

**11 July 2024**

**Annual Update of the Starting Well  
Partnership**



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**Report of John Pearce, Chair of the Starting Well Partnership, and  
Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of the report is to update the County Durham Care Partnership Executive on the work of the Starting Well Partnership (SWP) during 2023/24.
- 2 This report will give a brief update on any outstanding work from the last report (2022/23) as well as work undertaken in 2023/24.

**Executive summary**

- 3 As well as the considerable work carried out in the sub-groups of the SWP such as the delivery of the 15 Family Hubs, the Partnership has looked in detail at a number of areas such as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Children's Mental Health.
- 4 A forward plan for 24/25 will be finalised in July.

**Recommendation**

- 5 The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

Note the content of the report.

## **Background**

- 6 The governance structure of the SWP remains unchanged (see appendix 2) and the four sub-groups remain.
  - a) Best Start in Life (Chair, Dr Rushi Mudalagiri)
  - b) Prevention and Early Help (Chair, Martyn Stenton)
  - c) Supporting young people into adulthood (Chair, Jen Illingworth)
  - d) Service Transformation (Chair, Kathleen Berry)
- 7 The sub-groups report to the Operational Management Group of the SWP in order to support the SWP to discuss pressure areas across the system strategically.

## **Best Start in Life**

- 8 Early in 2023/24, the chair of the Best Start in Life sub-group was taken by Dr Rushi Mudalagiri as the ICB Clinical Lead for Children and Young people.
- 9 The group identified in June that there had been an increase in the Unintentional Injuries activity data reported by County Durham and Darlington NHSFT. The group requested that this be presented to and discussed by the Starting Well Partnership, which happened in November 2023 and January 2024.
- 10 The group initiated and delivered a strategy for Perinatal Mental Health to support the Family Hubs work.

## **Prevention and Early Help**

- 11 The main focus of the Prevention and Early Help sub-group has been the successful delivery of the network of 15 Family Hubs across County Durham.
- 12 The group continues to monitor, evaluate and change (where necessary) the services provided out of Family Hubs to ensure communities' needs are being met.

## **Supporting young people into adulthood**

- 13 This group paused when the previous chair moved on. The group has now been restarted with Jen Illingworth, Director of Children's Transformation as Chair.
- 14 The group has revised its Terms of Reference and developed a workplan to support young people with complex needs who are known to more than one service to have a smooth transition into adulthood.

## **Service Transformation**

- 15 The Service Transformation sub-group has been working to deliver a number of transformational changes including:
- a) The project to update and co-ordinate the purchasing of equipment, Auxiliary Aids and Adaptations by schools is scheduled to complete by 31 March 2024. This will see the purchasing of this equipment for school use much more closely linked to the community equipment service and introduces a scheme for re-use of equipment.
  - b) Investing in Children (liC) support our children and young people to have a voice in the work that we do. We have extended the funding to the organisation to enable us to carry out an integrated service review of all liC commissions across Social Care, Public Health and NENC ICB.
  - c) Valuing Neurodiversity in County Durham is a 3 – 5 year programme of work to move the whole system from a diagnostic focussed approach to supporting neurodiversity to a needs led approach. The work is co-produced with MCT Durham and liC.
  - d) SEND Inspection preparation has been a focus for this group since Q2. The restructure of NENC ICB, known as ICB 2.0 poses a significant risk to the outcome of a potential SEND inspection, should that inspection be called in April 2024 as expected. Officers have been working to mitigate this risk as much as possible.

## **Growing Up in County Durham strategy**

- 16 The SWP is also responsible for the delivery of the Growing Up in County Durham (GUICD) strategy which was co-produced with our children and young people during 2022/23.
- 17 The Partnership received a year-end report in May 2024 which is included at Appendix 3.

## **Partnership Meetings**

- 18 During 2023/24, the Partnership discussed the following topic areas:
- (a) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
  - (b) The SWP received the annual update from the SEND Strategic Partnership. A presentation was also given relating to the Valuing Neurodiversity in County Durham Project. The SWP decided they

would like to receive the SEND update annually. More frequently is not required as the work has its own governance structure.

(c) Mental Health and Crisis

The SWP received a number of presentations including the improvement work being undertaken in TEWVNHSFT to reduce waiting times, the system-wide work undertaken for children and young people at risk of being admitted to a Tier 4 mental health bed, alternatives to crisis, street triage and S136MHA 1983 and the impact of mental health on school attendance. As a result, the police have been linked with the Autism Partnership Strategy Group.

(d) Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The UASC team presented on their work and the challenges they face. Partners were asked whether a mental health, as well as a physical health, assessment could be included in the Initial Health Assessments these children and young people receive when they first come into the care of the local authority.

(e) Durham Place most pressing issues

For this item, Partners were asked to prepare a presentation for the SWP sharing their most pressing issues which may be resolved through actions possible in the SWP. A summary of these issues is provided in the PowerPoint slides accompanying this report. These slides were shared, as requested, with the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(f) Preparing for adulthood

This was an opportunity for the re-vitalised sub-group to share their Terms of Reference and areas of focus with the SWP for consideration and comment.

(g) Creating a Partnership Data Set

Colleagues from across the system were invited to the SWP to discuss the data requirements of the Partnership so that that they could consider the best way for those to be delivered.

(h) Primary Care Liaise scheme

Primary Care colleagues attended to request suggestions for the Primary Care Liaise scheme. This scheme is the GP practice quality improvement incentive scheme and Partners expressed enthusiasm to have children's items on the scheme. Current

negotiations are centred around the development of SEND Champions in GP practices.

19 A number of ad-hoc updates were also received on the following topics:

(a) Family Assessment Centres

NEC ICB colleagues highlighted to the SWP that a privately run Family Assessment Centre has been opened up in County Durham with a second (run by a different provider) planned. Partners raised concerns about the links made with NHS providers such as the Health Visiting service and local GP practices.

(b) Unintentional injuries data

The SWP was made aware that County Durham's unintentional injuries data suggests that we are an outlier in this area. However, this relates to coding in CDDFT, rather than our activity being significantly more than neighbouring Trusts. There was agreement that the data would be discussed with CDDFT representatives and consideration given to a possible future agenda item to include input from CDDFT.

(c) Primary Care Networks and Integrated Neighbourhood Teams

The SWP was asked to consider how much children's services would like to be involved in Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) which, thus far, have been mainly adult focussed. The suggestion was for some 'touch points' to be developed between INTs and children's services. It was agreed that Family Hubs would be a good starting point to link INTs and children's services.

## **Forward Planning**

20 The May 2024 meeting of the SWP considered areas for the agenda in 2024/25. These include:

(a) Dental access, health, and fluoridation

(b) Preparing for Adulthood

(c) Supporting and improving education attendance

(d) Ensuring provision of help, advice and support at the earliest opportunity.

21 Feedback suggested improvements could be made to the way we work together such as pooling of resources, being more solution focused collaborative working.

- 22 The SWP meeting scheduled for July 2024 will finalise the schedule of work and identify which topics will be discussed at which meetings. A reflection and planning session will again be scheduled for March 2025.

## **Conclusion**

- 23 The SWP plays a key role in bringing Partners together for joint working. The structure of a Partnership meeting for deep dives into specific issues and a separate Operational Management Group ensures best use of time at the SWP and that issues of the highest relevance are discussed in appropriate detail.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None

### **Finance**

Any financial implications are considered in relation to the individual projects and transformation programmes.

### **Consultation**

Consultation and co-production is undertaken at an individual project level.

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

None

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Risk**

None

### **Procurement**

None