



Report of Gordon Elliott, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement

Electoral division affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the work the Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) have led on, to support the community in responding to, and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive summary

- 2 This report forms part of a regular update to the Board that reviews joint working between health and wellbeing partners and the 14 AAPs.
- 3 The last report on the work of AAPs was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 30 July 2019.

Recommendations

- 4 Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to note:
 - (a) The work that is taking place across the County; and
 - (b) the work undertaken by the AAPs during 2020/21 in addressing the Health and Wellbeing agenda, which focuses on the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

Countywide Partnerships/ Services and AAPs

- 5 AAPs continue to be part of, and input into, the County Durham Dementia Action Alliance and the Dementia Friendly Communities Network, the Severe Weather Plan, Holiday Activities with Food Work Stream, Active Durham, the Mental Health Strategic Partnership Board, Teenage Pregnancy Steering Group, Suicide Prevention Alliance and Resilient Communities Group. The AAPs were also involved in the work to establish the new vision for the County Durham Partnership, as well as the review of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 6 The AAP representative responsible for connecting AAP work with that of the Health and Wellbeing Board partners, is also the AAPs link to many of the above groups, and the AAPs' Time to Change Champion.
- 7 All 14 AAPs have a Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) representative as a member of the board to input into the work of the partnerships and to share relevant information to each of the boards and forums on their work and gain feedback where required.
- 8 Each AAP has a nominated Public Health representative to liaise with on the development of health-related projects to seek guidance or provide comment. AAPs regularly share Public Health information and messages to their board and forum members and wider public through their e-bulletins and social media pages and support engagement with the public in relevant health and wellbeing consultations.
- 9 Work is taking place to establish links with Primary Care Network representatives to ensure alignment across the geographies.

AAPs' Response to the Pandemic

- 10 When the pandemic began, the AAPs were instrumental in updating the online directory Locate and developing the Community Hub established to support those shielding and isolating. Officers from the AAP teams manned the Hub initially. Other staff took over once the AAPs commenced their efforts to allocate funding provided to support the community during the pandemic.
- 11 As part of the virtual events that the 14 AAPs led on in late 2020, a call for COVID Champions was announced; 93 were engaged, with 83 active champions currently in place.

- 12 Induction training was rolled out in a phased manner to suit the champions, and a full schedule of meetings is in place to keep them updated. Themed meetings are included in this to improve their knowledge, making every contact count.
- 13 The role of a champion is to:
- promote key messages,
 - get the message out there,
 - feedback, and make a valued contribution by continuing to help and support communities.

AAP Available Funding and Priorities

- 14 AAPs receive core funding of £100,000 each year; an additional £100,000 was provided in 2020/21 to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. In recent years, AAP funding has also been supplemented with additional funding linked to older people's social isolation (£25,000), welfare assistance (£10,000) and youth related activities (£9,902). All of these pots were merged last year to tackle the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This gave each AAP a core budget sum of £244,902 for 2020/21.
- 15 Due to the unprecedented impact of the pandemic, it was agreed that each AAP's funding allocation should be aligned to one broad priority focus of COVID-19 recovery. Within this single focus, AAP Boards were able to address a wide range of issues around the themes set out below:
- (a) Employability
 - (b) Advice and guidance
 - (c) Mental health and wellbeing
 - (d) Organisation sustainability
 - (e) Food provision and support
 - (f) Social isolation
 - (g) Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector
 - (h) Support to small businesses (through a third party, not-for-profit)

- 16 AAPs also supported the 126 County Councillors in allocating their Neighbourhood Budgets (£19,400 per Councillor); Councillors also had COVID-19 in mind when allocating funds to projects.
- 17 In addition to the AAP core budgets outlined in paragraphs 14, each AAP received a share of £240,000 through the Holiday Activities with Healthy Food (HAWHF) group to develop, administer and distribute funding for enriching holiday activities with healthy food which is universally accessible but targeted at vulnerable children on free school meals. This covered the holiday periods in 2020/21 (Easter, May half term, Summer, October and February half term).
- 18 234 projects were allocated funding through the 14 AAPs with partners developing and implementing a range of programmes offering enriching activities and nutritious food to help mitigate the negative impacts of poverty on children and young people in the county during school holidays.
- 19 Feedback received from children, young people and families indicates that the activities and food provision has been vital to alleviating family finance worries, reducing social isolation and supporting our parents, carers, children and young people's emotional wellbeing. It has allowed families to take part in a range of activities together, learn new skills and has provided opportunities to make sustainable change.
- 20 To aid the COVID-19 response across the County, a total budget of £1.5 million was allocated to 292 projects, equating to £1,092,214 from the AAP's funding and £395,037 from the Countywide fund, leaving £12,749 of the Countywide funding yet to be committed. These projects also attracted £1.4 million in match funding from other sources, meaning projects supported by us across the county have seen over £2.9 million invested in projects to combat the effects of COVID-19. This includes the county wide projects, as well as projects within the 14 AAP areas. Some examples of the AAP projects are set out in paragraphs 21 to 49 below. In addition, 48 Neighbourhood Budget applications equating to £234,724 were also received. In total, around 300 community groups and organisations were supported.

Examples of AAP Health and Wellbeing Projects (COVID-19)

- 21 As per paragraph 20, AAPs funded a number of projects during 2020/21 that support the key objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Board, in relation to the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Details of some of these have been highlighted below under the Joint

Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities. Further information is available from the AAPs on the projects summarised in this report and can also be provided for any others if requested.

Starting Well

- 22 **The ‘It’s in the bag!’ scheme**, developed for **Rural Weardale** with local Head Teachers of both primary and secondary schools, community groups, parents and children, had the simple concept of supplying household cupboard essential food, with some recipe ideas. Alongside the bag, came a £5 bag of seasonal fruit and vegetables which are more difficult to obtain in rural areas.
- 23 Age-appropriate activity bags, with a compendium of arts and crafts, including environmental learning, ensuring the activities were related to the key stage development targets in the National Curriculum were also included. The bags were delivered by volunteer drivers to recipients’ homes.
- 24 The quote below shows the value beneficiaries placed on this scheme:

“We as a family would like to wholeheartedly thank the AAP for this scheme. It has been an absolute God send! (I especially appreciated the toiletries and cleaning supplies!) We loved getting the bags every fortnight and the kids loved diving in! We will miss it a great deal! Thank you so very much.”
- 25 **Spennymoor AAP** funded **King Street Primary School** from the COVID-19 Response funding to provide 55 tablets to families to support children with their education while working from home.
- 26 **East Durham Rural Corridor AAP** funded **Trimdon Village Hall** providing £1,042.71 towards a project totalling £1,846.71 for the provision of sports equipment packs for teenagers and their families living in Trimdon Village and Trimdon Grange. Each child received a sports pack including a skipping rope, frizbee, soft ball, mini rackets, paddle bat, throwing scarf and a catch tail ball in a drawstring bag. A packed lunch was also provided which included cucumber, carrot sticks, a fruit bag, ham or cheese bun, juice, jelly, and quavers.
- 27 Families also had access to one larger piece of equipment from the following list on a rotation programme for 4 days a week: Connect 4, Noughts and Crosses, Cricket set, Volleyball net and ball, Badminton rackets and shuttlecocks, Chess and Jenga.

- 28 As Trimdon Village Hall now has access to all this equipment; the project can be operated on an ongoing basis.
- 29 Four volunteers were involved in this project, there were 50+ beneficiaries and two community facilities were supported. It was well received and helped to combat issues with mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic.

Living Well

- 30 **Solan Connor Fawcett Cancer Trust** provided care and support packages to cancer sufferers and their families within the **4 Together Partnership**. They also provided support with hospital visits, funeral arrangements and delivered a befriending service.
- 31 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of **Mid Durham AAP's** vulnerable and at-risk families were left with little or no income. Therefore, they decided to help out in any way they could, and they thought the best way to do this would be through a weekly food bag. The contents in the food bag were inspired by pre-packed boxes that food banks use for their clients. Each of the bags contained enough food for approximately three to four days. Two volunteers went shopping for the food throughout the week, packed the food into bags, then delivered it directly to the households.
- 32 The outcome was many very grateful parents and families who were struggling to make ends meet due to the pandemic. Many parents are in low-income jobs and because of problems with the Universal Credit and furlough systems, they were left with little to no money. Many parents reported how helpful the food bags were, and some families asked to stop receiving the food bags once they started to receive income as they no longer needed help and wanted it to go to those that still needed the additional support. 35 households benefitted.
- 33 The quote below from a beneficiary shows the value of this work:
- “We would like to say a huge thank you to the AAP for all their help and financial support. It has truly made a substantial difference to our parents and local community through the worst of the pandemic.”***

- 34 **Open Door Church - Our Confident Community** was given funding by **3 Towns Partnership**. Since lockdown began, over 14,500 hot meals have been provided, over 3,500 since February 2021. In addition, an average 100-150 fair share packages have been delivered to local residents every week, supporting over 400 households with age ranges from birth to 101. The project has supported over 100 elderly and vulnerable households with a range of support, including activity packs for older people, and over 80 families have taken part in the healthy lives holiday activities with healthy food projects. 450 plus newsletters have also been distributed, 200 knitted items have been produced for the baby unit, furniture and clothing has been provided alongside a debt advice, support to move home and to arrange funerals.
- 35 Since restrictions have eased, the support for the vulnerable continues; however, the focus has changed to include people being accompanied on walks or encouraged to attend sessions on site where they can once again socialise, albeit within COVID-19 guidelines.
- 36 Additional projects have provided various opportunities to both express emotions and be positive. Participants have taken part in a photography project and exhibition, an art project and a grow your own vegetables project which is still ongoing. Demand has also increased for support for families who are having to self-isolate because of COVID-19.
- 37 The quote below from a beneficiary shows the value of this work:
- “Thank you very much for the lovely meals they are really appreciated and a great help at this current time. Puzzles keep me occupied and the volunteers who drop the meals off are really friendly - you are all doing a great job and are appreciated by everyone.”***
- 38 **East Durham Rural Corridor AAP** funded **DJ Evans Youth Club – Bowburn Youth Project** by giving £9,000 towards an £11,000 COVID-19 support group project which improved the quality of life, independence and support for people who were most vulnerable in the community or who were self-isolating. This project was in partnership with **Bowburn Community Centre** and involved volunteers going to the shops, collecting prescriptions and providing social interaction over the phone.
- 39 The project also provided a meals on wheels service and care packs for those who were vulnerable, isolating or struggling financially due to the

pandemic. The meals on wheels service and delivery of care packs also enabled checks on the most vulnerable. Whilst delivering meals, volunteers would stay and have a quick chat with people, which for many was the only face to face contact they'd had all week.

- 40 The majority of the funding was spent on food for families, with some spent on utensils, food cartons, pots and pans, advertising and PPE for volunteers.
- 41 3,000 households benefitted which exceeded the target of 2,500, one voluntary and community group was supported, 25 people were engaged in voluntary work, and two community buildings/ facilities were supported.

Ageing Well

- 42 **Annfield Plain Community Centre** are spearheading the **Catchgate and Annfield Plain Isolation Support** service that supports vulnerable and elderly residents from across the Annfield Plain Division. The Centre's Committee has set up volunteer networks in each of their villages to collect and deliver shopping, pick up prescriptions, deliver food and care packages, and oversee a telephone befriending service during the crisis, whilst still managing the delivery of their existing food bank.
- 43 The Centre received a COVID-19 response grant from **Stanley AAP** to expand and support their local volunteers, purchase cleaning materials for their premises, and enhance the capacity of their telephone befriending service. As at February 2021, the support service had completed over 800 jobs and supported over 1,000 people. One key volunteer stated that:

"The project has led to renewed community spirit and neighbourliness which I hope will continue once we are out of this awful time."
- 44 **South Stanley Partnership's A Helping Hand** project is a six day a week meals on wheels service that delivers to elderly and socially isolated residents from across the Stanley area. It received funding support to sustain it during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring their beneficiaries can continue to enjoy home cooked meals at low prices.
- 45 **Durham AAP's** funding supported over 70 isolated and vulnerable older people in Sherburn Village who were provided with a hot meal, twice a

week thanks to the efforts of the volunteers at **Sherburn Community Centre**. The centre received a grant of £4,120 which helped to provide equipment and resources used by the 16 volunteer cooks and drivers who produced the hot meals and then delivered to peoples' doors.

- 46 **East Durham Rural Corridor AAP** funded **Coxhoe Village Hall** with £910.10 for the **Bags of Cheer project** which was very well received by the 450 beneficiaries. The project outcomes exceeded all expectations of the project lead; from 300 deliveries they had responses from just under 50 recipients, thanking them for their kindness and thoughtfulness and expressing how much it had cheered up their day.
- 47 They had phone calls, emails, Facebook posts and even two donations to the Village Hall as an offer of appreciation. The cheery hand-written message in the card and bright stripy bags which were hand delivered by a smiling, socially distanced volunteer helped to achieve the aim of having a positive impact on peoples' wellbeing as much as the contents of the bags. The bags' contents were afternoon tea themed, and also included a booklet of cheery thoughts and a made-up smiley poem.
- 48 16 volunteers were involved in the project, and one community facility was supported. It is hoped that, when it is safe to re-open, the project will encourage new users of the Village Hall facilities.
- 49 The quote below from the project's lead shows the value of this work:

"I cannot thank you enough for awarding us the funding to deliver this project. It was so rewarding and also lit up Coxhoe for the afternoon."

Confirmed Funding for 2021/ 2022

- 50 The following funding has been confirmed for each AAP for the current financial year and work has commenced:
- £100,000 Area Budget to support delivery of local priorities
 - £25,000 Older Persons' Social Isolation Fund
 - £9,902 Youth Fund Grant
 - £10,000 Welfare Assistance Scheme Grant funding to tackle poverty issues
 - £100,000 Community Recovery Funding

51 Like last year, this gives each AAP a core budget sum of £244,902, and again this has been amalgamated and is focused on the broad themes of COVID-19 recovery set out in paragraph 15.

52 In addition, there will be the following funding available:

- **Towns and Villages:** £4.2 million for AAPs to fund the wider corporate objectives of improving towns and villages across the County; of which,
 - £210,000 has been allocated to each AAP (over three years but with no stipulation on amount to be spent each year), and
 - £10,000 (one-off additional sum) to each elected member's Neighbourhood Budget allocation, in order to ensure a greater focus is given to the funding of community 'town and village' themed projects across the County in every electoral division.
- **Holiday Activities with Healthy Food (HAHF):** £525,000 for AAPs from the Local Authority's £2.38 million grant from the Department for Education (DfE), to coordinate and deliver holiday activities with healthy food in the Easter/Summer and Christmas holidays during 2021. Funding has been distributed via AAPs to local providers based on the percentage of children on free school meals (FSM) in an AAP area. An uplift provided to support rural localities. So far:
 - 97 projects were delivered across the county at Easter, 73 by AAP partners engaging with 6,862 children and young people (FSM and non-FSM) including 757 children with additional needs, 87 projects have been allocated funding through the AAPs for the summer holidays complimenting the additional provision through schools, family centre hubs, tendered provision and internal DCC partners.
 - As the DfE grant does not cover half terms, additional funding of £95,188 has been allocated to AAPs by Durham County Council through the Poverty Action Steering Group to accommodate these holidays. During the May half term holiday period, 47 projects were supported to deliver through this allocation. Funding will be available from the beginning of September for the delivery of projects for the October half term.

- 53 The total budget for AAPs excluding Neighbourhood Budget is £6.8 million; the Neighbourhood Budget figure is £3.7 million including the Towns and Villages element.

Conclusion

54. This report provides an update on the work of the AAPs in relation to health projects over the last year as well as outlining the resources they will be administering over the current year. The AAPs are grateful for the support they receive from health colleagues to shape their funding decisions and look forward to that ongoing input, as well as developing closer links with Primary Care Networks as they move forward.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

No implications.

Finance

As above, the finance highlighted within this report is linked to budgets provided to the AAPs via Durham County Council and the Department for Education.

Consultation

The AAPs engage with local residents and partners throughout the year and base their work on the contributions provided. They provide an opportunity for residents and partners to be part of Task and Finish Groups established to examine, develop and evaluate the outcomes of the aforementioned contributions.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

AAPs fund projects which contribute to reducing inequalities in the county.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

AAPs fund projects which contribute to improving levels of crime and disorder.

Staffing

Not applicable.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

Not applicable.

Procurement

Not applicable.