

# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 September 2022

## Growing up in County Durham Strategy: Consultation



### Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service and Chair of Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board

#### Electoral division affected:

Countywide

#### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a draft Growing Up in County Durham (GUiCD) 2023 – 25 Strategy for comment, which can be found at Appendix 2.

#### Executive summary

2. The current Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2022 comes to an end this year and is due for review.
3. The strategy is based on evidence about the needs of children and young people in County Durham, which can be found in a range of infograms available on Durham Insight at <https://infogram.com/1p626dwy190l56t5kvjly77rjei3njxk7gv?live>.
4. The strategy is also based on four aims to better manage outcomes and reflecting the subgroup arrangements of the Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board (CYPFPB). The aims of the strategy are:
  - (a) Making sure every child has the best start in life – even before they are born.
  - (b) Making sure that all children are supported to be happy, healthy and safe to achieve their potential, and provide additional help when it is needed.

- (c) Making sure that children and young people with additional needs are supported throughout their childhood, teenage years and as they move into adulthood.
  - (d) Making sure the services we provide are joined up, with children, young people and families/carers at the centre.
- 5. The wider context of Growing Up in County Durham is reflected in the strategy, including the impact of Covid-19, which covers young people's physical health, mental health and wellbeing and signposts to other strategies provided where common themes and issues are identified.
- 6. A strategy development group was established to oversee the development of the strategy, including the coproduction process and ensure a wide cohort of partners, VCS representatives, children, young people, families and carers are involved in its development.
- 7. Coproduction sessions took place with children, young people, parents and carers to develop the new GUiCD Strategy which is based on what is important to those who use and need community support and services as well as the wider population, focusing on strengths, rather than deficits.
- 8. Consultation has taken place throughout the development of the strategy at three key stages.
- 9. CYP OSC were provided with a presentation at their meeting on 5 May, with an update on the development of the GUiCD strategy. Following discussion at that meeting, CYP OSC were asked to provide any comments on the draft GUiCD strategy as part of the consultation process.
- 10. The new strategy will run from 2023-25 to align with the timescales for the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25 and the County Durham Place Based Commissioning and Delivery Plan 2020-25.

## **Recommendations**

- 11. Members of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:
  - (a) Receive the draft GUiCD Strategy at the meeting 23 September 2022.
  - (b) Provide any additional comments/contributions to the new GUiCD Strategy to [andrea.petty@durham.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.petty@durham.gov.uk) by 2 October 2022.

## Background

12. A Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board Development Session took place in October 2021 to give direction on developing the new Children and Young People's Strategy, and the following was agreed:
  - (a) A name for the new strategy – Growing Up in County Durham 2023-25.
  - (b) The strategy is based on evidence about the needs of children and young people in County Durham, which can be found on Durham Insight.
  - (c) Coproduction sessions would take place with children, young people, parents and carers to develop the Strategy which will be based on what is important to those who use and need support from services, building on people's own strengths and those of communities.
  - (d) The strategy would have a narrower focus built on four aims to better manage outcomes and reflecting the subgroup arrangements of the CYPFPB. These aims are:
    - (i) Making sure every child has the best start in life – even before they are born.
    - (ii) Making sure that all children are supported to be happy, healthy and safe to achieve their potential, and provide additional help when it is needed.
    - (iii) Making sure that children and young people with additional needs are supported throughout their childhood, teenage years and as they move into adulthood.
    - (iv) Making sure the services we provide are joined up, with children, young people and families/carers at the centre.
  - (e) The wider context of Growing Up in County Durham would be reflected in the strategy, including the impact of Covid-19, which covers young people's mental health and wellbeing and signposts to other strategies provided where common themes and issues were identified, to avoid duplication.
  - (f) The new strategy will run from 2023-25 to align with the timescales for the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25 and the County Durham Place Based Commissioning and Delivery Plan 2020-25.

13. A strategy development group (SDG) was set up with the responsibility to develop the GUiCD strategy. The group also oversaw the coproduction process, involving a wide cohort of partners, VCS reps, children, young people, families and carers in its development, ensuring a whole family approach was taken.

## Consultation

14. Consultation has taken place throughout the development of the strategy at three key stages:
  - (a) Stage 1 – February to 30 April – coproduction sessions with children, young people, families and carers via the SDG and the VCS Alliance to establish the vision for the strategy and the priority areas that the strategy should focus on.
  - (b) Stage 2 – 22 June to 10 August – wider consultation on the proposed vision statement and priority areas, carried out via an online survey and targeted consultation with stakeholder groups.
  - (c) Stage 3 – 5 September to 2 October – further consultation on the proposed strategy document, carried out through an online survey with stakeholder groups, as well as presenting the draft strategy to key stakeholders, giving them the opportunity to comment before final agreement at the Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board.
15. Following the analysis of the results from stage 2 of the consultation, the draft GUiCD Strategy 2023-25 is attached at Appendix 2, which is now subject to further consultation in stage 3. Details of stage 1 and stage 2 consultations can be seen in Appendix 3.
16. Comments provided by CYP OSC following the meeting on 5 May were considered in developing the draft strategy. Details of the actions taken in response to the comments can be seen in Appendix 4.

## Focus of the Proposed New Strategy

17. The new proposed vision for the strategy is:

**“County Durham supports all children, young people and their families to achieve their goals in life, in an environment that is safe, happy and healthy.”**
18. The seven priority areas identified by children, young people and families which we will focus on are as follows:
  - (a) Family, friends and community.

- (b) Being safe.
  - (c) Fairer opportunities.
  - (d) Development, learning and skills.
  - (e) Tackling the impacts of Covid-19.
  - (f) Physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing.
  - (g) Access to community support and services.
19. Some key programmes of work, identified within the priority areas above, are included in other strategies and plans. To avoid duplication, these are signposted in the GUiCD strategy. The GUiCD strategy includes a number of actions that identify the key areas of work which the Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board will focus on and where they can add value to improve outcomes for children and young people.
20. These high-level actions will be owned by the subgroups of the Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board who will develop more detailed action plans to deliver the GUiCD strategy.

## **Performance Management**

21. Key indicators/outcomes for measuring the success of the strategy are included in the strategy at Appendix 2.

## **Timeline and next steps**

22. The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the next steps as follows:
- (a) Stage 3 consultation on the draft GUiCD Strategy – **5 September to 2 October 2022**
  - (b) CYPFPB agrees GUiCD 2023-25 – **3 October 2022**
  - (c) Cabinet and Partner's endorse GUiCD 2023-25 – **16 November 2022**
  - (d) Launch and promotion of the strategy - **December 2022**

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

23. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is being undertaken alongside the development of the GUiCD strategy.

## **Conclusion**

24. The development of the GUiCD strategy has been led by the Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board supported by a multi-agency and VCS development group. Children, young people, families and carers groups have been involved from the start in shaping the strategy and a robust consultation process has been in place throughout the development of the strategy. Relationships will be maintained with children, young people, families and carers across the lifespan of the strategy through to adoption and monitoring of outcomes.

## **Background papers**

- None

## **Other useful documents**

- None

## **Author**

Julie Bradbrook

Tel: 03000 267325

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The CYPFP ensures it incorporates the legal requirements pertaining to children's services.

### **Finance**

Resources will need to be agreed and the CYPFP will guide resource decisions and priorities.

### **Consultation**

Details of consultation are provided in the report. Partners and children, young people and their families and carers have all been provided with an opportunity to shape the direction and the content of the strategy and will continue to be involved throughout the lifetime of the plan.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

An Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken as part of the process for developing the new CYPF Strategy.

### **Climate Change**

The new strategy is aligned with and contributes to the current priorities within the Climate and Emergency Response Plan which focuses on climate change.

### **Human Rights**

There are no adverse implications.

### **Crime and Disorder**

The new strategy is aligned with and contributes to the current priorities within the Safe Durham Partnership Plan which focuses on crime and disorder.

### **Staffing**

Resources will need to be agreed and the CYPFP will guide resource decisions and priorities.

### **Accommodation**

There are no accommodation implications.

## **Risk**

A clear strategy framework is vital to ensure improvement in Children's services across the County.

## **Procurement**

Commissioners will take account of the GUiCD strategy when procuring services aligned to children, young people and families.

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## **Appendix 2: Growing Up in County Durham Strategy 2023-25**

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Attached as a separate document.

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## **Appendix 3: Consultation – Stage 1 and 2**

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### **Consultation - Stage 1**

Taking a whole family approach, a programme of coproduction sessions were arranged with children, young people, families and carers via the strategy development group (SDG) and the VCS Alliance. These sessions took place during March and April 2022 and feedback from these sessions was incorporated into the strategy and provided for other strategies where relevant.

Within the parameters of the four key aims outlined in paragraph 4, CYPF groups were asked to help identify the following:

- a vision for all children, young people and families and the key themes / areas of work we need to focus on to achieve this
- the aspirations and challenges that children, young people and families have/face in the county today
- where relevant, their experience of NHS and council services.

Activities included work with the Youth Council, United Voices, Investing in Children (IiC), the fostering network, and a range of children, young people, families and carers groups which incorporated young people from different backgrounds via One Point Centres, the Think Family / Stronger Families Programme and the NHS 0 – 25 service.

Engagement has also taken place with the VCS sector, via the VCS Alliance and 20 VCS sector representatives attended a Teams session in March and six VCS representatives from a range of organisations including NEPACS (supporting prisoners and their families), IiC and Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists (OASES) have indicated that they wanted to be part of the SDG going forward and were invited to join the group.

Feedback from these sessions was analysed during April/May to identify common themes and issues which could be incorporated into the strategy and/or provided for other strategies where relevant, for example, the Poverty Action Plan. Other relevant strategies, surveys, coproduction and consultation exercises, such as the Student Voice survey, were also analysed to identify common themes and issues.

Following the feedback analysis, and together with evidence and the input of professionals and the SDG, a draft vision and seven priority areas were identified.

Seven priority areas were identified as follows:

- Family, friends and community
- Being safe
- Tackling inequalities
- Learning and skills development
- Tackling the impacts of Covid-19
- Emotional wellbeing
- Access to services

## **Consultation - Stage 2**

A vision and the seven priority areas were further consulted on with the general public and wider stakeholders, during stage 2 of the consultation process, which ran from 22 June till 10 August, via an online survey. The survey was promoted by stakeholders including:

- Schools – through their extranet and a head teacher’s briefing note.
- VCS Alliance and Durham Community Action.
- Area Action Partnerships.
- Family Centres and 0-25 services.
- Durham Youth Network.
- County Durham Partnership network.
- Youth Council.
- Fun With Food network.
- Investing In Children.

Stakeholders promoted the survey by email, at meetings and through social media channels. Face to face sessions took place with young people supported by Investing in Children and the Youth Council.

The consultation asked:

- Do you agree with the vision for our children, young people and families for the next three years?
- Do you agree these are the right themes going forward?
- Are there any gaps?

There were 114 responses to the survey, which were generally positive and supportive of the vision and themes. The following is a breakdown and a selection of comments highlighting the key responses for each of the questions asked which have been incorporated into the draft GUiCD strategy.

## Vision

Question 1	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
Do you agree or disagree with the vision for our children, young people and families for the next three years?	69	19	12

Responses included:

- Difficult to read
- Not accessible to people with lower literacy
- Good sentiment but doesn't flow well

Based on these and similar comments the vision was simplified in the draft strategy and can be found at paragraph 16 in the report.

## Theme: Family, friends and community

Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
Do you agree or disagree that 'family, friends and community' is a theme we should focus on?	92	4	4

Responses included:

- Families are the most important influence on the children's lives and a focus on family life will be helpful.
- We need to focus on improving the environment. Litter and dumping of waste is a major problem in County Durham, families and communities need to be encouraged and rewarded to get involved to prevent this happening.
- Supporting all families regardless of type of family- special guardians, connected carers, single parents, same sex couples, heterosexual couples, working families as well as low income.

The environment people live in, and the make-up of families are reflected in 'family, friends and community' priority area section and throughout the wider narrative of the strategy.

## Theme: Being Safe

Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
Do you agree or disagree that 'being safe' is a theme we should focus on?	98	-	2

Responses included:

- We need to provide safe and enjoyable activities via youth provision to help keep young people safe.
- Tackling antisocial behaviour. Educating parents on keeping their children safe online.
- More education on the dangers of the Internet and social media for kids and parents.

Provision for young people in safe environments and importance of online safety are reflected in 'being safe' priority area section, throughout the wider narrative of the strategy and links from the strategy to work other partners are already undertaking, for example, the Safe Durham Partnership and the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership.

### **Theme: Tackling inequalities**

Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
Do you agree or disagree that 'tackling inequalities' is a theme we should focus on?	88	-	12

Responses included:

- Include all factors behind inequalities - health, poverty, racial, LGBTQ+.
- Better access for all is needed with some initiatives tackling the particular problems faced in rural areas.
- I think this should be the main priority due to the number of children living in poverty or who will fall into this category due to cost of living impact.
- Needs to be fair and accessible to all families, e.g., families who do not have access to transport and unable to access a service over 10 miles away.
- I think there should be an accessible food bank and clothing which can be used anonymously and with easy access.
- many of our regions children aren't able to access regular healthy or nutritious meals which affects their ability to learn.

This priority was changed from 'tackling inequalities' to 'fairer opportunities' to reflect the wider range of comments people made during the consultation. There are also links from the strategy to work other partners are already undertaking, for example the Poverty Action Plan.

## Theme: Learning and skills development

Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
Do you agree or disagree that 'learning and skills development' is a theme we should focus on?	90	3	7

Responses included:

- Three fold approach to improve educational outcomes, learning & skills development. Firstly – encourage early years involvement in sensory stimulation of the outdoors, group activities & empathy. Secondly - recognise the development of creative thinking, wonder & self-expression. Thirdly - poverty decreasing activity participation & as a result limiting development.
- I think there should be a strong focus on the parents of babies and toddlers receiving parenting courses about how to play and interact with their children.
- Learning and skills should be included from a basic fundamental level to include parenting skills and engaging in child development and learning. So often schools are the first point of call for some social skills, potty training, manners, using eating implements, understanding right from wrong.

This priority was changed from 'learning and skills development' to 'learning, skills and development' to emphasise the importance of the development of babies and preschool children.

There are also links from the strategy to educational information and the new Inclusive Economic Strategy (once launched) for information on learning and employment opportunities.

## Theme: Tackling the impacts of Covid-19

Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
Do you agree or disagree that 'tackling the impacts of Covid-19' is a theme we should focus on?	68	10	22

Responses included:

- More things for teenagers to do & places for them to 'hang out'. Many of them have missed out on developing their independence by being stuck at home and not being able to socialize with friends.
- Think covid has ran its toll now and it's something we need to learn to live with. The only impacts I would advise focusing on would be all those children that missed out in the 2 years!! Specially socially interaction.

- Mental health and wellbeing support for kids and support for families affected. There should be more assistance available at a local level to assist individuals and families with future development.

There are also links from the strategy to work other partners are already undertaking, for example to the County Durham and Families Information service.

### Theme: Emotional Wellbeing

Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
Do you agree or disagree that 'emotional wellbeing' is a theme we should focus on?	94	1	5

Responses included:

- Due to the current economic climate across the country and the fact some areas of our county are experiencing high levels of deprivation and poverty. Emotional wellbeing is a very important theme for our regions children. I have been heartened to see this expand as a focus in schools in recent years and across the community. And think this is definitely something as a theme that should be continued.
- Emotional and physical wellbeing - including a focus on healthy weight.
- Anything for parents that have just had babies? Drop in centres or classes? Women struggle and there is absolutely nothing on offer in my area.
- Emotional wellbeing is a given in a loving, happy, comfortable home with parents, family & friends to provide all the emotional support for a child to flourish.

This priority was changed from 'emotional wellbeing' to 'physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing' to reflect people's comments about the importance of both mental and physical health.

The points about the impact of cost of living, community-based support, support for new mothers and the importance of family are reflected in this priority.

There are also links from the strategy to further information about the work partners are doing, for example, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

## Theme: Access to Services

Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
Do you agree or disagree that 'access to services' is a theme we should focus on?	91	4	5

Responses included:

- This is critical - how ever good services are children and young people need to be facilitated to access them! Agree with all of this but perhaps it needs to be stressed more strongly!! Particularly the issue of rural isolation and also digital isolation.
- It is critically important to ensure that support is 'joined up' given the multiplicity of support for children and young people and also parents. It is often not that support isn't available but there needs to be better information to access that support - if that makes sense! and that the support is appropriate and 'attractive' and the choices are not overwhelming.
- This should be timely and the right service. In order for this to be effective, there needs to be strong links and communication between all agencies and collaborative decision making between the children/young person, family/carers and services.
- Provide equitable access to positive and enjoyable activities for young people which they wish to engage in and also ensure that access is addressed by providing lower cost or free bus transport for young people.

This priority was changed from 'access to services' to access to community support and services' to reflect people's comments about access to locally based support and services. It also acknowledges the rurality of the county and transport.

There are links from the strategy to work other partners are already undertaking, for example the Advice in County Durham website.

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## **Appendix 4: CYP OSC Comments and Responses**

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### **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

#### **Growing Up in County Durham 2022 – 2025**

##### **Consultation with wide range of stakeholders**

Some members indicated there were gaps in those consulted and suggested that this should involve school staff as schools are part of our communities and their value and importance had been evident during the COVID-19 Pandemic as a key point of contact for CYP and families.

- The consultations were promoted through a Headteacher's briefing note and via the Education intranet, giving all school staff the opportunity to be involved in the development of the Strategy.
- The consultations have been promoted through the wide-ranging County Durham Partnership networks, which includes representation from the NHS, Durham University, VCS organisations, Durham Community Action across their network – including community buildings across the County, business, schools, elected members, the Police and Fire and Rescue services, Area Action Partnerships and the County Durham Association of Local Councils, who have promoted the consultations through their Town and Parish Council mailing lists.

##### **Role of VCS**

Members highlighted that there was a specific need to focus on teenagers as they were often portrayed negatively in the media. Members highlighted the importance of volunteers and of situations where groups either could not operate or did so at a reduced capacity due to a lack of adult volunteers. Members also commented on the decline of universal Youth Workers and while volunteers provided a valuable resource there were issues regarding the availability of funding.

- A Volunteering Development Fund has been created for County Durham that can be accessed by the VCS to be used to mainstream VCS work so it becomes part of the pathway to contributing to our broader service delivery.
- The VCS Alliance, Durham Community Action and other VCS organisations have joined the GUiCD Strategy Development Group, where they have been heavily involved in the development of the strategy over the past months.

## **Young people involved in developing the strategy**

Members suggested that if children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities or those within the care system were involved in the development of the strategy then it was important that they were able to read their words and identify those issues being raised by them and they would potentially feel a greater sense of ownership of the Strategy.

- The consultations were promoted to special schools through the Education intranet, the Children in Care Council and IIC have been involved in the consultation. We received responses relating to both groups, which were considered in the development of the strategy, specifically relating to providing fairer opportunities for all and writing the strategy in a way which is easy for a young person to understand. We also looked to avoid duplication by signposting to strategies and support specific to these groups.
- Young people have been involved in promoting the consultation and developing the strategy, with the Youth Council and IIC running face to face consultation sessions and providing comments that supported the development of the strategy. The consultations have also been promoted through Durham Youth Network and the Fun and Food social media platforms.
- The strategy emphasises the need to support children, young people and their families, based on the idea of working with people to find solutions to their needs; and including them in the delivery and review of the strategy going forward, following co-production values.

## **Access to community support and services**

Members emphasised the need for continuity in delivering services, especially areas of health care such as health visitors. They also stressed the need for accessibility to services with thought given to accessibility of services and the frequency of having to travel long distances to do so. Members indicated that there was a wealth of knowledge in communities and this knowledge should be used to inform the strategy.

- Access to community and support services is a key priority within the draft strategy
- A high level action in relation transport benefits to access wider health, education, leisure and work opportunities is included in the strategy
- Specific issues mentioned by CYP OSC including the importance of community and building positive relationships, providing opportunities, poverty, recovery from Covid-19, access to and continuity of services,

mental health and online safety resonate with responses received from stage 2 of the consultation; and have been included as key points within the strategy.

## **Climate change and poverty**

Members also raised concerns about child poverty and that thought should be given as to how we can lift children out of poverty and also address the issue of how poverty can be a source of some stigma for children and young people.

Members indicated that young people were extremely concerned about climate change.

- The feedback received as part of the consultation relating to other areas of work, for example, Climate Change and poverty were fed back to leads responsible for these areas
- References to key areas that are governed outside the strategy are available through links within the strategy. This includes the poverty action plan, Climate Change, looking after your mental health, support for CYP with SEND and children in care.