

Cabinet

16 November 2022

County Durham Partnership Update

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

Electoral division affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP). The report also includes updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

Executive summary

- 2 The **County Durham Partnership** event this year will take place on 30 November and will focus on supporting our communities through the cost-of-living challenges.
- 3 **£1.4 million** has been allocated to **Fun and Food projects** for Summer 2022, with **£434,753.39** allocated to community Fun and Food projects through AAPs, with **90** projects in total.
- 4 Durham County Council is working with voluntary sector partners and the Poverty Action Steering Group to develop a **Warm Spaces Network**, which builds on the actions already being taken by the voluntary sector to provide a place for local people to visit to stay warm, socialise and to get connected to other useful services.
- 5 Consultation with key partners and members of the public on the Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) was undertaken at various stages over recent months. The IES will be a key document to support the

County's economic growth in the future. At the heart of the strategy is a simple ambition: more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy. To achieve this, the IES sets a framework for an inclusive economy, focusing on People, Productivity, Places, Promotion and Planet.

- 6 The Employability, Upskilling and Discretionary Project through Bishop Auckland College has been hugely successful. A number of AAPs have provided grants to support this project. It is aimed at engaging with clients who are most distanced from the labour market and who experience significant barriers to accessing work, training and/or volunteering. Previous outcomes clearly demonstrated the need for funding, with grants payable to applicants who can demonstrate that there are jobs available upon completion of the training or that the skills and support gained will enable applications to be made into the essential skills sector.
- 7 Our rural AAPs continue to focus on how poverty affects our residents in rural communities and provide support. Properties that aren't connected to the gas grid network and reliance on fuels such as oil or Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), which is more expensive than electric and gas from the network. means residents have to pay more for heating costs. Alongside this, the nature of rural housing is that it is often older and not as well insulated.
- 8 In addition, residents in rural communities tend to pay more for essential goods in local shops rather than less accessible cheaper supermarkets.

Recommendation

- 9 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) note the contents of this update.

Background

- 10 The **County Durham Partnership** including the board and forum (which bring together the board and local communities), five partnerships (**Health and Wellbeing Board, Safe Durham Partnership, Economic Partnership, Environment and Climate Change Partnership** and **County Durham Together Partnership**), **Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership** and the **Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership, Better Together VCS Forum** and all **Area Action Partnerships** lead on key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

County Durham Partnership board and forum

- 11 The **County Durham Partnership** Board met in May and July.
- 12 In May, the County Durham Partnership received a presentation as part of the consultation process for the Poverty Action Strategy where it was concluded that Partnership working is key to tackle this area of work.
- 13 Both the May and July meetings focused on the County's response to the various Humanitarian Support programmes currently running nationally.
- 14 Meetings continue to have regular updates from Thematic Chairs to focus on key areas of their work for the County Durham Partnership. The May meeting focused on the work of the Environment and Climate Change Partnership and the wider promotion of the new Climate Change Website <https://climatecountydurham.org.uk/>
- 15 Governed by the Safe Durham Partnership, the July meeting gave an overview of the Publicly Accessible Locations/Zones pilot across the North East and the partnership approach to make the public safer ahead of the impending Protect Duty in 2023 on the back of the Manchester Arena Inquiry.
- 16 In June 2022, **the County Durham Partnership Forum** took place virtually. The focus of the meeting was two workshops relating to:
- (a) the review of Community Engagement and how stakeholders could best be involved in the review; identifying strengths and areas of good practice in AAPs as they currently operate; and identifying areas of further development to be explored through the review;
 - (b) Sharing the position regarding Levelling up Fund bids and engagement with stakeholder prior to the bid submission in July 2022.

County Durham Partnership event

- 17 The **County Durham Partnership** event this year will take place on 30 November and will focus on supporting our communities through the cost-of-living challenges.
- 18 In the true spirit of Partnership working, this event is hosted alongside Advice in County Durham (AiCD) Partnership to facilitate a joint approach around how collectively we can meet those needs and focus on the cost-of-living pressures across the wider County Durham Partnership.

Review of Community Engagement

- 19 An independent review is taking place to review the County Council's community engagement processes. The review focuses on assessing current structures and governance with a view to ensuring the Council has a community engagement mechanism that provides support for our communities in line with the Council's future vision and priorities and also reflects the needs of the wider County Durham Partnership.
- 20 ERS, the consultants commissioned to undertake the review, have been carrying out an extensive range of interviews and visioning events to aid development of the proposals. The outcome of the review is anticipated to be complete by the end of the current calendar year.

Fun and Food programme

- 21 **£1.4 million** has been allocated to **Fun and Food projects** for Summer 2022.
- 22 The following activities and opportunities for Children, Young People and Families were available throughout the summer with Durham's Fun and Food programme.
 - (a) activities at 38 libraries;
 - (b) free swimming at all DCC leisure centres;
 - (c) 19 commissioned projects through our commissioning portal;
 - (d) 13 projects through schools (the total number of schools is greater as some school projects cover multiple school sites);



Children enjoying a Fun and Food craft session

- (e) 7 community arts projects each delivering across multiple community venues;
 - (f) 14 family centres offering Fun and Food activities;
 - (g) community groups have also been able to take up opportunities for trips to a range of venues including Bowes Museum; Raby Castle; Hamsterley Forest and the Centre for Life.
- 23 In addition, projects have taken place at the Aycliffe secure unit; two Gypsy, Roma, Traveller projects and a Special Educational Needs and Disability offer through short breaks and Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS).
- 24 **£434,753.39** was allocated to community Fun and Food projects through AAPs, with **90** projects in total.
- 25 **Spennymoor AAP** have provided Fun and Food funding to Trinity Methodist Church to operate the “Messy Summer” during the summer holidays.
- 26 Support was provided for approximately 40 families who were encouraged to work together and join in messy sensory activities that are fun, encourage healthy eating and sensory activity. A range of activities were undertaken which include:
- (a) **Messy Planting** – families involved in planting up salads and greens (or similar), with guidance from an instructor. Families take the pots home with written instructions on how to care for the plants. Recipe ideas are also provided;
 - (b) **Messy Movement** - Families involved in a fun and active session, involving messy cooperative games, dance and movement. Using the parachute, ball pool balls, balloons, bubbles and streamers, families have active fun making lots of colourful mess!;
 - (c) **Messy mixing** - Families involved in mixing up some healthy recipes, for example, colourful couscous, with guidance from an instructor. Families are able to take home their creations to share with their family. During the session, families were provided with a drink and healthy snack and received a recipe box and step by step instructions to take home, allowing them to make a tasty and healthy meal for the whole family.

- 27 Getting children ready for going back to school can be very expensive and another drain on family finances. Families that attended the face-to-face session were invited to request a back-to-school pack for their school age children. This included basic uniform items, such as a polo shirt, t-shirt, socks, a water bottle and a filled pencil case, along with items to support wellbeing, all packed into a bag that can be used as a school bag or for PE kit. Children attending nursery will receive a mini version of the back-to-school pack.

County Durham Warm Spaces Network

- 28 DCC is working with voluntary sector partners and the Poverty Action Steering Group to develop a **Warm Spaces Network**, which builds on the actions already being taken by the voluntary sector to provide a place for local people to visit to stay warm, socialise and to get connected to other useful services. In some cases, there will also be access to refreshments and/or wi-fi.
- 29 Financial support is being provided by Durham County Council and the County Durham Community Foundation. Through the Foundation, grants of up to £1,000 are available to community groups to help them offer a Warm Space. This could be something set up specifically to help people this winter or to support and widen an existing service that is offered. For example, the grant could cover the costs of providing a designated space with chairs and hot drinks, open at regular times each week.
- 30 The fund will also consider applications from local groups running activities for a particular community, such as a toddler group. The grants could be used for the following purposes:
- (a) utility bills, including gas and electricity;
 - (b) staff time;
 - (c) volunteer expenses;
 - (d) venue hire;
 - (e) equipment or furniture (for example extra chairs) for the warm space;
 - (f) the provision of drinks and food for those accessing the warm space.

- 31 Our Warm Spaces are free, and people can stay for as long, or for as short a period as you wish (within their opening hours). A depository of warm spaces will be held on Locate. Further information is available online www.durham.gov.uk/warmspaces.

Safeguarding

- 32 The **Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership (DSAP)** continued working towards achieving its Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2023. The DSAP has continued to regularly share and promote headline messages related to the safeguarding adults agenda. It has maintained its updates of the local picture to statutory and relevant partners, and wider stakeholders and continued to seek related assurance. In recent months the DSAP has shared key briefings with all partners which include (not exhaustive):



- (a) Practitioner Briefing related to 'closed cultures';
- (b) continuation of a suite of 'what good looks like' related to Mental Capacity Act (2005) Assessments;
- (c) DSAP newsletters and e-bulletins (including key updates to keep people safe from fraud and scams for example, Coronavirus vaccine related scams). There were over 39,000 visits to the DSAP website between April 2021 and March 2022.

- 33 The DSAP continued to extend its online training offer, it issued over 800 Raising a Concern Workbook certificates to professionals, staff and volunteers by the end of March 2022. Between April and June 2022, the DSAP had issued 13 themed e-bulletins with updates including:

- (a) Anti-slavery Network information and resources;
- (b) Hoarding Awareness Week;
- (c) 7 dedicated self-neglect briefings developed by regional Safeguarding Adults Review Champions;
- (d) Homelessness Briefings;

- (e) Trauma and Trauma Informed Practice.
- 34 The DSAP continues to seek assurance from statutory and relevant partners, through its working groups and Board activity. In recent months assurance updates included:
- (a) Durham County Council, Adult and Health Services – Principal Social Worker;
 - (b) Durham County Council – Channel Panel Chair;
 - (c) Healthwatch County Durham – Annual Report 2021-2022;
 - (d) Durham County Council, Safeguarding and Access Service - Mental Capacity Amendment Act (2019) and Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) – LPS Implementation Project/MCA Lead Officer;
 - (e) Durham County Council, Housing Solutions (Safeguarding and Homelessness focus).
- 35 Lesley Jeavons, DSAP Independent Chair, has met with Senior Officers as well as Operational Safeguarding Leads across the partner organisations as part of her continued work programme. The Independent Chair has also worked alongside colleagues of the Regional and National Network of Safeguarding Adult Board Chairs (NNSABC) as required, and in line with their related programmes of activity. The Independent Chair continues to share key and relevant updates to the Chief Officer Safeguarding Group.
- 36 The DSAP undertook a range of consultative exercises in Summer 2022, which included:
- (a) review of its government arrangements;
 - (b) revised multi-agency Information Sharing Agreement;
 - (c) updated Safeguarding Adults Review Protocol (in line with national updates);
 - (d) new policy for managing professional differences of opinion;
 - (e) new protocol for working with adults reluctant to engage.
- 37 The week commencing 21 November will be National Safeguarding Adults Week and the DSAP will host its fifth safeguarding week (and its third virtually) during this week.

- 38 The event will be supported by the Safe Durham Partnership and this year's event will be focussed upon the following key themes:
- (a) Safeguarding in everyday life;
 - (b) Self-Neglect;
 - (c) Creating Safer Organisational Cultures;
 - (d) Elder Abuse;
 - (e) Domestic Abuse, Digital Safeguarding in a Tech-Society;
 - (f) Prevent (countering terrorism).
- 39 A wide range of learning opportunities will be made available during the week through a range of dedicated workshops which include NHS Lunch and Learn; Predatory Marriage (learning from real life examples) and Safeguarding Adults in Care Homes, facilitated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The week will close with the start of 16 Days of Action to end domestic abuse.
- 40 **Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)** partners requested a review to consider the options for a future learning model for the partnership.
- 41 A number of frameworks used by other partnerships were considered and it was agreed that the DSCP move towards a new meeting structure. Changes towards this new model will be progressed into 2022/2023 and the DSCP aims to provide analysis of the impact of this new direction in next year's Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) annual report.
- 42 The development of the improvement areas will be progressed and up until the new arrangements are in place, the partnership will continue with the improvement areas below:
- (a) Management Understanding and Decision Making;
 - (b) Voice and Lived Experience of the Child;
 - (c) Risk Assessment and Cumulative Harm;
 - (d) Child Sexual Abuse.

- 43 Other priorities for the partnership include:
- (a) continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across partner agencies;
 - (b) improve effectiveness of Partnership scrutiny and the assessment of impact;
 - (c) progress and launch the DSCP website;
 - (d) maintain the Child Protection procedure updates;
 - (e) progress the work of the Child Death Overview panel.
- 44 The redesign of the new DSCP website has come from the learning from audits, reviews and practitioner surveys with the intention of focussing on realising the following benefits:
- (a) creating an effective communication channel within the Partnership;
 - (b) improving the accessibility of safeguarding tools and resources to practitioners;
 - (c) improve efficiency to partnership administration of training;
 - (d) present an effective public facing representation of the Partnership and its work.

Humanitarian Support

- 45 As a result of recent significant developments in the migration and asylum landscape globally and nationally, the county is now engaged in six different programmes delivering refugee, migration and asylum support, some developed at speed in response to a global emergency. A separate report has been provided to Cabinet on the County's response to these issues.

Vision 2035: More and better jobs

46 In December 2021, Cabinet agreed to the process for developing a new Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES). The Big Econ-versation was undertaken between 31 January and 22 April 2022 with over 86 events held and attended by over 1500 people and a total of 1455 surveys were completed including 918 residents, 94 businesses and 443 young people.



47 Using information from the Economic Review, the Economic Statement and the Big Econ-versation an IES has been drafted. The draft was circulated in June to key partners and members of the public who had expressed an interest in continuing their involvement in the consultation process. A further draft went out for public and partner comments during September 2022. The IES will be a key document to support the County's economic growth in the future.

48 At the heart of the strategy is an ambition for 'more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy'. To achieve this the IES sets a framework for an inclusive economy, focusing on People, Productivity, Places, Promotion and Planet. The IES will be presented to an upcoming Cabinet meeting.

49 In addition to the IES, during the summer, bids were submitted for £98.94 million from Round 2 of the Government's Levelling Up fund towards five Levelling Up schemes with a total expenditure of £131.17 million. This follows a successful bid which saw the Bishop Auckland Parliamentary Constituency awarded £20 million from Round 1 of the same fund in 2021. County Durham has been identified as one of the areas of greatest need of levelling up in the UK and has been classified as a Tier 1 area by Central Government. Round 2 announcements for successful bids are anticipated as part of the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022.

50 The money will be used to promote regeneration and economic growth in the County, providing support and intervention to build a better economy and allow residents to benefit from new and better jobs.

51 However, there are a number of critical factors influencing financial insecurity that have been magnified in recent times: including the continued impact of the coronavirus pandemic; rising living costs caused by inflationary pressures, in particular in relation to food, fuel,

energy and utility costs; and the economic uncertainty arising from the conflict in Ukraine which is compounding the squeeze on household budgets.

- 52 For those individuals that are affected by this, **AAPs** recognised that in a lot of circumstances this would require re-training, learning new skills and developing new career paths to support people into the jobs market.
- 53 Grants from **East Durham Rural Corridor, 4Together, Bishop Auckland and Shildon (BASH), GAMP and Spennymoor AAPs** (which were match funded by Livin) set up a discretionary fund to be delivered through their Livin Futures Employability team, with grants payable to applicants who can demonstrate that there are jobs available upon completion of the training or that the skills and support gained will enable applications to be made into the essential skills sector. Examples of areas that the grant supports are:
- (a) training courses and qualifications;
 - (b) clothes for interview;
 - (c) travelling expenses to interviews;
 - (d) protective clothing (PPE);
 - (e) tools for the job;
 - (f) DBS checks.
- 54 The maximum grant given was £400 per person with the intended outcomes to support tenants back into employment, enable them to access the necessary support needed to secure employment to offer them access to further support through internal and external partner services, including financial wellbeing, links to mental health, social isolation and domestic abuse.
- 55 Monitoring information highlights that 77 applicants have been supported across the five AAP areas. Of the clients from the **East Durham Rural Corridor AAP**:
- (a) 13 went into employment (72% against clients supported);
 - (b) 1 into self-employment;
 - (c) 1 into further education;
 - (d) 2 still working with Livin Futures;

(e) 1 disengaged.

- 56 There were various items funded including data protection fees and business insurance for a person going self-employed, bus passes and lunch for AMAZON course, work boots, jacket, driving lessons and theory, recognised qualifications in health and safety, safety equipment, laptop and interview clothes, bike, tools and uniform costs.
- 57 **BASH AAP** has supported the Employability, Upskilling & Discretionary Project through Bishop Auckland College which has been hugely successful. It aimed at engaging with clients who were most distanced from the labour market and who experienced significant barriers to accessing work, training and/or volunteering.
- 58 Through the Employability Fund, established by the project, the specialist training provided has been linked to employment opportunities, and in many instances, training had been to address legislation requirements for specific sectors, for example Health and Safety and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme training and licences, that had to be secured by the clients before being considered for employment. The range of courses was diverse, and training included: HGV, Forklift Truck, Health and Safety and First Aid, and the Discretionary Fund also supported with travel costs, uniform and beauty pack, removing the barriers for accessing training.
- 59 The project supported 23 people into employment, with many of the clients who have accessed training and secured employment having low self-esteem, and in many instances, lack academic potential. Accessing training that meets their ability/needs, has had a positive impact not only in improving their employability prospects but having a positive impact on their self-esteem.
- 60 In addition, learning/training undertaken has the potential to energise the individual, their family and their community, enabling and empowering them to change their lives, leading to greater wealth, social and economic well-being and a healthier lifestyle.

Case Study

KP, secured funding towards the cost of undertaking HGV Class 1 training. He was already employed but wanted a career change, that would allow him to be more financially stable. He has successfully completed the training and has gained new employment with a Haulage Firm in Redcar.

Feedback from KP: "The funding towards this course has given me a huge advantage, that without, I would have been unable to complete. Alongside the job opportunities that I would have gone without. I am very grateful for the opportunity to take this course and develop my skills further, which has widened my skill set and given me the opportunity to develop my career into something I wanted to do. The funding has opened doors for me, which would otherwise been closed to me.

- 61 **Derwent Valley AAP** has funded Derwentside Trust to allow it to support people to become job ready. The employment readiness programme will enhance and build on individuals' confidence, interpersonal skills and team working skills, improve their ability to research and apply for work, help to develop their CVs and provide them with recognised qualifications that will support their personal development and enhance their opportunities for employment.
- 62 The programme is available for people of all ages who are unemployed and offers support, advice and guidance on careers that they wish to develop.
- 63 The Ladder Centre has secured **4 Together AAP** funding to expand and enhance their employability and benefit support project. The project aims to support residents across the AAP area to maximise their income during these challenging financial times. This may include supporting individuals to navigate the benefits system or offering support with securing training or employment. A large focus of the project is to increase the amount of accessible support available in the 4 Together Partnership area, by creating weekly drop-in sessions at community facilities and implementing outreach work and home visits. The project began in April 2022 and has



The Ladder Centre in Ferryhill

already supported over 150 individuals in 4 Together Partnership area. The demand for this project is expected to amplify due to increases in the cost of living.

- 64 **Weardale AAP** residents are particularly susceptible to the cost of living impacting on their lives due to the lack of shopping outlets and a majority of the heating systems being oil, which has seen a large price jump during recent months. The rural advice worker continues to support residents by identifying unclaimed benefits but has seen a marked increase in the debt case work. Most of the clients are in the 55+ age group and 80% have disclosed a disability related to a health issue. During the summer the advice worker received 31 new clients and plans with the AAP Board are in place to manage a further increase in caseload during the winter.
- 65 At the request of an informal cross-party elected members faith reference group, the Partnerships Team have re-launched the Breakfast Seminars which bring together elected members, officers, partners, and individuals from **faith and community groups** in roundtable conversations on challenging and timely topics. The first seminar explored how, following the pandemic, we can 'build back fairer' by working to create a more inclusive economy and better-connected communities in County Durham. Further seminars have explored responses to poverty and the challenges of facilitating change, and the housing crisis. The seminars provide a 'reflective breathing space' for open discussion which is welcomed by all who participate.
- 66 The **Economic Partnership** is now supporting the development and delivery of the Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). In order that the investment plan for Durham is developed through broad engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders, working closely with local partners, as required by the guidance, a specially enhanced **County Durham Economic Partnership+ (CDEP+)** has been created, which incorporates a wider membership than just the Economic Partnership, including local MP's, Parish Councils, other thematic partnership board chairs and the Police and Crime Commissioner, and reports findings to the Economic Partnership.
- 67 The **CDEP+** has been meeting regularly to support the work needed to gather local evidence of opportunities and challenges through the lens of the three investment priorities for UKSPF:
- (a) supporting local businesses;
 - (b) communities and place;
 - (c) people and skills.

68 Four task and finish groups, focussed on communities, business, innovation, and skills, were chaired by various members of CDEP+, and have been carrying out initial work on developing the local context, identifying past activity that has been effective, and collating information to form part of an evidence base and this has been presented to the **Economic Partnership**.

69 The guiding principles for the plan were:

- (a) ensuring flexibility;
- (b) maximising synergies;
- (c) addressing funding gaps;
- (d) de-risking annualised funding;
- (e) Net Zero.

With proposed activities divided into three areas as follows:

70 **Proposed Activities: Supporting Local Business:**

- (a) activities that increase productivity;
- (b) providing a broad business support offer;
- (c) strengthening the local business ecosystems.

71 **Proposed Activities: Communities and Place:**

- (a) improvements to town centres and high streets and stimulating vitality;
- (b) improvements to community and neighbourhood infrastructure - including community resilience, address digital exclusion, and green infrastructure;
- (c) promotion of the County - building on the County of Culture programme.

72 **Proposed Activities: People and Skills:**

- (a) providing a broad employment support offer;
- (b) supporting inclusivity through tailored support - particularly for young people and adults from vulnerable groups;
- (c) address barriers to work for those disengaged from the labour market.

73 This work dovetails to the Inclusive Economic Strategy.

People live long and independent lives

74 From 1 July the Integrated Care Board (ICB) came into operation and CCGs were dissolved. Dave Gallagher, Executive Director of Place Based Delivery (Tees Valley & Central), North East & North Cumbria ICB, is the new representative on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

75 Cllr Hood, Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services, became the new chair of the **Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB)** at the HWB meeting on 28 September and Michael Laing, Director of Integrated Community Services, County Durham Care Partnership, is the Vice Chair of the Board.

76 The **Health and Wellbeing Board** agreed the HWB Annual Report 2021-22 which outlines the work carried out which has been led and supported by the HWB during 2021-22 which has impacted positively on the strategic priorities detailed in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25 (JHWS).

77 The Covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected the health and wellbeing of our population and increased health inequalities. The partnership response during these challenging times was particularly strong and there are positive lessons, practices, and collaborative experiences to build on, enabling the HWB to confidently address some of the future challenges we face over the forthcoming year and beyond.

78 **Teesdale AAP** has supported the Phoenix Day Care to enable the organisation to rebuild strong foundations and maintain a good level of service. Phoenix was established in 2015, after the closure of day care services for adults in Barnard Castle and provides a bespoke adult day care service that is open for people aged 18 plus who have a learning disability, physical or sensory impairment, have mental health issues or the elderly and for people that are at risk of social isolation.



79 The service has enabled people to maintain long-term friendships and reduce the impact of social isolation and support families and carers. The 12 current service users and their families will benefit but they aim to offer additional places and raise their profile through marketing initiatives, networking and developing links to other referral organisations. They will also offer voluntary opportunities and work placements to adult care students.

80 **Mid Durham AAP** funded Silver Talk, a Karbon Homes project to assist in providing a telephone befriending service to older people who live alone and



may be impacted by social isolation and the associated issues. The funding helped towards the Silver Talk Coordinators post and also the recruitment of local volunteers. The funds also helped provide improved telephonic equipment. This was joint venture with **Derwent Valley and Stanley AAPs**.

81 The service continues to grow and very much came into its own at the height of the pandemic when AAP staff and other 'Community Hub' staff at the time referred many people who came forward presenting issues of isolation. The service is quite simple in that it connects a caller/friend/volunteer with a person registered for the service and they call to just have conversation over 30 minutes or so making the person feel valued and ensuring they have someone to talk to when they may have no one else. Referrals to other services are made where needs are identified.

82 Karbon Homes has subsequently sustained the coordinator role by making this a permanent provision within the organisation.

83 **East Durham AAP** has enabled a Community Resilience subgroup to be set up which looks at supporting those in financial hardship to look at the holistic picture in terms of escalation into personal or emotional needs that impact on overall wellbeing. This includes the involvement of a number of organisations such as MIND, Calm and East Durham Veterans Trust.

84 The Children, Young People and Families Partnership agreed the Growing up in County Durham (GUICD) Strategy, our strategy for children and young people. 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.

85 A strategy development group was established to oversee the development work, including the coproduction process and ensure a wide cohort of partners, VCS representatives, children, young people, families and carers were involved in its development. This ensured it reflected what we were told is important to those who use and need community support and services as well as the wider population, focusing on strengths, rather than deficits.

- 86 **Durham AAP** has supported Belmont Community Centre to directly deliver more services that benefit the local community. The centre has established two weekly sessions, one is a traditional carer and toddler group, and the other session offers sensory play that benefits young children with special educational needs. The sessions are also helping to bring carers together in a social setting which is improving their overall wellbeing.
- 87 'Faith and Wellbeing' events which brings together local **churches and faith groups** within an AAP have been held in all AAPs, with the final event in Weardale AAP taking place in the Autumn.
- 88 The thirteenth 'Faith and Wellbeing' event was held in **Chester-Le-Street AAP**. Working in partnership with North East Churches Acting Together (NECAT) these workshops consider the huge amount of work, often unseen, which is going on to contribute to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities and to see how we can work better together. A particular focus of the Chester-le-Street event was to invite the local social prescribing link workers so that they could be more aware of the types of activities which go on in local churches and church halls to which isolated or vulnerable people could be referred so that they are better able to have long and independent lives.

Connected communities

- 89 Anti-social behaviour is a key priority for the **Safe Durham Partnership**. An Anti-social Behaviour Strategy is currently in development, which sets out its vision of "improving lives through tackling anti-social behaviour" and guiding principles on how we will work together to identify those issues that have the most impact on residents and visitors within County Durham.
- 90 Consultation has taken place with a wide range of stakeholders, including AAPs, Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Better Together Forum and the Youth Council from September to November and the Strategy will be agreed at the **Safe Durham Partnership** in early 2023.
- 91 After a break in delivery due to the coronavirus pandemic, Year 9 pupils at Woodham Academy and Greenfield Secondary School welcomed back the team of volunteers from Prison! Me! No-Way! for the delivery of their Crime and Safety Awareness Days, funded by **Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership (GAMP)**.
- 92 Originally set up by prison officers, Prison! Me! No-Way! (PMNW) is a national charity which aims to raise awareness of the causes and consequences of becoming involved in antisocial or criminal behaviour.

- 93 The Crime and Safety Awareness Days are delivered by qualified and experienced professionals through a number of hard-hitting, factual and engaging presentations, workshops, dramas and role-playing activities, which encourage pupils to make positive decisions and to stay safe. Workshops included:
- (a) **Prison Life** – delivered by long-serving prison officers, this session covers the realities of prison life and the general impact of the loss of freedom of choice. Pupils were given the chance to visit a life size replica and fully furnished prison cell to get a real feel for an inmate’s living conditions;
 - (b) **Street Scene** – through a role-playing activity on ‘Confrontation Street’ pupils looked specifically at the impacts of antisocial behaviour;
 - (c) **Choices and Consequences** – pupils met with serving and ex-prisoners (now employed by PMNW) explaining to the pupils how and why they ended up in custody. Pupils heard a first-hand account of being locked in a prison cell, the lack of freedom and the impact a prison sentence can have on family and friends.
- 94 During the sessions pupils are taken from their normal daily school routine and treated like offenders to ensure maximum realism. The project engaged with over 300 pupils across both schools.
- 95 Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. PREVENT is about working together to safeguard and support people who might be vulnerable to radicalisation. Prevent is one of the four elements of CONTEST, the Government’s counter-terrorism strategy and aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
- 96 A Home Office Benchmarking/performance review of Prevent, which was recently carried out, has commended Durham as an area of good practice which has scored highly in this process despite being an unfunded area.
- 97 The **Safe Durham Partnership** (partners include County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and Durham Constabulary) initially led a campaign to raise awareness of cold water shock, in partnership with Fiona Gosling, who lost her son Cameron to Cold Water Shock in 2015.

98 An Open Water Safety Task Group set up by **Chester le Street Area Action Partnership**, was set up in response to ongoing concerns around water safety at Riverside Park following an incident last year where a young child needed to be rescued from the river.



Members of the Open Water Safety Task Group in Chester-le-Street

99 As part of the work the group have arranged for staff and volunteers who work in the park to receive Throw Rope training from the Fire Service. The group have also designed and added a meeting point sign for park users for if children get separated and with emergency numbers if needed.

100 A series of Open Water Safety Assemblies took place in Chester-le-Street during the summer targeting the schools closest to Riverside Park in order to educate children and young people of the dangers of swimming in the river.

101 The task group has worked with Fiona Gosling, Police and Fire colleagues and local community partners.

102 The annual County Durham Environment Awards 2022, organised by the **Environment and Climate Change Partnership**, recognise the outstanding conservation and voluntary work that has taken place across the County.

103 Now in its 33rd year, the event celebrates the county's community groups, individuals, businesses and other organisations that go the extra mile to improve their local environment in a sustainable way.

104 Having been moved online due to social distancing guidelines and the coronavirus pandemic, this year the awards will return for an in-person ceremony in early 2023. Winners at the 2022 awards included:

105 **‘Waste Management’ category winner** - Recyke y'Bike, a recycling charity that refurbishes donated bikes. These bikes are then sold to the public at a reasonable cost as a way of encouraging cycling across Durham, this helps provide exercise for local residents, reduces the number of bikes being sent to landfill, as well as helping to fund other community-based activities related to cycling in the county.



Children enjoying their recycled bikes

106 **“Volunteer Group” category winner** - The Friends of Riverside Park at Chester-le-Street. This group has worked on a number of projects through the park to promote and protect the wonderful spaces on their doorstep, such as creating the Sands Memorial Garden, a maze and sculptures. They worked on creating a memory garden, full of sustainable and sensory planting, which is maintained by the group. They also raised funds for numerous benches around the park.



Friends of Riverside Park

107 Members of the **Environment and Climate Change Partnership’s** Climate Emergency workstream have been building on the momentum of last November’s County Durham COP event. They ran four ‘Together Towards Net Zero’ events during the early Summer, with the aim of developing a programme of mutual support where partners that are leading the way on one aspect of carbon reduction, offer help and technical assistance to others who wish to take similar action, to create a Hub of expertise. The events, which were held in partnership with Business Durham, included workshops, talks, and ended with a net zero business showcase. Feedback has been excellent, and partners are looking at next steps.



EV charging point in County Durham

- 108 A project supported by the Climate Emergency workstream have had their work recognised. The Scaling on Street Charging Infrastructure (SOSCI) project, which has so far seen 153 EV Charging Points installed across the county, won the national award for 'Best Electric Vehicle Charging Project' at the MJ Achievement Awards 2022, which were held at the Park Plaza Hotel in Westminster, London on 24 June.
- 109 **3 Towns AAP** supported Jack Drum Arts to deliver BOP (Building our Planet) Fest, a family friendly 'green' festival produced in collaboration with local young people. The festival took place on 14 August and provided a day of free summertime activities including live music, entertainment, drop-in workshops, local stalls and food traders at Glenholme Park in Crook for local residents of all ages to enjoy.
- 110 The festival programme included:
- (a) Mossy Rock Main Stage - live music from professional bands;
 - (b) Little Mossy Rock - performances from local groups / bands;
 - (c) Green Feet - street theatre entertainment;
 - (d) Climart Activities - eco themed drop-in workshops including junk instrument making, eco graffiti, upcycling and seed planting etc;
 - (e) Green Minds - chill-out sensory space for families / neuro divergent young people;
 - (f) Green Prints - climate change information / festival merchandise stall;
 - (g) Green Tea - spoken word / speakers corner;
 - (h) Fayre Trade - carnival stalls;
 - (i) Save the Plan-eat - local eco-friendly catering stalls.
- 111 This project has been developed in consultation with local young people from the 3 Towns area who have been supported by the Jack Drum team and festival mentors from Harambee Pasadia Festival to plan, programme and deliver the festival.

112 'Bop Fest' was a sustainable festival that celebrates the environment, inspiring action behind the scenes and in the encounters members of the community have with activities. Using the hierarchy of environmental action: Avoid, Reduce, Reuse, Replace, consideration was given to use of materials, travel, energy use and food waste.



Bop Fest Young Leaders

- 113 Long-term plans are for 'BOP Fest' to be an annual event co-produced with local young people giving them opportunities to be involved in organising events for the community in which they live.
- 114 Stanley Town Council has received funding support from **Stanley AAP** to strengthen its partnership with Durham County Council to further improve the local environment by entering the Northumbria in Bloom National Competition and carry out environmental improvements in Stanley. In Bloom is not just about flowers, it includes the Local Environment, Children & Education, Community Safety, Tourism & Heritage, Health & Wellbeing, supporting Local Groups & Communities, working with Partners and Agencies, and Regeneration & Economic Development. In 2021, Stanley was awarded Silver Gilt for its Stanley in Bloom entry and efforts. The engagement of local residents has been key to the vast improvement to local communities and the local environment as part of the Northumbria in Bloom entry workstreams.
- 115 An event to showcase and celebrate the work of the VCS across County Durham was organised by the **Better Together VCS Forum**. The event provided a networking opportunity to share and celebrate good practice in the sector and raise awareness of where organisations work and what they offer.

Conclusion

116 As we work through recovery from the restrictions of the pandemic, communities across the County are still facing what could be a protracted period of hardships, both for their beneficiaries and for the organisations, their staff, and their volunteers. Debt, poverty, poor mental health, and the cost-of-living crisis are undermining the capacity in all sectors to be as effective as they want to be in enabling social and economic growth and wellbeing. However, we do have very strong partnerships in the County. Relationships and resilience within the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector, have been tested, and are largely healthy and strong. County Durham communities have been writing the manual on resilience for the last hundred years. There is much to be proud of.

Background papers

- None.

Other useful documents

- None.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

Area and neighbourhood budgets are utilised and delivered through the 14 AAPs and ensure the Council (and AAPs) receive improved information on the outputs achieved through use of locality budgets.

Consultation

The County Durham Partnership framework is a key community engagement and consultation function of the Council and its partners. The recommendations in the report are based on extensive consultation with AAP partners.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The actions set out in this report aim to ensure equality and diversity issues are embedded within the thematic partnerships and the working practice of AAPs.

Climate Change

This is recognised throughout partnership activities.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to form a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment and to reduce re-offending. In County Durham, the CSP is the Safe Durham Partnership.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.