared nationally.
4. The influence of trauma and violence on women's mental health and the importance of continuing to listen to the experiences of groups with least representation.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Note the content of the Director of Public Health Annual Report
- Consider the final reflections and how they can be supported
- Acknowledge the contributions from women in the city and the organisations who support them
- Commit to considering what more needs to be done to improve the health and wellbeing of women and girls in the city.