



Northumberland County Council

Health and Wellbeing OSC

Tuesday, 7 November 2023

Mid-term review of the Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Theme 'Giving Children and Young People the Best Start in Life'

Report of Councillor(s) Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People and Councillor Veronica Jones, Portfolio Holder for Improving Public Health and Wellbeing

Responsible Officer(s): Audrey Kingham, Executive Director for Children, Young People & Education

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the 'Tackling Inequalities' priority of Northumberland County Council's Corporate plan. Giving children and young people the best start in life is central to reducing inequalities during childhood and has a lifelong impact.

It is also relevant to the 'Driving Economic Growth' priority because supporting the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people, ensuring they are safe and supported and have high quality education will have lifelong benefits for their future including employment prospects and overall quality of life.

2. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is:

- To update the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) on achievements made against the Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2028 theme of 'Giving children and young people the best start in life'.
- To review and agree priorities and actions for this theme and describe proposed amendments for the remaining period of the strategy from 2023 to 2028.
- To review indicators used to measure progress against this Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy theme.

3. Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- 3.1 Consider and comment on the achievements described in this report.
- 3.2 Comment on and agree the proposed amendments to the name of this theme, priorities and associated actions.
- 3.3 Comment on the national indicators aligned to this theme and other measures for understanding the qualitative impact of actions within this Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy theme.

4. Key Issues

- Giving children and young people the best start in life is one of the four themes of the Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) 2018-2028 and includes three priorities, education, ensuring children are safe and supported and supporting positive lifestyle and social choices.
- This report is a mid-point review of progress which has been made against these priorities.
- Elected member and officer leads for each JHWS theme were assigned by the HWB in July 2022. The member lead for this theme is Councillor Wayne Daley, the Director Sponsor Graham Reiter, Director of Children's Social Care, Young People and Families and NCC officer lead, Jon Lawler, Consultant in Public Health.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the social, educational and emotional development of some children and young people.
- Progress has been made against some national indicators aligned to this theme, including uptake of breastfeeding, under 18 conceptions and smoking status at the time of delivery.
- Improvements have not been seen across all national indicators. School readiness, persistent absences (primary pupils), the rate of unintentional and deliberate injuries and childhood overweight have worsened.
- There are limitations with national indicators. These do not provide a comprehensive measure of impact of actions and there is a time lag to publication of data.
- Information from annual reports, supported by inspection feedback is included to provide a more detailed qualitative description of progress against priorities and actions and the impact on children and young people.
- It is proposed to rename this theme to 'Starting and growing up well' to reflect how this theme includes the whole of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood.
- It is proposed that 'education and growing up well' and ensuring that 'children and young people are safe and supported' remain priorities. It is suggested that the third priority is updated to 'Children and young people's physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing' to emphasise the importance of a holistic approach to health, make physical health explicit within the JHWS and recognise the contribution of all HWB partners. Specific mention of physical health and wellbeing provides the opportunity to make links with other plans and priorities, such as NHS England's Core 20PLUS5 approach to reducing health inequalities for children and young people.
- Amended actions are proposed for consideration and discussion by the HWB.

5. Background

5.1 Giving Children and Young People the Best Start in Life JHWS theme

'Giving children and young people the best start in life' is one of the four themes of the Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The member lead for this theme is Councillor Wayne Daley, the Director Sponsor Graham Reiter, Director of Children's Social Care, Young People and Families and NCC officer lead, Jon Lawler, Consultant in Public Health. The outcome for this theme is that all children and young people in

Northumberland are happy, aspirational and socially mobile. This theme includes three priority areas, namely education, ensuring children are safe and supported and supporting positive lifestyle and social choices. Each priority includes examples of actions that might be taken.

This theme is central to tackling inequalities in Northumberland. The foundations for every aspect of human development, including physical and mental health and wellbeing, educational achievement and economic status are laid in early childhood. Giving every child the best start in life was the highest priority recommendation of the Marmot Review¹ which described the close links between disadvantage in early life and poorer outcomes throughout life, highlighting the importance of early years, or first five years of life.

Educational is a core priority for this theme. Inequalities in educational outcomes follow a similar social gradient to health inequalities and have lifelong impacts on physical and mental health, income, employment and quality of life achievement. Improving educational outcomes and reducing inequalities in these outcomes will reduce social and health inequalities.

5.2 Review of the JHWS Theme

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy includes a mid-term review of priorities to provide assurance that they still reflect need in Northumberland. The review of this theme describes progress against the national indicators specified in the JHWS and a summary of key achievements against priority areas.

Updated priorities are proposed for the remaining five-year period of the JHWS. These refreshed priorities reflect extensive multiagency work undertaken during 2023 by the Northumberland Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), the Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) and council children's services. The priorities identified within the CYPSP have been based on information provided by children and young people. This has included work to streamline and coordinate the range of partnership priorities and governance arrangements more effectively.

5.3 The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Children and Young People

The COVID-19 pandemic which occurred during the first 5 years of the JHWS has had a significant, but varied impact on children's lives, potentially unsettling their emotional, cognitive and social development². This has disproportionately affected the most disadvantaged³. Disruption of in-person teaching during 2020 and 2021, has meant that many pupils missed out on learning and social opportunities and some got out of the routine of attending school. There is some evidence of an overall worsening of children and young people's mental health associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ Institute of Health Equity (2010) Fair Society, Healthy Lives, The Marmot Review Executive Summary. <https://www.instituteoftheequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-exec-summary-pdf.pdf>

² The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2021) Children's mental health and the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0653/POST-PN-0653.pdf>

³ Institute of Health Equity (2020) Build Back Fairer: The COVID-19 Marmot Review Executive Summary. <https://www.instituteoftheequity.org/resources-reports/build-back-fairer-the-covid-19-marmot-review/build-back-fairer-the-covid-19-marmot-review-executive-summary.pdf>

5.4 Progress against national indicators

Table 1 shows progress against the most recent published data for the national indicators aligned to this theme. At the mid-point review there have been improvements in the rate of under 18 conceptions, smoking at the time of delivery and breast feeding at both initiation and at 6-8 weeks.

Improvements have not been seen across all indicators. The rate of hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in children in all reported age groups (0-4 years, 0-14 years and 15-24 years) increased between 2017/18 and 2021/22. The prevalence of obesity in Reception year children and overweight (including obesity) in Year 6 children increased between 2018/19 and 2021/22, reversing a downward trend prior to 2018/19. However, there has been an improvement in both these indicators compared to 2020/21.

There was a decrease in school readiness (at the end of reception year) in 2021/22 compared to baseline (2017/18) , and an increase in persistent absence rates in primary school in 2020/21, whilst persistent absence rates in secondary school pupils remained stable. National indicators for fixed term and permanent exclusions have not been updated since 2016/17.

Table1. National indicators for JHWS Giving children and young people the best start in life theme

Baseline Indicators (2018)				Mid-Strategy review		
Indicator	value	Time period	Trend (at baseline)	Time period	Value	Trend
School readiness (at the end of reception)	75%	2017/18	increasing	2021/22	67.5%	↓
Persistent absence rates (primary school)	7.4%	2017/18	increasing	2020/21	8.3%	↑
Persistent absent rates (Secondary School)	13.0%	2017/18	increasing	2020/21	13.0%	stable
Exclusions (fixed term and permanent primary school rate per 100)	1.0%	2016/17	increasing	2016/17	1.0%	*
Exclusions (fixed term and permanent secondary school rate per 100)	6.2%	2016/17	increasing	2016/17	6.2%	*
Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in children (Crude rate - per 10,000 aged 0-14 years)	111.2	2017/18	increasing	2021/22	136.7	↑
Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in children (Crude rate - per 10,000 aged 0-4 years)	142.1	2017/18	decreasing	2021/22	162	↑
Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in young people (Crude rate - per 10,000 aged 15-24 years)	219.3	2017/18	increasing	2021/22	246.4	↑
Under 18 conceptions (rate per 1000)	20.3	2017	decreasing	2021	13.8	↓
Breastfeeding (at initiation)	65.6%	2016/17	increasing	2021/22	66.0%	↑
Breastfeeding (at 6-8 weeks)	36.6%	2018/19	decreasing	2021/22	42.0%	↑
Smoking status at time of delivery	13.6%	2018/19	increasing	2021/22	10.1%	↓
Reception pupils: Prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity)	8.6%	2018/19	decreasing	2021/22	9.2%	↑

Year 6 pupils: Prevalence of overweight (including obesity)	19.0%	2018/19	decreasing	2021/22	21.8%	↑
*Awaiting publication of more recent data Arrows indicate direction of trend and colour indicates whether this is improving (green) or worsening (red)						

5.5 Progress during 2018 to 2023 by priority area

There are limitations with the national indicators identified within the JHWS to measure progress in this theme. There is a time lag in publication of indicators, with the most recently available data for 2021/22. National indicators for fixed term and permanent exclusions have not been updated since 2016/17. The national indicators also present information at local authority level which can mask variation and inequalities within Northumberland. More granular measures would help to better understand inequalities within Northumberland to inform action. Member organisations of the Health and Wellbeing Board may hold additional information which provides a more useful and timely measure of progress. For example, Northumberland County Council records information about exclusions and the percentage of pupils attending schools rated by Ofsted as 'good' or 'outstanding'.

The national indicators provide an incomplete insight into the qualitative impact of work undertaken by services and partnerships within this JHWS theme. Information for this review was obtained from relevant annual reports and discussion with staff, supplemented by external inspections and reviews to provide a more comprehensive description of progress.

5.5.1 Priority 1. Education – narrative measures of progress

Proposed actions within this priority included:

- Undertaking a review of educational provision to ensure that all children enjoy good quality education.
- Investing in capital programmes to create an environment which promotes learning.
- Working with schools to target those receiving free school meals who need additional support to realise their potential.
- Ensuring the pupil premium is utilised to meet the educational needs of those who most need it.

There is high quality education provision across Northumberland with regular monitoring and support from Northumberland County Council's Education and Skills Directorate. There is excellent Early Years education provision with 98% of providers rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. There is excellent uptake of statutory entitlement for Early Years provision with 93% of eligible 2 year olds taking up this offer compared to the national average of 72%. 100% of 3 and 4 year olds take up early education entitlement.

In July 2022 Ofsted inspection outcomes were the highest they have been in Northumberland with 87.9% of primary pupils and 78.2% of secondary pupils attending 'good' or 'outstanding' schools. There has been substantial investment across Northumberland to develop the learning environment for young people including the ongoing School Capital Improvement Programme to maintain the current school estate and capital investments such as the Emily Wilding Davison School which opened in

September 2022, increasing provision in central Northumberland for children with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

5.5.2 Priority 2. Ensuring children are safe and supported – narrative measures of progress

Proposed actions within this priority included:

- Continually improve and develop our front door services (such as the MASH) to ensure children receive the right support at the right time.
- Work with the public and all partners who have contact with children to ensure they recognise and respond to situations where children might be most at risk.
- Ensure that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have an appropriate level of support.

The Ofsted Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection of 2020 noted that "children are helped, protected and cared for to a good standard" and "the 'front door' service ensures that children's needs are identified promptly....and children and families receive the most appropriate service". There has been further improvement of front door services including a review of the multiagency safeguarding hub (MASH) in 2021 and introduction of revised processes with increased partnership working.

The Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) was formed in 2022/23, bringing together partners from adults and children's safeguarding boards to enhance oversight, learning and development on a whole family and community basis. Thresholds of Need for professionals working with children have been updated to support timely and appropriate decision making and a partnership plan to prevent and tackle neglect has been developed.

A range of actions have been taken to ensure that children and young people with SEND receive appropriate support. Significant improvements were made after the Ofsted SEND inspection in October 2018, which resulted in a Written Statement of Action. The Ofsted revisit in 2021 found that sufficient progress had been made in all areas requiring improvement and additional challenge was ended. The Education and Skills team has responded to increased demand and the challenges of COVID-19. The Northumberland Ordinarily Available Provision was developed with support from parents, carers and educational colleagues and launched in September 2022, to provide clear guidance about support available within mainstream schools.

5.5.3 Priority 3. Supporting positive lifestyle and social choices – narrative measures of progress

Proposed actions within this priority included:

- Working with schools to promote and improve the emotional wellbeing and resilience of children and young people.
- Supporting children and young people who are disadvantaged through adversity created through physical deficit or societal circumstance to enable them to make positive social and lifestyle choices.
- Ensuring that parents have the tools to promote attachment and understanding of positive behavioural insights.

Examples of work with schools to promote and improve the emotional wellbeing and resilience of children and young people include a named senior mental health lead (SMHL) in all schools, an extensive training offer for the multiagency workforce and an updated Northumberland Emotional Health and Wellbeing strategy which reflects partnership

working. Be You Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) are established in Blyth, Hexham, Ashington and Bedlington and will be extended to Alnwick and Coquet in September 2024.

Children's social care services were rated by Ofsted in 2020 inspection as 'good'. This followed the inspection judgement in 2016 that services required improvement to be good. Inspectors noted that there had been "significant financial investment" in social work capacity and "thoughtful strategic planning and determined focus. As a result, children are helped, protected and cared for to a good standard." All Northumberland County Council children's homes are currently rated as 'good' and the secure unit is rated 'outstanding'. There is a strong Virtual School offer for children in care and a whole council approach to good corporate parenting is being introduced.

5.6 Proposed updated priorities and actions

It is proposed that this JHWS theme is renamed as 'Starting and Growing up Well'. The rationale for this change is to reflect how this theme includes the whole of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood whereas 'best start in life' is frequently associated with the early years of childhood, either the first 1001 days or first five years. Whilst the early years are a crucial period of development, they are one element of this JHWS theme and amending to 'Starting and Growing up Well' makes this more explicit.

It is proposed that education and keeping children safe and supported remain priorities for the remaining period of the JHWS. It is proposed that the third priority of supporting positive lifestyle and social choices is updated to 'children's physical and emotional health and wellbeing'. The updated priority emphasises the importance of a holistic approach to health and wellbeing and the partnership contribution of all board members, including Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust, the Integrated Care Board, Cumbria Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust and the Growing Healthy Northumberland 0-19 Service. Specific mention of physical health and wellbeing provides the opportunity to make links with other plans and priorities, such as NHS England's Core 20PLUS5 approach to reducing health inequalities for children and young people.

5.6.1 Priority 1. Education and growing up well

The rationale for this priority is that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve their potential and to be meaningfully included within their community. We will improve the quality of early years settings, school and other providers, so that all children and young people, no matter their circumstances or educational need, have access to education as close to their home communities as possible and achieve best educational outcomes.

The proposed actions within this priority are that we will work with services, children, young people and their families to:

- Know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers and report their performance to the Council and the community.
- Challenge and support improvement in the performance of our schools and settings so that all children and young people, including SEND learners and those experiencing disadvantage, achieve the best educational outcomes.
- Improve the lived experience and outcomes for learners with SEND.
- Ensure all our young people are supported to achieve their ambitions by developing our vocational education offer to provide clear pathways into apprenticeships, further education, higher education, and employment for all our young people and adults.

- Develop appropriate high quality educational provision that meets the needs of all children and young people as close to their home communities as possible.
- Ensure the Education and Skills Service fulfils its statutory duties within the legislative framework.
- Develop and embed partnership working with families at the centre so that families have access to a range of inclusive support from pregnancy through to children turning 18 (or 25 for those with SEND)
- Ensure that children, young people and their families are able to access inclusive activities within the community where they belong.

5.6.2 Priority 2. Children and young people are safe and supported

This priority is a shared endeavour to safeguard, protect, help and promote the welfare of children.

The proposed actions within this priority are that we will:

- Keep our children safe through early support, assessment and delivery of our statutory functions, including being an effective Corporate Parent for and supporting our Care Leavers.
- Ensure that children and young people have a voice and are aware that their voice will influence decisions that affect them and that their opinions are seriously considered.
- Develop our services ensuring families' needs are put first.
- Ensure that all services work together regarding tackling any form of disadvantage, helping families to be confident that they have what they need to build the future they wish for.
- Further emphasis on training for the workforce regarding parental conflict and the impact on children and young people.

5.6.3 Priority 3. Children and young people's physical and emotional health and wellbeing

The purpose of this priority is to support children and young people's physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing through prevention and early intervention, using universal and targeted approaches to minimise the impact of inequalities.

The proposed actions within this priority are to:

- Lead and implement partnership strategies targeting improving and maintaining high quality preventative measures (e.g. the Northumberland Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy).
- Work in partnership to provide effective prevention and early intervention services to support the development of children and young people. This will include delivery of the Healthy Child Programme by providing an integrated 0-19 service and the Northumberland 0-19 Family Hubs model.
- Tackle inequality experienced by those most likely to experience poor mental and physical health and/or emotional wellbeing through partnership working and implementing local strategies (e.g. the Autism Strategy).
- Work in partnership to develop and implement approaches to promote healthy weight and physical activity in children and young people.
- Develop the knowledge, skills and capability of workforces through partnership and integrated working to improve the experience of children and young people in relation to their health.

5.7 Conclusion

This mid-point review of the JHWS theme 'Giving children and young people the best start in life' has used a range of information to describe achievements and progress against the priorities and actions, identifying limitations in some national indicators and areas where performance against national indicators has worsened.

The proposed amendments to the name of this theme, the priorities and associated actions reflect discussions within the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, NCASP and Northumberland Children and Young People and Education Directorate. The input from HWB partners is requested to develop this theme to ensure it reflects our shared priorities and identifies appropriate actions for the remaining period of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

6. Implications

Policy	<p>This report updates the Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy theme of Giving Children and Young People the Best Start in Life. It proposes updated priorities and actions which have been developed to reflect those of multiagency partnerships and plans and the NCC Children, Young People and Education and Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorates</p> <p>The updated priorities and actions support the priorities of the Northumberland Inequalities Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan</p>
Finance and value for money	It is not anticipated that there will be direct implications
Legal	It is not anticipated that there will be legal or governance implications associated with the updated priorities and actions. Some partner organisations, including NCC services have statutory responsibilities in relation to children and young people and are subject to regulation and inspection
Procurement	No direct implications
Human resources	No new recruitment is identified
Property	No direct implications
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	<p>No - no equalities issues identified</p> <p>An equalities impact assessment has not been undertaken. However, the updated priorities and actions will</p>

Risk assessment	Not undertaken for the update of this strategy
Crime and disorder	Activity undertaken by partners in relation to these priorities, particularly those in safe and supported (e.g. Youth Justice, safeguarding and children's social care) are expected to have a positive impact on crime and disorder in Northumberland
Customer considerations	There is a continuing need to ensure that children and young people are kept safe and supported, have equitable access to education and universal and targeted services which maintain their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. Seeking the views of children, young people and their families is central to these priorities and undertaken by a range of partners
Carbon reduction	No direct implications
Health and wellbeing	This report is explicitly intending to improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Northumberland and reduce health inequalities
Wards	(All Wards);

7. Background papers

Not applicable

8. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable

9. Author and Contact Details

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