



Northumberland County Council

Health and Well-being Board

Thursday, 9 November 2023

Update on Promoting better Mental Health and Wellbeing in Northumberland

Report of Councillor(s) Cllr Wendy Pattison, Cabinet Member for Caring for Adults

Responsible Officer(s): Gill O'Neill, Executive Director for Public Health (DPH),
Inequalities & Stronger Communities

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

- **Achieving value for money:** Working in partnership to improve people's mental health helps improve their physical health, economic contribution and reduces demand for services. Focusing resources ensures we are achieving value for money through efficient, effective and accessible services that are responsive and meet the needs and expectations of our residents.
- **Tackling Inequalities:** Mental ill-health has significant impacts and is closely linked with socioeconomic disadvantage and other inequalities. Promoting better mental health and wellbeing increases healthy life expectancy and reduces the impact of inequalities. Partnership work to promote better mental health builds on existing strengths within our communities, increasing individual and community capacity and resilience.
- **Driving Economic Growth:** Promoting better mental health helps residents to be in the best place to contribute economically.

2. Purpose of report

To provide an update on multiagency activity in Northumberland to promote better mental health since the last report to the HWB in December 2020.

3. Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board is invited to:

- Note and comment on the wide range of multiagency work which has been undertaken to promote better mental health.

- Comment on the proposal to develop a Promoting Better Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

N/A

5. Background

Key issues

1. This report demonstrates the wide range of work being undertaken by organisations and the strong partnership arrangements in place across Northumberland to promote better mental health and wellbeing.
2. Mental health and well-being is a fundamental requirement of a healthy, resilient and thriving population. It supports physical health, educational attainment, financial well-being, employment opportunities and productivity, safe relationships, community safety, community cohesion and quality of life. Poor mental health and wellbeing can be the cause or consequence of difficulties in these aspects of life.
3. The Office for National Statistics published information about ill-health and long-term sickness using data from the Labour Force Survey¹. In 2023, common mental health conditions, described collectively in this survey as “depression, bad nerves and anxiety” were the most prevalent health condition, reported by 12% of the working age population in the UK. The prevalence is substantially higher in those who are economically inactive, with these common mental health conditions reported by more than half of those with long-term sickness. This has increased since 2019, with most of this increase from those reporting mental ill- health as a secondary condition¹.
4. Socioeconomic inequalities are closely linked to many risk factors for poor mental health and wellbeing and the mental disorders which arise amplify socioeconomic inequalities².
5. The number of people at risk of poor mental health and experiencing common mental health conditions has increased over recent years. This has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic³ and more recent rising cost-of living⁴.
6. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant, but varied impact on children’s lives, potentially unsettling their emotional, cognitive and social development⁵. This has

¹ Office for National Statistics (2023) Rising ill-health and economic inactivity because of long-term sickness, UK: 2019 to 2023

² Campion et al (2022) Public mental health: required actions to address implementation failure in the context of COVID-19. *Lancet Psychiatry* 9:169-82

³ Marmot et al (2020) . Build Back Fairer: The COVID-19 Marmot Review. The Pandemic, Socioeconomic and Health Inequalities in England. London: Institute of Health Equity

⁴ Office for National Statistics (2023) Cost of living and depression in adults, Great Britain: 29 September to 23 October 2022

⁵ The Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (2021) Children’s Mental Health and the COVID-19 Pandemic

disproportionately affected the most disadvantaged³. The restriction of social activities and disruption of in-person teaching during 2020 and 2021, have meant that many pupils missed out on learning and social opportunities and some got out of the routine of attending school which is having a continued impact. There is some evidence of an overall worsening of children and young people's mental health associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. During the COVID-19 pandemic, partners undertook a wide range of collaborative work to meet increased demand. This included strengthening the identification of those at highest risk and increasing early intervention, using self-help resources and community assets to their best advantage. This work continues through the NHS England Community Mental Health Transformation Programme. Examples include:
 - Working towards a 'no wrong door' approach with one trusted assessment, and an improved community offer of holistic physical and mental health care.
 - Partnership working to develop planned and opportunistic support for local communities through physical hubs and use of digital options wherever possible.
 - The development of collaborative systems involving multidisciplinary working across secondary care, primary care, the local authority and Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to develop seamless personalised care pathways.
 - Work which is underway to develop a Crisis Café / Safe Haven in Ashington.
 - Continuing to strengthen the role of the VCSE in Community Rehabilitation.
 - Developing integrated workstreams.
 - Further development of Multi-disciplinary Teams (MDTs) and whole system working including closer working between primary and secondary care providers.
 - Development of a community adult eating disorder team which links with VCSE and secondary care provision.
 - Establishing the Helping Overcome Personal and Emotional Difficulties (HOPE) Team in Cumbria Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust. The team supports those aged 18 and over with relational difficulties, formerly known as personality disorders and provides county-wide support.
 - Strengthening the link between services at transitions, such as when children move into adult services.
 - Regional work to develop an additional mental health option to the NHS 111 service.
 - County wide access to Qwell online support for adults. This is anonymous, helps to remove any perceived stigma and can be adapted to suit individual preferences and needs.
 - Partnership working to introduce Right Care, Right Person in Northumberland⁶. This is an agreement between the police, health and other partners to ensure that people experiencing mental health crisis are seen by the appropriate professional.
 - Working with secondary care to implement policies in co-occurring mental health and substance/alcohol misuse.

⁶ [National Partnership Agreement: Right Care, Right Person - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-partnership-agreement-right-care-right-person)

- Increased support to patients with substance misuse (including harm reduction work e.g., Respiratory).
 - Review of neurodevelopmental pathways (ADHD and Autism) and associated waiting lists.
 - Provision of [Northumberland Recovery College](#), which offers courses, information and advice county-wide, providing support to those with Severe Mental Illness (SMI) as well as promoting strategies for good mental health.
 - Development of a VCSE Mental Health Alliance.
 - Provision of post diagnostic support to adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism.
 - Provision of targeted smoking cessation work for those with severe mental illness delivered collaboratively with Northumberland County Council's Specialist Stop Smoking Service.
 - Introduction of the Maternal Mental Health Service link worker programme in Well Up North and Valens PCNs. This is a partnership between the NHS, VCSE and Maternity Voices Partnerships to provide non-clinical support to women with low to moderate mental health needs in the perinatal period and link them to community assets.
 - Multiagency collaboration in Northumberland's Family Hubs to strengthen the support for perinatal mental health and wellbeing. This will be enhanced by an increased focus on parenting support.
 - The Dementia Diagnosis Care Home Project including the Diagnosing Advanced Dementia Mandate assessment tool to improve understanding of needs and provide better care.
 - Reviewing Talking Therapies access and waiting lists.
 - Aftercare including discharge and community support, including personal health budgets, provided under section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1987 to support people who have been detained in hospital.
 - A personal health budget pilot.
 - Mental health conveyance.
 - Partnership working between Cumbria Northumberland Tyne and Wear (CNTW) NHS Foundation Trust and Northumberland County Council regarding community care for people with dementia and professionals, including social workers and clinicians working between organisations.
 - Individual Placement and Support (IPS) pilot with collaboration between primary care and the ICB at Newcastle Place.
8. Multiagency partnership work is being undertaken to support financial wellbeing. This will provide support around this important wider determinant of health and contribute to better mental health. The financial wellbeing work will be reported separately to the HWB.
9. [Suicide Prevention & Mental Wellbeing](#)

The UK Government published the Suicide prevention in England: 5-year cross-sector strategy in September 2023 and announced the establishment of the VCSE Suicide Prevention Grant which will run from 2023 to March 2025 to assist in the delivery of suicide prevention activity⁷. At the time of writing, agencies and VCSE organisations in Northumberland were starting to develop bids.

In Northumberland there is an established multiagency Crisis Care, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Strategic Partnership which meets quarterly. The Partnership is supported by an operational group that meets bi-monthly. The operational group developed an action plan for promoting good mental health in 2022. There is a wide range of activity to support suicide prevention including:

Suicide and Mental Health Training

- Adult Mental Health Awareness
- Adult Mental Health First Aid
- Basic Suicide Awareness
- Youth Mental Health Awareness
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Bespoke Mental Health Awareness (including Suicide Awareness) for Elected Members

The Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA) Scheme which includes:

- Promotion of Mental Health/Suicide Prevention Training.
- Promotion of Zero Suicide Alliance Training.
- Sharing of good practice through Business Locality Networks in the west and north, Cramlington, Ashington and Blyth and the Larger Business Network which includes CNTW, Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust and Northumberland County Council.
- Best Practice Policy Development to businesses and workplaces on the BHAWA scheme. Health Trainer Support to businesses and workplaces including those not on the BHAWA scheme.

There is partnership support for a range of mental health campaigns throughout the year including:

- Stress Awareness Month
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Loneliness Week
- World Suicide Prevention Day
- Silver Sunday
- World Mental Health Day

The NENC ICB, with assistance from NCC's public health team supports primary care with:

- Safer prescribing advice in line with National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health (NCISH) reports [NCISH | Resources \(manchester.ac.uk\)](https://www.ncish.ac.uk/resources).

⁷ UK Government (2023) Suicide Prevention in England: 5-year cross-sector strategy.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-strategy-for-england-2023-to-2028/suicide-prevention-in-england-5-year-cross-sector-strategy>

- Mental health triage for practices to ensure patients with highest risk of suicide are seen urgently by the right service.
- Mental health education materials for primary care that are consistent across the region.
- Information about transformation of services.
- Suitable support resources for those bereaved by suicide.
- A code to reflect 'bereaved due to suicide', highlighting the increased risk of suicide among this group.
- Consideration of drug related deaths.
- Support to further improve physical health checks for those people with SMI.

10. Work to promote better mental health for men

Suicide is three times more common in men than women and middle-aged men have the highest rate of suicide compared to other groups (based on age and sex) since 2010⁷. The trend in Northumberland is consistent with this national pattern.

Activity to promote better mental health in men includes:

- Andy's Man Club and the Northumberland Recovery College which provide a range of support and activities for men.
- RISE a VCSE organisation in Berwick, is exploring establishing a social activity group for men who are neurodiverse.
- Post diagnostic support for patients and carers with autism, and after a dementia diagnosis provided through the Toby Henderson Trust, Autism in Mind, and Northumberland Recovery College.

11. Supporting the NCC Workforce

As a large employer, NCC is in a strong position to promote better mental health for staff, many of whom are Northumberland residents. A comprehensive staff wellbeing offer includes:

- Thrive financial wellbeing guidance and support with the increased cost-of-living.
- Money Advice Network referrals for financial and debt advice.
- A Psychological Wellbeing co-ordinator.
- CALM SPACE (Mindfulness and Meditation).
- MECC for mental health and menopause.
- A chaplaincy Service.
- Mental Wellbeing Surgeries for line managers.
- Bespoke mental health training for line managers.
- A Health and Wellbeing portal on the staff intranet with access to a wide range of resources.

12. Promoting Better Mental Health for Children and Young People

It is recognised nationally that the complexity of children's mental health has been increasing and this is more evident following the impact of COVID. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing surveillance report in April 2022 found that the pandemic has substantially affected some children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

There is a range of ongoing activity to promote better mental health and wellbeing for children and young people including:

- An updated multiagency Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy for Children and Young People, 2022-25 and associated review of the graduated approach to young people's mental health support. This has involved stronger partnership working and a review of referral threshold criteria and waiting times.
- The Growing Healthy Northumberland 0-19 service has developed an Emotional Health and Resilience "pillar" to strengthen the service's offer to children and young people.
- Northumberland County Council's Ordinarily Available Provision guidance to support learners with neurodiverse needs attending mainstream schools.
- Review of 'Be You' Website.
- Review of existing support for Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)
- Review of provision associated with FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) including formalising existing arrangements.
- Developing a sensory processing pathway including review of universal.
- Kooth Online support for Children and Young People (aged 11 – 25 years). This online support is funded by the North East and North Cumbria ICB. Kooth Children and young people can self-refer or be directed to Kooth by professional staff. Kooth provides access to a range of tools, resources and activities including online discussion boards, reading and contributing to self-help articles, daily goal trackers and an online journal and has the benefit of direct access with no waiting lists or referral thresholds.

13. Promoting Better Mental Health in Schools

Schools are an important setting for promoting better mental health and there is a strong offer in Northumberland. Examples include:

- Northumberland has been successful in obtaining further funding for the Trailblazer Mental Health Support Team work. This is a national programme which provides support and extra capacity for promoting good mental health and wellbeing in schools and support for early intervention for those with mild to moderate mental health issues. This funding allows for expansion of this work to Alnwick and Coquet Areas.
- All schools in Northumberland have a mental health lead co-ordinator.
- There has been good uptake of the Department for Education grant to support senior mental health lead (SMHL) training with 118 schools in Northumberland have taking up this offer. A further course is being run in the spring term and the 50 settings in Northumberland identified by DfE as not yet having taken up the grant will be contacted with information about funding and the range of courses available.

- The Mental Health Support Teams employ a senior mental health lead co-ordinator who provides support to senior mental health leads (SMHLs) and with developing whole school approaches e.g. undertaking audits.
- This year's SMHL conference, 'Relationships Matter' was a joint Conference with Designated Teachers in schools. Northumberland schools are proactive in learning more about relational approaches and 10 schools are currently part of a Northumberland School C.A.R.E pilot.
- Funding for online Friends facilitator training.

Summary

This report describes the extensive and varied partnership work undertaken since the publication of the Director of Public Health's Annual Report on Mental Wealth in 2018 and the report to the HWBB in December 2020. However, the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent increase in cost-of-living has increased demand on services and emphasises the need for continued investment to promote good mental health for everyone across the county.

We need to build on the strong partnerships we already have and take a universal approach to improving mental health by improving the wider determinants of health and reducing inequalities.

6. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Collaborative work to promote better mental health continues through the multiagency Crisis Care, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Strategic Partnership, supported by the operational group.
- The Crisis Care, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Strategic Partnership develops a Promoting Better Mental Health Strategy for Northumberland. This would ensure best use of our strong partnership to develop a strategic approach to promoting better mental health.

7. Implications

Policy	Strategic Policy Implications have been considered
Finance and value for money	Funding has been agreed for specific projects and packages of support in line with appropriate mechanisms
Legal	No specific issues
Procurement	Procurement support has been provided where necessary
Human resources	No specific issues

Property	No specific issues
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	N/A A full impact assessment has not been undertaken for this report. Activity to promote better mental health will help to reduce inequalities
Risk assessment	N/A
Crime and disorder	Activity to promote better mental health may help people whose mental health and wellbeing has been affected by crime and disorder. Some activity may help to reduce crime and disorder
Customer considerations	Partnership Working across sectors has enabled discussion to consider the most appropriate response for mental health and wellbeing
Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and wellbeing	This paper is relevant to the mental health and wellbeing of all our residents and our staff
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

Not applicable

9. Links to other key reports already published

Northumberland Multi-Agency Zero Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021-2025
[Microsoft Word - 05.1 Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021 \(northumberland.gov.uk\)](#)

Northumberland's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy for Children and Young People 2022-25
[x243506_nhs_p8_jr-interactive-spl.pdf \(northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk\)](#)

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