

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Health & Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee** on Tuesday, 9 January 2024 at 1.00 p.m. at County Hall, Morpeth.

PRESENT

Councillor R. Dodd
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Bowman, L.	Hunter, I.
Chicken, E.	Nisbet, K.
Hardy, C.	Richardson, M.
Hill, G.	Seymour, C.

FACS MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ball, C.	Fairless-Aitken, S.
Daley, W.	Scott, A.
Hodgson, A.	Swinburn, M.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, C.	Scrutiny Officer
Bradley, N.	Executive Director - Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing
Jones, V.	Cabinet Member
Kingham, A.	Executive Director - Children, Young People and Education
Lawler, J.	Public Health Consultant
Mackenzie, H.	Senior Manager - Safeguarding Adults
Murfin, R.	Director of Housing and Planning
Nugent, D.	Healthwatch Northumberland
O'Neil, G.	Executive Director - Public Health, Inequalities, and Stronger Communities
Reiter, G.	Director of Children, Young People and Families
Robinson, L.	Senior Public Health Manager
Todd, A.	Democratic Services Officer

1 member of the press was also in attendance.

The Chair welcomed members of the Family and Children Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FACS) to the meeting who had been invited to attend to jointly consider the reports tabled for today's meeting.

33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Humphrey and FACS Members H. Waddell and A. Watson.

34. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 12 December 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

35. JOINT REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE AND CABINET MEMBER FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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

Members received an update on achievements made against the theme of 'Giving Children and Young People the Best Start in Life', to review and agree priorities and actions and describe proposed amendments for the remaining period of the strategy and review indicators to measure progress against this theme. The report was presented by J. Lawler, Consultant in Public Health and G. Reiter, Director of Children, Young People and Families (a copy of which has been filed with the signed minutes).

The following key points were raised as part of the powerpoint presentation (a copy of the powerpoint slides have been attached with the signed minutes):-

- This theme had three priorities with actions included to achieve them.
 - Education.
 - Ensuring Children were safe and supported.
 - Supporting positive lifestyle and social choices.
- There was a clear emphasis on children and young people.
- Details of national indicators and progress against them were shown. It was important to note that the national indicators did not show the whole story for Northumberland and could mask inequalities. Local information was more up to date and relevant.
- Narrative and qualitative indicators for each priority were shown.
- Covid-19 had had an impact such as disrupting education, impacting mental health and wellbeing, safeguarding and school readiness. There was also a disproportionate impact on existing inequalities. The current cost of living crisis was compounding the impact of Covid-19.

- By way of refreshing the theme, it was proposed to rename it 'Starting and Growing Up Well' in order to reflect whole of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood.
- Proposed priorities to be:
 - Education and Growing Up Well.
 - Children and young people are safe and supported.
 - Children's physical and emotional and mental health and wellbeing.
 - Includes importance of physical health and wellbeing.
 - Emphasises holistic approach and contribution of all HWB partners.
 - Opportunity to link to other plans and priorities e.g. Core 20 PLUS 5.
- Proposed actions for each priority were listed.
- Recommendations and Next Steps.

Following the presentation, a number of comments were made, including:

- There were huge inequalities when it came to housing within the county.
- Family Hubs were a locality-based partnership working along with the community voluntary sector such as Thriving Together. Work could be done to enhance statutory services and links with those.
- Confidence, self-esteem and overall life skills in young people needed to be built in as it had been hampered by Covid-19. This also related to physical health and wellbeing.
- The difficulties faced by school settings, particularly since Covid-19 pandemic, of students' readiness to start school. Schools were seeing more SEN within settings against the backdrop of budgets being cut.
- FACS received each year an annual Education report. The report detailed issues such as attainment, detailed the ongoing impact following Covid-19 and measures being put in place to support the ambition, transition, and development of all children, young people and residents to their next stage of education, employment and life.
- Northumberland was a diverse county with both rural and urban areas resulting in different issues needing tackled on a place-by-place basis.
- Inequalities and the rising cost of living were among the most important problems facing residents.
- A concern that within this report there was nothing radical to tackle the pressing issues such as child poverty, poor and lack of suitable housing, low earnings and cuts to free school meals in schools. Members were reminded that this was one of four themes within the JWHS. The themes were interlinked and cross cutting. This report was a high level look at the strategy. Streams of work would follow from the strategy such as the poverty and hardship work and school attainment. Data and resources would underpin the JWHS.
- Confirmation that poverty and hardship was a specific focus for the local authority. A report on this was being prepared for the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- It was asked if poverty could be highlighted within this theme as there was a link between hardship and physical, medical, emotional health and wellbeing.
- The need to ensure inequalities did not widen further before seeking to level off and eventually close the gap in health, social and economic outcomes.
- There was a whole joined up system to ensure that children and young people were prepared for their next stage in life.

- Work regarding mental health was welcomed. Further work was being carried out within Northumbria Trust regarding its adult and children's mental health services.
- Careful use of language and specific terms was crucial to encourage engagement with the wider voluntary and community sector.
- Confirmation that during Covid-19 there was specific joint work carried out with schools. It was suggested that FACS examine what changes/adaptions were made and lessons learnt.
- It was suggested FACS also pick up the issues of school readiness, absences, and family hubs.
- Healthwatch were currently seeking views on the health visiting services and the 0-19 service. Everyone was encouraged to participate in the survey which was available on Healthwatch Northumberland's website.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) note and comment on the achievements described in the report, and
- (b) that the proposed amendments to priorities, actions, and indicators or evidence of achievements for the theme be noted.

36. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Update on and refresh of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy theme 'Tackling the wider determinants of health'

Members received a report updating them on the achievements made against this theme and were requested to review and agree priorities and actions for the period 2023-28, to review indicators used to measure progress and comment on national indicators and other measures to understand the qualitative impact of actions. (A copy of the report and powerpoint slides have been filed with the signed minutes).

R. Murfin, Director of Housing and Planning, Place and Regeneration and L. Robinson, Senior Public Health Manager gave a powerpoint presentation which covered the following key points:

- The 'Tackling the wider determinants of health' theme in the current Strategy included the following four priorities:-
 - Tackling fuel poverty by increasing the number of households with access to affordable warmth' and
 - Supporting people to live independently for as long as possible by maximising the use of building regulations.
 - Increasing the number of people with long term health conditions into and sustaining work.
 - Ensure local transport policy delivers on providing resilient, flexible and sustainable transport options across the county, particularly in rural area.
- The aims relating to the priorities were outlined, along with the success against indicators.

- Covid-19 had re-focused attention on inequalities and the building blocks of a good life. This along with the cost of living crisis had disproportionately impacted on those with lower incomes as a larger percentage of their income was used for housing, food and energy. There was a caveat regarding the data for the Covid-19 period as the Northumberland average masked inequalities.
- Proposed Changes
 - Change the name of the theme from 'Tackling the Wider Determinants of Health' to 'Building Blocks of Good Life'.
 - Priorities for housing broadened to include impact on health of wider strategic housing and planning issues and remained 'Healthy Housing and Planning'.
 - Fuel poverty indicator to be supplemented with Energy Efficiency Measures, housing affordability and overcrowding indicators.
 - Closing gap in employment outcomes for people with long term physical and mental health conditions and reducing economic activity linked to poor health/disability.
- Refreshed Priority 1 - Healthy Housing and Planning
 - Supporting Healthy Neighbourhoods through Planning
 - Blyth Deep Dive Housing and Healthy Housing Hub
 - Hirst Housing Masterplan Phase One Implementation
 - Available, Quality Housing
- Refreshed Priority 2 – Inclusive Economy
 - Supporting the economically inactive with long term health conditions to obtain and sustain good quality work.
 - Increase access to good quality work.
 - Maximise the economic levers of Northumberland's Institutions to reduce inequalities.
 - Increase in impactful, volunteering and training opportunities for economically inactive.
- Refreshed Priority 3 – An Inclusive Transport System
 - Public and Community Transport is equitable, accessible and appealing.
 - Increase children and young people's active travel.
 - Ensuring the built environment is conducive to active travel.
- Measuring Progress.

Following the presentation, a number of comments were made, including:

- Employment, workforce, job skills and housing should be key priorities.
- The Northumberland Skills Team offered residents a wide variety of full and part time courses for 16-18 year olds and adults; apprenticeships; career's guidance and employability advice and support.
- The Northumberland Economy Strategy included a focus on jobs and careers in the green industry sector.
- Housing Standards both in the building and letting of buildings needed to improve.
- Standards in social housing needed to be improved.
- The need to challenge central government to make it easier for more affordable housing to be built.

- Public transport needed to be frequent, fast, comfortable, accessible, convenient, affordable and safe, serving routes for which there was demand.
- Northumberland residents wanted more faster and frequent train links but there seemed to only be a focus on shaving off minutes on the Edinburgh to London train.
- The need for the Council to think big and radical to enable any substantial changes to be made.
- Education needed to be a key priority which would help young people get on the right path to employment, improve their skills and ultimately lead to overall improved outcomes for all.
- The cost of living crisis, shortage of affordable housing, low paid jobs and unemployment levels should all be highlighted within the JHWS.
- Countries such as Holland and Belgium had quite aggressive policies for the provision of good cycling networks. Many lessons could be learnt from examining these countries.
- There needed to be improvement and maintenance plans for cycling paths once established. Cramlington was a good example of how once the cycle paths had been created there was no plan or funding available to ensure they were preserved.
- The Government was consulting on a new approach regarding S.106 agreements.
- Some provisions such as cycle paths were obviously welcomed by regular cyclists, but it was important to also encourage others who may not already be active.
- The change of name of the theme was welcomed. It was stressed that it was important to avoid the perception that this theme related only to healthcare facilities but instead related to a 'good life' in a broader sense. It was the conditions within which people were born, grow, live, work and age that had a much bigger impact on health and inequalities than healthcare services and health behaviours. Good life included having good health.
- Cycling to work in some of the rural areas was not feasible.
- Affordable housing as there needed to be affordable, downsizing opportunities in both rural and urban areas. It was acknowledged that there were different issues affecting rural areas.
- Consideration should be given to the indicators beyond the national statistics which may suit Northumberland's population better.
- A request for information regarding the safe routes to school scheme was made. Officers would seek the required information and pass on the data to the relevant Member.
- Northumberland Communities Together was launched in response to the Coronavirus pandemic to ensure residents were kept safe and well throughout the crisis. It continued to help support residents and provide coordination to support individual volunteers, voluntary groups and communities across the county. Members were reminded to signpost any residents in need to this Team.
- Access to faster and more reliable broadband was needed across the whole of the county. This was especially important for those working from home and small businesses.

- The need to have better links with counterparts in neighbouring counties to improve cross border transport, health services and improve overall economic growth.
- There was a shortage of skilled tradesman.
- Northumberland Skills ran courses and offered apprenticeships to hopefully help improve the skill gap.
- The Northumberland Line had been established to bring passenger trains back into service between Ashington and Newcastle. It was hoped this project would help stimulate and support economic growth and improve transport links for local people and businesses.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) note and comment on the achievements described in the report, and
- (b) that the proposed amendments to priorities, actions, and indicators or evidence of achievements for the theme be noted.

37. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE

NCASP Annual Report – September 2022 to September 2023

G. Reiter, Director of Children, Young People and Families presented the first Annual Report of the Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) which integrated in April 2022. It was reported that the report satisfied the statutory requirements for both Children and Adults Safeguarding and outlined our progress so far in integrating our new partnership arrangements. (A copy of the report and powerpoint slides have been filed with the signed minutes).

Members received a powerpoint presentation which highlighted the main points of the report:

- The vision of the Board
- The structure of the NCASP.
- The strategic drivers.
- Scrutiny arrangements.
- Strategic priorities 2022-23.
- Learning from Reviews.
- Summary of themes.
- Looking forward.

It was advised that the new partnership arrangements acknowledged that children and adult arrangements were underpinned by different legislation and statutory guidance. The revised structure included a range of both joint (children and adults) and separate arrangements which were accountable to the Business groups. It was envisaged that the new arrangements would help ensure effective scrutiny and oversight whilst retaining an appropriate focus on adults and children's work respectively alongside bringing opportunities for shared development and learning. It was reported that there had been national recognition for how the new safeguarding arrangements/partnership had been

developed and the approach to scrutiny had been cited as a model of excellent practice.

It was reported that the Independent Scrutineer had been in post since June 2023 and had provided NCASP with an appraisal of how the partnership arrangements have continued to develop and improve since implementation, acknowledging the strength and commitment of partners.

It was noted that the annual report showed that Northumberland had effectively maintained a focus on work and business during the developments detailed within the report and gave clear and detailed information and analysis of the safeguarding work in the county. It highlighted partners' commitment and progress towards the vision to work together to provide added value across the safeguarding system, improve practice and outcomes and to safeguard, protect and promote the welfare of children, young people, adults and their families in the community.

Following the presentation, a number of comments were made, including:

- The Annual Report was a good reflection of the joined-up work with partners.
- There was a good relationship between partners which enabled collaboration as well as the ability to challenge each other.
- There was a shared and collective responsibility between organisations and agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults.
- The partnership arrangements enabled partners to support and challenge from within the multi-agency system and operate from within an environment where effective multi-agency practice could flourish.
- A request for councillors as well as members of the public to be included in communication to help identify/raise awareness of different types of abuse and educate all on how to report and signpost to help available.
- Multi agency training should be readily available to help everyone understand their role in relation to safeguarding adults and children including domestic abuse, how to recognise all signs of abuse, how to report it and where to access support services.
- The lack of housing made it difficult if trying to leave an abusive home.
- The need to teach resilience and healthy relationships at an early start.
- Awareness across communities of abuse and safeguarding issues needed to continue with the help from all partners.
- Safeguarding was not restricted to the home with criminal exploitation remaining a top priority for Northumberland.
- Operation Endeavour was Northumberland's local agreement with Police to notify schools when child concern notifications were received regarding children going missing. The process worked in the same way as Operation Encompass (re domestic abuse) and had allowed schools to act swiftly to safeguard children and better understand individual children's needs. The number recorded through Operation Endeavour during this year had increased significantly, by 66%. It was suggested that the percentage be accompanied with an actual figure to show exactly how many notifications were being received regarding missing children.
- Often school was a place of safety for many children.

- The issue of self-neglect amongst adults and its impact on children was raised for consideration following a case discussion at SARG. It was reported that work would be undertaken by the NCASP to help understand the issue.

RESOLVED that the report and comments made be noted.

38. REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

(a) Forward Plan

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (a copy of the Forward Plan has been filed with the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(b) Health and Wellbeing OSC Work Programme

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2023/24 council year (a copy of the work programme has been filed with the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the Work Programme and comments made be noted.

39. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the date of the next meeting be scheduled for Tuesday, 5 March 2024 at 1.00 p.m.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____