
Appendix 3: Consultation – Stages 1, 2 and 3

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 strategic 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 with six VCS representatives from a range of organisations including NEPACS (supporting prisoners and their families), IiC and Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists (OASES) indicated that they wanted to be part of the SDG going forward and were invited to join the group.

NHS Providers were also given opportunities to engage. This was facilitated by the NHS Commissioners on the GUICD Development 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.
- County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board from July 2022)
- County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust

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 17 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 ‘breaking down the barriers’ 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 socialise 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 and Locate.

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 region's 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 community support and networks as a means of help and support and not just 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, the Families Information Service and Durham Locate.

Consultation - Stage 3

The draft strategy was consulted on with the general public and wider stakeholders, during stage 3 of the consultation process, which ran from 5 September until 12 October, via an online survey. The survey was promoted by stakeholders through the networks and channels established in stage 2 of the consultation.

The consultation asked:

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the new Children, Young People and families' Strategy?
- Do you have any comments as to why this is the case?
- Do you have any other comments about the strategy?

There were 29 responses to the survey, which were positive and supportive of the vision and themes. None of the respondents said they disagreed with the strategy. The following is a breakdown and a selection of comments highlighting the key responses to the questions asked which have been incorporated into the final GUiCD strategy.

Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the new Children, Young People and families' Strategy?	80	0	20

Comments included:

- I found the strategy document very clear and covered the main issues.
- Need to be more specific about what you intend to do and how it will be measured.
- Good to see children and families involved in the strategy's development.
- I am please about taking a look at public transport with young people in mind.
- Highlighted most of the issues that we come into contact with as an organisation working with children, young people, and the wider community.
- Good to have a strategy that is easy to read and understand for all.
- I feel if the focus areas can be tackled it will make a big difference to children and their families in County Durham.
- The strategy has been set out in an easy to follow way which is clear and easy to understand for all readers including children and young people. It's helpful that the strategy holds links to relevant information and policies.

Additional comments:

- Transport in rural areas is an issue.
- Agencies need to work together to deliver the improvements.
- Children and young people need more access to local opportunities and facilities e.g., leisure activities or part time jobs.
- Useful to see strategies/services that are already in place to support issues raised.
- Need to provide links to support for housing.

The final strategy includes six priority areas:

- Family, friends and community
- Being safe
- Breaking down the barriers
- Development, learning and skills
- Physical Health, Mental Health and Emotional wellbeing
- Access to community support and services

Feedback reflected that we need to learn to live with covid, and that 'Tackling the impacts of Covid-19' did not need to be included as a separate priority. Any relevant issues have been incorporated into the other priority areas.

The comments from the consultation were analysed and used to update the content of the final strategy.