

# Director of Public Health Annual Report 2021



## Putting life into living

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to

Michelle Baldwin – Public Health Strategic Manager  
Sean Barry – Public Health Advanced Practitioner  
Julie Bradbrook – Partnerships Team Manager  
Michael Fleming – Strategic Manager, Research and Intelligence  
Thelma Lambert – Regional Support Officer  
Lisa Lynch – Public Health Programme Manager  
Fiona Mawson – Public Health Practitioner  
Karen McCabe – Public Health Strategic Manager  
Jen McGuigan – Public Health Practitioner  
Jodie Norman – Public Health Practitioner  
Rachel Osbaldeston – Public Health Advanced Practitioner  
Phil Ray – Public Health Advanced Practitioner  
Helen Riddell – Public Health Advanced Practitioner  
Craig Robson - Public Health Practitioner  
Emma Roycroft – Public Health Specialty Registrar  
Kirsty Roe – Public Health Intelligence Specialist  
Mick Shannon – Public Health Strategic Manager  
Tracey Sharp – Independent Consultant in Public Health  
Tammy Smith – Public Health Advanced Practitioner  
Jane Sunter – Public Health Strategic Manager  
Kirsty Wilkinson – Public Health Advanced Practitioner

Design and Print, Durham County Council

## Contents

	Page
Foreword .....	5
Health and wellbeing across County Durham .....	6
Approach to wellbeing .....	7
County Durham – our health roadmap .....	8
COVID-19 – response and recovery .....	10
Update on strategic priorities.....	14
Promoting positive behaviours .....	16
High quality drug and alcohol services .....	20
Better quality of life through integrated health and care services.....	24
Revisiting the Taylors with some examples of real life case studies.....	28
Update on recommendations from 2020 .....	30
Recommendations for 2021 .....	31





Amanda Healy

## Foreword

Welcome to my Annual Report for 2021. The last year has been one of the most challenging that any of us can remember and every part of our society has been affected by COVID-19. I am proud of the way that our communities and services across the county have responded to these unprecedented times. I want to express our thanks again to all NHS and social care colleagues, care workers, voluntary sector, key workers and our communities for their ongoing efforts to ensure that services continue in County Durham. I particularly want to thank my team for all their hard work and support throughout the pandemic.

In this report, I want to consider how we have responded to outbreaks of COVID-19 in care homes, schools, workplaces and a range of community settings. In addition, we have seen very positive and above average take up of the vaccine programme in County Durham. We continue to work with partners to respond to government guidance, promote vaccine uptake and support other preventative measures to protect our population. I will highlight how we are preparing for the next phases of the pandemic as we learn to live safely with COVID-19 as well as outlining our plan to protect our local communities by preventing and controlling transmission.

Last year I introduced the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing. At the heart of the Approach to Wellbeing is that working with communities and empowering communities' results in better health outcomes, however this needs organisations to work differently. This year I look at how that approach has been implemented, including how the Wellbeing Principles that were developed as part of this work have helped the County Durham Together Community Hub to adapt to meet the changing needs of our communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In my first Annual Report four years ago, I set out seven priorities to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of the people of County Durham and I have focused on a selection of these priorities in each of my subsequent reports. This year I will be completing this work with an update on the last three priorities, which are promoting positive behaviours, high quality drug and alcohol services and better quality of life through integrated health and care services.

I have followed the progress of our "Taylor" family and their community over the last four years to understand how the work that we have carried out has made a difference to their lives and the lives of others across County Durham. This year will be the last for the Taylor family in my Annual Report, as we consider the final of our seven priority areas.

In the coming year we will continue to work closely with our partners as we recover from the impact of COVID-19. Our focus remains on reducing health inequalities, which have widened across the county due to the direct and indirect consequences of COVID-19. We continue to work hard to make County Durham a healthier and fairer place to live.

**Amanda Healy**  
Director of Public Health



## Health and wellbeing across County Durham

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in County Durham builds a picture of current and future health and wellbeing needs of local people. It's a suite of resources locally that helps to inform the planning and improvement of local services, and guides us in making the best use of funding available. We use it to shape joint commissioning priorities to improve health and wellbeing as well as reduce health inequalities in our communities. As we look beyond the COVID-19 pandemic it is vital that we understand the protective factors and strengths across communities is crucial. This combined view of both needs and assets (building on our Approach to Wellbeing) will allow us to build a broader understanding of health and wellbeing and how we can support and protect the health of our local communities.

### Durham Insight

Durham Insight is our publicly available shared intelligence, research and knowledge base platform for County Durham. We use it to inform strategic planning across the council and partnerships, not just the Health and Wellbeing Board via the JSNA content. The site contains a variety of data and intelligence including in-depth JSNA and insight factsheets, interactive content and infographics, maps and story maps. New content is regularly added, and the site is continuously being developed and improved. [www.durhaminsight.info](http://www.durhaminsight.info)



### COVID-19 surveillance

Data and surveillance have been central to informing our understanding and response to the pandemic. The key area of focus in terms of data and surveillance during the pandemic has been to integrate effectively national and local data and intelligence to provide the best available understanding and insight into the situation in County Durham.

The provision of pro-active, high quality, detailed, timely and locally focussed data and surveillance from both local and national sources has underpinned decision-making at all levels and has been a critical factor in enabling us to take informed action in preventing and managing outbreaks. This is essential for scenario planning, rapid response to outbreaks and to inform and support more effective targeting of interventions, and inform the vaccination process.

### Recent updates include

- Continual development of our local COVID-19 dashboard to include case numbers, vaccinations, hospital occupancy and deaths
- Post COVID-19 economy content
- New interactive poverty and economic factsheet
- Poverty Dashboard and Interactive sub-County map
- Development and utilisation of a Spike Detector Tool (looking at exceedance at a small area level)
- Establishment of a Schools cases GIS dashboard and linked testing assurance process

## Approach to wellbeing

At the heart of the Approach to Wellbeing is that working with communities and empowering communities' results in better health outcomes, however this needs organisations to work differently. By empowering local people to make decisions about issues that affect their communities, we acknowledge their valuable contribution and responsibility, enabling us to work together to discover the best solutions.

### CASE STUDY

County Durham Together Community Hub was introduced in March 2020 as part of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) emergency response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Our initial response, was, of necessity, introduced very quickly but recognised the need to promote the building of resilience at both a community and individual level. It was also important to mobilise existing community assets/ resources.

The Community Hub is a single point of contact for people who live in County Durham who required support to remain at home either because they had been advised to shield or had to self-isolate due to being a confirmed case of COVID-19 or a close contact of someone with COVID-19. The remit of the Hub adapted to the need of communities through the different phases of the pandemic, based on continuous feedback and built on assets within communities..

Initially, the focus of the Hub was around provision of food; providing emergency food packages or doing shopping for people who were shielding and self-isolating. Over time, support was given to community led groups through the Area Action Partnerships (AAP's), enabling them to build their capacity to deliver these services.

As a result of continuous improvement, the Hub now takes a holistic person-centred approach to understand the individual/family's circumstances triggering their contact with the Hub. It has enabled us to work better together to achieve the greatest impacts.

The pandemic has also led to the expansion of Locate, an online directory which allows residents to connect with local services in their community. Locate can empower people, helping them to build their own resilience through local knowledge. It has strengthened working relationships across the county particularly with the voluntary and community sector in service delivery.

Finally, our approach has helped to determine the different resilience levels in communities and identified where we need to work differently to engage and support particular communities.



Blackhall Community Centre

This approach to working with communities (not doing to) will see a significant shift and will put co-production very much at the centre of how services and solutions are explored and developed.

# County Durham – our health roadmap

The health and wellbeing of the people in County Durham has improved over recent years but remains worse than the England average. Health inequalities remain persistent and pervasive. Levels of deprivation are higher and life expectancy is lower than the England average. There is also inequality within County Durham for many measures (including life expectancy, childhood obesity and premature mortality for example)

**County Durham value** (England average)

← County Durham figure

← England average

## Where we live

- 14,100 businesses
- 21 green flags for parks and open spaces
- 2 in 5 residents living in rural areas
- 12 miles of coastline
- 150 miles of former railway paths
- Durham world heritage site



## Starting Well

**16.8%** (10.4)  
Smoking status at time of delivery

**1%** (1.2)  
Deliveries that are to teen mums

**50.4%** (67.4)  
Baby's first feed breastmilk

**27.8%** (48.0)  
Breastfeeding 6-8 weeks after birth

**21.6%** (15.6)  
Children living in low income families

**37.6%** (35.2)  
Children with excess weight (yr 6)

**24.9%** (23)  
Children with excess weight (reception)

## Living Well

**71.4%** (76.2)  
People aged 16-64 in employment

**16.5%** (12.9)  
Living with low income

**65.5%** (66.4)  
Physically active adults

**19.4%** (22.3)  
Adults who feel lonely

**3.1%** (1.9)  
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

**7.3%** (6.5)  
Asthma

**696** per 100,000 (644)  
Hospital admissions attributable to alcohol

**17%** (13.9)  
Smoking prevalence

## Ageing Well

**24.5%** (17.6)  
Living with a limiting long term health problem or disability

**3.9%** (4.0)  
Dementia

**17%** (14.2)  
Older people living in deprivation

**13.6%** (12.4)  
Pensioners living alone

## Our Communities

- Over 530,000 people live in County Durham
- 20% of the population are over 65 years old, and 19% are under the age of 18
- 30 Dementia friendly communities
- 43 CREEs\*
- 14 area action partnerships
- 59,000 adult carers
- 38 mutual aid shops



## Life Expectancy

**78.3** years (79.8)  
**81.8** years (83.4)

## Our Services

- 224 primary schools, 32 secondary schools
- 4 colleges, 10 special schools, 14 enhanced mainstream schools
- 1 university
- 39 libraries
- 15 council owned leisure centres
- Around 170 breastfeeding friendly businesses
- 63 GPs
- 122 pharmacies



\*A Cree is County Durham's version of Australia's Men's Shed. Crees aim to engage with those at risk of suicide by tackling social isolation and self-harm through skill-sharing and informal learning to promote social interaction. Although Crees were originally aimed at men, some have developed for women and young people.

## COVID-19 – response and recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest public health challenges in living memory. It has affected every part of our society throughout 2020 and 2021 and is likely to lead to lasting changes to how we live, work and enjoy our leisure time.

The virus is highly infectious and can cause severe respiratory illness. Please look at our covid dashboard for the most up to date figures [www.durhaminsight.info/covid-19](http://www.durhaminsight.info/covid-19)

Last year I wrote of the tremendous effort across all our health, social care and local authority settings, in addition to the valuable community contribution responding to the first wave of COVID-19 and building a support infrastructure. Last year's report also highlighted the incredible involvement of wider partners in all settings to our initial response.

In this year's annual report, I want to reflect on the next phase of the pandemic, how we have responded to further waves of the virus throughout 2020 and 2021 and the successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme.

By the time we came out of the first lockdown (June 2020) we had developed robust local outbreak management plans and governance across all settings and we continue to use this framework to deliver our COVID-19 response today and into the future.

### County Durham COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan

We have developed and continually refreshed a Local COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan for County Durham to protect our local communities.

#### The plan includes:

- Working across key settings to rapidly detect and manage outbreaks and implement appropriate infection control measures.
- Emergency response to variants and mutations of the virus.
- The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.
- Our local COVID-19 testing offer.
- Compliance and enforcement work.
- Autumn and winter planning.
- Support to our communities, particularly those who are vulnerable or needing to self-isolate.
- COVID-19 Champions engagement activity.
- Utilised the Health and Wellbeing Board as a Member-led Local Outbreak Engagement Board
- Communication plans.

Our support to individuals, communities and businesses is strong. Personal control measures (Hands, Face, Space, Fresh Air) were well understood and adhered to and 'covid secure measures' across all sectors had been introduced.



Our clinical response and understanding of COVID-19 was continually improving and the development of the COVID-19 vaccine is happening at pace.

Over the course of the pandemic we have supported a range of setting (see schools example below) and responded to outbreaks of COVID-19 in care homes, schools, workplaces and a variety of community settings in County Durham.

### Supporting Schools and Colleges

Since the start of the pandemic all education settings have had access to expert advice from the public health team, with over 1800 cases linked to education settings.

#### We have:

- Continued upskilling of education and school staff for case management and the development of an Outbreak Control Team approach to compliment case management.
- Introduced an Education Oversight Group to consider settings with 5 or more cases providing additional support, including a community response where required.
- Developed an Education Dashboard to improve daily surveillance and provide immediate response.
- Refreshed communications to Head Teachers, providing learning from cases, clusters and outbreaks in schools – see protect our summer example.
- Development of targeted communication for pupils (primary and secondary).

This support has contributed to the enormous effort and response the education community (Staff, Students, Parents and Carers) have delivered, not only to keep our children safe but to ensure high quality education continues to be provided.



Throughout the pandemic, we have worked with national and regional partners such as the NHS, Public Health England, the Local Resilience Forum, and the Civil Contingencies Unit to deliver local interventions such as the Local Tracing Partnership and to protect and support our residents, families, businesses, social care, community organisations, and NHS structures in County Durham.

## Local Tracing Partnership

January 2021 saw the transfer of national NHS Test and Trace tracing services to County Durham Together under the umbrella of the Local Tracing Partnership.

Initially, the team received cases within 32 hours of a positive test result, where the national team had been unable to contact them. Following a successful pilot where the team achieved over 95% successful contact, in April 2021 we took on responsibility for all tracing services for County Durham residents.

As the pandemic has progressed, we have had to constantly review our approach to local tracing, and as numbers rose again in June 2021, we reverted to contacting calls where the national team were unable to make contact.

Given continuing high rates of transmission, we have begun prioritising geographies based on those areas with lower vaccine uptake, higher than expected rates of COVID-19 and those where engagement with NHS Test and Trace have been low.



*"You hear about people with COVID being contacted all the time in the news – someone has come to the house to make sure I am OK and see if I need anything – I feel so valued."*

*"I was really poorly, I didn't have the energy to get help. Thank you so much for contacting me and for ringing my GP, I was taken into hospital things could have been a lot worse if you had not called."*

*"It's not been easy for me or my family - your professionalism, guidance and expertise has been much appreciated."*



The COVID-19 vaccination programme has seen the biggest and most intense vaccination rollout ever undertaken in the UK. Launched in December 2020 our first vaccination hubs were sited within University Hospital Durham and Darlington Memorial Hospital, which targeted priority groups 1 and 2 alongside NHS staff.

A network of smaller vaccination hubs aligned to GP surgeries opened in the first months of 2021 and County Hall was used as a dedicated vaccination site for health and social care staff, delivering over 40,000 vaccines in a 3-month period from February to March 2021. We opened a mass vaccination site in the heart of Durham in February 2021, and we reached the government milestone of vaccinating all the priority groups 1-9 by the middle of April 2021.

As the programme moved to target the wider eligible population, we have continued to shape our offer, such as no appointment walk-ins, vaccination 'pop-ups' at events and the introduction of the Mellissa vaccine bus used in targeted areas of inequality and vaccine hesitancy to achieve maximum uptake.

We have seen very positive and above average take up of the vaccine in County Durham with over 84% of our eligible population having received their first dose; over 73% fully vaccinated; and leaving 15% unvaccinated as at 24th August 2021. Please look at our covid dashboard for the most up to date vaccination figures [www.durhaminsight.info/covid-19](http://www.durhaminsight.info/covid-19)

The vaccine has had a dramatic and positive effect on infections, serious illness and deaths. Couple this with the improvements in our clinical response and understanding of COVID-19 and we have seen the number of people needing hospital treatment reduce. Those that are admitted to hospital are spending less time as an inpatient due to new treatments and therapies, with less requiring intensive care and consequently fewer deaths. Our understanding of Long Covid continues to grow and we now have a number of Long Covid clinics in operation.

As well as these direct health consequences other areas of health and wellbeing have been affected by COVID-19 including a rise in demand for mental health support and specifically in children's mental health support. There are increased risks of social isolation in our vulnerable communities we continue to address with support from our Area Action Partnerships.

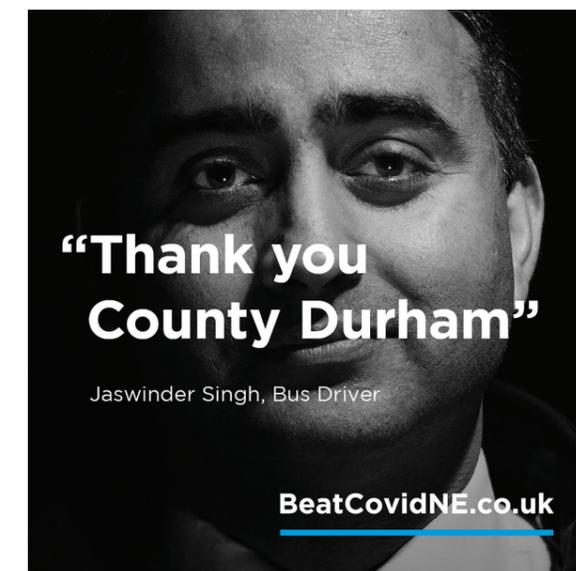
We have also seen both positive and negative changes in eating, drinking and physical activity behaviours and through a strong relationship with our Culture Sport and Tourism service we are sustaining the increases seen in positive physical activity, while reducing the impact on poor eating and drinking habits. You can read more about promoting positive behaviours on pages 16-19 of this report.

The wider health impacts are still unfolding, along with lasting concerns around the health of the economy, employment, education, businesses and socio-economic inequalities.

In summer 2021 the government roadmap saw the final restrictions lifted and in County Durham we have seen a gradual, cautious and safe return to open society. Our emphasis has been on learning to live with COVID-19, adapting our lives and the control measures we take, in response to the settings and situation we find ourselves in. Our 'Thank you County Durham' campaign acknowledges the effort we have all made to keep, ourselves, our loved ones and our communities safe.

Looking to the future, our Autumn and Winter plans recognise the continued risks mixing indoors brings and the re-emergence of winter illnesses such as flu, norovirus and other respiratory viruses in addition to the threat of covid variants.

We continue to reshape our overarching Local Outbreak Management Plan and the governance and supporting infrastructure to flex and respond to demand throughout the winter period and into 2022.



## Update on strategic priorities

In my first annual report, I identified seven key public health priorities for the Taylor family and local communities to lead healthier lives. These were based on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) but also evidence of 'what works' to make a difference. A recommendation from 2018 was to implement the actions for each priority working with partners across County Durham. Here are some examples of progress made.



Promoting positive behaviours, high quality drug and alcohol services and better quality of life through integrated health and care services is a focus for this annual report.

## Every child to have the best start in life

### Action

1. All schools in County Durham working towards healthy schools with emphasis on mental health.
2. Provide dedicated support for women smoking while pregnant and include support for their partners.
3. Introduce breastfeeding friendly venues.
4. To understand the health and wellbeing needs of children with special educational needs and disability.

### Progress

1. The Health and Wellbeing Framework website has been launched and kept up to date with available resources to support around physical activity, mental wellbeing, healthy eating and other aspects that contribute to positive behaviours that improve health outcomes.
2. Continue to promote and roll out the Smokefree app to complement the existing pathway and support to treat tobacco dependency for both pregnant women and their partners.
3. The new breastfeeding friendly scheme has been in place within County Durham since 2018 with approximately 180 venues accredited to date.
4. Supported the 0-25 Family Health Service to improve their offer to children, young people with SEND and their families. This includes improving the quality of education, health and care plans to support children and young people to improve their outcomes.

## Mental Health at scale

### Action

1. Support small businesses to take action about mental health, and train staff to become Mental Health First Aiders
2. Get involved in *Time to Change* to reduce stigma due to mental stress.

### Progress

1. The mental health training hub was launched in August 2020. Since the launch 13 First Aid for Mental Health courses have been delivered.
2. Over 20 local organisations in County Durham committed to change the way they act and think about workplace mental health by signing the Time to Change Employer Pledge. Whilst Time to Change announced the retirement of the pledge in May 2020 in conjunction with partners we are scoping a range of schemes that could replace the pledge and continue to promote the ongoing hard work and commitment to improve mental health and wellbeing across the county.

## Good jobs and places to live, learn and play

### Action

1. To develop health standards for private landlords to implement.
2. Older people to have support to ensure their homes are warm and safe and not at risk of fuel poverty.
3. Set out a plan to restrict the increase in take-away food.

### Progress

1. The council's housing strategy is committed to maintaining and improving standards across all housing sectors to ensure health is integrated into housing initiatives. We have worked with Housing Solutions to ensure health information relating to warm homes initiatives, stopping smoking, substance misuse, domestic abuse, mental health and wellbeing services are all made available to landlords within in the private rented sector. This will be taken one step further and integrated into standards developed as part of the authorities Selective Licensing process if the status request is agreed by government.
2. Despite pressures on GP Practices from COVID-19, a total of 15 GP Practices wrote to their patients with COPD or Asthma to promote the Warm Homes and Health Service.
3. Following the implementation of a Hot Food Takeaway Policy within the County Durham Plan to restrict number of new takeaway premises across the county there have been no hot food takeaways approved within 400 metres of educational establishments.

## Healthy Workforce

### Action

1. Support organisations to promote the wellbeing of their staff
2. Reach more organisations with our Better Health at Work award (BHAWA).
3. Support a range of marketing campaigns to promote health and wellbeing award.

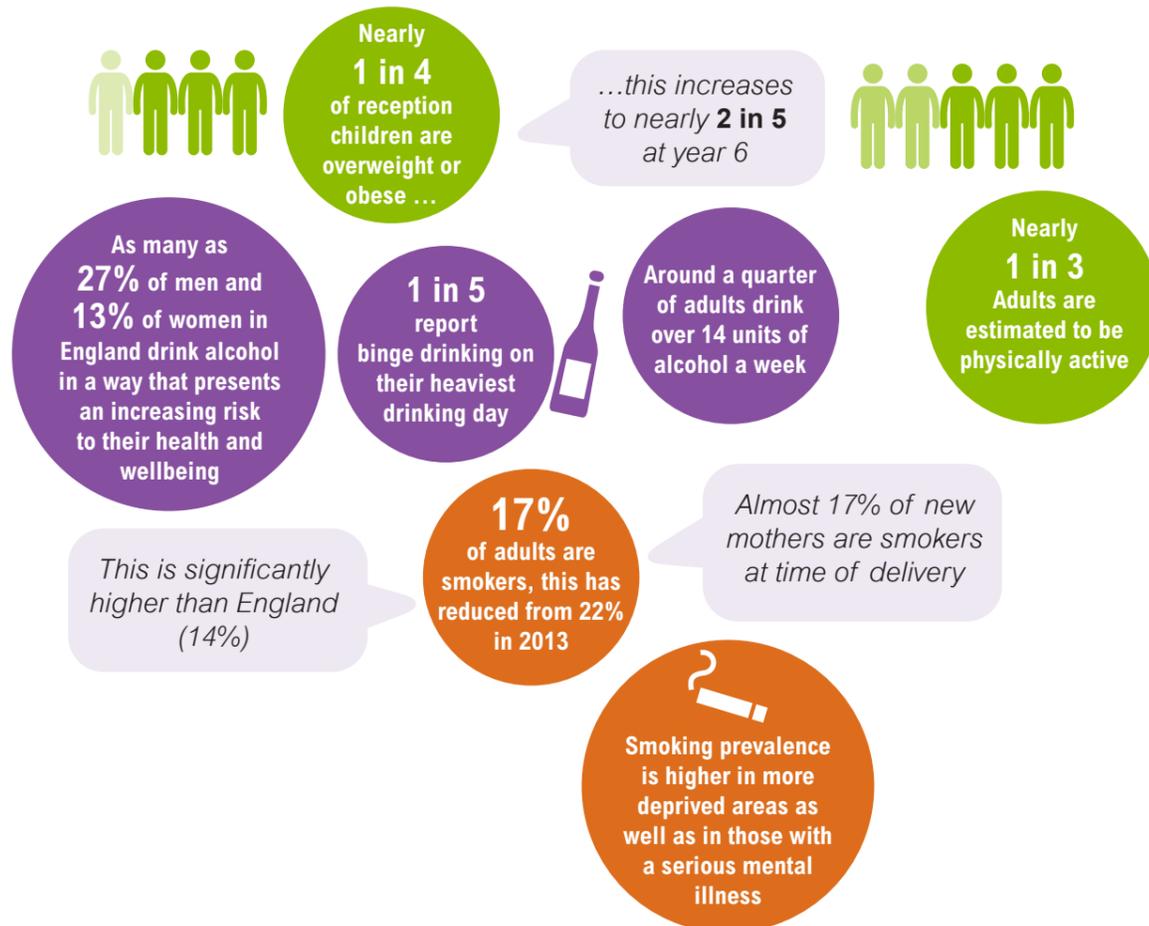
### Progress

1. Launched a county-wide Employee Assistance Programme for small and medium sized businesses and the voluntary and community sector organisations based in County Durham to support staff wellbeing. Delivery of training to 132 health advocates across the county, in addition to this 680 people have received mental Health Awareness training and 882 people have received other health and wellbeing training.
2. A further 10 organisations signed up to the award. We are opening foundation support to organisations outside of the award with networking and signposting to encourage more organisations to achieve their award.
3. A range of public health campaigns and messages were delivered this year, linked to the wider public health calendar. There was a particular focus on COVID-19 response and support to organisations to manage a Covid secure workplace, increase testing, volunteers for vaccine centres and vaccine uptake.

## Promoting positive behaviours

### Action

1. Introduce the Active 30 to help children to become more active.
2. Reducing exposure to second hand smoke.
3. Increase awareness about the risks of alcohol.



### Why is this important?

Promoting and supporting positive behaviours is a key priority across County Durham as we want to ensure all communities can achieve and sustain healthy lives. The environments in which people live, learn and play contribute to one's ability to lead a healthy life therefore it is important that opportunities for health are maximised across all settings.

We recognise that personal circumstances impact on people's ability to make healthy choices and health is affected by where people live, whether they have a job, income and education level and relationships with friends, family and the community. By working with partners and with our communities, we will build wellbeing and resilience across our communities to support positive behaviour change. We aim to make the healthy choice the easy choice by providing the necessary support and services to enable residents to live a healthy life.

### Active 30

The Active 30 Durham is a partnership campaign aiming to help schools in County Durham to support every pupil to participate in the recommended 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activity every day at school. Those working with and using Active 30 resources will be better prepared to set children and young people up for lifetime of involvement in physical activity, something that is crucial to their long-term health beyond childhood.

To build on the success of the last year, an Active 30 community campaign has been developed to provide schools, home educators, parents/carers, families and community groups with an easy to access Active 30 Durham resource to encourage and support young people to be active during the 2021 summer holidays.

### Some examples of how schools embed Active 30 in the school day

- Every morning young people take part in super movers daily challenges and brain gym activities to get them ready to learn
- Morning carousel of activities – young leaders trained to support other children to participate with the activities
- Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 children take part in the Real Play project, encouraging them to engage their whole family in 30 minutes of activity each day
- Active 30 homework ball encourages children to continue to get their daily 60 minutes of activity over the weekend
- Whole school skipping project to encourage young people, staff and families to be more active in a fun and engaging way

### CASE STUDY

#### Nettlesworth Primary School - Active 60 Homework Ball

##### The Project:

As a school we have an Active 60 homework ball for each class. The aim of this is to encourage children to continue to get their 60 minutes of physical activity each day over the weekend. During our physical education sessions class teachers are constantly monitoring and assessing progression. This then helps them decide which child will be nominated to receive the Active 60 homework ball over the weekend. Children are very enthusiastic about the ball and book that they get to take home, if chosen. Children can then record which activities they have completed over the weekend, using the ball as a starting point. All members of the family are encouraged to get involved.



##### The Outcome:

- It has helped encourage children to continue to improve and try their best in PE lessons.
- We receive lots of positive feedback from parents and children alike.
- We feel that this incentive has had a positive impact on physical activity within school as well as at home, costing us very little.

## Reducing Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke

Smoking continues to be one of the biggest causes of death and increases risk of developing serious health conditions. Breathing in second-hand smoke also increases your risk of getting the same health conditions as smokers therefore we work closely with partners to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke.

## County Durham Tobacco Control Alliance

Reducing the impact of smoking on families remains a key priority for the work of the County Durham Tobacco Control Alliance. The Alliance continued to meet throughout the course of the pandemic. Focused priorities for 2021/22 have been proposed by the Alliance as:

- Smokefree homes/second-hand harm
- Poverty
- Tobacco dependency in pregnancy
- Mental health

## Smokefree Homes

A pilot scheme with Livin' housing is underway. Whilst timing of this pilot has proved challenging during the pandemic there are several actions already underway which will be built on over time:

- Training of tenancy support, welfare/benefits, employability and other front facing support teams within the housing provider in brief advice and second hand harm
- Smokefree County Durham attending relevant team meetings to undertake training
- Smokefree County Durham having a presence at the Health Carousel
- Bespoke literature will be distributed to residents who are known smokers
- Links on the housing provider App to Smokefree County Durham
- Smokefree Champions/Advocates established within each team
- Opportunity for clinics within Livin' owned community spaces i.e. Junction 7 (Newton Aycliffe) and Jubilee Fields (Shildon)

smokefree  
countydurham



## Second-Hand Smoke Campaigns

In September 2020, Fresh launched its Second-hand Smoke is Poison campaign. In County Durham, the Fresh toolkit has been shared with 0-25 service and Children and Young People's Services across the county including paediatrics in County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust.

## Alcohol Harm Reduction Campaigns

In response to the impact COVID-19 has had on increasing alcohol consumption, we are continuing our work to support wider stakeholder engagement with Balance, the North East Alcohol Office in order to promote alcohol harm reduction campaigns across the county.

**Alcohol - Not the Answer** was re-launched in February 2021 as a response to the concerns about rising levels of alcohol consumption during the pandemic especially among people who were already drinking above the Chief Medical Officer's low risk guidelines and who were likely to be drinking even more as a result of pressure and anxiety during COVID-19.

The campaign underlined the broad range of physical and mental health problems alcohol causes, why it is important to reduce drinking, and highlighted practical advice, tips and free tools to help people cut down. It was targeted at men and women of all ages who are drinking more during the pandemic.

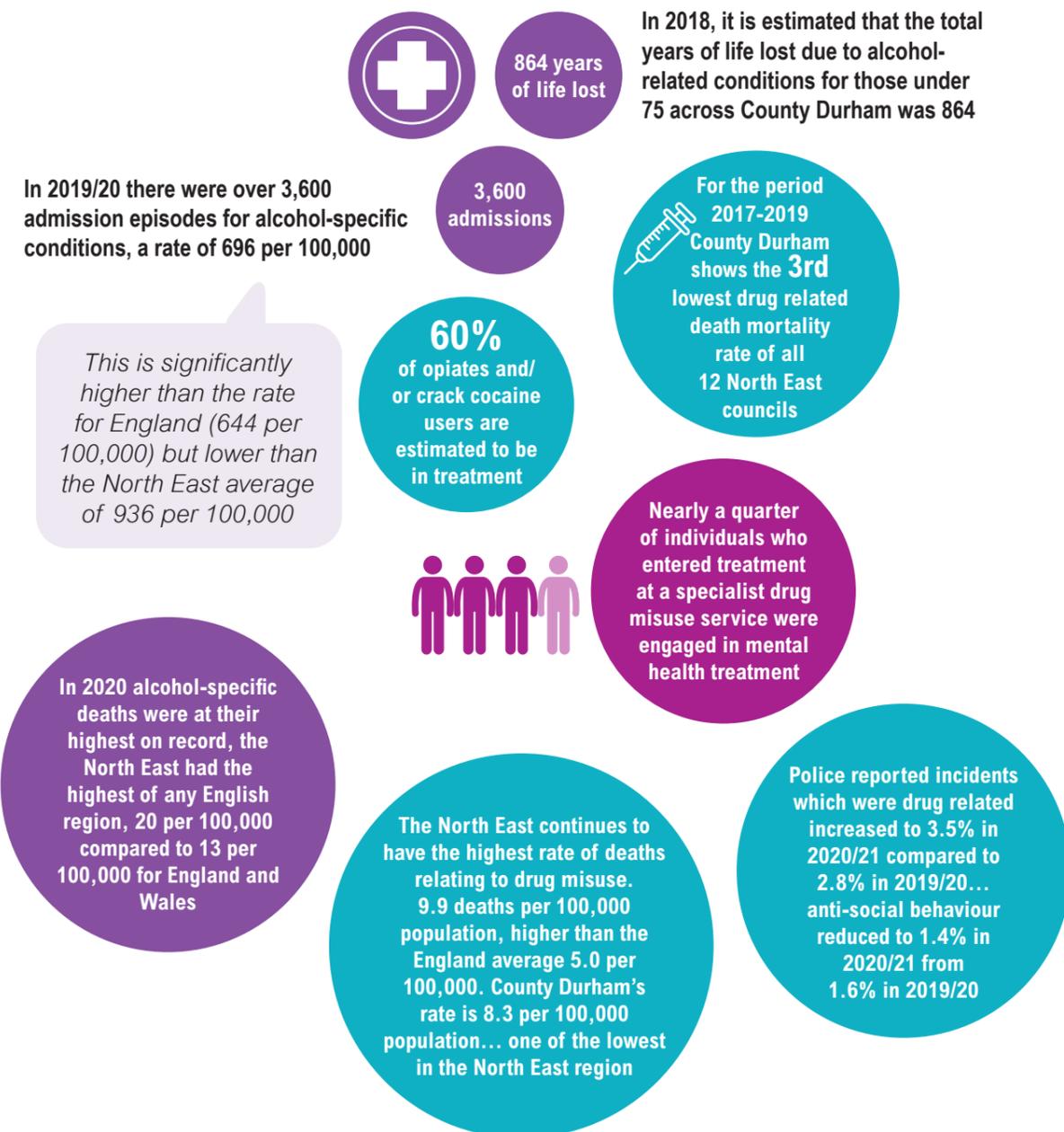
## Key Achievements

- 76 schools signed up to the Active 30 programme during the 2020/21 academic year
- As a result of staff training, Smokefree County Durham have already seen an uplift in the number of referrals from the housing provider
- Durham Licencing team have stepped up community work, engaging with retailers to support the campaign and display the What's the Harm resources highlighting the alcohol harms to children and promoting key messages via social media.

## High quality drug and alcohol services

### Action

1. To support people needing help with our drug and alcohol service.
2. To work with families to help them with drug and alcohol issues.
3. Promote awareness about sensible levels of alcohol intake.



### Why is this important?

Harmful drinking and substance misuse both have wide-ranging effects on not only the individuals effected but their families and communities.

Both harmful drinkers and drug users can become dependent; dependency is a chronic, relapsing disorder characterised by compulsive alcohol/drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences.

Harmful drinking is a pattern of alcohol consumption that causes health problems, including psychological problems such as depression, alcohol-related accidents or physical illness such as acute pancreatitis.

Substance misuse related harm has a detrimental effect on both physical and mental health. It can be associated with poor cardiovascular and respiratory health, and depression as well as social issues such as low educational attainment, family breakdown and homelessness. Drug-related deaths can be a consequence and occur in a variety of circumstances.

### Support people needing help with our drug and alcohol service

The County Durham Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service has been provided by Humankind since 2018. It offers ways for local people with drug and alcohol problems to become free from their dependence. The service also works to reduce the problems that substance misuse causes to families, friendships, workplaces and communities in County Durham.

The Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service is made up of different teams and services that are specialists in their area. These include:

**Young People and families** – support is provided to young people and young adults who have a range of different needs as well as their carer's and wider families.

**Drug and Alcohol Recovery** – reduce harm, support behaviour change promote recovery and comprehensive wraparound support

**Sustained Recovery** – a welcoming recovery community including recovery academies which enable those in recovery to develop positive life skills and peer mentoring and volunteering opportunities to gain confidence and skills to return to the workplace.

**Criminal Justice** – support to help those who are actively offending or who have historically offended to move towards a more positive lifestyle.

**Clinical Services** – clinical interventions including prescribing, detoxification and harm reduction needle and syringe programmes.

**Health and Wellbeing** – offering a range of health services, including healthy lifestyle advice, on site stop smoking services, flu vaccinations, identification and brief advice on a range of health topics.

**Housing and Independent Living** – support to vulnerable people to source the right accommodation and develop the skills to live independently.

**Education and Employment** – support for vulnerable people to identify and address any barriers to employment, in order to lead to healthier, positive and more stable lives.

## CASE STUDY

### Background

I first started drinking at the age of 17 which was what most other people my age did and like everyone else I went out and had a gallon. It was the culture back then and it weren't a problem.

My drinking first became heavy when my marriage broke down. One thing I would say is I never liked talking to anyone about my feelings. Growing up I was told men shouldn't talk about our feelings and that emotions were for women. I used to let emotions go round and round in my head and then bury them all in.

### Recovery Journey

My drinking escalated and I was now drinking a bottle of vodka a day. Eventually my son who was 23 then walked out of the home because he'd had enough. So I decided to do something about it, and in 2019 I went into the recovery centre at Peterlee. To be honest I went in there for the wrong reasons, I went in for others. I reluctantly agreed to go but I didn't fully engage with the programme; I was closed off and defensive, keeping my emotions hidden.

Unfortunately, I had a major relapse for weeks just before I graduated. I started drinking a bottle of vodka a day again and sometimes a litre. Then I sat on the couch one Wed and decided I don't want to wake up anymore and took a load of tablets. I realized straight away what I done and went to the hospital and luckily, I was alright. After that I decided to go back to the service for the right reasons this time, for me. I did everything that was on offer and more importantly I was open and honest for the first time although I still had a little bit of guard over my emotions.

Recovery has given me my life back. I am living a better life now than I have lived for a very long time. Recovery has given me a clear mind, any problems that come up, even though I don't want to deal with them I can now do so logically and clearly. I am now an ambassador in DARS helping to facilitate groups. I really enjoy helping others although some things do pull on my heart strings."

### Work with families to help them with drug and alcohol issues

A Women's Recovery Academy Durham has been established. This is part of the sustained recovery agenda and offers a structured day programme for women recovering from substance misuse. Previously this provision has only been offered in mixed sex groups and the need for a women only service was a direct response to client feedback.

The project will bring together the various services in the community providing interventions for issues key to women's wellbeing. These include drug and alcohol misuse, physical and mental health, sexual and emotional abuse, family support, housing, domestic abuse, education and training, employment, finance, benefits and debt advice, legal advice, counselling and re socialisation.

### Drink Coach APP

The Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service have developed a new website aimed at encouraging people to assess their own alcohol consumption levels. The website is [www.drinkcoach.org.uk](http://www.drinkcoach.org.uk)

In Quarter 4 2020/21 2359 people visited the site leading to 1467 completing the audit tool. Of those 32% were low risk drinkers, 44% had increasing risk, 13% were high risk drinkers and 15% has possible dependence. 60 referrals into service have been generated since the launch of the website.

In May 2021 Balance launched the 2021 "What's the Harm?" campaign aimed at helping North East parents to understand Chief Medical Officer guidance around children and alcohol. This year's campaign is bringing forward more the voice of schools. The campaign ran May - July 2021 on radio, facebook and point of sale retailer displays and its aim is to encourage parents to have a conversation with their child about alcohol, the facts, the risks, the myths and encourages downloading a free parents' guide from the Balance website.

Durham Licencing team have stepped up community work, engaging with retailers to support the campaign and display the What's the Harm resources highlighting the alcohol harms to children and promoting key messages via social media.

During 17th May – 16th July 2021, the Whats the Harm campaign received good engagement through online channels, generating 33,063 clicks during the 9 week period and over 49,000 post engagements via boosted posts on facebook.



### Key Achievements

#### Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service

- Establishment of outreach facilities in the local community to ensure it is accessible for those most in need.
- Improvement across key performance indicators including how many people they support and how many are successful in recovery.
- Increasing the bespoke offer for underrepresented groups e.g. women, children and young people.

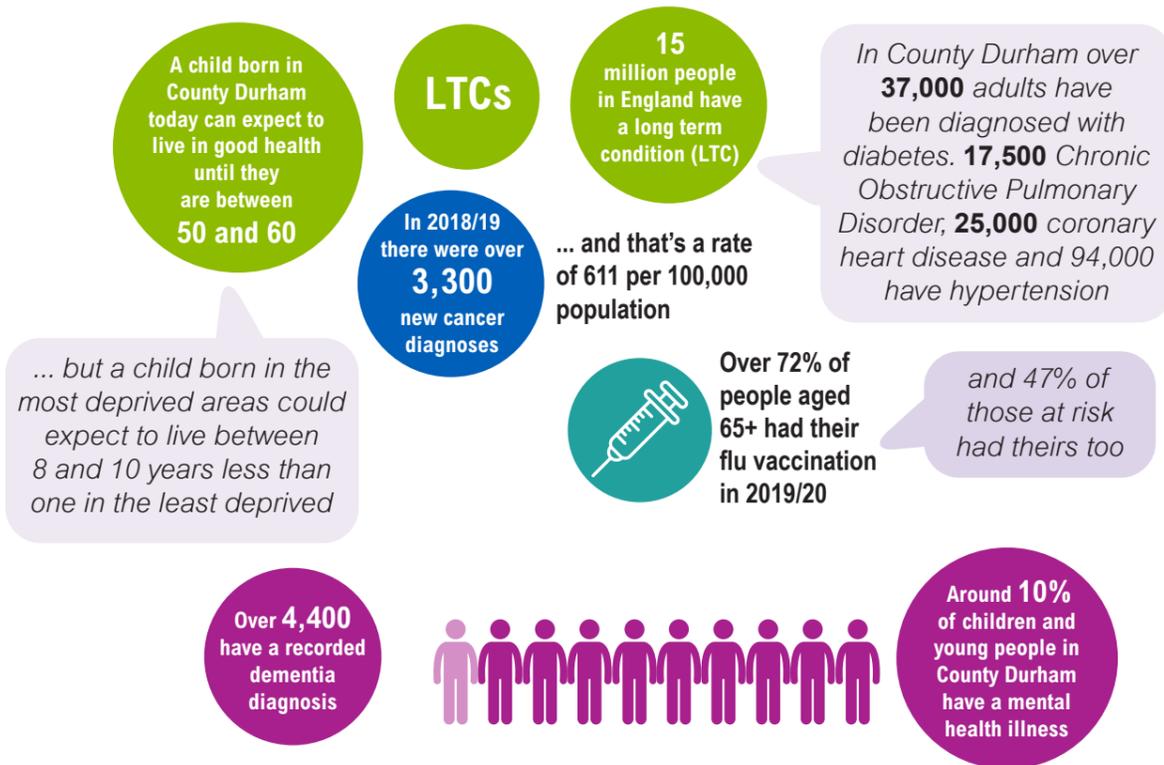
#### Working with families

- Positive partnership wide engagement in the Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Group to ensure a joined up systems wide approach across County Durham
- Supporting licensing to utilise innovative approaches to licensing, which promote Public Health objectives including the vision of an alcohol free childhood.
- A health needs assessment of long term opiate clients has been completed and recommendations implemented to ensure appropriate medication and mental health pathway

## Better quality of life through integrated health and care services

### Action

1. Encourage people to have the flu vaccination.
2. To work with health and social care organisations to integrate services to improve quality of life.
3. Support people to get involved in local social and physical activities to reduce social isolation.



### Why is this important?

As previously highlighted, there is a gap between the healthy life expectancy and overall life expectancy in County Durham for both men and women. This means that, on average, people are living, quite often with several long-term conditions for around 20 years which can adversely impact on their quality of life. Living with a long-term condition can impact upon a person's job, home, education, finances, relationships and sense of wellbeing.

By working together in a joined-up way, local health and social care services, benefits and advice agencies as well as the voluntary and community sector can ensure that the needs of people living with long-term conditions, their families and carers, are met at the right time and in the right place.

Effective partnership working, through the County Durham Care Partnership, is already driving forward system-wide integrated models of care and providing opportunities to join up care to benefit the people of County Durham including the launch of a new community service model, wrapped around GPs and primary care, as well as an emerging integrated approach to commissioning services.

### Flu Vaccinations

Encouraging people to take up the offer of a flu vaccination is as, if not more, important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Across County Durham, our Flu vaccination campaigns have been undertaken, with an increasing voracity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a Local Authority, we have a responsibility for providing appropriate advocacy with key stakeholders and challenge to local arrangements to ensure access to flu vaccination and to improve its uptake by eligible populations.



### We Are Undefeatable

County Durham has been chosen as 1 of 10 pilot areas across the country to deliver a place-based We Are Undefeatable programme. This is a national campaign to support the 15 million people who live with one or more long-term health conditions in England. Launched in August 2019, it aims to help those with conditions such as diabetes, cancer, arthritis and parkinson's to build physical activity into their everyday lives.

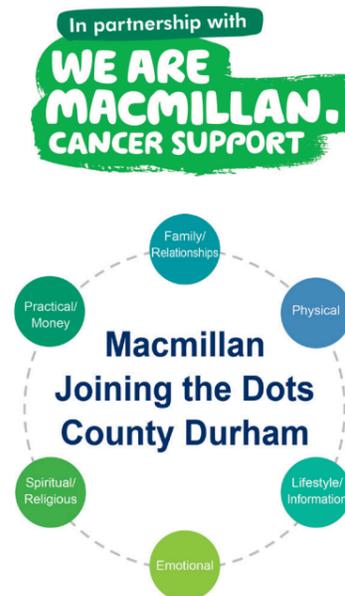
Taking our demographics of people with long-term health conditions and the likelihood that they will live for 16 years longer than average in poor health, Ferryhill and Chilton is the initial area of our focus. The programme will see primary care partners supporting people to move more despite their long-term conditions, linking with the council's leisure services and the vast array of voluntary and community sector organisations who offer exercise programmes closer to home.



## Macmillan Joining the Dots

The Macmillan Joining the Dots programme was part of a national Macmillan Cancer Support and local authority programme of work. County Durham was chosen to be one of five flagship areas which include Dundee, Fife, Manchester City and Tower Hamlets.

Complexities of the cancer treatment pathways in County Durham can have a negative impact on the experience, outcomes and quality of life for someone living with cancer. People, who have lived experience of cancer, designed and developed the Macmillan Joining the Dots service.



### CASE STUDY

## Macmillan Joining the Dots

John was referred to Macmillan Joining the Dots from his Macmillan Palliative Care Nurse for practical and financial support following a recent diagnosis of Stage 4 Oesophageal cancer.

The service looked holistically at his situation to understand what was important to him. John highlighted that he was struggling financially, especially when it came to rising heating costs. He had been using hot water bottles to try and keep warm however these were causing extensive bruising from the pressure to the skin and there were also concerns in relation to scalding. John said he would like to purchase an electric blanket but he could not afford one. He was in receipt of Universal Credit and had only recently received guidance from the Welfare Rights team on his financial entitlements following a late-stage diagnosis and the funding had not yet been obtained.

During discussions, John also identified he was unable to swallow any solid food due to his tumor. This meant blended food for smoothies of fruit/vegetables was necessary to enable John to eat, but again his finances were unable to stretch to the purchase of a blender.

John agreed to apply for a Wellbeing for Life Microgrant, which was completed by the Macmillan Joining the Dots facilitator and marked as an emergency.

After a successful application, John was able to purchase an electric blanket throw-over. John was thrilled he could use it wherever he was - when in bed or on the sofa. He was also able to purchase a blender so that he could have a more varied diet but in liquid form.

John was also able to gain financial support with his living costs, heating and travel expenses through a Macmillan Cancer Support Grant applied for and submitted by his Macmillan Joining the Dots Facilitator.

John is now able to live safely, comfortably and independently and has an improved quality of life.

## Wellbeing for the time being

In summer 2021, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust secured funding for a prehabilitation programme for people waiting for surgery or diagnosed with cancer. The programme will optimise the health and wellbeing of those people currently waiting for surgery and those who have been diagnosed with cancer. This will improve surgical outcomes and speed up recovery.

The programme will encompass shared decision making, ensuring that a comprehensive prehabilitation plan is coproduced between the person awaiting treatment/surgery and the Wellbeing Practitioner to address identified risk factors. There will be a four-tier offer:

- **Universal offer** – information on the different support that is available and general awareness campaigns.
- **Level one** – telephone emotional resilience and brief advice/ motivational support on staying well.
- **Level two** – 8-week programmes – which can be repeated, of basic exercise programmes - this can be accessed in person or via YouTube.
- **Level three** – individual support whereby a personalised health plan is developed with a wellbeing coach for the lead-in to surgery.

## Social prescribing link workers

It is estimated that one in five GP appointments focus on wider social needs, rather than acute medical issues. In areas of high deprivation, many GPs report that they spend significant amounts of time dealing with the consequences of poor housing, debt, stress and loneliness.

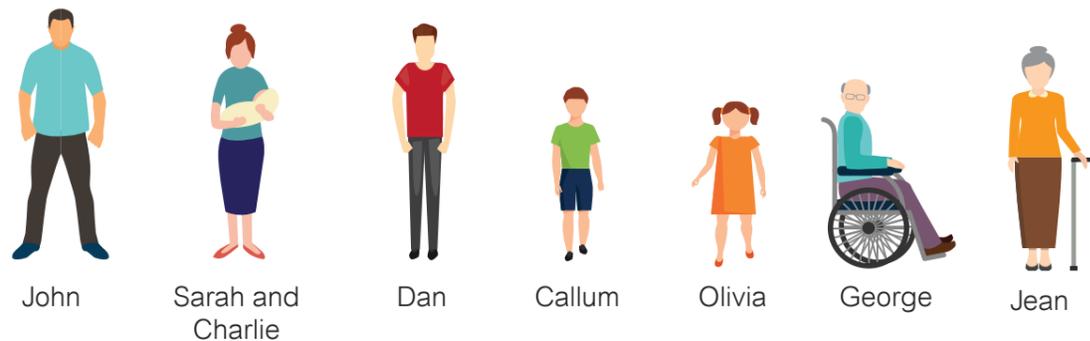
Social prescribing is an all-age model that encompasses both mental and physical health support. It takes a whole-system approach, integrating services around the person. Social prescribing can support a wide range of people, including (but not exclusively) people:

- with one or more long-term conditions
- who need support with their mental health
- who are lonely or isolated
- who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing



## Key achievements

- We have developed approaches to target flu vaccinations at children and young people with clinical risk factors, working age adults through workplace schemes and worked with existing services to reach vulnerable groups with health and social risk factors.
- Over 1,200 people have benefitted from Joining the Dots. Most of these have been people who have a diagnosis of cancer, but there is also a strong element of support for family and carers.
- The social prescribing link workers have supported over 5000 people including many people who were identified as clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19.



## Revisiting the Taylors with some examples of real life case studies

In my previous reports, we have been following the Taylor family, a fictional family who experience the common challenges and opportunities for health and wellbeing in County Durham. Below is an update on the Taylor family with some examples of real life case studies in County Durham.



**John** - John struggled with his mental health during the COVID-19 lockdowns but he continued to work and was able to access support through the Employee Assistance Programme that his employer has signed up to. He was still smoking at the start of the pandemic but he decided to try another quit attempt when he saw the Secondhand smoke is poison campaign. This time he was successful and he has started to engage in more sport and physical activity with Callum and Olivia.

### CASE STUDY

Dave works full time and has a busy home life with a partner and 3 children. He struggles with the pressures of a busy workload and family stresses and challenges. He has accessed mindfulness sessions through better health at work which has given him insight into ways to improve his own wellbeing.

*"Following the sessions I have practised mindfulness which has helped me accept my thoughts and feelings from being overwhelmed with family and workload pressures. I am much more accepting of my feelings and am able to move forward and deal with these in a more positive way."*



**Sarah and Charlie** - Sarah received support for her post-natal depression via her health visitor and was referred to a local mums and toddlers group where she was able to make friends with other mums of young children. Charlie is meeting all developmental milestones and is now up to date with all childhood vaccinations.



**Dan** - The swimming pool where Dan volunteers was closed for several long periods due to COVID-19 restrictions. Dan decided to volunteer through the County Durham Together COVID Champions Programme to support the local response to the pandemic. He continues to run on a regular basis to maintain his fitness.

### CASE STUDY

When Richard Hornby heard about the County Durham Together COVID Champions programme, he stepped forward to volunteer and help his community stay safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

Richard was given the opportunity to volunteer on the vaccination bus, which is being used as a mobile clinic to deliver vaccinations in areas where uptake is lower and improve access for people who may find it difficult to get to a designated vaccination centre.



*Richard said "Supporting the vaccination bus was simultaneously one of the hardest and the most rewarding days of my life. For every minute I was there, I was playing a part (albeit a very small one) in helping our county become a little bit safer."*



**Callum and Olivia** - Callum and Olivia continue to be active at school through the Active 30 programme. They particularly enjoy learning new skills. This has helped to increase Callum's confidence at school and Olivia maintains a healthy weight.



**George and Jean** - Jean's local classes were stood down due to COVID-19 and without them she became isolated, lonely and depressed. Her GP referred her to their Social Prescribing Link Worker who was able to refer her to a befriending service. George continues to regularly engage with his local CREE, which he finds offers him support as Jean's dementia worsens.

### CASE STUDY

Barry is a fairly active man of 70 who lives alone. He has some caring responsibilities for his elderly mother who is housebound. Throughout the lockdown the Men Shed kept in contact with Barry as he was particularly vulnerable in terms of his mental and emotional wellbeing. When the guidance allowed, they worked with him on a one-to-one basis and within a small group setting.

*"The Men shed has been a lifeline to me over these last few months. I don't know what I would have done without it. I love coming down on a Monday morning. It gives me something to look forward to"*

## Update on recommendations from 2020

### Good jobs and places to live, learn and play

#### 1. Work with housing and planning colleagues to implement health interventions that aim to raise health and living standards and reduce fuel poverty.

The Warm Homes and Health Service have worked jointly with partners to promote ways of making people's homes warmer. Since April 2020 the service have assisted 775 households and provided grants for new heating boilers and insulation measures equating to over £958,000 of grants. The Councils Managing Money Better service also assisted 362 households to reduce their energy bills and provide support with fuel debts from energy supply companies.

#### 2. Include housing support for older people in a Healthy Ageing Strategy

Work has been undertaken to assess the need for the development of a new Ageing Strategy for County Durham. A health needs assessment on the ageing population will commence in autumn 2021/22, which will include priority areas for investigation such as poverty action, housing, employment, transport, mental health, physical activity, dementia and equitable access to health care.

#### 3. Engage with hot food takeaways to promote healthier changes to cooking practices and menu options across Takeaways across County Durham.

Plans are in place to deliver training sessions with independent takeaways to promote healthier changes to cooking practices and menu options. This work will focus on engaging with takeaway establishments across County Durham by offering a training session for staff of independent takeaway food outlets to promote healthy cooking practices and menu options. Due to the pandemic, the training sessions have not been able to take place as yet due to them being face to face delivery. These are to be rearranged for a later date when it is safe to do so.

### Every child to have the best start in life

#### 1. Increase the number of schools and settings working towards the Health and Wellbeing Framework

Since the soft launch in April 2021, due to the impact of COVID-19, there have been 35 education settings that have signed up to the framework. A larger launch event is planned for September 2021 with education settings encouraged to sign up, work towards their own personal self-assessment and identify an area of health development for the academic year.

#### 2. Reduce the number of women who smoke during pregnancy.

Smoking at the time of delivery across County Durham continues to maintain a downward trend reducing, however it remains higher than both the regional and national averages.

Supported the Family Health Service to procure a number of carbon monoxide monitors to enable them to progress the smoke free homes agenda and continue to track progress for those women and their families who stopped smoking whilst pregnant.

#### 3. Increase the number of businesses and venues signed up to the breastfeeding accreditation scheme.

Due to the pandemic it has been difficult to progress this work with many businesses and venues closed or with limited access for the duration of the period. A review of the breastfeeding action plan will be undertaken which will include assessing the feasibility of delivering the accreditation scheme in its current format or whether there are opportunities to improve how the accreditation programme is delivered following learning from the use of digital resources and remote learning, which will increase the uptake.

## Recommendations for 2021

### Promoting positive behaviours

1. Increase the number of schools signed up to Active 30 and target communities most impacted by COVID-19 to promote and embed daily physical activity habits
2. Implement measures with housing and other providers to reduce the risk from second-hand smoke in the home
3. Produce a communications campaign to raise awareness of the health and social impacts of increased alcohol intake on individuals, families and the wider community

### Better quality of life through integrated health and care services

1. Shape and engage in the Integrated Care Partnership ensuring County Durham is at the forefront to benefit from any changes
2. Implement the County Durham Together transformation programme
3. Build on the personalised care developments in cancer for other long-term conditions

### High quality drug and alcohol services

1. Increase co-production within drug and alcohol services to ensure delivery is inclusive
2. Build on and improve the current working relationship with criminal justice partners to ensure a co-ordinated whole systems approach to drug harm reduction
3. Begin work towards implementing the recommendations in Dame Carol Black's Independent report, 'Review of drugs part two: prevention, treatment and recovery'

### Smoking recommendation

In my 2018 annual report we had a focus on smoking with a recommendation to continue with the ambition of only 5% of our local residents smoking by 2025. Our levels of smoking are at 17% (compared to 22.1% in 2013). However they did reduce to 14% and have since increased so we need to refocus our efforts on this priority moving forward.

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format:



Braille,



Audio,



Large print.

العربية Arabic, (中文 (繁體字)) Chinese, اردو Urdu,  
polski Polish, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ Punjabi, Español Spanish,  
বাংলা Bengali, हिन्दी Hindi, Deutsch German,  
Français French, Türkçe Turkish, Melayu Malay.

**Telephone: 03000 264 109**

**Email: [PublicHealth@durham.gov.uk](mailto:PublicHealth@durham.gov.uk)**