

North Yorkshire Councillors report September 2024

Free checks at libraries to tackle 'silent killer' of high blood pressure

People in North Yorkshire are being encouraged to take advantage of a simple free blood pressure check that could bring to light the risk of conditions that cause 160 deaths in the county each month.

On average, 85,000 people in North Yorkshire are living with heart and circulatory diseases each month, while the diseases kill more than one in four people across the county according to analysis by the British Heart Foundation. A blood pressure check can be the first step to preventing heart attacks and strokes. High blood pressure is a major cause of these diseases, but it usually has no symptoms until it is too late.

High blood pressure can also lead to vascular dementia, and although around 100,000 people in North Yorkshire have already been diagnosed with high blood pressure, thousands more will have it without knowing.

As part of Blood Pressure UK's Know Your Numbers Week, which takes place from today (September 2) to Sunday, September 8, North Yorkshire Council is increasing awareness of the health risks of high blood pressure.

In total, 30 libraries, six locations that the supermobile library will be visiting, plus health kiosks across North Yorkshire are offering a walk-in blood pressure point for the public to make use of which could not only alleviate the pressures on doctor's surgeries, but identify an abnormality potentially saving a life.

This year's Know Your Numbers campaign follows a pilot scheme offered to library users by Whitby Library to help GPs and encourage people to make healthier lifestyle choices. The library had a walk-in blood pressure point, as well as a device that could be borrowed for 10 days alleviating pressures on GP surgeries.

North Yorkshire Council director of public health, Louise Wallace, added: "Monitoring your blood pressure is incredibly important and spotting abnormalities can save lives. We hope identifying any problems can be a catalyst to individuals contacting their local community pharmacy.

"Some people might not be able to do this simple check, so we urge as many as possible to visit their library and use the monitors. You can find out more information and a list of some of the pop-up blood pressure stations and health kiosks available in North Yorkshire during Know Your Numbers Week, here:

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/knowyournumbers>

Locations in North and mid Craven are Bentham Community Library, Ingleton Community Library and Skipton Library.

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People asked for views on future of county's children's centres

People in North Yorkshire are being asked for their views on the future use of 18 identified designated children's centres run by North Yorkshire Council.

The authority's executive member for children and families, Cllr Janet Sanderson, gave the go ahead on Tuesday, August 20, for a consultation to be launched on the de-registration of the centres. The move will allow for greater flexibility in the future use of the buildings so that they can best meet the needs of the local community.

Before 2015, North Yorkshire Council's Children and Families Service Early Help delivered sessions from a high number of premises. However, since 2015, the need for face-to-face sessions has significantly reduced.

At the same time, the Children and Families Service Early Help moved away from supporting children up to five years and extended that support to up to 19-year-olds. The establishments became known as Children and Families Hubs.

However, in March 2019, as part of a service review, the Children and Families Service wanted to bring together the Early Help and safeguarding teams to provide joined-up services for families. All North Yorkshire Council properties and leased space were looked at to help identify where the co-location could happen.

Now, the use of the children's centres is being looked at to bring them in line with what families and communities need in the future.

As the needs of children and young people are changing it is incumbent on the Council to respond. By being flexible with the purpose and use of our buildings, we can open up opportunities to work with key partners and organisations that can deliver a range of activities."

Over the last four years, during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, Early Help has redesigned the delivery of its activities to better support children and their families and now delivers a blended approach of face-to-face and virtual activities taking place in our premises and in family homes, reducing the need for the same number of designated children's centres.

By de-registering of all the designated children's centres and being flexible, we can open opportunities for our buildings to be used differently.

A 28-day public consultation has been launched and includes a survey. Anyone wishing to take part in the consultation can do so by visiting www.northyorks.gov.uk/your-council/consultations-and-engagement/current-consultations/de-registration-childrens-centres

The findings of the consultation will go before the executive in October before a final decision is made.

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Updated taxi policy to ensure service is accessible to all

Proposals to update North Yorkshire's taxi licensing policy and a plan setting out a more inclusive service are set to be approved for consultation.

An updated Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, and a new Inclusive Service Plan (ISP), will be presented to the general licensing and registration committee for consideration on Tuesday, September 3, to ensure the service is accessible to all.

Following the launch of North Yorkshire Council on April 1, 2023, a single policy was adopted that incorporated the Department for Transport's (DfT) guidance and standards, to ensure that the public continues to be provided with safe and accessible services.

At the time of adoption, the council wanted to explore other opportunities to improve the policy and ensure that hackney carriage and private hire vehicles are accessible to all users, especially those that require Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs).

As a result, the council has drafted a proposed ISP, that supports the updated policy and aims to improve the access and availability of licensed vehicles, address any reports of non-compliance, and educate drivers and operators of the needs and legal rights of disabled passengers.

The council is also proposing to improve the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, as the current one has no requirement for licensed vehicles to be wheelchair accessible. However, research has revealed an unmet demand for licensed WAVs, which is supported by national data.

Therefore, the council is proposing that all new applications for hackney carriage vehicles to be a WAV or Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV), along with a phasing out period for existing vehicles.

The council has previously introduced incentives by waiving the licence fee and relaxing the age limits of WAVs. However, their number in North Yorkshire remains stable. Under the proposals, the council can expect to increase the availability of WAVs while mitigating any potential adverse effects on carbon emissions by simultaneously increasing the number of ZEVs. This would allow for a mixed fleet, which is in line with Government guidance, and will help to reduce emissions and improve air quality.

These proposals, which would only apply to hackney carriages and not private hire vehicles, will hopefully help North Yorkshire increase its number of WAV vehicles, promote equality, and enhance the quality of life for people living with disabilities.

Other proposals have been drawn up in response to requests from the trade. These include ensuring all new or renewal vehicle licences meet new emission standards, changes to the frequency of vehicle testing, opportunities for drivers to apply for a specific type of licence, and changes to medical assessments.

If approved, the new requirements will be introduced from April 1, 2025, for new licences and January 1, 2030, for existing ones, giving licence holders sufficient time to make arrangements for replacement vehicles.

Anyone wishing to comment will be able to do so via the council's website.

Residents asked to help shape future leisure services

North Yorkshire residents are being asked to help shape the county's leisure and wellbeing services.

An eight week-long consultation exercise opens today (Monday, September 9) which aims to build a picture of physical activity across the county and understand what people take part in now, and what they would like to see available in the future.

The survey will help develop leisure facilities and community-based sport and leisure provision. North Yorkshire Council's new Active North Yorkshire (ANY) brand came into play at the start of this month when two of its leisure centres – in Selby and Tadcaster – were brought under the umbrella.

This new ANY service will take a stronger focus on health and wellbeing and aims to support more people to be active, especially those who may need more help and those who don't currently use the leisure service.

Up until now the leisure centres have been managed by five different operators in the former district council areas. They will move to be part of Active North Yorkshire in phases, operated by North Yorkshire Council as active wellbeing hubs.

The facilities in the former Hambleton and Craven council areas will adopt the new Active North Yorkshire identity later this year. Services currently provided by Brimhams Active in the Harrogate area and Richmondshire Leisure Trust will move by spring 2025. The last phase, in 2027, will see the transfer of facilities and services currently provided by Everyone Active in the former Ryedale and Scarborough council areas.

To access the survey – which closes on November 4 - go to:

www.northyorks.gov.uk/LetsTalk

It is also possible to take part by:

Picking up a paper copy from your local library, leisure centre or main local council office and return it in the envelope provided

Contacting 0300 131 2 131 to request a survey - when prompted say 'Let's Talk'

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Emailing LetsTalk@northyorks.gov.uk

Accessible formats of the survey are available on request.

Officers will also be available to listen to views and answer questions in person at events across the county in September and October – a list of dates will be available on the website soon, go to www.northyorks.gov.uk/letstalk.