

Best Start in Life Update

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

13th November 2023



Purpose

To provide Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny with an update of the progress made in addressing the Best Start In Life (BSIL) priorities



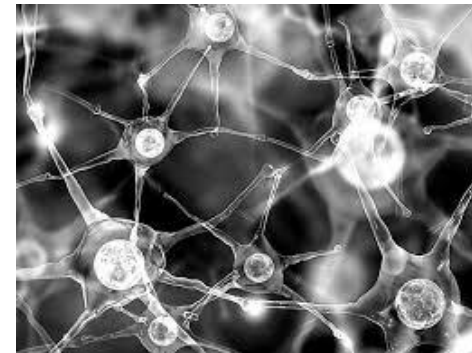
Context

- The importance of the first 1001 critical days and ensuring every child has the best start in life is a key national priority and has been a local priority for County Durham since the Marmot review in 2010.
- Getting a good start in life and throughout childhood, building resilience and getting maximum benefit from education are important markers for good health and wellbeing throughout life.
- The priorities for the County Durham BSIL group and the development work of the family hubs are cross cutting with clear reporting into the BSIL group and Start for Life partnership board.



1001 Critical Days

- Brain development tells us that the construction of the brain begins before birth and that more than a million new neural connections are formed every second in the first year of a baby's life.
- This is the peak period of brain development. The 1,001 critical days set the foundations for an individual's cognitive, emotional, and physical development.
- During the first two years of life the brain displays a remarkable capacity to absorb information and adapt to its surroundings.
- Positive early experience is therefore vital to ensure children are ready to learn, ready for school and have good life chances.



Priorities

1. Improving speech language and communication (SLC).
2. Reducing unintentional Injuries (UII).
3. Improve perinatal & infant mental health (PNIMH).
4. Increasing breastfeeding rates (BF).
5. Reduce tobacco dependency in pregnancy (TDiP).
6. Supporting vulnerable families.
7. Improve healthy weight.

Speech language and communication (SLC)

- Provision of evidence-based assessment, early intervention and therapies and the development of integrated pathways.
- An additional SLC Screening health visitor contact at 14-18 months delivered by the health visiting team.
- HV teams have been trained in Early Language and Identification Measure (ELIM) at the 2.5-year review to identify toddlers with early language needs and timely referral for specialist support.
- Bookstart resources available for families in all 15 Family Hub libraries.



Unintentional Injuries (UII)

- The most recent UII data for 0-4yrs identifies that County Durham remains higher than the England average. We do not currently have trend data due to technical change (this is the move to the 2021 population denominator).
- Ongoing multiagency training on the reduction of unintentional injuries continues to be delivered to frontline staff working with children.
- There are additional plans to embed UII training into current integrated pathways.

Perinatal & infant mental health (PNIMH)

The physical and mental health of the mother, and the family environment during pregnancy, infancy and childhood is of fundamental importance to mental health along with a parent's ability to bond with and care for their baby.

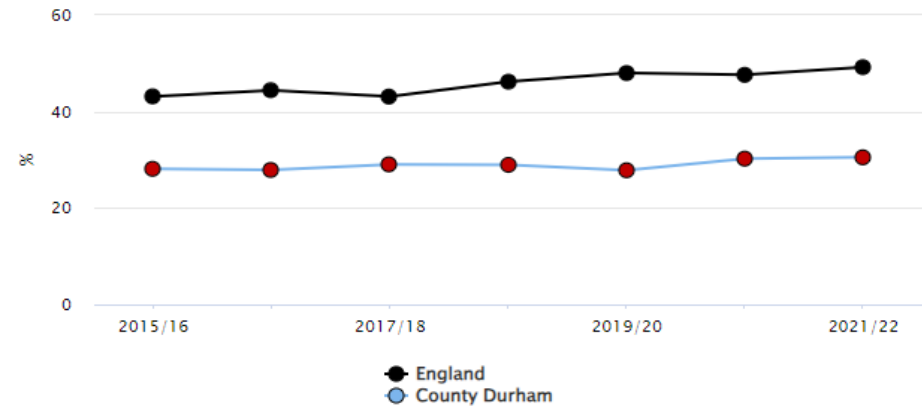
Service developments include:

- Low-moderate PNIMH support was commissioned to fill identified gaps.
- A PNIMH support leaflet support has been co-produced with Parent Carer Panel
- Professionals/clinicians regularly updated via regular communications.
- A Family Hubs newsletter is being developed.
- PNIMH training is being systematically rolled out to all Family Hubs workforce.
- Perinatal Mental Health and parent-child relationships is one of the Family hub / Start for life programme priorities with an to develop a multidisciplinary perinatal mental health and parent–infant relationship strategy
- The draft strategy will go out to public consultation in early 2024 for six weeks. This consultation will be supported by a robust communication and engagement plan to ensure we hear the voice of our communities and other key stakeholders.

Breastfeeding (BF)

- Breastfeeding is a major contributor to public health. It has an important role in the prevention of illness and reducing health inequalities.
- County Durham Breastfeeding rates have remained almost unchanged over recent years. 2021/22 figures England 49.2% compared to County Durham 30.5%.
- Local insight work has been undertaken to better understand barriers to breastfeeding initiation and continuation.
- HDFT are working with local businesses to expand the breastfeeding friendly business accreditation scheme.
- Face to face breastfeeding support groups are in place with targeted support where rates continue to be low.

Breastfeeding Prevalence at 6-8 weeks after Birth



Data source – OHID Public Health data – fingertips



Tobacco dependency in pregnancy (TDiP)

- Smoking during pregnancy is a significant health risk to both mother and unborn child.
- It can cause a range of serious health problems, including lower birth weight, pre-term birth, placental complications, and perinatal mortality.
- TDiP is an addiction, not a lifestyle choice.
- Rates of smoking at time of delivery are slowly improving, there is still a lot of work to do.
- A specialist Midwifery Matron for Health Inequalities has been recruited within CDDFT.
- The 0-25 FHS has been involved in the development of the Northeast England TDiP and Postnatal Pathway, which is now being rolled out across the region.
- The TDiP Steering Group continues to work in partnership to drive towards the regional goal of reducing smoking at time of delivery to 5% or less by 2025.
- TDiP Call to Action - Support awareness-raising about the significant impact of smoking on infant mortality and highlight it as a modifiable risk factor.
- New and emerging work relating to 'Stopping the Start' – government plan to create a smoke free generation

Supporting vulnerable families

- Additional support is provided to vulnerable families through a variety of multi-agency pathways including The Enhanced Parent Support Pathway (EPSP).
- The EPSP provides additional seamless support from HDFT and DCC early help services during the antenatal period until the child is 2 ½ years old.
- The programme was recently extended to also include families up to 10 weeks post-natal to ensure we include those families with perinatal mental health concerns.
- Additional funding from the household support fund has been secured to provide safe sleeping and home safety equipment to vulnerable families. This funding can be applied for by any professional and is being managed by children's early help services.

Improve Healthy Weight

- Health Education and Nutrition in the Really Young (HENRY) is an evidenced based intervention, using face to face sessions, for families with young children to support healthy eating and healthy weight.
- Production of the maternal healthy weight resource 'Nourishing baby and parent in pregnancy' will upstream a healthy weight focus on both the child and parent. This has been produced in collaboration between NENC, Public Health, Best Start In Life steering groups and HDFT colleagues.
- Focused work is taking place to promote the uptake of healthy start vouchers. County Durham currently has one of the highest uptake rates with 80% of eligible families claiming, although approximately 1400 eligible families are not claiming.
- Public Health, HDFT and the family hubs are working together to increase uptake of healthy start vitamins through the 15 family hubs and aligning healthy nutrition messages.



Recommendations

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Promote the opportunities to work collaboratively and further explore opportunities to meet the needs of children and young people as early as possible.