

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020

# Healthy Lives, Healthier Communities

Protecting and supporting the people of County Durham



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**Contents**

	Page
Foreword .....	3
Health and wellbeing across County Durham .....	4
Response to COVID-19 .....	6
Approach to Wellbeing .....	10
The Taylor’s Community .....	12
How we have worked with partners to impact on Health and Wellbeing of residents living in County Durham .....	13
Update on the seven public health strategic priorities .....	14
and the specific actions against each priority area	
Good jobs and places to live learn and play .....	16
Every child to have the best start in life .....	20
Update on recommendations from 2019 .....	24
Recommendations for 2020 .....	25



## Foreword



Amanda Healy

Welcome to my third annual report. It is my role as Director of Public Health to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of people in County Durham.

I would like to acknowledge the sadness experienced across our communities for the loss of life and any families affected due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and express our thanks to all NHS and social care colleagues, care workers and key workers who have worked extremely hard to ensure that services continue in County Durham.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the public health measures that followed have highlighted the important role of Public Health in protecting the public from infectious diseases and supporting and improving their health and wellbeing. The response has also clearly demonstrated that health and wellbeing is everyone's business and the vital part that individuals, communities, businesses, services and organisations play in controlling the virus and working alongside our residents. Throughout the pandemic, I have been privileged to work across sectors to lead our public health response, with incredible support from my highly motivated, dedicated and skilled public health team. In this report, I outline some ways that we have responded to reduce and control transmission of the virus, support our communities, and maintain our essential services. I am extremely proud of the way our partners and communities have responded and worked together to meet the challenges of COVID-19.

This report also provides examples of how we have been working on updates on the seven priorities that I set out in my first report in 2018, and has an in-depth focus on giving every child the best start in life and promoting good jobs and places to live, learn and play. I also introduce a new evidence-based Approach to Wellbeing that has been developed and will be used to help empower our communities and build their resilience.

As with my previous reports we continue to follow the "Taylor" family, and there is an update on how the work carried out has made a difference to them. This year's report focusses on the Taylors' community and how we have worked with partners to impact on the health and wellbeing of residents living in County Durham.

Last year's report focussed on our work to improve mental health across the whole population and support workplace health. I'm pleased to report that the new employee assistance service has been launched to help support workers in small and medium businesses and community organisations with their mental health and wellbeing. Businesses have also continued to sign up, and progress in, our Better Health At Work Award scheme.

In the year ahead we will continue to work closely with our partners and communities to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of people in County Durham. As ever, reducing health inequalities is a core principle that will guide us in this work.

**Amanda Healy**  
Director of Public Health

## Health and wellbeing across County Durham

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is 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. It builds a picture of current and future health and wellbeing needs of local people. This is used to shape joint commissioning priorities to improve health and wellbeing as well as reduce health inequalities in our communities. It informed the recent refresh of our Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and underpinned development of the Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy, and the Children and Young Peoples Strategy amongst others. The development of assets within the JSNA is a key priority. By focussing only on the “needs” of local communities we do not acknowledge the importance of the assets, or take account of the protective factors and strengths within individuals and across communities. This should incorporate practical skills, capacity and knowledge of residents and the networks and connections in a community.

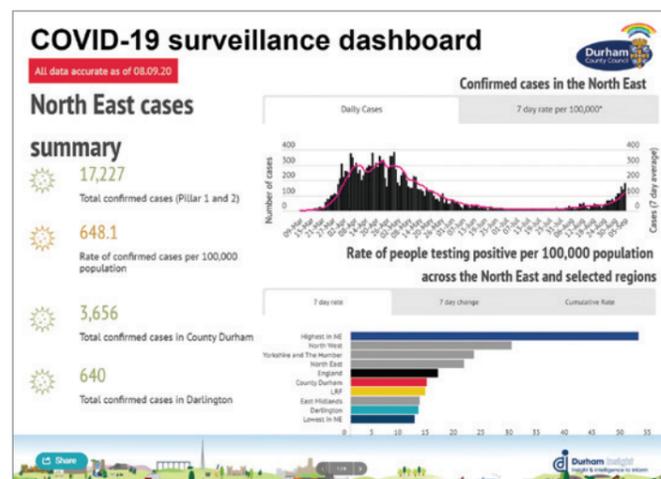
### Durham Insight

The JSNA is part of Durham Insight. Durham Insight is a shared intelligence, research and knowledge base for County Durham, informing strategic planning across Durham County Council and its partners. This site includes in-depth JSNA and insight factsheets, health needs assessments, health equity audits and lots of topic based intelligence including infographics, maps and story maps. New intelligence content is regularly added, and the site is continuously being developed and improved. [www.durhaminsight.info](http://www.durhaminsight.info)



Recent developments include:

- a COVID-19 landing page hosting the public COVID-19 dashboard.
- a dashboard providing information on a) our Shielded Patient List (SPL), and b) comparing against other North East local authorities.
- Updated information on our economy and employment (together with a State of the County storymap), including the post COVID-19 economy (estimated furlough numbers in the county, unemployment and claimant counts etc.
- New interactive content covering the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019.



## Intelligence led and data based decision making

The need for local, timely and high-quality data and surveillance has been a critical factor in helping the County Durham COVID-19 Health Protection Assurance Board and the County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to make informed decisions. Having access to up to date intelligence about the impact of COVID-19 on County Durham is crucial to ensuring the number of cases in our region continues to fall. The Durham Insight: COVID-19 dashboard is a valuable tool, providing the latest statistical information relating to COVID-19 in County Durham. It includes a surveillance dashboard displaying statistics on cases of COVID-19 and deaths associated with it in the county and the North East as a whole.

In addition to this we have created a local mortality surveillance system to monitor both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 deaths using local Registrar data, and an interactive mapping tool containing location specific lab-confirmed tests combined with a broad range of spatial data relating to specific settings and risks. There is also a linked geographically specific dashboard containing location based summaries of positive tests in the last 7 and 14 days.

## Where we live, our services and our communities

There are many challenges to health and wellbeing especially whilst dealing with COVID-19. However, County Durham has many assets that can support and protect health, some of these are set out below:

### Building on our assets

#### Where we live

- 13,800 businesses
- 21 green flags for parks and open spaces
- 2 in 5 residents live in rural areas
- 12 miles of coastline
- 150 miles of former railway paths
- Durham Cathedral and Castle are world heritage sites

#### Our communities

- 530,000 people live here, around 1 in 5 are over the age of 65
- 30 dementia friendly communities
- 43 Crees\*
- 14 Area Action Partnerships
- 71% people working age are in employment
- 59,000 adult carers in County Durham
- 38 mutual aid shops

#### Our Services

- 4 colleges
- 33 further education establishments
- 13 special educational needs schools
- 1 University
- 234 primary schools
- 52 Secondary Schools
- 39 libraries
- 12 Council owned leisure centres
- 177 breastfeeding friendly businesses

\*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.

## Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest public health challenges in living memory, with significant repercussions for health and wellbeing. It has affected every part of our society and is likely to lead to lasting changes to how we live, work and play. The virus is highly infectious and can cause severe respiratory illness. As at the end of September, our county has suffered from over 4,600 confirmed infections and over 700 deaths associated with COVID-19. The risk of dying from COVID-19 infection is highest in the elderly or those with underlying health conditions, however the risks are found to be higher in males than females; higher in those living in the more deprived areas than those living in the least deprived; and higher in those in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups than in White ethnic groups. As well as these direct health consequences of the COVID-19 virus, the subsequent restrictions, have affected other areas of health and wellbeing including mental health, social isolation, and changes in eating, drinking and physical activity behaviours. The wider impacts are still unfolding, with concerns around the health of the economy, employment, education, businesses and socio-economic inequalities.

However, throughout these difficult times our services, communities, and residents have been working together in partnership to address these challenges.

The public health team have been at the heart of the council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Emergency preparedness, response and recovery**

Since the imminent threat of COVID-19 to our population became clear in January, we worked with regional partners including Council departments, the NHS, Public Health England (PHE), the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), and the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU). This supported our planning and response to the virus. When the pandemic was declared as a major incident in March, we worked with our partners and communities to implement measures to help protect and support our residents, families, businesses, social care, community organisations, and NHS structures in County Durham.

- **Providing public health advice and support**

Throughout the planning and response to the pandemic, the public health team have worked across council departments and with external partners to provide public health advice in line with national government guidance. We set up a single point of contact for requests for public health advice and to date have processed over 1,000 enquires. For example, we have supported schools and universities to clarify, interpret and apply guidance so that they could operate safely and reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. Where government guidance was not available for some of our services, we worked with them to develop local advice based on public health principles.



- **Local Outbreak Control Plan**

In July we published a Local Outbreak Control Plan for County Durham, which sets out our plan to protect our local communities by preventing and controlling transmission of COVID-19. The plan includes provision of clear prevention messages, rapid detection and management of outbreaks, and working with various settings to implement appropriate infection control measures. It also outlines the support we will continue to offer to our communities, particularly those who are vulnerable or needing to self-isolate. Since July we have responded to outbreaks of COVID-19 in care homes, workplaces and social settings in County Durham. This has meant working closely with colleagues across the council and with PHE Health Protection Team. Utilised the Health and Wellbeing Board as a Member-led Local Outbreak Engagement Board to support the ongoing response to Covid-19, providing the opportunity for members to communicate openly with the public and residents on this issue.

- **Maintaining and adapting essential public health services**

Many of our public health services needed to change or adapt to continue to safely deliver during the COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions. Services developed innovative new ways of working to continue to support vulnerable groups. Some examples are:

- Drug and alcohol recovery service adopted online initial assessments for new clients, and also began to deliver recovery groups through online platforms to maintain this important element of treatment. As pharmacies were unable to administer vital opioid substitution treatments, alternative methods were developed including secure deliveries, complemented by increased remote support for clients. Where face-to-face clinical appointments were necessary, these were conducted in recovery centres with appropriate social distancing and personal protective equipment.
- Health visiting service developed enhanced support for breastfeeding mothers included daily phone and video calls through which health visitors were able to demonstrate and observe breastfeeding technique. Where necessary, face-to-face support has been provided by a dedicated team equipped with necessary protective equipment. Breastfeeding peer-support groups have also moved to online platforms which have received positive feedback. Early signs are that we are seeing some improvements in breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates, and we are investigating the reasons for this.
- Public health team co-ordinated a multi-agency communications plan to ensure that victims of domestic abuse, including children and young people knew how to access support during lockdown. During the pandemic we have increased our capacity within the specialist domestic abuse service, including the ability to offer dedicated remote access counselling sessions. We have also co-ordinated with children and young people services to ensure that vulnerable children and young people effected by domestic abuse could still access support.



### County Durham Together – Community Hub

In March 2020 we worked with our partners and the community to plan and launch County Durham Together, a community hub to support socially vulnerable people during the pandemic, particularly those who were shielding or self-isolating. The hub has helped coordinate food deliveries and link people to volunteers, welfare advice, and wider support services. Since it was launched the community hub has supported over 10,000 people. This has been through proactive contact with vulnerable residents that were identified, and by responding to incoming enquiries from the public. Over 2,000 shielding residents needed support with food supplies and 1,500 needed support with pharmacy supplies.

To help identify residents deemed to be extremely vulnerable to COVID-19, our public health intelligence team worked with the NHS North East Commissioning Support Unit to develop an innovative data tool that brought together information about social vulnerability and existing clinical conditions. This enabled us to proactively contact those identified to offer them support. Over 27,000 residents in County Durham needed to shield during the pandemic, a further 58,500+ were identified as vulnerable.

As the pandemic progressed and people were self-isolating and shielding for a longer period of time, the Hub noticed that some callers talked of their growing loneliness and lack of social contact, some people said the Hub Officer was the only person they had spoken to for days. In response to this the hub developed County Durham Together - Chat Together. The service adds to the person-centred offer of the Hub and provides general companionship, a welfare check and the opportunity for a friendly conversation for people who were self-isolating or shielding and those who are still generally missing contact with family, friends and activities. The Hub also links with partner organisations to refer people for more specialised befriending and mental wellbeing needs where necessary.

At the peak of the pandemic, over 200 council staff and over 80 NHS and Wellbeing for Life staff were redeployed from their usual roles to support the community hub, which was functioning 7 days per week. A training programme was developed to support and develop staff in their roles and enable effective responses to clients' needs. On returning to their usual roles, many staff have identified that the training and Hub experience is valued and of benefit to their future practice.

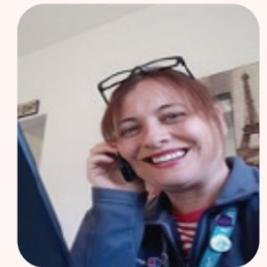
### Health impact assessment

We have conducted a health impact assessment that has assessed the potential impact of COVID-19 on inequalities in County Durham. This highlighted some areas that need to be addressed to guard against widening inequalities. Four key areas were identified: socio-economic factors and poverty reduction, mental health and emotional wellbeing, and use of community assets and community mobilisation and inclusion of vulnerable groups. Understanding these will help our services and partners across County Durham to take actions to reduce health inequalities.

The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over; however we are committed to working in partnership with partners, communities, and residents to continue to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all County Durham's residents. Public health services will continue to learn, adapt and innovate as we support our communities to respond and then recover from what has been an extremely challenging time.



This is Linda Parkin and her dog Oscar. Linda had been advised to shield by the NHS so could not leave her home to get any shopping. Linda received support from The County Durham Together Hub and one of our wellbeing4Life workers arranged for essential groceries to be delivered to Linda and Oscar.



This is Charlie Elliott. Charlie of Brookwood Outdoors CIC supported vulnerable members of the community by delivering boxes of freshly prepared hot meals.



Here are some of our DCC staff redeployed to prepare food boxes to deliver to vulnerable residents.



The Meal Orchard project received a grant from the 3 towns AAP which was used to deliver hot meals which were prepared and cooked by a local company. Lee Tones and his daughter Ellie volunteered to deliver the vegetables used in the cooking of these meals for the Meal Orchard Project.



Community grants were given out to local scout groups. Funding was used to buy activity packs for children, young people and families enabling them to learn new skills and cook together at home.



## Approach to Wellbeing

Over the past year we have developed an Approach to Wellbeing that we intend to build into all of our organisations and services. We are confident that following this evidence-based approach will help us promote healthier and more resilient communities across our county. This Approach to Wellbeing supports the delivery of the County Durham Vision 2035, which sets out our ambition for more and better jobs, people living longer and more independent lives, and connected communities.

At the heart of the Approach to Wellbeing is a recognition that communities play a vital role in their own development. 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. For example, working with people to co-design services will help us develop services that are tailored to communities, utilising their assets and targeting their needs.

Our approach has six principles, that are underpinned by evidence drawn from published research, best practice and local insights. Following these principles means that our actions will need to be informed by conversations with people and communities, listening to their knowledge and experience of what works for them. It means working in partnership with communities, building on their strengths while providing the support they need to manage challenges and setbacks they may face. It also means sharing power with communities, inviting them to make, or influence, important decisions that will affect them.

### People and Places

#### Empowering communities

working with communities to support their development and empowerment.

#### Being asset focused

acknowledging the different needs of communities and the potential of their assets.

#### Building resilience

helping the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and building up their future resilience.

### Supporting Systems

#### Working better together

working together across sectors to reduce duplication and ensure greater impact.

#### Sharing decision-making

designing and developing services with the people who need them.

#### Doing with, not to

making our health and care interventions, empowering and centred around you as an individual.

### Using what works:

everything we do is supported by evidence informed by local conversations.



We are using the Approach to Wellbeing to influence how services are being delivered. For example, we are encouraging our commissioned mental health services and providers to work more closely with communities. We are also designing new early help services, working with parents, head teachers and others to identify key challenges to pupils' emotional wellbeing and seeking to co-design potential solutions and support with them.

### Alzheimer's Society

Dementia Friendly Communities (DFC's) have developed as a social movement through empowering and supporting communities to design their own groups and to make local businesses and services Dementia-friendly based on the needs of their own local area. There are currently 30 DFC's across the County with more to follow. The Alzheimer's Society supports these DFC's by using networks of service users to support in recruitment of staff and in shaping services to empower its service users through tools, advice and strategies rather than doing things 'to' or 'for' people.

### Adult and Health Commissioning

The wellbeing principles form part of all new contracts for mental health, meaning that wellbeing is considered as a central part of service delivery. This will ensure that the people delivering services on behalf of the local authority will work more closely with communities to build on their assets, to share decision-making and co-design services to build greater resilience in communities.

### County Durham Commissioning and Delivery Plan 2020-2025

The plan sets out the commissioning and delivery intentions of the partners of the Integrated Care Board, through the life course and across 22 chapters. Each chapter is structured in the same format to address why change is needed, the objectives and goals of change, and what interventions are going to be undertaken over the coming years to achieve these. The planned interventions are grouped into themes including addressing health inequalities, personalised care, and the Approach to Wellbeing. Utilising the approach as a means of framing specific interventions has introduced and challenged partners to think about system working which engages patients and residents, and to think more inclusively on what matters to communities, rather than thinking and planning along organisational perspectives alone. The plan is updated twice a year in the Spring and Autumn, and whilst the approach is a relatively new concept to many of the partners the next iteration of the plan will include a self-assessment of the initiatives against the model, supported by the Approach to Wellbeing Programme Manager.



### Holiday activities with food

Following work with families, it was identified that access to food and also access to positive and meaningful activities for children during school holidays was an issue. Through Area Action Partnerships (AAP's), local community youth groups were given additional funding to enhance the range of activities they could offer over holidays and to provide a meal with the activity. This meant that groups who already knew the children and families and were already delivering community-led services could reach more families.





John



Sarah and Charlie



Dan



Callum



Olivia



George



Jean

## The Taylors' community

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. The Taylor's community – the people and places they live among – provide an important role in supporting health and wellbeing. Family, friends, neighbours and local services help them remain connected with others and provide opportunities for them to give and receive support when it is needed.



**Meet Stephen** - Stephen is a sports coach at the local leisure centre and has been supporting Olivia to keep active. Olivia enjoys the sessions, has made new friends and feels much fitter. She would like to do more sessions, but since the COVID-19 pandemic Stephen is no longer offering face-face sessions. However, Stephen has developed some online activity resources which Olivia has accessed to keep her motivated.



**Meet Simon** - Simon is a community support worker based in John's GP surgery. Simon has been supporting John with giving up smoking and guidance around his alcohol consumption. During the COVID-19 pandemic John was concerned he would take up smoking again as the support from Simon might not be available. However, Simon kept in contact with John via video calls which has really helped John continue to not smoke.



**Meet Dean** - Due to the closing of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the children being at home more during the day, the family have struggled to provide additional food for the children. The family have accessed their local food bank for support. Dean is a volunteer at the local food bank and has been delivering food parcels to the family.



**Meet Mandy** - Mandy runs the children and young people's mental health support group, which Dan now attends. Dan struggled to engage in the group at first, so Mandy 'buddied' Dan up with another young person to provide some peer support. Dan is now fully engaged in the group and has since been involved in feedback events to help develop an online mental health support offer for children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## How we have worked with partners to impact on the Health and Wellbeing of residents living in County Durham

Throughout all of our work, we aim to promote healthier and more resilient communities in which residents in County Durham can thrive. There are many assets in our communities, but we must continue to work with our partners and the people who live there to harness these and support those in greatest need. Here are some examples of the partners and people we work with who support residents and promote positive health and wellbeing.



Paul is one of our Health Advocates and has been volunteering in this role since 2018. Paul has raised awareness of many health and wellbeing campaigns with his colleagues across Durham County Council and has supported them to access these. This is Paul being a positive role model and signing up to the 2019 Dry January campaign.

Here is what Paul said about being a Health Advocate:

*"It's given me the opportunity to promote health within my team and also meet a diverse range of staff within DCC which has been a real pleasure"*



This is David Jones. With support from the Housing Solutions Warmer Homes Team David was able to access a free scheme and receive a grant to replace his current central heating system with a new one. The pilot scheme aimed to support older people to ensure their homes are warm, safe and they are not at risk of fuel poverty.

Here is what David said about the scheme:

*"I am delighted with my new central heating system; my home is warm and comfortable now and I'm not worried about the cold weather and high coal bills anymore. I was amazed that I didn't have to pay anything, it was totally free".*



### Community Outreach

Andrea and Elliott Snowball work as cancer awareness workers and deliver engagement sessions with residents in local communities across County Durham. The sessions raise awareness on several health-related topics such as smoking, alcohol, staying safe in the sun and cancer. These sessions support residents in understanding some of the risks associated with these topics, promote good health and wellbeing and signpost people onto services if further support is required.



### Community Action Team (CAT)

The CAT brings together residents and a range of organisations to tackle housing and environmental issues in a specific area by identifying local priorities and making best use of resources. The CAT works with multi-agency partners and as well as delivering some level of enforcement, CAT have a key role in promoting health and wellbeing and healthier lifestyles. For more information about how we promote healthier neighbourhoods for our residents see page 16.

## Update on the seven public health strategic priorities and the specific actions against each priority area

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.



### High quality drug and alcohol services

#### Action

- 1 To support people needing help with our new 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.

#### Progress

- 1 Service provision has transformed through the COVID-19 pandemic to enable staff and clients to be safe and still access treatment and recovery services. Referrals have seen stable or increased numbers accessing services.
- 2 Flexible support for individual needs of families continues and we have reshaped our outreach support to include video calls, remote working and treatment. Also, an increase in targeted bespoke support to 46 clients and their families whose treatment plans had been effected as a result of the pandemic.
- 3 Worked with all off-license premises to promote Chief Medical Officer (CMO) alcohol guidelines as part of Alcohol Awareness Week.

### 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 health.

#### Progress

- 1 Worked with Business Durham and its networks to support small and medium businesses to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination, including training over 80 staff to become Mental Health First Aiders.
- 2 In 2019, County Durham was successful in becoming a funded Time to Change Hub, enabling us to make positive progress in tackling mental health stigma and discrimination.

### 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.

#### Progress

- 1 In response to COVID-19 Active 30 developed an online hub with physical activity resources to help support schools, parents and young people to keep active to support health and wellbeing at home.  
[www.countydurhamsport.com/young-people/active-30-durham](http://www.countydurhamsport.com/young-people/active-30-durham)
- 2 The danger of second hand smoke is now part of all training delivered to services who work with families. This is in addition to inclusion on the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training.
- 3 Implemented the recommendations from the Alcohol CLear (Challenge, Leadership, Results) self-assessment and peer assessment. In addition we increased the reach and uptake of alcohol harm campaigns such as Dry January, What's the Harm and 7 cancers.

### 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.

#### Progress

- 1 The Flu Prevention Board have supported the biggest local joint flu vaccine programme to date with further plans to extend the reach and scope of the programme into 2020/21
- 2 Working with partners through the County Durham Integrated Care Partnership to review and implement the local System Plan.
- 3 Public health continues to support an extensive range of programmes to address the wider social determinants of health within local communities. For example: Social Prescribing Link Workers - working in GP practices enabling patients to build confidence and access support within their local community, e.g. walking groups, befriending services and volunteering opportunities.

### 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.

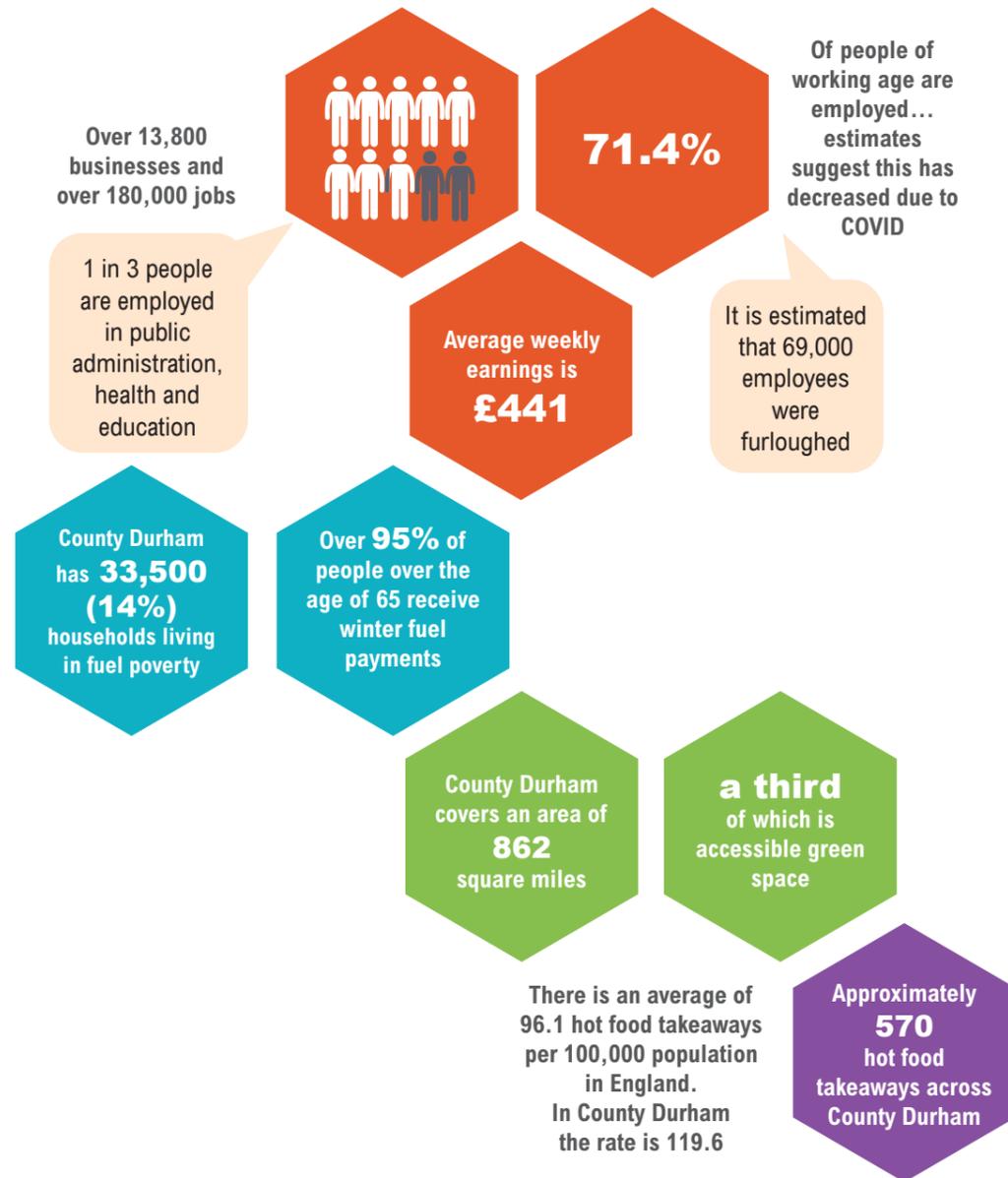
#### Progress

- 1 The BHAWA has helped facilitate 300,000 health promoting contacts in the workplace. Throughout the COVID19 pandemic, demand for virtual training has continued e.g. health advocates and mental health awareness.
- 2 Across the region, County Durham continues to have the highest number of registered businesses actively engaging and progressing the award. Recruitment of new businesses has continued. County Durham, currently has 78 businesses working towards all levels of the BHAWA.
- 3 Staff flu campaign 2019 -
  - 401 front line staff were vaccinated in 2019
  - Dry January – 360 staff took part in 2020 campaign
  - Mental Health – Time to Talk day and Mental Health Awareness Week raising awareness of mental health and challenging stigma and discrimination
  - Physical Activity – During the lockdown staff have created a virtual exercise forum where they share pictures and routes to motivate one another.

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

### In my 2018/19 report I said we would:

- Develop health standards for private landlords to implement.
- Support older people to ensure their homes are warm and safe and not at risk of fuel poverty.
- Set out a plan to restrict the increase in take-away food.



The quality of our housing and the neighbourhoods in which we live are fundamentally linked to our health and wellbeing. Poor housing can contribute to various illnesses, injuries and mental health conditions. Deprived neighbourhoods are often associated with higher crime rates, unhealthy food outlets, betting shops, and stigmatisation of communities, and can lead to health and social harms. However, these problems are preventable if root-causes of poor-quality housing and unhealthy neighbourhood environments can be addressed. That is why we have been working closely with our council partners and communities to improve housing standards, and to promote healthier neighbourhoods for our residents to live in.

### Why is this important?

The homes and the places in which people live are important to support their overall health and wellbeing – impacting on their quality of life; their healthy life expectancy (this is the expected number of years of life spent in good health), their risk of illness, and their access to appropriate support services. Improving the quality of housing, living conditions and their wider environment will lead to improved health and wellbeing for our residents. This is more important than ever as we are now spending more time at home due to COVID-19. Whether people have a long term condition, are experiencing social or health inequalities or simply have changing needs as they get older, it is important that all homes and places in County Durham provide a safe, inclusive and secure environments for people to live and grow within their local community.

### Influencing Housing

We are working with housing and planning colleagues to understand and adopt health interventions across housing and environmental policies, projects and actions to see living standards rise and fuel poverty reduce.

### Key achievements in 2019/20

- Working with the selective licensing team we have contributed to the County Durham Selective Licensing Evidence Report incorporating the evidence between poor housing, deprivation and ill health.
- The development of draft licence conditions setting out the expected standards to improve quality of housing and living conditions for tenants in some of our most deprived areas.
- Health is now a cross cutting theme of the local housing strategy.
- Undertaken a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of the housing strategy, working with partners from housing, health and social care identifying measures that can improve equity of access to quality housing, mitigate against financial barriers to having a secure home and prevent against accidents or injuries.
- Produced a HIA on homelessness to consider opportunities to address those most at risk and to support rough sleepers.
- Upskilling housing staff in Make Every Contact Count (MECC) to make the most of health improvement opportunities.

## Older People in their homes

In collaboration with our housing, health and social services colleagues we have helped support older and vulnerable people through home adaptations, improved energy efficient homes, and better integrated planning to promote independence and security. These will help improve their quality of life as well as prevent illnesses associated with poor housing. County Durham has 33,500 (14%) households living in fuel poverty. Fuel poverty occurs when a household cannot afford to maintain an internal household temperature adequate for the health and wellbeing of the occupants. Reducing fuel poverty remains one of our priorities.



### Key achievements in 2019/20

- We have actively engaged with the fuel poverty group making winter warmth and reducing health inequalities a key strand of their action plan.
- Refreshing the Cold Weather Plan and Heatwave Plan and implementing new local actions and engaging more closely with our AAPs.
- Based on information from the publication of NICE guidance (NG6), 'Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes' we identified an opportunity to maximise reductions in levels of fuel poverty and cold-related illness interventions with a specific focus on working with primary care to identify and refer patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma.
- NG6 has also been used to embed cold-related ill health assistance into the Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy.
- Working with Housing Solutions Warmer Homes Team we developed and piloted a cold related ill health project offering free intervention such as new or replacement boilers / central heating system, home insulation and fuel energy advice to assist them mitigate bouts of cold related illness and the impacts of fuel poverty.
- Evaluated the pilot with Teesside University and through the recommendations the Warmer Homes service have adapted the interventions and seen a greater uptake in GP surgeries engaging with the service. We will extend this engagement by working with the newly created social prescribing link workers across County Durham.
- Joint working with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG), Public Health and Housing Solutions has resulted in positive contacts with patients living in cold homes or having cold related ill health. Over the last two years a total of 1,886 households have received financial assistance, energy efficiency measures and central heating/boiler grants with £3.64m of external funding drawn down into County Durham from the energy supply companies.

### CASE STUDY



Betty, an elderly widow renting a house in County Durham was referred to Managing Money Better (MMB) as she was worried about increasing direct debits on her energy bills. MMB found she was on an expensive standard energy tariff and made arrangements for her to move to a cheaper tariff, this has saved her £210 a year. In addition, during a visit to her home, MMB found Betty was eligible for a new boiler and insulation measures under the Energy Company Obligation Flexible health criteria. The work was carried out the following month.

## Restricting increase in take-away food

Now more than ever it is a critical time to support residents to be of a healthy weight. Evidence has reported that there is an increased risk of COVID-19 diagnosis, serious illness and death among people of excess weight.

Work is ongoing to support our young people, families and communities to be able to live and interact within environments where healthier food and drink choices are the easy and accessible choice.

### Key achievements in 2019/20

- The County Durham Plan includes a policy which will allow us to carefully consider over concentrations of hot food takeaways in our defined retail centres and will only be approved in certain circumstances. The policy will also ensure that in order to promote healthy lifestyles in young people, hot food takeaways will not be allowed within 400 metres of an entry point of an existing or proposed school or further education college. The policy approach and evidence base have been subject to wide consultation and was discussed at length in front of an independent planning inspector at the examination in public. Following the recent publication of the Inspector's report, the policy approach can now be afforded significant weight in determining planning applications. Full Council will be asked to adopt the updated policy as part of the County Durham Plan at the earliest opportunity.
- Takeaway Masterclasses are to take place when safe to do so to help businesses promote healthy cooking practices and menu options. These will provide advice on simple practical changes that can be made when buying, preparing, cooking, serving and promoting food.

### ✓ How has this work benefitted the Taylors



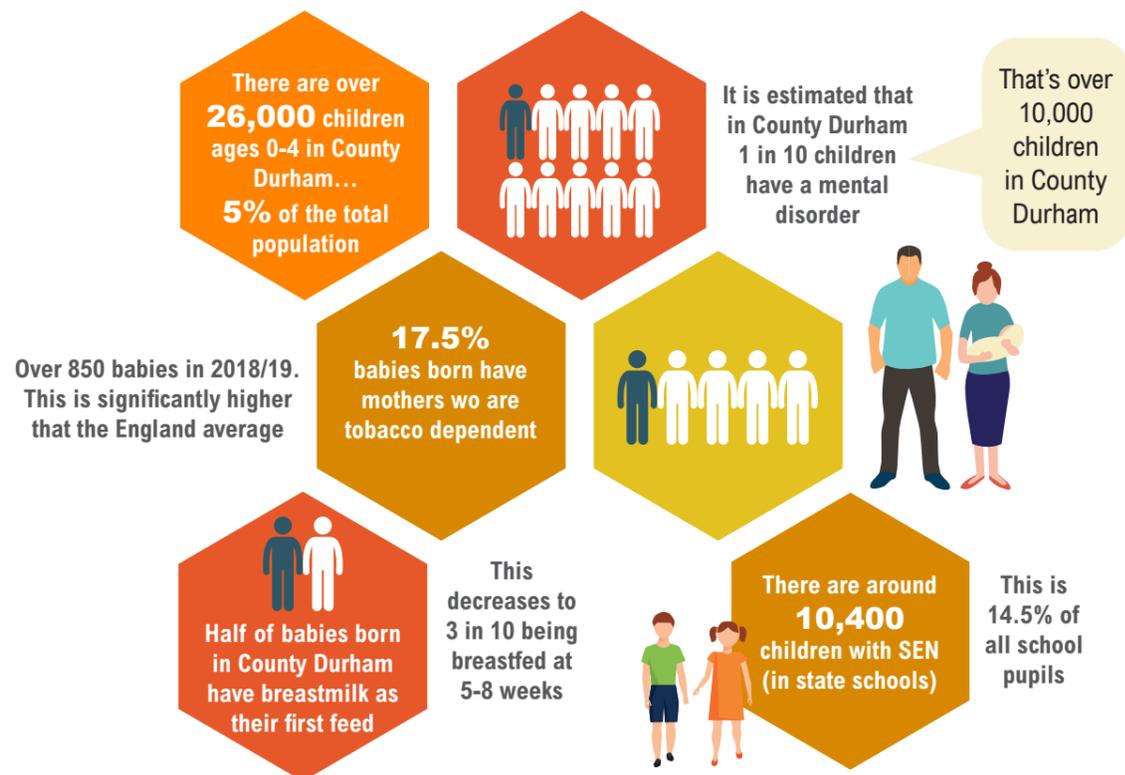
Our joint work with housing will ensure that the Taylors' health and wellbeing is considered in both private and public housing. Jean and George were referred to Warmer Homes service by their GP and subsequently received a new boiler and home insulation making their home warmer and more energy efficient. Sarah and John self referred to the Managing Money Better service and received advice to access lower energy tariffs and to switch energy providers.

The improved cooking practices and menu options adopted by hot food takeaways will benefit the Taylor family by improving their access to better quality meals when they buy takeaway foods.

## Every child to have the best start in life

In my 2018/19 report as part of my strategic priority for every child to have the best start in life I said we would:

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



Giving children the best start in life is a fundamental part of improving health and reducing health inequalities. What happens in pregnancy and early childhood will impact on physical and emotional health all the way through to adulthood. It is important that we encourage positive early experiences to ensure children are ready to learn, ready for school and have good life chances.

In County Durham, we are committed to working together in a coordinated way with our partners in health, social care, and the community so that children, parents and families receive the support they need to give every child the best start in life.

### Why is this important?

We know that the first 1000 days of life from conception to age 2, is a critical phase, during which the foundations of a child's development are laid. If a child's body and brain develop well their life chances are improved.

We also know that supporting children to reach their potential through supporting their health and wellbeing throughout their school years can greatly improve their educational outcomes.

Focusing on the early years and childhood and encouraging a healthy start in life can positively improve the health outcomes of 'babies' and children long term, including:

- early cognitive and non-cognitive development
- social interaction and development
- children's readiness for school
- later educational outcomes

### Behavioural Insights- Understanding the health and wellbeing needs of children with special educational needs and disability

In 2019 we completed a Health Needs Assessment (HNA) for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). This detailed assessment means that we have a better understanding of the health needs of some of County Durham's most vulnerable children and young people. The HNA produced a range of key findings which were used to inform a comprehensive set of recommendations for key themes included:

- Having a clear focus on improving the quality, particularly the health element, of education, health and care plans, ensuring children and young people get the right level support at the right time.
- Ensuring that all services have a good understanding of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and can implement a trauma informed approach.
- Ensuring there is a focus on supporting a range of multi-agency practitioners to use appropriate evidence – based tools to identify any speech, language and communication issues at the earliest opportunity and linking this to an all age pathway.

Findings and recommendations from the HNA have been incorporated into future strategic documents and plans making sure that as a system we are continually striving to improve outcomes for our children and young people with SEND and their families.

### Provided dedicated support for women smoking while pregnant and included support for their partners.

In October 2019 we worked with our Stop Smoking Service (SSS) to gather qualitative insights from pregnant smokers to inform the development of the service. The women were helpful in identifying referral pathway failures and shared their experiences of behaviour change. This helped us develop a plan of action to overcome these challenges and remodel the SSS to meet their needs. As a result, from April 2020 the service provider began to deliver an enhanced service to pregnant women and their "significant others". This included:

- Behavioural support which goes beyond the "standard" 12-week programme and is available throughout pregnancy which includes additional support post-partum to ensure support at a time when most women fear relapse.
- Combination Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT - two NRT products) for a minimum of 12 weeks.
- Support, throughout pregnancy, for "significant others".

### Key achievements in 2019/2020 to support women smoking while pregnant and their partners

- We have reduced Smoking at the time of delivery across County Durham from 17.4% in 2018/19 to 15.8% in 2019/2020
- We have worked with the North East Yale System Leadership group to tackle too many pregnant women smoking at the time of delivery. This led to the development of a Tobacco Dependency script for professionals to follow and a new clinical pathway for smoking dependency which was formally launched in September 2019.
- We have ensured that carbon monoxide (CO) readings are taken at every midwife appointment to monitor smoking status and track progress for those women who had stopped smoking.
- We have promoted and rolled out the use of the Smoke Free app funded by the Integrated Care System Prevention Board to complement the existing pathway and support to treat tobacco dependency for both pregnant women and their partners.

### All schools in County Durham working towards healthy schools with emphasis on mental health.

We have worked with local schools and partners across County Durham to develop a Health and Wellbeing Framework, with an emphasis on mental health. The framework supports schools and education settings to improve, promote and develop good health and wellbeing for children, young people and staff.

We have piloted the Health and Wellbeing Framework with schools and settings and feedback was used to inform further development, roll out and implementation of the framework. We are now working with our partners within DCC Education Services, Education Psychology, the Mental Health Support Teams and Harrogate and District Foundation Trust School Nursing service to support more schools who have signed up to use the new framework in the autumn term. Here is what some of our schools said about **the Health and Wellbeing Framework**

It allows you very quickly to identify the area of focus for your school.

It gave us the opportunity to reflect upon our mental health provision and what action needs to be taken in the future.

It is very useful and detailed and for someone already committed to the emotional and mental well-being of families and staff it is a very welcome resource.

In response to COVID-19 we developed an online resource with information about services available in County Durham to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children, young people and their parents. This was shared with all schools across County Durham.

  
for children, young people & families in County Durham  
This is a **great starting point** to help you **access support**  
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/familiesmentalhealth>

### Introduced breastfeeding friendly venues

In June 2018 the 'Breastfeeding Friendly County Durham Business Scheme' was reviewed and relaunched. By taking part in this scheme, cafés, restaurants, leisure centres and community venues show that they are committed to ensuring their staff and premises are welcoming and supportive of breastfeeding mothers.

To promote the scheme, we ran a three-month county wide marketing campaign to coincide with national and world breastfeeding events and campaigns. We now have 177 businesses signed up to the Breastfeeding Friendly County Durham business scheme.

To find out what our County Durham mums think of the scheme:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/breastfeedingfriendly>

To hear from some of our breastfeeding mothers:

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/breastfeeding>



### Key achievements in 2019-2020 in County Durham for breastfeeding

- Reviewed and re-accredited all Durham County Council venues in 2019.
- 200 frontline practitioners attended the County Durham Infant feeding conference
- Harrogate & District Foundation Trust (HDFT) Specialist Infant Feeding Practitioners introduced and are delivering the Breastfeeding Peer Support Programme - 46 volunteers have signed up
- Over 5,000 individuals are users of the Best Beginnings Baby Buddy app
- 150 people attending 'The Big Latch on' event
- The Growing Healthy 0-5 Health Visiting services in County Durham and Darlington team were awarded the 'UNICEF Baby Friendly Gold award'
- The HDFT Infant Feeding Team now have an active face book page with 600 followers.
- A COVID-19 Infant Feeding Pathway was developed and put into action to ensure families could continue to access quality support during the pandemic.

### ✓ How has this work benefitted the Taylors



Sarah's Health Visitor attended one of HDFT's infant feeding training sessions. As a result, the Health visitor was able to signpost Sarah to the Breastfeeding Peer Support Programme as Sarah had admitted that she had found it difficult to breastfeed baby Charlie, which made her feel anxious and upset.

Sarah has since been regularly attending the programme. This has helped her access the support and guidance she needed to breastfeed Charlie.

Sarah has also made friends with some of the other mums who attend the programme and they often meet up at the Breastfeeding friendly cafes in their local area. Sarah now feels much more confident to breastfeed Charlie.

## Update on recommendations from 2019



### Mental Health at Scale

#### 1. Increase the number of organisations involved in our collective approach to workforce development on mental health

A new joint approach to improving mental health training and support for workplaces has been developed, which engaged 30 representatives from 17 public, private and voluntary sector organisations. This included development and publication of 'A framework for good workforce mental health in County Durham businesses'. The framework aims to reduce stigma associated with poor mental health and develop equitable access to good mental health training and support. The joint approach also saw the commissioning of a new Employee Assistance Programme and Mental Health Training Hub to provide free training and support to Small and Medium Sized businesses (SME) and Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) organisations based in County Durham.

#### 2. Take a proactive approach to reaching more SMEs

Surveys and a series of focus groups were conducted with a cross section of local SME and VCS organisations to inform our framework for good workforce mental health. Over 100 local organisations took part in these information-gathering exercises, in which they told us about the unique problems that are associated with wellbeing amongst small business owners – predominantly relating to the small networks in which they operate and the demands of running a small business.

#### 3. Continue to focus on Time to Change and tackling stigma and discrimination by more employers signing the Time to Change Employer Pledge and support the Time to Change Hub.

As of May 2020, over 20 local organisations have committed to change the way they act and think about workplace mental health by signing the Time to Change Employer Pledge. Signatories are developing action plans to reduce stigma and discrimination by increasing mental health awareness amongst employees, encouraging open conversations about mental health, promoting a healthy work/life balance, and promoting effective people management.

### Healthy Workforce

#### 1. Help create healthy workforces across County Durham by ensuring alignment with key strategies such as the County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Creating healthy workforces has been embedded in County Durham's Health and Wellbeing strategy published in 2020. The strategy includes an ambition to see more mental health champions across workforces and support businesses to implement effective preventative strategies, to help improve employees' wellbeing and avoid costs of absenteeism to organisations. This year 151 new health advocates have attended one of 15 training sessions. In addition, Mental Health First Aid Training delivered by the regional Trades Union Council (TUC) team were fully subscribed and well received.

#### 2. Attract more businesses to participate and achieve the Better Health at Work award.

The Better Health at Work Award continued to proactively reach out to businesses, providing them with a framework to improve the health and wellbeing of their staff. The programme has responded to the challenge of COVID-19 and adapted to ensure the support provided to businesses is relevant and beneficial. Since January 2020, 15 new businesses have joined the programme.

#### 3. Encourage and support progress through Better Health at Work award levels.

Workers within participating businesses across County Durham continued to benefit from a vibrant BHAWA programme that maintained high levels of engagement, commitment and progression. In 2019-20, 46 businesses progressed to the next level of the award which means that thousands of workers now have more health information, improved access to services and more supportive working environments.



## Recommendations for 2020

Following the information presented in my report this leads to a number of recommendations we will take forward next year.

### 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.
2. Include housing support for older people in a Healthy Ageing Strategy
3. Engage with hot food takeaways to promote healthier changes to cooking practices and menu options across Takeaways across County Durham.

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

1. Increase the number of schools and settings working towards the Health and Wellbeing Framework
2. Reduce the number of women who smoke during pregnancy.
3. Increase the number of businesses and venues signed up to the breastfeeding accreditation scheme.

### 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).

### What is coming up in future annual reports

In my next annual report I will focus on:

#### 2021

- High quality drug and alcohol services;
- Better quality of life through integrated health and care services;
- Promoting positive behaviours;
- COVID-19 recovery.

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



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