

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Jan Ryles - Executive Member for Public Health

DATE OF MEETING: 14 January 2026

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on areas of activity within my portfolio including performance against strategic priorities.

COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES

A healthy place:

- *Improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities*
- *Promote inclusivity for all*
- *Reduce poverty*

1. HIGHLIGHTS

Update:

Healthy Environments

- 1.1 MUST Rollout of Managing Undernutrition South Tees (MUST) across all Disability and Mental Health care homes in South Tees is now in the final stages, full implementation will be completed by end of March 2026.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme – October Half Term

- 1.2 During the October half-term HAF programme, 22 organisations were funded with £71,748.58 to deliver 42 programmes (ranging between 2–4 days, 2–4 hours per day) across key areas in Middlesbrough. Over 1,777 children and young people were engaged and attended the October half-term HAF programme, 1,596 of whom were in receipt of benefit-related free school meals. Over 2,606 places were attended; although this was less compared to Easter, Summer, and Christmas due to lower funding, the programme was delivered in key targeted areas within Middlesbrough. The quality of the provision was rated excellent by Young Inspectors.

Vulnerabilities:

- 1.3 The NE regional gambling programme, which is hosted by Public Health South Tees, has secured additional grant funding. This is via the new statutory levy, which translates gambling industry contributions into funding for prevention and reducing harms initiatives. It includes monies for quarter four of 25/26, which will enhance our understanding of the impact of gambling harms locally. It will be followed by a minimum of three further, annual rounds of funding, which will enable us to increase the capacity of the regional programme team and, consequently, the scope of the programme.

- 1.4 The prehabilitation service pilot commenced in November 2025, which is supporting people who were in poor accommodation and who are affected by substance use issues. It provides them with a flat and enhanced support in order to equip them with the support they need to succeed in their recovery journeys. This additional support will provide a greater number of people accessing our detoxification and residential rehabilitation pathways.
- 1.5 Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant funding has been confirmed for the next three financial years, from April 2026 onwards. This continues the enhanced level of substance use funding, which has supplemented our local system since 2020. It provides additional, dedicated capacity in our treatment and recovery services, enhanced specialist support and interventions, and has enabled us to develop a unique accommodation-based support pathway.

Best Start in Life

Middlesbrough 0-11 Healthy Child Programme Service

- 1.6 Public Health South Tees have developed a new model for delivering the Healthy Child Programme in Middlesbrough and are going through a commissioning cycle to implement it. Implementation will commence from Wednesday 1 April 2026 and will be executed in three phases.
- 1.7 As part of the first phase Harrogate and district Foundation NHS Trust (HDFT) have been successful in tendering for the 0-11 Healthy Child Programme Service and will deliver this from Wednesday 1st April 2026 onwards. We expect there to be little or no change to the universal service presently offered for children under 11 years. The new service will increase support available for children and families aged 11 and under.
- 1.8 Phase two. Between 1st April 2026 and 31st March 2027 transitional arrangements will be put in place to provide staffing resource to deliver health input into safeguarding for adolescents aged 11 and over. This resource will sustain essential information sharing into Middlesbrough's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MACH), input into ICPC and strategy and health needs assessment provision where essential for adolescents aged 11. This transitional arrangement will last for one year only with the primary aim to reduce risks to adolescents during transition to the new model.
- 1.9 Phase three will see the new health offer for children aged 11 and over commence on Thursday 1st April 2027 and this service will focus on prevention, delivered by a non-clinical staff mix. We have recruited a project manager to work during 2026 to develop a delivery model for the new service.
- 1.10 The change of delivery model is required as a significant proportion school nursing capacity is focussed downstream on risk reduction and safeguarding. The new delivery model will support with realigning the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme to focus on prevention, early identification and health promotion, supporting better health outcomes for young people Middlesbrough whilst also keeping them safe.

HealthStart

- 1.11 HealthStart aims to develop a whole school approach to health and wellbeing, to bring schools closer to public health services. It involves four key components: developing

school health profiles, auditing school health policies, supporting the delivery of PHSE curriculum and conducting pupil survey. Through these components we want identify the needs in each school and deliver a tailored public health service.

- 1.12 HealthStart was introduced to schools in September at the Child Health Protection Workshop and through the Health and Wellbeing Network meetings. In October, the first meeting was held with 6 pilot schools: Archway, Macmillan, Archibold, Outwood Normanby, Hummersea and Whale Hill. Established key contacts with the pilot schools and emphasised on next steps i.e. developing the school health profile. Mapped key indicators to be included in the health profile and identified data available within the council services. Scheduled the next meeting with pilot schools to agree upon data they can provide towards the health profile.
- 1.13 Established an internal Public Health Forum with 19 members from the Children and Young people's services in South Tees in September. Meetings are held every month, that provides a platform for all the services to share their latest developments, discuss challenges in their area of work and collate new ideas for service improvement.
- 1.14 Presented at the Make Attendance Everyone's Business event in December. HealthStart was well received by all schools that participated in the health and attendance focus group within the event. Received interests from more schools to be added to the pilot.
- 1.15 In the next phase of HealthStart in January, schools will be introduced to the self-audit tool that can aid in tracking and implementing school health policies.

Infant Feeding & Mamazing

- 1.16 Phase 2 of the Mamazing campaign is being developed. Collaborating with partners across the infant feeding system, a marketing and communications plan is in development. The campaign will go live between January and March 2026, with the aim of highlighting how to get breastfeeding off to a good start.
- 1.17 The Mamazing campaign was shortlisted in the recent Comms2Pointo public sector awards for Best Collaboration. Whilst the collaboration between Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland Council's did not win, we were highly commended for the campaign.
- 1.18 Work is underway to develop a new infant feeding strategy. The updated strategy will focus on key achievements, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to increase breastfeeding rates across South Tees over the next 5 years. This will result in an agreed action plan for the infant feeding system to deliver.

Oral Health

- 1.19 Procurement process for the fluoride varnish programme has been completed. The schools being targeted in Middlesbrough have full coverage with dental practices (17 schools in total). Currently working with legal on the contracts for dental practices. The Colgate toothbrushing resources have been distributed to the majority of Middlesbrough schools and early years settings. Further schools will receive their resources once the second delivery has been made in December 2025. We are jointly

commissioning an evaluation on the supervised toothbrushing programme with other NE authorities to optimise recruitment rates with schools.

Post-16 opportunities for education, employment and training

1.20 The Government published the Post-16 education and skills white paper in October 2025 outlining reforms to:

- Simplify and improve the skills offer - including bringing several vocational level-3 qualifications under the V-level umbrella alongside A-levels (academic) and T-levels (technical).
- Invest in priority areas -including V levels, for English and Maths qualifications and establishing 29 new Technical excellence colleges for key industries.
- Improve access to higher education and lifelong learning

Post-16 education, employment and training is 1 of 9 missions in the Health and Wellbeing strategy, as this complex issue is key to giving people the Best Start in Life and for improved outcomes across all system and council priorities. System leads in South Tees met in December to review progress on the strategy's recommendations and the white paper reforms. The scope of this work will be agreed in the next month, with governance including the Live Well Board and the Children's Trust in Middlesbrough. Public Health is a member of the Middlesbrough NEET partnership, which since August has brought providers and systems partners together.

III Health Prevention:

- 1.21 NHS Health Checks delivery has commenced by our new community provider, ELM GP Federation, with a schedule now established into March 2026. ELM are also collaborating with MFC (Football Foundation) to also use their bus in certain locations, to attract a variety of potential patients.
- 1.22 We continue to tackle CVD through other routes as well as the NHS Health Checks. We completed AF (atrial fibrillation) screening during Covid and Flu vaccine clinics held in October, in partnership with Middlesbrough GPs. The initiative is being fully evaluated at present, but initial figures and feedback show that a number of undiagnosed AF cases were found, proving potentially life saving support.
- 1.23 We are also continuing to provide community BP checks through our community champions and through the BP kiosks provision. The BP Kiosks monitoring data submitted to ICB has now ceased, but we will continue to offer the BP kiosks locally, gathering our own data to demonstrate effectiveness. Final figures showed that 342 BP checks were completed using the 2 GP kiosks available, with high blood pressure identified in 28% of the cases and low BP identified in 6% of cases. There was excellent take up of the checks in our deprived and ethnic communities.
- 1.24 The new Public Health South Tees website will be launched early in 2026, to better promote the public health campaigns each month and the work of the public health team across Middlesbrough to increase awareness and engagement.

Health Determinants Research Collaboration

- 1.25 We continue to support Middlesbrough Council staff to progress their own research ideas and to collaborate on research generated by our academic partners.
- 1.26 In our Culture Change workstream we have scheduled a joint session (sandpit) for late January 2026 between Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland Councils' Adult Social Care directorates. The aim is to identify research priorities of importance to the service and South Tees population and plan how to progress these.
- 1.27 On Tuesday 2nd December we celebrated our progress in embedding research into the local authorities at an event at Middlesbrough Football Club. The event was well attended and in addition to showcasing how we have supported research, it provided a great opportunity for local authority, academic, NHS and voluntary sector attendees to network and make connections. We plan to have a bigger event in November 2026.

Health Protection

- 1.28 On 1 December, Public Health South Tees worked with partners across Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland to mark **World AIDS Day**, reinforcing our commitment to HIV prevention and reducing health inequalities.
- 1.29 Local activities included free rapid HIV testing events, awareness campaigns, and community conversations, alongside Council staff training. These actions support our wider health protection priorities by promoting early diagnosis, reducing late presentations, and tackling stigma.
- 1.30 Although HIV treatment is highly effective and uptake remains strong in the North East, almost half of new diagnoses last year were late, and we've seen a notable rise in cases among women. Improving access to testing and PrEP remains a key focus for our programme.
- 1.31 The Government's new **HIV Action Plan for England 2025–2030**, launched on World AIDS Day, sets out the national ambition to end new HIV transmissions by 2030. We will align local work with this strategy to strengthen prevention, testing, and equitable access to services, developing a new Sexual Health Strategy in the new year which will set out the steps as to how we will do this in Middlesbrough.

Exercise Pegasus – Local Authority Engagement and Learning

- 1.32 Exercise Pegasus was the UK's largest pandemic response exercise in Autumn 2025, designed to test national and local preparedness for a novel infectious disease. Cleveland Local Resilience Forum (LRF) played an active role, with Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland councils (facilitated by Public Health) fully engaged across all three phases alongside other Tees Valley authorities, emergency services, NHS partners, and the voluntary sector.
- 1.33 Local authority leaders demonstrated strong commitment, attending Strategic and Tactical Coordinating Groups and contributing to scenario discussions on

education, social care, and community resilience. This engagement ensured that local perspectives on vulnerable populations, welfare, and service continuity were reflected in decision-making. The exercise also provided valuable exposure for senior leaders to multi-agency structures rarely convened outside real incidents.

1.34 Key Learning for Pandemic Plan Finalisation

- **Integration and Clarity:** The exercise highlighted the need for clearer frameworks outlining roles and responsibilities, particularly for councils in outbreak control and consequence management, something that we have recently just established in Middlesbrough with the Outbreak Management Plan.
- **Communication and Information Flow:** Delays and gaps in national guidance reinforced the importance of robust local communication strategies and contingency planning for PPE, funerals, and public messaging.
- **Community and Voluntary Sector Role:** Inclusion of voluntary organisations was a major strength and will inform future plans to embed community resilience in pandemic response.
- **Leadership and Representation:** Feedback suggests health agencies should chair SCGs during health-led incidents, with councils maintaining a strong role in consequence management.

These insights will directly shape the finalisation of our pandemic plan, ensuring it reflects lessons from Exercise Pegasus and strengthens Middlesbrough's ability to respond effectively to future health emergencies.

Immunisation Update

1.35 The Tees Valley Local Immunisation Steering Group has recently completed the engagement and co-production phase of the childhood immunisations project. In Middlesbrough, targeted workshops were held with the Arabic community and two Romanian communities to explore concerns and barriers around childhood vaccination. The team overcame significant difficulties in securing interpreters for these groups. The insights gathered from these workshops and similar workshops across the Tees Valley were presented on 3 December and are now being reviewed to inform the commissioning and delivery phase of the project. In parallel, work is continuing to implement universal resources aimed at improving understanding of the importance of childhood vaccinations.

1.36 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing:

- Work has commenced to extend the current Children and Young People's Emotional Well-being Board across South Tees.
- The HeadStart service targeted secondary attendance pilot has been introduced. Delivered in 2 settings the aim is to address attendance concerns at an early stage to prevent escalation to persistent or long-term absence.
- HeadStarters (young emotional well-being champions) attended a session with the mayor. During the session the CYP were involved in the designing of the 10 x 10 initiative and had a debate regarding the commercial determinants of health.
- Suicide prevention awareness in construction session delivered at K2 construction management at SeAH wind site on Teesport. Specific mental health difficulties faced by men in construction and contractors within the industry was shared.

- Suicide Prevention session delivered to nursing students at Teesside University on the importance of correct language, suicide as a public health priority and safety planning and risk management.
- A Christmas Support poster has been created to assist individuals experiencing mental health challenges during the festive season, as well as those supporting them. It has been widely shared with partners.

2. THE TIME AHEAD

Update:

2.1 Public Health South Tees will be leading forward the development of a new sexual health strategy.