

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE TO COUNCIL

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

DATE OF MEETING: 01 April 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:

1.1 Healthy Environments:

- 1.1.1 Happy Little Sunbeams Day nursery has achieved Eat Well Early Years Gold Award in March 2026. They are the first nursery in Middlesbrough to achieve this award, and a press release will follow shortly.
- 1.1.2 The Advertising policy is making good progress and is now in the final stages of the democratic process. This policy will help support healthier adverts in Council advertising space across the town.
- 1.1.3 The 3rd year of benchmarking for Good Food Local North East was submitted in February 2026. We are now awaiting the recommendations report and a regional celebration event will be held in June 2026 hosted by ADPH and Sustain.
- 1.1.4 Middlesbrough's Local Plan is undergoing examination. The Creating Active and Healthy Places Lead submitted a Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQ) Statement relating to the emerging Health and Well-being Policy (February 2026) and subsequently gave evidence at the public hearing (March 2026).
- 1.1.5 Breastfeeding Boroughs commitments continue to be developed and implemented. Engagement has started with a secondary school in Middlesbrough to add breastfeeding to the PHSE curriculum, ensuring breastfeeding education is embedded. Further work is in development to support early years settings to embed breastfeeding education also.

1.1.6 The February HAF Programme offered 4065 places – 65% of these places were filled. We had 36 providers offering provision. 15% of eligible children and young people attended. This is a decrease compared to what we usually have but was expected due to a shorter delivery period and our first time delivering February Half Term. Overall, the programme offered was excellent.

1.1.7 Funding for the HAF programme has been confirmed until March 2029.

Best Start in Life:

1.2 Oral Health

1.2.1 An evaluation on co-designing and reviewing strategies to optimise the recruitment of settings in supervised toothbrushing programmes in the North East has been jointly commissioned with other NE local authorities. The evaluation will support with the future recruitment and retention of schools and nursery settings to participate in the supervised toothbrushing programme.

1.2.2 Schools and nursery settings will receive additional resources to support with the delivery of the toothbrushing programme.

1.2.3 Care homes have been offered resources to support with ensuring residents maintain good oral health in elderly care homes.

1.3 Healthy Weight

1.3.1 The service specification for healthy weight in Middlesbrough has been finalised. The new Growing Well, Growing Healthy programme will commence from April 2026.

1.3.2 We continue to work with UCL on the SHINE research programme. The research programme will be extended into next academic year, with the aim of recruiting more schools into this programme.

1.4 Infant Feeding

1.4.1 The Mamazing breastfeeding campaign (phase two) is being delivered in the form of various media (billboards, bus stops, buses, social media, radio etc). The campaign aims to increase breastfeeding rates, encourage mothers to breastfeed for longer and normalise breastfeeding. The campaign has featured some additional mothers in this phase of the campaign, highlighting more breastfeeding journeys and providing information to support mothers to make informed choices about feeding their baby.

1.4.2 The family hubs are currently working towards stage 2 of the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI). Further training has been undertaken with the workforce within the family hubs.

1.4.3 The infant feeding strategy for South Tees is in development. A project group has been meeting regularly to develop the strategy with the aim of implementing the agreed objectives from 2026.

1.5 III Health Prevention:

- 1.5.1 The Live Well Centre has partnered with Teesside University to host a sight clinic delivered by students as part of their professional training.
- 1.5.2 The binocular vision and visual stress clinic's offer specialist assessments for children, young people and adults who experience challenges with everyday activities such as reading and writing, including evaluating eye focus and coordination.
- 1.5.3 All clinic appointments are now fully booked, due to high demand through a successful marketing campaign.
- 1.5.4 Live Well Centre staff have been nominated and shortlisted for the MBC Engagement and Inclusion Award, recognising their commitment to impactful, inclusive community engagement.
- 1.5.5 A member of the team has secured a Level 3 Public Health Business Apprenticeship after completing an initial placement through the Government's Youth Trailblazer Scheme. This achievement reflects Public Health's continued commitment to developing internal talent and creating new opportunities through the Work Well programme.
- 1.5.6 A young people's marketing group has been established to review and shape current Public Health messaging, supporting more effective engagement with young audiences across the region.

1.6 Social Prescribing in Secondary Care Cardiology

- 1.6.1 Since its introduction in secondary care cardiology in July 2025, social prescribing has shown strong early impact, with 106 referrals and a 75% uptake, mainly for anxiety, social isolation and long-term condition management. Patients have been linked to community services such as mental health support, social groups, exercise schemes, and financial or housing advice, with 9 in 10 reporting improved wellbeing across EQ-5D measures. The approach is relieving clinical pressures by providing holistic non-medical support, strengthening community links, and contributing to prevention, and has gained external recognition through a Public Innovation Award. Overall, it represents an effective, preventative model that improves outcomes, reduces inequalities and supports more sustainable service delivery.

1.7 Healthy Heart Checks

- 1.7.1 Community NHS Health Checks have begun with lower-than-expected uptake in community venues, though Park GP Practice has achieved strong delivery through ELM support; overall GP delivery is slightly higher than Q3 last year. Improved marketing with ELM and MFC Foundation aims to boost community uptake in Q4 and beyond, and the first NHS Health Check Newsletter has been issued to strengthen GP engagement by clarifying tariffs, training, community offers and referral pathways. Additionally, substance misuse service nurses are

now trained to deliver NHS Health Checks, with delivery expected to begin in March 2026.

Health Protection:

1.8 Sexual Health

- 1.8.1 Delivery of high impact Adult & Child Health Protection Assurance Workshops – the two events strengthened workforce capability across: immunisation, Infection, Prevention and Control, communicable disease, housing standards and pandemic response
- 1.8.2 World AIDS Day activity – including a joint “World AIDS Day – HIV on Teesside Lunch and Learn session” with Public Health South Tees and Terrence Higgins Trust for wider PH, MBC and RCBC colleagues. The session included:
 - Updates on the HIV landscape in Teesside
 - A rapid-testing demonstration
 - Discussion on how services can strengthen support for people living with HIV
- 1.8.3 ‘Elephant in the Room’, a new campaign directed at young people has now launched on the 1st March 2026. The NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), in partnership with UKHSA, OHID, Directors of Public Health and public health teams, across the region's local authorities have developed the campaign. Its aim is to raise awareness of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), promote confidential and FREE sexual health advice and services, and encourage safer sexual health behaviours among young people.
- 1.8.4 Middlesbrough continues to have high levels of teenage pregnancy and abortion. The South Tees Teenage Pregnancy Partnership has successfully been relaunched, meeting monthly with the aim of system wide collaboration to reduce teenage pregnancy rates and improve outcomes for teenage parents and their children, who experience significant health inequalities.
- 1.8.5 The new sexual health prevention contracts launch in April; both are 12-month pilots to further scope and inform future service planning and delivery, with a focus on improving sexual health outcomes and reducing inequalities. The contracts include a universal age 13+ condom offer and a prevention and support service with a focus on HIV

1.9 Immunisations

- 1.9.1 Immunisation uptake data for Middlesbrough continues to be lower than that for other Tees Valley LAs.
- 1.9.2 Tees Valley Local Immunisation Steering Group established Jan 2025 with partners across public health, Child Health Information Service, Health Visiting and School Nursing, School Age Immunisation Service, maternity, GP

Federations, pharmacies, acute trusts, UK Health Security Agency, ICB and NHS England. The group meets monthly.

- 1.9.3 Secured £190k (Mar 2025) to improve 0–18 vaccine uptake across Tees Valley covering engagement, delivery and evaluation phases. Teesside University have been commissioned to facilitate the engagement and co-production phase and evaluate the commissioning and delivery phase before producing a final evaluation report.
- 1.9.4 Local authorities commissioned to lead engagement with priority cohorts; 13 workshops and 386 surveys captured barriers for ESOL families (M), GRT communities (D), migrants, pregnant women (S), disadvantaged families (H) and care leavers (R&C). Key themes emerging include the need for simple information (in appropriate language), trusted messengers, clarity on risks/side effects/ingredients, and improved access via drop ins and flexible booking.
- 1.9.5 Subgroups formed for maternal, childhood, teenage, ESOL, GRT, and care leaver to implement a range of interventions to improve immunisation uptake.

1.10 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing:

- 1.10.1 A South Tees Service Directories Asset Mapping Survey was developed and shared with stakeholder directory leads to gather information on directory features, functions, and costs. The findings will support improved navigation to appropriate wellbeing services, reduce duplication, and inform the creation of a wellbeing marketplace.
- 1.10.2 After a suicide and mental wellbeing session with construction workers at Teesport in December an insight and recommendations report was produced resulting in participating organisations seeing improved communication around men's mental health, raised awareness, and introduction of more male-focused activities and support
- 1.10.3 Language and risks associated with suicide session delivered to 3rd year mental health nursing students at Teesside university in partnership with TEWV
- 1.10.4 The HeadStart service has commenced a pilot in 3 secondary settings with the aim of improving pupil attendance at an early stage to prevent escalation to persistent absence. Approximately 90 pupils are receiving targeted support.
- 1.10.5 HeadStarters is an educational pathway for CYP creating emotional health champions within educational settings. 4,700 young people have participated on the pathway. A key feature is developing skills for further education, training and employment. Working with HDRC a new module is in development which will create young health researchers. Supported by the NIHR Research Network 5 schools attended an initial session to understand what research is and how they can play a vital part in understanding young people's views and perceptions on health issues.

1.10.6 Dementia Café – Funding has been secured from Public Health and the MBC Small Grant Scheme, to resume fortnightly Dementia Friendly sessions at My Place, with live music from Grassroots Music, afternoon tea and dancing. Care Home residents are invited with Staff and families are also welcome, which allows Carers and families to enjoy social time with their loved ones outside of the care home

1.11 Ageing Well Updates:

1.11.1 Public Health Ageing Well Team in partnership with National Literacy Trust (Middlesbrough); Middlesbrough Library Service and Community Development Team delivered a project to celebrate World Book Day in March. Children from 6 primary schools visited 6 care homes and shared their favourite stories with residents. The project created warm, memorable moments across all six settings and strengthened ongoing links between schools and care homes for future intergenerational activities.

1.11.2 Intergenerational activities offer significant benefits for both older people and children. They help reduce loneliness, build social connections, challenge age-related stereotypes, improve mental wellbeing, and boost confidence, empathy, and communication skills.

1.11.3 An 'Age Friendly Communities Project Coordinator' has been appointed and will commence their 2-year fixed term post on 19/03/26 to lead 'Age Friendly' project activities, Training, outreach and engagement, to identify isolated older people and improve access to older people's groups. Will also support the development of the Ageing Well Hub activities timetable.

1.11.4 The Live Well Centre Ageing Well Hub activities are developing. Some activities have had low numbers and are being reviewed, such as Chair Exercise and Age UK activities, but weekly coffee mornings have been successful with good attendance and professionals dropping in giving advice such as Healthwatch and Welfare Rights. A creative writing group (Art and Soul) is also well attended with participants referred from the Hope Foundation and Teesside Mind.

1.12 Health Determinants Research Collaboration South Tees

1.12.1 We were delighted with the success of our first HeadStart Research Discovery Day on 18th February aimed to introduce children and young people to research, public health, and how evidence shapes healthier communities. Activities included interactive sessions on research methods, a creative public health poster challenge, and a guided tour of the Live Well Centre. This was delivered in partnership with HeadStart South Tees, the North East and North Cumbria Regional Research Delivery Network and Public Health South Tees.

1.12.2 This forms part of our HDRC ST Routes to Research workstream to embed early engagement in research and public health, supporting preventative approaches and helping children and young people (CYP) to understand how evidence informs decision-making at a local authority level.

1.12.3 The next steps are to extend this offer to more schools and create follow-on opportunities for children and young people relating to local research.

