



Christian Faith Settings Toolkit

PROTOTYPE

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PROTOTYPE

Foreword

Too many people in Birmingham experience poor health too early in their lives and there is much to be done to improve the situation for individuals, families and communities.

At the forefront of pastoral care and community development, Faith Leaders are and are well placed to support improvements in health and wellbeing. To enable Faith Leaders in this endeavour, Birmingham City Council are producing a set of Healthy Faith Communities Toolkits for the six dominant faith communities in Birmingham.

The aim is to help Faith Leaders to build health improvement into their day to day work. The toolkits describe opportunities to improve physical and mental health, alongside information on mainstream services and how to access them.

The toolkit is divided into a set of 'health outcomes' for community wellbeing highlighting any specific challenges for each community. Topics cover the life course and include issues such as healthy eating, preventing infections and health screening. Each section contains a snapshot of local health and wellbeing needs and local service and support information. At the end is a development opportunity checklist for organisations and groups to identify training and development requirements. This is designed for the faith setting to reflect on their current practices in supporting, signposting and offering interventions which look to address the health needs of the Christian users.

This is an initial version of the toolkit, developed with community partners who have advised on content and religious references. The next phase is for faith leaders and communities to use it as a prototype. We want to see how it goes in practice so it can be refined and modified to better achieve the goal of improving health and wellbeing.

We hope the toolkits prove to be a useful resource and look forward to their continuing evolution and development.

Public Health Team

Birmingham City Council

Acknowledgements

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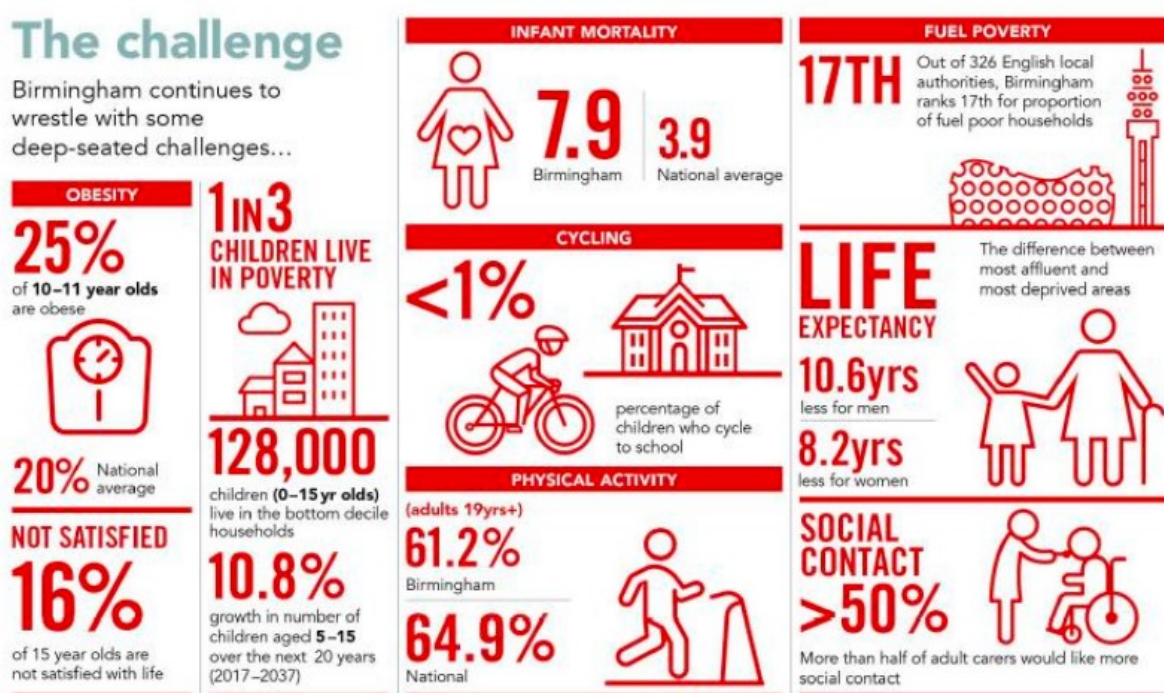
- Solutions 4 Health
- Attendees to the Birmingham Council of Faiths Interfaith Week
- Roundtable events attended by Birmingham City Council Public Health
- Commissioners and Chaired by Solutions 4 Health
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Background

Good health is not a given in Birmingham. Too many of our citizens become unwell too early and for too many years of their lives. The picture is not uniform across our City and there are stark differences in health status and the opportunities to be healthy between different communities.

Birmingham’s Public Health Green Paper highlighted some of the significant issues that affect our individuals, families and communities in Birmingham. Our city has poorer health in many areas than the West Midlands, national and European averages. Some of these are highlighted within the infographic below.

Figure 1: The health inequalities experienced within Birmingham's citizens



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Improving our health and wellbeing requires a concerted effort across society and we all have a part to play. Faith leaders and faith settings are in ideal positions to support health improvement and create opportunities to enhance physical and mental wellbeing. Faith leaders were active COVID Champions who played an essential role in the city’s response to the pandemic. The Public Health Division recognises the key role that faith leaders play and would like to support and empower faith settings and leaders to improve the health of their communities.

Recognising this opportunity, Birmingham City Council are producing a set of Healthy Faith Communities Toolkits for the six dominant faith communities in Birmingham. The initial version, developed with community partners, will be tested and further developed and improved. Case studies will be collected to highlight faith setting-led activities that address the health needs.

This Christian toolkit seeks to explore the health inequalities experienced within Birmingham in the context of the Christian faith. The toolkit will discuss how Christians relate to the health inequalities experienced by the citizens in Birmingham, as well as highlighting health issues that are experienced within our Christian communities.

Introduction

Historical context

Christianity in Birmingham has accommodated diverse population change since industrialisation. It now meets a cross section of denominational, economic and ethnic community needs, both through the establishment of new church communities and by changes within established Catholic and Church of England institutions.

Industrialisation

Nonconformism, especially Methodism, was very strong in the Black Country during the era of industrialisation. In 1843 the Anglican vicar of Oldbury reckoned "nineteen out of every twenty people are Nonconformists."⁽¹⁾ Though others suggest a figure nearer to 15%, this was still three times the national average,⁽²⁾ and by the end of the 19th Century there were about 1.5 times as many Nonconformist churches as there were Anglican.⁽³⁾

Nonconformism took off among the working poor, probably because of its 'democratic' structures and its informal, everyday style of worship. Nonconformist congregations were able to offer more effective practical help than the Anglican church, because their looser structures allowed them to organise more quickly. They provided basic unemployment relief, loans, and similar support.⁽⁴⁾

Irish migration

A second major influence on Christianity in industrial Birmingham was Irish (Catholic) immigration during the potato famine. By the mid-1800s, Birmingham had the fourth highest Irish-born population of any English or Welsh town. Another wave of immigration from Ireland after the Second World War meant that one child in every six born in Birmingham in the 1960s had at least one parent from Ireland.^(4, 5)

Commonwealth migration

The Irish were only the first of several waves of immigrants to bring their own Christianity with them. In the 1960s (before the Immigration Act of 1971), 'Windrush' migrants came from the Caribbean to fill labour shortages resulting from the war. Like the rural migrants of the 17th Century, they seem not to have felt welcomed by the national church, instead joining - and building out further - the Black-led churches that migrants from Commonwealth countries had begun at the beginning of the 20th Century.⁽⁶⁾ Today Black led Pentecostal churches have a significant imprint on worship and Christian social support in the city.

European Union movement

During the second half of the 20th Century, net migration was broadly stable until the creation of the EU in 1993 when a steady increase began.⁽⁷⁾ European migrants have been overwhelmingly Catholic: it is estimated that over half a million Poles moved to the UK following 2004, including many priests.⁽⁸⁾ These migrants have either brought new vigour to existing Catholic congregations or have been supported to celebrate Mass in their own languages. (The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham lists twenty-two 'ethnic chaplaincies', of which a third are for European nationals).⁽⁹⁾

The future

The total numbers worshipping in churches continue in a long, slow decline that began after the two world wars. The nationally structured churches (Anglican, Catholic, Methodist) have far fewer worshippers than they once had, and the average age of their congregations is much older. However, there is a growth in independent churches, which are either entirely local or else have only

loose ties to an umbrella organisation. These are often within the Evangelical and Pentecostal movements.

The public decline of religion also hides the continuing power of the older churches: they have far fewer adherents, but they still have their buildings, organising structures, and through committed volunteers and staff, they still offer support to their local communities in many ways.

PROTOTYPE

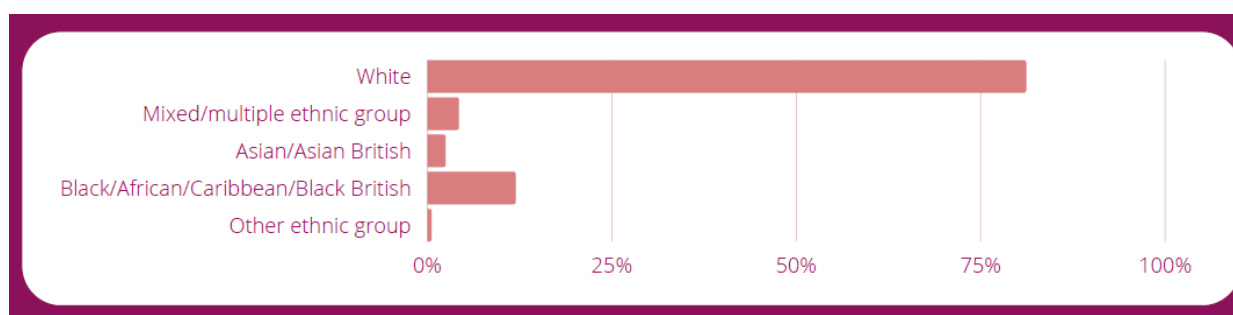
Current demographics

Figure 2: Proportion of Christians as part of religious communities in Birmingham



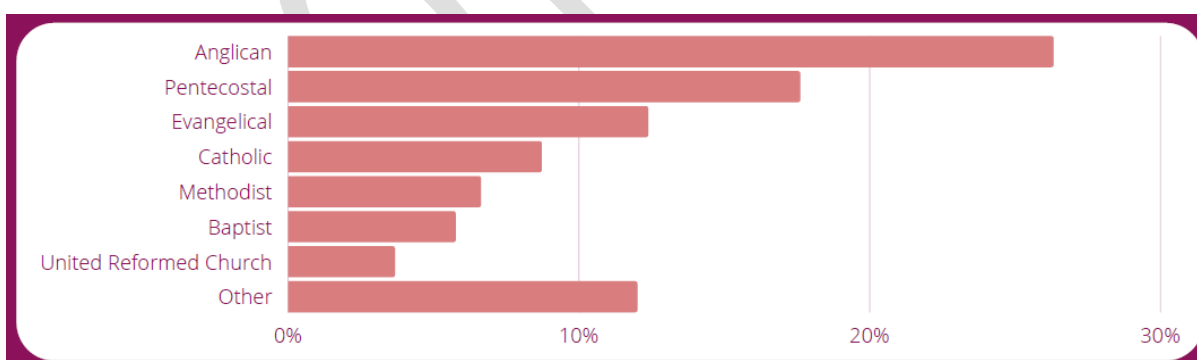
Christianity is the largest faith group in Birmingham. As you would expect in such a diverse city, this religious grouping is itself very diverse. It spans many denominations and is made up of many ethnic and cultural groups.

Figure 3: Ethnic breakdown of Christians in Birmingham



Christians in Birmingham come from a broad range of ethnic backgrounds, with White British, African, Caribbean, African, Irish, and Eastern European Christians being the most numerous groups.

Figure 4: Birmingham references by denomination



Christianity is the most internally diverse of the Birmingham religions, with a range of doctrinal traditions. Churches serve the whole range of economic backgrounds, from the very poorest to the wealthiest. In some cases, this diversity is found within one congregation; in other cases, it can be that whole denominations have, on average, poorer or wealthier followers.

The role of Christian communities in supporting wellbeing

Speaking of one 'Christian community' in Birmingham is challenging in practice. The diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and levels of affluence or deprivation mean Christians' health needs are varied. However, central to almost all Christian denominations is a belief in service to others. Anyone can attend any church service, and many Christians would feel they have an obligation to help people in need.

Birmingham Churches therefore tend to promote wellbeing both among their close adherents, and also among their wider communities. Many church activities and outreach work are inclusive of all faiths and none. Churches regularly offer spaces of solace, put on social activities and provide pastoral support to anyone who seeks help. Food banks organised by Christian groups in the city address food poverty. Youth clubs, elderly lunch clubs and outreach activities provide people of all incomes with activities that support physical health, social health and mental wellbeing.

Christians have a duty to help others regardless of which social or religious group they belong to. Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan in response to the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' When they saw man left for dead in the road, two members of the Temple hierarchy had 'passed by on the other side.' But a Samaritan - at that time an enemy of the Jews - stopped, tended his wounds, and paid for him to stay somewhere while he recovered. Jesus asked his questioner,

'Which of these was a neighbour to the one who was left for dead?' The answer came: 'The one who showed mercy'. Those suffering with mental or physical illness are often a special concern: "Jesus ... called the disciples together, [and] gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick." (Luke 9)

Health inequalities in Birmingham's Christian communities

Christian communities in the city work with a population who are diverse ethnically, in age and income, serving the most and least deprived areas. Health inequalities in the population are most likely to be noticed in the most deprived groups and there are some notable health inequalities in Birmingham's large ethnic minority communities i.e. Black and South Asian.

More than 1 in 4 children in Birmingham live in poverty.⁽¹⁰⁾ Parents' access to nutritious food impacts all children's health and obesity is more likely in more deprived households.^(11, 12) Churches in the city provide important food bank touchpoints for the most deprived and can have an important role in providing the nutrition that young families need.

Christian communities doing outreach work like soup kitchens, food banks and homeless support are also likely to come into contact with the many people with complex needs in the city e.g. people experiencing a combination of homelessness, offending, substance misuse and/or mental health problems.⁽¹⁰⁾ Christian outreach services offer important holistic support to these communities that include practical as well as mental and physical wellbeing support.

Ethnicity can also impact health. Black and South Asian minorities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 than their majority ethnic neighbours. Racism has a recognised impact on mental health and wellbeing. Women from minority ethnic backgrounds⁽¹¹⁾ (including black, South Asian and newly arrived communities) are more likely to experience complications in pregnancy and childbirth.⁽¹³⁾

In England, there is a systematic relationship between deprivation and life expectancy, known as the social gradient in health. Males living in the least deprived areas can, at birth, expect to live 9.4 years longer than males in the most deprived areas. For females, this gap is 7.4 years.⁽¹⁴⁾

Black-led churches and leaders are hosting conversations about inequality and wellbeing in the city, including Unity FM mental health podcast "What shape are you in"⁽¹⁵⁾ and the Time4Change Churches Charter for Racial Justice and Racial Reconciliation Gatherings.⁽¹⁶⁾

The percentage of White children achieving entry rates into higher education is the lowest of all analysed ethnic groups.⁽¹⁷⁾ This may suggest an issue in obtaining employment and a high level of management amongst White citizens.

Finally, loneliness, isolation and inactivity significantly impact the elderly in the city. Poor mental health is also a concern. 1 in 5 elderly people are considered to be depressed.⁽¹⁸⁾ Supporting elderly people to keep active and stay independent can have a huge impact on wellbeing and church communities across the city are doing this through elderly befriending services, pastoral care in the community and running social events like coffee and cake clubs.

You can read more about inequalities and the faith-based, Birmingham-based and national services you can use to respond to them in the 'services to support your community' section under each health outcome in this toolkit.

Promoting healthy eating and preventing obesity

Background:

Almost two-thirds of adults in Birmingham and 40% of primary school children (aged 11 years) are overweight or obese and are much less likely to eat the recommended '5-a-day' portions of fruit and vegetables compared to the rest of the country.⁽¹⁹⁾

There is a Christian tradition of praying or 'say a grace' before eating as a sign of thankfulness.⁽²⁰⁾ Generally, there are no dietary restrictions or diets that Christians follow. Some Christians abstain from consuming alcohol while many give up certain food items during the period of lent.⁽²¹⁾ Another tradition more common in the Roman Catholic church, is to eat fish on Fridays, in particular on Good Friday as a mark of respect to the day that Jesus was crucified.⁽²⁰⁾

Community provision is extremely important amongst Christian cultures. Churches regularly support families in crisis by offering food donated by the community.⁽²²⁾ Many churches offer tea and cake at service, but offering healthier options such as a bowl of fruit may help to improve eating throughout faith settings.⁽²³⁾

The term obese describes a person who's very overweight, with a lot of body fat. BMI is a measure of whether you're a healthy weight for your height. You can use the NHS BMI healthy weight calculator to work out your score.

For most adults, a BMI of:

- 18.5 to 24.9 means you're a healthy weight
- 25 to 29.9 means you're overweight
- 30 to 39.9 means you're obese
- 40 or above means you're severely obese

BMI is not used to diagnose obesity because people who are very muscular can have a high BMI without much fat. But for most people, BMI is a useful indication of whether they're a healthy weight. Generally, men with a waist size of 94cm or more and women with a waist size of 80cm or more are more likely to develop obesity-related health problems.

Rates of obesity are higher amongst the most common Christian ethnic groups. In 2019/20, the percentage of White British (63.7%) and Black-ethnic adults (67.5%) who are overweight or obese was higher than the national average (62.8%).⁽²⁴⁾

Recommendations:

- Religious leaders promote healthy eating messages and use Church venues as sites for providing education and training about a healthy diet
- Be a role model for the congregation following a healthy diet rich in fruit and vegetables
- Include discussions on healthy eating and helping people to live well
- Involve trusted and recognised health professionals in their work, who understand cultural sensitivities, which may include certain dietary customs, and speak the same language as members of the congregation.⁽²⁵⁾
- Include activities that consider the factors that affect food choice, for example, hospitality and celebrations, which may involve the use of ingredients that are high in sugar and fat.⁽²⁵⁾

Top 5 tips:

1. Religious leaders promote a balanced diet in line with NHS guidelines and encourage '5-a-day', at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
2. Include healthier food options at Churches and other Christian faith settings to promote healthy eating and manage a healthy bodyweight
3. Provide resources that are culturally appropriate, translated where required and signpost to local and online resources.
4. Hold cooking demonstrations and provide guidance to all about making traditional meals healthier by thinking about using alternative ingredients such as low-fat oils, whole-wheat flour, etc.
5. Target healthy eating messages to children and young people with age-specific educational events and social media.

Christian references:

- So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. – 1 Corinthians 10:31
- It is not good to eat too much honey, nor is it honourable to search out matters that are too deep. – Proverbs 25:27
- "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. – 1 Corinthians 6:12
- That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. – Ecclesiastes 3:13
- No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. – 1 Corinthians 10:13

Resources:

- **NHS** – [Eat well](#): Healthy eating advice for the general population
- **British Heart Foundation** – [Obesity](#): Information on obesity and how to measure body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference
- **Diabetes UK** – [Eating with diabetes](#): Information to make healthy food choices for a balanced diet with diabetes
- Change 4 Life: [Healthier Families](#): offers helpful information about balanced nutrition, including recipes and suggesting food swaps.

Case Studies:

Promoting physical activity

Background:

Physical inactivity remains one of the top ten causes of disease and disability in England and is responsible for one in six deaths in the UK; the same number as smoking. Being active reduces the risk of falls and frailty in later life and reduces the risk of conditions like Type 2 Diabetes⁽²⁶⁾ heart disease and cancers. The UK Government's advice for physical activity is to:

- do strengthening activities that work all the major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms) at least 2 days a week
- do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity a week
- spread exercise evenly over 4 to 5 days a week, or every day
- reduce time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity.⁽²⁷⁾

Physical activity can be seen as a key tool to practice good stewardship, learn self-control, stay ready for usefulness and to love others.⁽²⁸⁾

The percentage of White British adults (63.1%) who are physically active (>150 mins/week) is higher than the national average (61.4%). Both percentages are significantly higher than Black ethnic adults (53.3%).⁽²⁹⁾ This may suggest a large difference in physical activity levels amongst various Christian groups and communities and there is a need to encourage and promote physical activity within Black-led churches.

Recommendations:

- To help less active community members start moving more and strengthening, activities that improve posture may be a first step.
- Christian venues are used as 'safe' environments to deliver culturally-tailored physical activity programmes without language barriers.^{(25),(30),(31)}
- Encourage some type of physical activity every day. This includes strength-building activities at least twice a week, as well as a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week.⁽²⁷⁾

Top 5 tips

1. Encourage daily physical activity and advocate its positive effects regularly.
2. Empower members of the community to help plan, organise and deliver sports and physical activity programmes.
3. Tailor activities and sports to specific ages and abilities, encouraging all to take part.
4. Host regular sports and physical activity sessions at church venues as well as through online video and social media platforms.
5. Signpost to local community groups, leisure centres and online resources, such as the NHS Couch to 5K (below)

Christian references:

1. *She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.* – Proverbs 31:17

2. *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. – Romans 12:1*
3. *Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. – 1 Corinthians 9:26-27*
4. *Beloved, I hope that you are prospering in every aspect and in good health, just as your soul is prospering. - 3 John 1:2*

Resources:

- NHS – [Physical activity guidelines](#)
- NHS – [Couch to 5K](#)
- NHS - [12-week fitness plan](#)
- NHS - [Physical Activity for Disabled Adults](#)

Case Studies:

PROTOTYPE

Promoting mental health and wellbeing

Background

One in four adults and one in 10 children experience mental illness and half of mental health difficulties begin before a child is 14 years of age.⁽³²⁾ Isolation is an important factor that leads to higher levels of anxiety and depression within communities.⁽³³⁾ This in turn can increase the risk of other conditions such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.⁽³⁴⁾ However, religion and cultural beliefs within the community provides social support, a sense of connection and meaning, improved life satisfaction and coping strategies.⁽³⁵⁾

The church plays a natural role in supporting mental health and wellbeing needs. The open-door policy of many churches means that people from all backgrounds seek pastoral support from clergy, volunteers and those in chaplaincy roles. In addition, chaplains, clergy and volunteers perform many types of outreach work to the vulnerable in the community across all age brackets.⁽³⁶⁾ Because the church can be a first port of call, mental health first aid training and knowing where to signpost people to any specialist support they need is important.

The Christian ethos supports kindness and love for those struggling with illness:

- ***"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* - John 13:34-35⁽³⁷⁾**

Those who identify as Christian are more likely to report a better level of mental health compared to people with no religion.⁽³⁸⁾ There are differences between communities with rates of common mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression, being highest amongst Black/Black British adults (22.5%), compared to White British (17.3%) and White Other (14.4%).⁽³⁹⁾

Recommendations

- Make referrals to mental health services where needed
- Provide culturally appropriate spaces tailored to the mental health needs of different groups
- Be physically active which helps mental well-being.
- Encourage actions to support wellbeing such as learning something new to boost self-confidence and build a sense of purpose.
- Use techniques to pay attention to the present moment through mindfulness or meditation and more attention to your own thoughts, feelings and the world around us.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Top 5 tips

1. Religious leaders discuss mental health with the aim of encouraging people to take action to prevent mental ill-health and to seek help early from health services when needed.
2. Arrange talks or workshops by trusted healthcare professionals and include members of the congregation who are happy to share their own experiences with mental illness to tackle stigma.
3. Create volunteering opportunities at the church and activities that allow the community to meet and connect with each other, such as classes, religious discussions or sports.
4. Encourage members of the community to become mental health first aid trained. Link for becoming a mental health first aider is in the resources section below.
5. Develop an outreach or welfare programme in which community members are regularly contacted, stay connected and supported when required.

Christian references:

- *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.* – 1 Peter 5:7
- *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* – Psalm 23:4
- *You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy* – Psalm 30:11
- *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies.* – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Resources

- **Mind** - [Birmingham offer outreach services for men's mental health, women's wellbeing and newly arrived communities \(with a Christian lead worker\)](#)
- **NHS** – [5 steps to mental well-being](#), [Mental health](#) and [Depression and anxiety self-assessment quiz](#)
- **Mind** – [How to improve your mental well-being](#)
- **Improved Access to psychological therapies and service (IAPT)**- [Birmingham Healthy Minds](#) for people seeing to improve symptoms of depression and anxiety
- **Text 85238 for free 24/7 mental health text support at [Shout](#)**

Culture and Faith Sensitive Support

- [Black Minds Matter](#)
- [Birmingham LGBT wellbeing support service](#)
- [Birmingham mind community development services for minoritized groups](#)
- [Hope together wellbeing journey podcasts for young Christians](#)
- [Mind Birmingham](#) offer outreach services for African Caribbean communities, LGBTQ+ communities, men's mental health, women's wellbeing and newly arrived communities
- [Mind and soul foundation](#): faith-centred support for young people in health and wellbeing
- [Premier lifeline Christian helpline](#)
- The Sanctuary app '[Together Again](#)' is a conversation starting game with access to emergency mental health support and faith and mental health support
- The Sanctuary Course, [to understand faith and wellbeing](#)
- Unity FM mental health podcast "[What shape are you in](#)'

Training provision

- Mental health first aid training (MHFA) training – sign up via:
 - [Mental Health First Aid England](#),
 - [Birmingham Solihull Mental Health Foundation NHS Trust](#)
 - [Birmingham Mind](#)
- Racial Equity and Mental health course by [MHFA](#) or [Helplines Association Course](#) for basic counselling skills and referrals

Case studies

Promoting healthy relationships

Background

According to the scripture in **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**:

- ***“a healthy relationship depicts a real love that is patient, does not envy or boast; it is not resentful but rejoices at the truth.”***

Healthy personal relationships are a vital component of health and wellbeing. Evidence suggests that strong, meaningful relationships can contribute to a long, healthy and happy life, with a sense of greater fulfilment. At the same time, the health risks of being alone, isolated or involved in an unhealthy relationship are similar to the risks associated with smoking, substance misuse and obesityⁱ. Our mental health and well-being are intricately connected to our personal relationships.

Good examples of Christian lives can be set by parents, family, guardians and role models. These can often be the first place where children can learn about love, companionship and forgiveness.⁽⁴¹⁾

As social norms have changed, Christians find themselves navigating modern ideas of relationships, sex and sexuality. Navigating relationships, can be a really important pastoral role to fulfil.

Different churches and denominations hold varied theological positions on non-heterosexual relationships and on relationships outside of marriage or after divorce. It is important that faith settings signpost people to support if they are unable to provide it within the faith setting and are compassionate. For everyone in the circle of contact, providing relationship, sexual health and wellbeing support is important.

Churches frequently have services and groups for young people which present opportunities to discuss issues around relationships and sex. Churches are also involved in key life events such as marriage or baptism which provide opportunities for guidance on healthy relationships.

Recommendations

- Take opportunities to encourage and support relationships
- Promote the positive benefits of healthy relationships on mental well-being and minimising loneliness, isolation and depression.
- Promote healthy relationships outside the home, including at work and at school
- Take action to protect people from abuse in relationships

Top 5 tips

1. If as a faith institution you are unable to support with particular types of relationships or sexual health support, do signpost on using one of the services below
2. Consider targeted assemblies for adolescents and young adults to explore what makes a positive relationship
3. Provide spaces for young people to speak about relationship expectations and learn mutual respect and consent.
4. Take opportunities of church involvement in life's milestones to promote positive relationships and act if you see abuse.
5. Share details of relationship support groups and services with your community

Christian references

- *Love is patient and kind; it is not irritable or resentful.* – 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- *Children, obey your parents...Parents, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the instruction of the Lord.* - Ephesians 6:1-4

Resources

Services to support your community Directories of support

- **NHS** - [Sexual health clinics](#)
- **Sex Wise** - [Directory of sexual health clinics and sexual wellbeing advice](#)

Birmingham based sexual health support

- [Umbrella sexual health services](#)
- [Birmingham LGBT sexual health support](#)

Contraception advice

- **NHS** - [contraception advice](#)
- **Sex Wise** - [contraception advice](#)

Youth relationships support

- [Online resources at The Mix](#)
- If you're concerned that someone may be at risk of female genital mutilation, contact the NSPCC helpline on 0800 028 3550 or fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

Adult relationships support

- **Umbrella Health** – [Psychosexual support](#)
- **NHS** - [Female sexual dysfunction support](#)
- **NHS** - [Male sexual dysfunction support](#)

LGBT sexual health and relationships support

- **NHS** - [sexual health resource for lesbian and bisexual women](#)
- **NHS** - [sexual health resource for gay and bisexual men](#)
- **The Mix** - [youth support for gender and sexuality](#)

Case Studies

Infographic



What makes a relationship **healthy**?

PROTOTYPE

Conception and pregnancy

Background:

Naming a new baby often triggers contact with the Church and there are opportunities to support new and growing families throughout childhood.

Although for many parenthood is a time of joy, many women struggle with mental wellbeing during pregnancy and after giving birth or suffering a miscarriage, including depression, anxiety and for a small number, psychosis.⁽⁴²⁾

Pregnancy is a time when domestic abuse is more likely to start or worsen. Pregnant women may feel less able to take action than at other times, for example, they may be financially dependent on their partner, or more isolated than usual.

Teachings around family planning vary between Christian denominations, there is evidence that planning the number and intervals of pregnancies assists adequate support to be given to children and the mothers' health to be protected.⁽⁴³⁾

Around 1 in 7 couples struggle to conceive⁽⁴⁴⁾ and 1 in 4 will miscarry, usually in early pregnancy.⁽⁴⁵⁾ For couples struggling to conceive, NHS funded diagnosis and treatment is available in Birmingham and can be accessed through the GP.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Prospective LGBTQ+ parents can also speak through a range of options for having children with their GP.⁽⁴⁷⁾ In addition, good nutritional health, a healthy weight, giving up smoking, and taking folic acid can improve the likelihood of conception.^(46, 47) Mental health support from the perinatal mental health team, can be accessed via the GP during pregnancy and following birth.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Recommendations:

- Share information on healthy living to people planning pregnancy for example maintaining a healthy weight and avoiding alcohol and smoking.⁽⁴⁹⁾
- Share information on healthy eating during pregnancy, pregnant women should eat a variety of foods including 5 portions of fruits and vegetables, carbohydrates, protein such as beans/lentils, fibre-rich foods and dairy.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Pregnant women should limit their consumption of caffeine to 200mg per day, which is equivalent to 2 cups of tea/instant coffee or 1 cup of filter coffee.⁽⁵⁰⁾
- Share information on healthy living during pregnancy, women may continue or start moderate exercise (e.g. 30 minutes walking every day) during pregnancy.⁽⁵⁰⁾
- Watch for signs of domestic abuse and take action.
- Share information on vitamin supplementation for women trying to get pregnant, who should take a daily folic acid supplement and a vitamin D supplement. This should continue throughout their pregnancy.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Top 5 tips:

1. Consider pregnancy support groups with sessions on healthy eating, exercise,, and mental wellbeing
2. Encourage pregnant women to attend antenatal appointments, tests and ultrasound scans.
3. Know where to seek help for domestic abuse victims
4. Be available to offer pastoral care to prospective parents.
5. Encourage community support groups for both parents during pregnancy and after birth.

Christian References:

- *Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.* - Genesis 1:28:

Resources:

- **NHS** – [Pregnancy](#): This guide includes all you need to know about trying for a baby, pregnancy, labour and birth.
- **Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists** – [Patient information leaflets](#): Up-to-date leaflets on a variety of topics around pregnancy and childbirth.
- **National Childbirth Trust** – [Wealth of online resources about being a parent and information on courses and workshops.](#)
- **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence** – [Fertility problems](#): Trying for a baby? Some things you can do to improve your chances of getting pregnant.
- **Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists** – [Male fertility problems.](#)

Baby loss

- [Tommys baby loss support page for miscarriage, still birth, neonatal death and terminating a pregnancy for medical reasons](#)
- [Miscarriage Association helpline](#)

Birth and the fourth trimester (post-birth)

- [Information and support for parents of premature babies](#)
- [NHS Information about birthing options](#)
- [Tommy's birth and recovery support](#)
- **Spurgeon's** - [a Christian charity who run children's centres in Birmingham where parents of young children can go to meet one another, and receive parenting support -](#)

Case Studies:

Infographic:

Avoid listening to myths



Continue to exercise and stay healthy

You may need vitamin B12 and iron supplements

Think about your mental health; stay positive, read and listen to devotional books and music

Vegetarian foods that are high in iron include pulses, dark green vegetables, wholemeal bread and dried fruits such as apricots

The infographic features a central illustration of a pregnant woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored top and a red skirt, holding her belly. Above her head are several red scribbles, including question marks and exclamation marks, representing myths. Four text boxes are arranged around her, each containing a piece of advice. A large, faint watermark 'PROTUS' is visible in the background.

Healthy Pregnancy

Promoting childhood health

Background:

It is human nature to want to give our children the best start in life possible. Good maternal health and breastfeeding are important to help provide an advantage to children by reducing infant and childhood death rates⁽⁵¹⁾ and illness. Eating well, exercising and having emotional development are important pillars of childhood health.

1 in 5 reception class children and 1 in 10 year 6 children are obese or overweight in the UK.⁽⁵²⁾ In reception, 22.7% of White British, 30.8% of Black African and 25.2% of Black Caribbean children are overweight or obese, which are all higher than the national average (22.4%).⁽⁵³⁾ The West Midlands has the highest rates of childhood obesity in the UK.⁽⁵²⁾

Children thrive when they can grow physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. Christians are aware of the importance of supporting children with additional needs and challenging circumstances.

- ***Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it. — Proverbs 22:6 (ESV).***⁽⁵⁴⁾
- ***Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor ...—Zechariah 7:10 (NIV)***⁽⁵⁴⁾

Recommendations:

- Promoting supportive family and social structures helps to promote childhood mental health and well-being.
- Take steps to include children of all abilities and backgrounds in activities.
- Include **physical activity** in child programmes which improves overall health during childhood and in adulthood.
- Model a **healthy diet** at church events, with a varied and balanced food offer.
- **Health promotion** such as awareness of the benefits of vaccination,⁽⁵⁵⁾ breastfeeding,⁽⁵⁶⁾ and easy measures for accident prevention are also important.
- Watch out for evidence of neglect and harm, and take action.

Top 5 tips:

1. Try key child health awareness mini-topics in children's assemblies e.g. good sleep habits, talking about emotions, handwashing, minimising screen-time, etc.
2. Incorporate 'own your health' activities into your programme, e.g. cooking with Dad during Father's Day.
3. Encourage children to talk about their experiences and attention to emotions and mental wellbeing.
4. Promote a balance in screen time with a mix of screen and non-screen activities, and education for parents around reducing screen-time
5. Provide active and reflective spaces for young people to develop socially, emotionally and in which to be active

Christian references:

- *And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.—Mark 10:16 (NIV)*
- *He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” - Mark 9:36-37*
- *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. - Ephesians 6:4*

Resources:

Resources for under 5's:

- [The Chief Medical Officer's physical activity advice for early years](#)
- [Nutrition guidance for babies and toddlers](#)
- [The healthy start scheme offers access to nutritional food for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers](#)

Resources for 5-18's:

- Football clubs Aston Villa and West Bromwich Albion both recruit primary school aged families to compete for them against other football clubs in a tournament of sustainable food-making, craft and outdoors activities. Sign your organisation up to play [here](#)
- [NHS Food scanner allows you to see at a glance how healthy your food is, and it suggests swaps you can make](#)
- [See how you can get involved in the Holiday Activities and Food programme in Birmingham](#)
- [The Chief Medical Officer's physical activity advice for children and young people](#)
- **Kick Christian chaplaincy** and mentoring for young people through sports. See what they do [here](#) and their resource pack [here](#)

Case studies:

Long-term Conditions

Background

As we age as a society we are not only living longer overall but also living for more years with chronic conditions and ill health. There is much that can be done to prevent or delay the onset of long term conditions, to prevent their progression and their impact on our lives. The Church can help support people to actively manage their health and maintain a good quality of life for longer.

Diabetes:

People with Diabetes are not able to regulate their own blood sugar appropriately. Over time this leads to damage to blood vessels which increases the risk of blindness, amputation, heart attack and stroke, kidney disease and even sexual problems.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Some people develop Type 1 diabetes at an early age and have to carefully manage the disease for many years. This can be challenging for some young people as it impacts their social lives as well as managing the practicalities of having to monitor their blood sugar and medications closely.

Type 2 diabetes develops later in life and if caught early can be reversed with lifestyle changes. Others require medication to manage the condition. Diabetes is more common in men and people from Black ethnic groups are nearly twice as likely to have the disease compared with people from white, mixed or other ethnic groups.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Musculoskeletal conditions:

Good musculoskeletal health is an important component of maintaining an individuals' functional abilities throughout their life course and is fundamental to healthy ageing, reducing the risk of falls.⁽⁵⁹⁾ More years are lived with a musculoskeletal (MSK) condition than any other long-term condition. MSK conditions affect people of all ages but become more common with increasing age. In total over 20 million people in the U.K live with an MSK condition and good MSK health means more than the absence of a musculoskeletal condition, rather meaning that the muscles, joints, and bones work well without pain.⁽⁶⁰⁾

There are three main groups of MSK conditions:

- 1) Inflammatory Conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, can affect anyone at any age and are rapid in onset. Not smoking and maintaining a healthy weight lessen the risk and the impact. Over 430,000 adults in the U.K. have rheumatoid arthritis and usually specialist treatment is needed. Conditions of MSK pain, such as osteoarthritis or chronic pain, are more common with rising age, are gradual in onset and affect the joints, spine and pain system. Over 8.5 million people have Osteoarthritis in the U.K
- 3) Osteoporosis and fragility fractures, such as a fracture or a fall from a standing height, mainly affect older people most commonly affecting the hip, wrist and spinal bones.

Those struggling with their MSK conditions have the most to gain from the right support. Churches and their faith leaders can help by signposting people to help and encouraging compliance with recommended medication, exercise and diet regimes. Living with pain can make people down and isolated and opportunities to maintain mental wellbeing are important.

Cardiovascular disease:

Heart disease and strokes are leading causes of death nationally and locally, causing 24% of all deaths in England and Wales in 2019. Black Africans, Black Caribbeans and South Asians in the UK are at higher risk of developing high blood pressure compared with White Europeans, while rates of CVD are higher amongst people of Black ethnicity.⁽¹⁴⁾

Recommendations

- Share the message that long-term illness as we age is not inevitable. We can all take steps to stay as well as we can.
- Raise awareness of common long-term conditions that can have a significant impact on future health such as high blood pressure, obesity, heart disease, stroke and diabetes, particularly in communities where these are more common.
- Encourage people to act on the early symptoms of disease.
- Encourage people to actively manage their conditions and maintain their mental as well as physical health.
- Promote healthy behaviours, such as a good diet staying active.

Top tips

1. Encourage people to seek medical advice early and signpost to resources such as the NHS Choices health apps.
2. Host health awareness events in conjunction with healthcare professionals, local and national charities and healthcare organisations.
3. Support national campaigns such as Change4Life, Healthier You and Act FAST.
4. Liaise with local Pharmacists to host or share information on medicines information events

Christian references

- *Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.* Jeremiah 33:6
- *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.* Psalm 103:2-4

Resources

Diabetes

- **NHS** – [Get tested for diabetes](#)
- **NHS** - [Support for type 2 diabetes management](#) and Gestational diabetes - [when your body cannot produce enough insulin during pregnancy](#)
- [Birmingham Diabetes Service information](#)
- **Diabetes UK** - [online information and support](#)

Cancer

- **NHS** - [Support for cancer](#)
- **NHS** - [How to spot cancer](#) - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer/symptoms/>
- [Birmingham and Solihull drop in cancer support centre \(children and adults\)](#)
- **Macmillan Cancer Support** – [Cancer information and support](#)

Musculoskeletal conditions

- **NHS** – [Musculoskeletal conditions](#)
- **NHS**– [Arthritis advice and guidance](#)
- **NHS**- [Rheumatoid Arthritis advice and guidance](#)
- **NHS Birmingham Community Healthcare Trust**- [MSK Physiotherapy](#)

Cardiovascular Disease

- **NHS** - [Support for a stroke](#)
- [Birmingham and Solihull stroke recovery service](#)
- **NHS** – [Information on cardiovascular disease](#)

Case studies

Infographic

JAN National Obesity Awareness Week - Cervical Cancer Prevention Week - Dry January	FEB National Heart Month - World Cancer Day	MAR Prostate Cancer Awareness Month - National Salt Awareness Week - World Oral Health Day	APR Bowel Cancer Awareness Month - Stress Awareness Month - World Health Day
MAY Action on Stroke Month - Mental Health Awareness Week - World Hypertension Day	JUN Men's Health Week - Diabetes Week	JUL 24/7 Samaritans - The Big Listen - World Hepatitis Day	AUG World Breastfeeding Awareness Week - Cycle to Work Day
SEP Know Your Numbers Week - Organ Donation Week - National Fitness Day	OCT Breast Cancer Awareness Month - National Cholesterol Month - World Mental Health Day	NOV National Stress Awareness Day - World Diabetes Day - Alcohol Awareness Week	DEC World AIDS Day - International Day of Persons with Disability

Ageing and dying well

Background:

The Church is frequently engaged with people who are elderly or nearing the end of their lives. Older people form an important part of some congregations, many of whom are actively involved in supporting others. Community volunteering can provide a sense of purpose, important for wellbeing, increasing social interaction and preventing loneliness.

Frailty and falls

Frailty is a risk for people as they get older with more than half of over 85s considered frail.⁽⁶¹⁾ Ageing is also associated with an increased risk of falling, due to many factors including sight and muscle loss, deterioration of balance and use of certain medications. Bones weaken as we get older, meaning that elderly adults are more prone to bone fractures when they fall. Where frailty exists, the person is likely to require assistance to remain independent at home.

It is particularly important to take action after a first fall, even if no injury was sustained to ensure that all risks for further falls are managed

Mental health:

Poor mental health is also a significant health concern amongst older people. The most common problem is depression, which affects around one in five older adults. For those with physical illness the risk is doubled for those in hospitals and trebled for those in care homes. Supporting older people to be social, keep active and stay independent in the home can be beneficial for overall wellbeing.

Dementia:

Dementia refers to a group of related syndromes associated with a decline of brain functioning. The most common forms are Alzheimer's Disease and vascular dementia. The risk increases with age, especially after the age of 65⁽⁵⁵⁾ Affecting one in 14 people over the age of 65 1 in 6 over 80.

The number of people with dementia is increasing because people are living longer. It is estimated that by 2025, the number of people with dementia in the UK will be more than 1 million.⁽⁶²⁾ Dementia Friendly Church is a UK-based organisation that support churches in their quest to become more dementia-friendly. The website offers many tips and guides that help church leaders to minister more deeply and meaningfully to those living with dementia and individuals who have a family member with dementia.⁽⁶³⁾

Digital Poverty

Digital exclusion is common among people of older age. Around 5 million people over the age of 55 are not online.⁽⁶⁴⁾ As many parts of society move online, there are a rising number of older people who are less connected to society, as they have limited access to online services. This can cause a lack of opportunity, access, knowledge and information for older adults. Church Action on Poverty offers support for older adults who experience digital exclusion.^(62, 63, 65)

The Church has an important role in dying well, supporting and advocating for individuals and their carers at the end of life.

Bereavement:

Grieving the death of a loved one is an individual process. Not everyone deals with death in the same way, but grieving is part of the process that helps one to come to terms with a loss of a friend or family member. Christians hold funerals at church venues to help the deceased's soul to enter Heaven, while offering comfort and support for those mourning. Furthermore, the risk of an elderly person dying within the first three months following the death of their spouse is greatly increased. The risk of an elderly person dying within the first three months following the death of their spouse is greatly increased. Therefore, the faith setting needs to ensure support is given to individuals in the immediate months following the death of a partner.

Recommendations

- Ensure Church activities are inclusive for people with reduced mobility, visual or hearing problems
- Be dementia friends
- Encourage people to keep mentally active by reading, learning new things and playing educational games and puzzles.⁽⁶⁶⁾
- Encourage people to stay as active and fit as they can
- Help people to connect and socialise with each other, arrange meetings and activities that involve getting together and volunteering opportunities.
- Link people with community volunteering programmes
- Talk about dementia encouraging people to seek a diagnosis and treatment.⁽⁶⁷⁾

Top 5 tips

1. Consider hosting welfare sessions
2. Hold physical activity classes/opportunities for older adults to keep their muscles strong and to keep their body moving.
3. Appoint an advocate for dementia from the community.
4. Consider support and social sessions for carers
5. Help older people access digital services and learn technical skills

Christian references:

- *"Wisdom belongs to the aged, and understanding to the old"* - Job 12:12
- *"Though outwardly we are wearing out, inwardly we are renewed day by day. Our suffering is light and temporary and is producing for us an eternal glory that is greater than anything we can imagine."* – 2 Corinthians 4:16-17
- *"Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come."* – Psalm 71:18

Resources

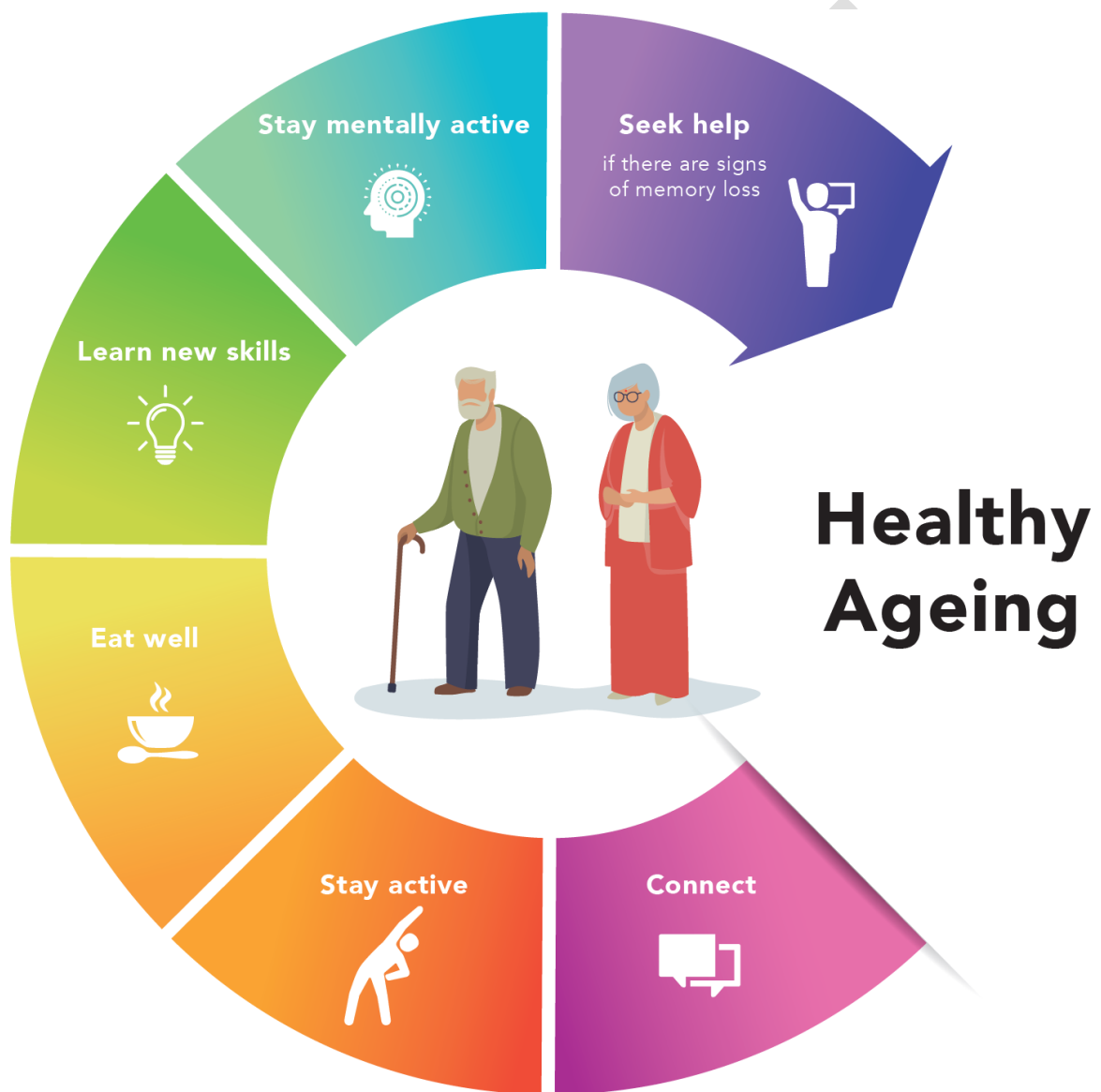
- **Birmingham City Council** – [Ageing well services](#): information of a range of organisations providing information, support and advice to help lead a healthier and happier life.
- **Age UK** – [10 tips for ageing better](#): Tips for living healthily and happily for longer. [Making the most of the internet](#): Step-by-step guides to help you feel confident and stay safe online.
- **Alzheimer's Society** - [Five things you should know about dementia](#).
- **Dementia Action** – [Dementia friendly physical environments checklist](#): small changes that can have a major impact on improving accessibility for people with dementia.

Faith-related resources:

- [Elderlink](#) (East Birmingham)
- [Parish Nursing outreach](#) (Sparkhill and Sutton Coldfield)
- [Parish Nursing resource](#) (for setting up your own outreach)
- [Neighbourhood chaplains' resource](#) (for setting up your own outreach)
- [Anna chaplaincy](#)
- [Other Christian Adult Social Care in Birmingham](#)

Case studies:

Infographics:



Preventing abuse and violence

Background

The Church can play an important role as a safe haven or supportive space for victims of abuse and violence. Through outreach work you may spot the signs that something isn't right. Onus and the Black churches domestic abuse forum are two examples of resources to help churches be safe spaces for victims and know how to spot the signs of abuse and intervene.⁽⁶⁸⁾

- ***The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. (Psalm 11:5)***

Needs

Abuse takes many forms. Emotional abuse is where control is exerted over someone by undermining independence e.g. controlling finances, limiting a person's social contact and limiting their movement. Domestic violence is the use of threats and or physical violence like pushing, hitting or choking or any unwanted, forced or pressurised sexual engagement. Domestic abuse can happen to women or men and in same sex as well as heterosexual relationships.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Child sexual abuse (CSA) and child sexual exploitation (CSE) can happen to any child, but groups considered particularly vulnerable are those experiencing homelessness, those in care and young carers.⁽⁷⁰⁾ The sharing of indecent images, indecent internet interactions, as well as physical assault, are all considered forms of abuse. CSE happens when children are groomed, initially developing trust or an exchange of needs with the perpetrator (e.g. gifts, accommodation or attention) who then goes on to exploit them.^(70, 71)

Gender based violence, or violence against women and girls encompasses the range of violent acts towards women because they are women This can take the form of sexual harassment online, sexual harassment in public, assault and rape. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is also a form of violence against women.⁽⁷²⁾

When considering forms of abuse, it is important to include spiritual abuse which is defined as: "Coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context,"⁽⁷³⁾ is where misuse of scripture can be used to coerce the victim. Clearly there is an important role for the Church in identifying and taking action where this occurs.

Disclosure of abuse may occur to trusted members of the Church and there is a duty of care to act when this is the case.

Recommendations

- Take opportunities to promote the importance of non-violence and zero tolerance of abuse
- Ensure you have an appointed lead for safeguarding for your institution and clear processes when abuse is disclosed
- Ensure children's assemblies are conducted with at least two Disclosure and Barring Service-cleared adults present at all times.
- Ensure information you share has the correct permissions,

Top 5 tips

1. Consider hosting workshops to teach parents, children and young adults about the importance of being alert to online grooming and abuse, and how to stay safe online.
2. Have a clear policy for safeguarding children and adults and trained leads for safeguarding.
3. Ensure adults working with children have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service clearance.
4. Raise awareness about domestic abuse and how to get help.
5. Raise awareness of factors that may lead to violence and abuse such as financial worries, unemployment, stress within the family and how to get help for these stressors.

Christian references:

- *The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence* - Proverbs 10:11
- *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.* - Ephesians 6:4
- *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.* - Ephesians 4:29

Resources:

If you suspect child abuse is happening, [Birmingham Children's Trust](#) offer the following information:

- The Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) provides a single point of contact for professionals and members of the public who want to seek support or raise concerns about a child.
- We want to keep all children and young people in Birmingham safe from harm. If you are concerned about a child please contact us. We will listen, assess your concerns, and can take action if a child is at risk.
- If you're not sure whether a child is at risk you can discuss the circumstances with us or with someone else who works with children, such as a teacher, health visitor or the NSPCC. All professionals who work with children have a responsibility to safeguard them and will know how to help.
- Contact details: 0121 303 1888; emergency out-of-hours 0121 675 4806.

Support for victims of domestic abuse

- Guidance to support anyone in a DV situation including, how to help them hide their tracks [online](#)
- If you need somewhere to stay, any of the refuge services will help you
- Council tenant's can call us on 0121 464 4700 and choose option 4 for antisocial behaviour [West Midlands Police Domestic Abuse support](#)
- [Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) - 0808 800 0028
- [Birmingham LGBT Domestic Abuse Service](#) - 0121 643 0821
- [Domestic abuse in pregnancy support](#)

Support for survivors of other forms of abuse and violence

- [Women's Aid chat service](#)

- [Refuge helpline and chat](https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/en/Chat-to-us-online) - <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/en/Chat-to-us-online>
- [Safe space for sex workers](https://umbrellahealth.co.uk/our-services/safe/) - <https://umbrellahealth.co.uk/our-services/safe/>
- [Help after rape and sexual assault](#)
- [LGBT abuse helplines](https://galop.org.uk/types-of-abuse/) - <https://galop.org.uk/types-of-abuse/>
- [English National Domestic Violence Helpline](#) - 0808 2000 247. For Help Text 'NCDV' to 60777
- [Disrespect Nobody](#)
- [Galop \(for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people\)](#) - 0800 999 5428 -
- [Men's Advice Line](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk) - 0808 801 0327 - www.mensadviceline.org.uk
- Paladin (National Stalking Advocacy Service) - 020 3866 4107. [Paladin assists with high risk victims of stalking throughout England and Wales](#)

Case studies:

PROTOTYPE

Addressing addiction – alcohol, smoking, gambling and substance misuse

Background

Addictive behaviour can take many forms and affects not only the addicted individual but their families and the communities around them. Addiction is frequently hidden and if acknowledged, is challenging to overcome. Church communities are well placed to support people to tackle their addictions and support individuals and families in recovery.

Many Christian organisations in the city are involved in outreach work that meets complex needs helping to provide a community of support and help with meaning-making.

The Birmingham Christian homelessness project operate from churches across the city. They partner with charity Aquarius to help vulnerable people to leave drug and alcohol addictions.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Community detox project 'Keys' integrates Christian spiritual and community support into a 12-step programme for drug and alcohol addiction recovery. Keys is accessed nationally online.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Alcohol

Most people consume alcohol to some extent, and for most this will not be problematic, indeed alcohol forms part of communion for many churches. However, the harms of alcohol misuse are underestimated. Among working age adults, alcohol is the leading cause of ill-health, disability, and death.⁽⁷⁶⁾ Problem alcohol use is currently on the rise in the West Midlands with a roughly 50% increase in the last 10 years.⁽⁷⁷⁾ People are starting to consume alcohol at an earlier age and are drinking more, particularly at home.

The rates of those who drink at harmful levels are highest amongst people of White British ethnicity (22.6%), compared to White Other (14.8%) and Black (7.1%).^{(78) (78)} in recent years a trend of people consuming alcohol at an earlier age and drinking more has emerged, particularly at home. The rates of those who drink at harmful levels are highest amongst people of White British ethnicity (22.6%), compared to White Other (14.8%) and Black (7.1%).⁽⁷⁸⁾

Alcohol consumption is particularly harmful during pregnancy, limiting the development of the baby's brain and other organs.

Smoking

The contribution of smoking to heart diseases, lung diseases, and general ill health is well known. Men who never smoke have a 78% chance of reaching 73; those who start smoking by the age of 20 and never stop have a 42% chance.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Smoking is not directly discussed in the Bible, but excessive smoking would indicate an addiction, which is sinful.

Harm from smoking is shared, with most second-hand smoke being odourless, meaning people can unknowingly breathe in harmful poisons, no matter how cautious the smoker is being. For those who have not yet decided to stop smoking, it is important to not smoke indoors to protect others from second-hand smoke. Passive smoking is particularly dangerous to children, pregnant women and people with chronic respiratory conditions.

Gambling:

Another form of addiction, gambling, has seen a rise in recent years as online gambling has become more common. The accessibility of gambling has resulted in an estimated 1.4 million people within the UK being harmed by their own gambling, while a further 1.5 million are at risk.⁽⁸⁰⁾ In 2019, the Gambling Commission launched a three-year strategy seeking to improve prevention, education, treatment and support for problem gamblers.

Substance misuse.

Many people use substances recreationally at some point in their lives and this carries its own set of risks of health harms, victimisation and criminality. Substance misuse covers a broad range of addictive behaviours with health harms. For example, those who inject drugs are likely to be exposed to blood-borne diseases such as HIV and hepatitis. Smoking drugs adds similar risks to smoking tobacco. Psychoactive substances can cause and exacerbate serious mental health conditions, such as paranoia and depression.⁽⁸¹⁾

The recreational use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs has increased.⁽⁸²⁾ Their use recreationally, either on their own or in combination with other substances, both licit or illicit, including New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) has adverse impacts on health. They are of relative ease to access, with low cost, a decrease in the perception of the potential for harm and growing social acceptance or less stigmatisation.^(83, 84) Adverse mental health, physical health, and social problems can develop with regular and substantive use, and where use escalates, the risk for further harm will accumulate and increase morbidity.

Prevention and treatment

Prevention works, the sustained work on smoking had resulted in fewer smokers and Birmingham has the ambition to be smoke-free by 2030.

Treating addiction is complex and may require medical and social support to be successful. Detoxing without specialist care can be extremely dangerous and should not be attempted.

People with addiction issues may also have other needs which have made them vulnerable to substance misuse. In addition, addiction increases the risk of ill health, homelessness, worklessness and social isolation.

Each person will require a bespoke approach for their problem, Emphasis on acknowledging a problem, the possibility of personal change and the benefits of treatment is likely to be helpful. The [Christian 12-step programme](#) has been harnessed within Christian Rehab Centres for faith-based addiction recovery.

Recommendations

- Encourage non-smoking, and signpost people to help if they cannot quit alone
- Reduce the stigma surrounding substance misuse and encourage people to seek help from healthcare services.
- For those dependent on alcohol or drug additions, help from specialist services is essential to help cut down or stop completely.

Top 5 tips

1. Raise awareness of the negative impact of smoking, alcohol misuse and illicit drugs through religious discourses and health seminars.
2. Educate children and youth of the harms of substance misuse and involve them in creating content for newsletters and posters that can be displayed in the church.
3. Raise awareness of national campaigns such as Dry January, Stoptober and Alcohol awareness week in November.
4. Keep leaflets and resources that can be picked up by people and know where to direct them for help: GP, pharmacist, local health services or online.
5. Arrange drop-in sessions where specialists can provide advice and support about smoking and alcohol to community members in their own language.

Christian References

- *I know nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.* (ROMANS 7:18)
- *A man who is kind benefits himself, but a cruel man hurts himself.* Proverbs 11:17 ESV
- *And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.* Matthew 10:1 ESV

Resources

- **NHS** – [Self-help tips to stop smoking](#), [Paan, bidi and shisha](#), [Find stop smoking services](#), [Alcohol misuse](#), [Alcohol support](#) and [Drug addiction](#).
- **Smoke-free National Helpline** – Free advice: Call 0300 123 1044 and ask to speak to an interpreter for the language you need.
- **Quit with Bella app** – [AI powered personal stop smoking coach](#)
- **Alcohol Change UK** – [Checking your drinking](#), [Alcohol fact sheets](#) and [Tips for cutting down](#)
- **KIKIT** is a Birmingham based culturally sensitive service for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups [suffering drug and alcohol addiction](#)
- [12-steps programme for drug addiction](#)
- [GamCare](#) offers free information, support and counselling for problem gamblers in the UK.

Case studies

Preventing infection and taking up vaccination

Background

Health protection means preparing for waves of infection, such as flu and the coronavirus, as well as protecting against environmental hazards such as chemicals and radiation. To prevent infection, churches and other Christian faith settings should enforce effective hand washing and sanitising amongst those using the church, as well as regular and effective cleaning.

Vaccination can be really important in protecting against many diseases, preventing up to 3 million deaths worldwide every year. Since vaccines were introduced in the UK, diseases like smallpox, polio and tetanus that used to kill or disable millions of people are either gone or seen very rarely. The annual flu vaccine also helps to protect the most vulnerable groups from serious or fatal illness.⁽⁸⁵⁾

Overall, the population of Birmingham has a significantly lower than average rate of childhood and flu vaccinations.⁽¹⁹⁾ It is important to understand and engage with individuals' concerns around vaccination. Churches in the city, particularly Black-led churches, have played a key role in addressing vaccine hesitancy and misinformation. Birmingham Churches Together have signed up to be Community Champions, engaging directly with their communities to increase understanding and uptake of life saving vaccines.^(77, 86)

According to the Office for National Statistics, Christians have lower levels of vaccine hesitancy compared to most religious groups and those with no-religion. COVID-19 vaccination rates were highest within Christians between the 8th December 2020 and 12th April 2021 (93.2% vaccinated).⁽⁸⁷⁾

Recommendations

- Encourage vaccine uptake in children and adults, for example for flu, COVID, TB, travel vaccines and routine childhood vaccinations
- Educate about the importance of health as well as various diseases and empower them to take ongoing responsibility for their own health
- Encourage effective hand washing and sanitising amongst those using the church, as well as regular cleaning

Top 5 Tips

1. Raise awareness of vaccination through religious sermons, talks and seminars, videos and social media channels.
2. Encourage those travelling abroad, e.g. to China, to book travel clinic appointments with healthcare professionals, to ensure recommended travel-related vaccines and anti-malaria tablets are taken.
3. Raise awareness of health and disease through religious discourses, smaller group discussions, talks, leaflets, posters, publications and online platforms.
4. Adhere to public health advice in response to COVID-19, including regular handwashing and limiting contact when experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
5. Encourage people taking antibiotics to follow information from their healthcare provider

Christian references

- *Of David. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. ... Psalm 103:1-22*

Resources

Services to support your community Vaccination support

- Become a [community champion](#) for the COVID-19 vaccines
- **NHS** - Learn more about [vaccines](#)
- **Birmingham City Council** - [How to book a COVID-19 vaccine in Birmingham](#)
- **NHS** - [The flu vaccine is available for free at GP services and pharmacies if you are:](#)
 - 50 and over
 - have certain health conditions
 - are pregnant
 - are in long-stay residential care
 - on a carer's allowance
 - or are the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you get sick
 - live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)
 - a frontline health or social care worker.

Antibiotics and medication

- **NHS** – [Antibiotics](#)

Case Studies

Health screening

Background

Health screening can be extremely important in ensuring the greatest protection and longevity of health. Diagnosing a health issue early can mean that treatment is more effective and can lead to people making more informed decisions about their health. This decreases the risk of complications and increases the chance of better health outcomes.

Birmingham has a significantly lower than average rate of cancer screening coverage for breast, cervical and bowel cancer, as well as abdominal aortic aneurysm screening.⁽¹⁹⁾ The rates of cancer screening amongst Christians within the UK is largely unexplored. One study has shown the rates of colorectal screening to be higher among Christian men compared to Hindu, Sikh and Muslim men.⁽⁸⁸⁾ A study has found the knowledge of breast, bowel and cervical cancer screening within the six largest ethnic groups in the UK to be the highest amongst White-ethnic individuals.⁽⁸⁹⁾

The NHS also offers [health check-ups](#) for adults in England aged 40 to 74. These are designed to check for common symptoms of stroke, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease and dementia.

Recommendations

- Education around the importance of attending and the benefits of cancer screening programmes (cervical cancer, breast cancer and bowel cancer).
- Educate and encourage attendance for other NHS screening programmes (abdominal aortic aneurysm screening, diabetic eye screening, NHS health check and screening tests offered in pregnancy).
- Hold health checks at the faith setting, with clear pathways for directing people back to the GP for follow-up.⁽⁹⁰⁾
- Health checks should be targeted for early detection of conditions without symptoms which are prevalent in the community, such as heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney and liver damage.⁽⁹⁰⁾

Top tips

1. Raise awareness of NHS screening programmes through talks and events where members of the community can share their positive experiences of the process.
2. Provide a 'one-stop shop' health screening programme at the faith setting with point-of-care tests, risk calculation, tailored culturally appropriate health promotion in a suitable language, and follow-up where required.
3. Get in touch with local NHS services who are currently running community health screening programmes for guidance.

Christian references

- *This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.* Revelation 14:12
- *A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.* Proverbs 17:12
- *Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.* John 1:2

Screening - types offered by life stage

The screening tests offered in pregnancy are:

- screening for infectious diseases (hepatitis B, HIV and syphilis)
- screening for Down's syndrome, Patau's syndrome and Edwards' syndrome screening for sickle cell disease and thalassaemia
- screening to check the physical development of the baby (known as the 20-week scan or mid- pregnancy scan)
- diabetic eye screening if you are pregnant and have type 1 or type 2 diabetes

Newborn babies are offered:

- a physical examination, which includes the eyes, heart, hips and testes a hearing test
- a blood spot test to check if the baby has any of 9 rare conditions

Diabetic eye screening

- From the age of 12, all people with diabetes are offered an annual diabetic eye test to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy

Cervical screening

- Cervical screening is offered to all women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 64 to check the health of cells in the cervix. It is offered every 3 years for those aged 25 to 49, and every 5 years from the ages of 50 to 64

Breast screening

- Breast screening is offered to women aged 50 to 70 to detect early signs of breast cancer. Women over 70 can self-refer

Bowel cancer screening

- Everyone aged 60 to 74 is offered a bowel cancer screening home test kit every 2 years.
- If you're 75 or over, you can ask for a kit every 2 years by phoning the free bowel cancer screening helpline on 0800 707 60 60.
- Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening
- AAA screening is offered to men during the screening year (1 April to 31 March) that they turn 65 to detect abdominal aortic aneurysms (a dangerous swelling in the aorta). Men over 65 can self-refer

More about screening

- Learn more about screening available on the [NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-screening/) - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-screening/>
- [Birmingham NHS Health Checks](#) programme which screens for a wide range of illnesses and is open to anyone

Case studies

Wider determinants of health

Background

The wider determinants of health are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which influence people's mental and physical health. These are summarised in the model by Dahlgren and Whitehead (below).⁽⁹¹⁾ Birmingham is one of the most deprived areas in England and has one of the highest levels of unemployment in the country.⁽¹⁹⁾

Education

Higher educational levels of Christians appear to be significantly lower than other religious groups. Of the six main religious groups and those who are not religious, Christians (30.0%) have the lowest percentages of those with a degree or equivalent qualification.⁽⁹²⁾ This is perhaps surprising as the Bible endorses education and studying:

- ***“The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.”***
Proverbs 18:15.

The role of the church may consider encouraging young church users to further their education, and may wish to signpost individuals to career planning and the educational journey required.

Employment

Working hard is regularly outlined throughout the Bible:

- ***“You who are servants who are owned by someone, obey your owners. Work hard for them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Work for them as you would for the Lord because you honour God.”*** Colossians 3:22

Rates of employment within Christians are not significantly lower than the other main religious groups. The percentages of Christians that are employed are higher than Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh citizens.⁽⁹²⁾ Average earnings of Christian citizens within the UK are lower than Hindu and Jewish citizens, but higher than Buddhists, Muslims and Sikhs.⁽⁹²⁾

Deprivation

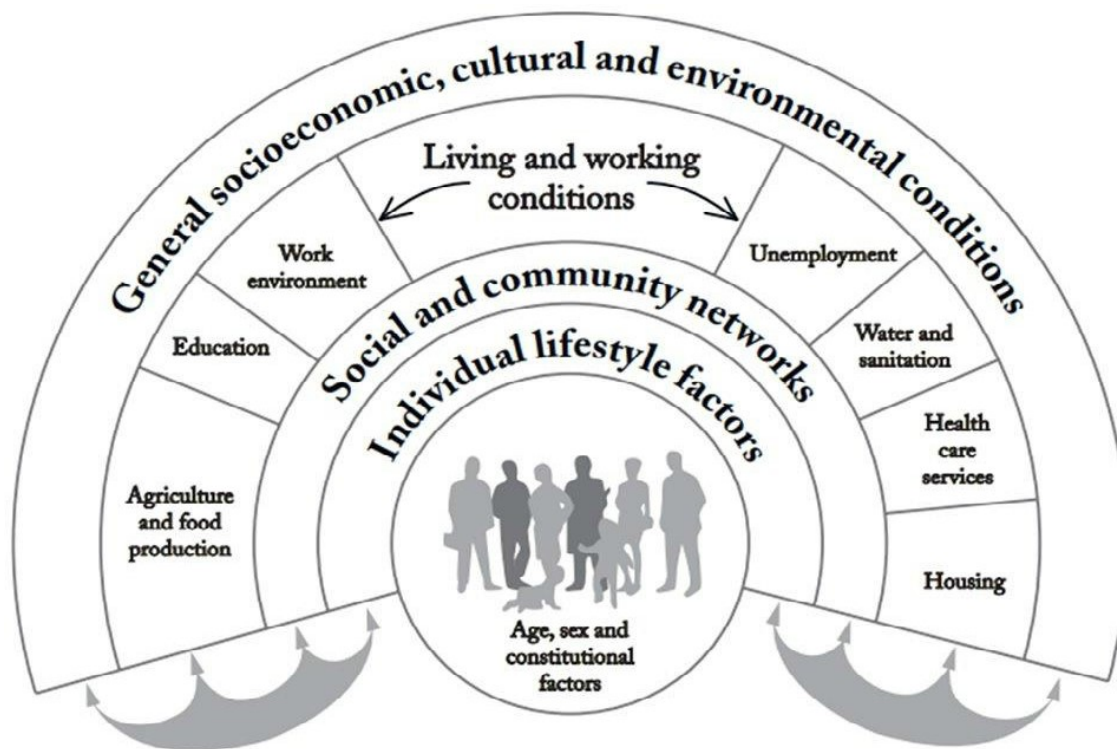
The rates of deprivation between Christian ethnic-groups vary dramatically. 9.0% of White British live in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods which is lower than people of Black ethnicity (15.2%) (Black African = 15.6%, Black Caribbean = 14.1%, Black Other = 16.6%).⁽⁹³⁾ The church can provide a community space for individuals which can help to reduce social deprivation. Encouraging church users to focus on education and job prospects can also improve income and employment.

Air quality

Poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to health in the UK. Pollutants are emitted through many activities, such as transport, industry, farming, energy generation and heating buildings, causing and aggravating heart and lung disease as well as cancers.⁽⁹⁴⁾ The Clean Air Zone has been enforced within inner city Birmingham to improve air quality and the health of our citizens, particularly children.⁽⁹⁵⁾

Infographic

Figure 5: Dahlgren and Whitehead's Social Determinants of Health Model



Recommendations

- Organise educational, skills development and careers events for people of all ages, and integrate these alongside faith-based teaching.
- Provide guidance to the congregation on hygiene, cleaning and ventilation to minimise the risk of infections spreading in multigenerational households.
- Encourage members of the community to reduce car use and instead, where possible, walk or cycle to work or the church, use public transport or consider car-sharing.
- Raise awareness of other ways to reduce carbon footprint through reducing long-haul flights, speed management, using renewable energy, home insulation, reuse and recycling.⁽⁹⁶⁾

Top 5 tips

1. Appoint an education and careers team or committee who can plan and organise events, offer guidance and networking opportunities with other members of the community.
2. Develop links with local and regional organisations, higher education institutions and government agencies who can offer careers guidance, work experience and training opportunities for members of the community.
3. Celebrate Earth Day annually to raise awareness of the environment, organise a regular local litter-picking initiative, get involved in tree-planting activities and volunteering for local wildlife or environmental organisations.
4. Reduce the carbon footprint of the faith setting by maximising natural light and energy efficient lighting, using renewable energy such as solar systems, using water-efficient fixtures and efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

5. Promote health services available to individuals in the local area and encourage individuals to partake in screening and vaccination opportunities.

Christian references

- *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* Matthew 6:33
- *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.* Proverbs 9:9
- *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.* Psalm 24:1-2
- *"I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable."* Jeremiah 2:7

Resources

- **GOV.UK** – [National Careers Service](#) and [Job Help](#): careers information, advice and guidance to help make decisions on learning, training and work at all stages of careers. [The Skills Toolkit](#): free courses to help learn new skills or get a new job. [Free courses for jobs](#): details of the free courses and qualifications to help adults gain skills for life.
- **Birmingham City Council** – [Pollution](#): air pollution, its effects and how to reduce it.
- **Energy Saving Trust** – [Top tips to reduce your carbon footprint](#).
- **University of Birmingham** – [Guild of Students](#). [Student Groups](#)

Case studies

Development opportunity checklist

The development opportunity checklist was developed for faith settings to reflect on the services that they provide for their faith settings and their users. The checklist is split into eight sections, including the themes discussed throughout the Healthy Faith Setting toolkit. The checklist is design to help gather information on: The current levels of health promotion activities;

- The current levels of health promotion activities;
- Solutions to develop new initiatives;
- Leadership, implementation and planning on findings of key sections: for example, decreasing isolation, raising awareness of diseases and screening, signposting to specialist services;
- Reflecting on how inclusive services are, covering all ages and gender expressions
- Training and development opportunities for staff and volunteers.

The development opportunity checklist can help faith settings demonstrate their impact and also evaluate their work for development opportunities to better the health needs of the Faith settings users.

Section 1: Describing Your Community and Congregation		Notes	Action Points
1a	How do you describe your organisation?		
1b	Can you describe your congregation in terms of population size?		
1c	Do you have any sense of the demographics of your congregation in terms of age, ethnicity, home location, disability, etc?		
1d	Which ward is your faith setting operating in?		
1e	What are the priority health issues identified in the local health and wellbeing information for your local ward population either looking at the local authority public health profile or on the national local health website		
1f	Are there any specific community health profile		

	issues that are relevant to your congregation or staff? Birmingham City Council has published some specific community health profiles available here		
Section 2: Understanding Organisational Ambition		Notes	Action Points
2a	Does your organisation have a clear vision or ambition around health and wellbeing?		
2b	How would you describe your organisation vision or ambition for the health and wellbeing of your congregation?		
2c	How would you describe your organisation vision or ambition for health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers?		
2d	Is there an identified operational lead for health and wellbeing?		
2e	Is there a senior trustee or management committee level champion for health and wellbeing?		
2f	Is there an identified management or governance committee that receives and discusses health and wellbeing projects?		
2g	Do you have any specific indicators or outcomes you monitor to measure success in your health and wellbeing work?		
2h	Are communications accessible and in appropriate languages for the congregation?		

2i	How important do you feel health and wellbeing is within the context of your faith work with communities? (scale from 1 – 10)		
Section 3: Understanding current activity		Notes	Action Points
3a	Is there a specific plan or strategy to improve the health and wellbeing for: i. Your congregation? ii. Your staff? iii. Your volunteers?		
3b	Do you have any specific programmes or projects focused on health and wellbeing at the moment? If yes, please indicate below:		
	Theme	Internal or external funding?	Description
			Outcome or impact measures
	Health inequalities		
	Promoting healthy eating and preventing obesity		
	Promoting physical activity		
	Conception and pregnancy		
	Promoting childhood health		
	Promoting ageing well and retirement		
	Promoting mental health and wellbeing		
	Promoting healthy relationships		
	Preventing abuse and violence		
	Encouraging healthier lifestyles by addressing smoking and substance misuse		
	Protecting against disease and health protection		
	Vaccination and screening		
	Diversity and Inclusion		
	Accessing Health Services		
Understanding current activity		Notes	Action Points

3c	How much is faith part of the delivery of these projects?		
3d	How do you capture outcome information for externally funded projects?		
3e	Do you have any specific local or national partnerships with health and wellbeing organisations, e.g. local GP practice, dentist or local disease specific charity or community organisation?		
3f	<p>Are various forms of communication used for promoting project events and communicating health and well-being messaging?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word-of-mouth, face-to-face communication, assemblies or online webcast announcements - Print media such as posters, booklets, flyers or paper publications - Messaging such as emails, text message or WhatsApp - Electronic media such as website pages, online newsletters and apps <p>Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube</p>		
3g	How do you train staff involved with health and wellbeing initiatives?		
Section 4: Looking to the future		Notes	Action Points
4a	Do you want to refresh your strategy for health and wellbeing?	Yes/No	
4b	Which of the following areas do you want to focus on for future delivery planning?		

Theme		Develop more on existing work	Start new project	Plan for future project(s)
Health inequalities				
Promoting healthy eating and preventing obesity				
Promoting physical activity				
Promoting mental health and wellbeing				
Promoting healthy relationships				
Conception and pregnancy				
Promoting childhood health				
Long-term disease				
Promoting ageing well and retirement				
Preventing abuse and violence				
Addressing addiction – alcohol, smoking and substance misuse				
Preventing infection and improving vaccination uptake				
Health screening				
Wider determinants				
5. Developing a faith-based strategy for health and wellbeing			Description	
5a.	How can strategy development help us to improve the health and wellbeing of the people who use the health services?			
5b	How can I be sure our strategy will meet patients' future needs?			
5c	What development is required within our setting?			
6. Developing existing projects			Description	
6a.	What rationale did we provide for the projects that we are completing?			
6b	How did we ensure the project was appropriate for the community that accesses it?			
6c	Do we have enough capacity to fulfil the project? Could we increase it further and how?			
6d	What training opportunities could we provide to: i. Volunteers ii. Citizens			

	iii. Staff	
6e	How are we planning to evaluate the projects that we are completing?	
6f	How will we ensure we learn from the evaluation? <i>(think of using successes and altering things that didn't work so well)</i>	
7. Starting a new project		Description
7a.	What rationale will we use we for a new project?	
7b	How will we ensure that the project is appropriate for the community that will access it?	
7c	How can we shape our current capacity to fit the outcomes of the project?	
7d	What training opportunities could we provide to: iv. Volunteers v. Citizens vi. Staff	
7e	How are we planning to evaluate the projects?	
7f	How will we ensure we learn from the evaluation? <i>(think of use of successes and altering things that didn't work so well)</i>	
8. Planning for the future		Description
8a.	What rationale will we use for building the team, relating to the projects that we are delivering?	
8b	How will we ensure that the setting is providing appropriate projects for the communities that access it?	
8c	What capacity do we have within the team for our future aims? What do we need to do to increase capacity? <i>(think of business case)</i>	
8d	What training opportunities could we provide to: vii. Volunteers viii. Citizens ix. Staff	
8e	How are we planning to evaluate the projects?	

8f	How will we ensure we learn from the evaluation? (think of use of successes and altering things that didn't work so well)	
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PROTOTYPE

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