

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE TO COUNCIL

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

DATE OF MEETING: 09 September 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. Creating Healthy Environments Programme

- 1.1.1. **The Welcome to Breastfeed Scheme** continues to be promoted across communities with a wide variety of venues signing up to the scheme.
- 1.1.2. **Breastfeeding Boroughs** – infant feeding research is being commissioned to identify any gaps across services which provide infant feeding support across Middlesbrough.
- 1.1.3. **Public Health E-Learning Hub** – approval has been granted from PH DMT to commission a new E-Learning Hub for the whole of PH to utilise in increasing awareness and knowledge of PH priorities and workstreams. Currently awaiting approval from the Technical Design Authority to proceed with procurement.
- 1.1.4. **MUST** - The Managing Undernutrition South Tees (MUST) Service is now fully implemented in all but 1 disability and mental health care homes in Middlesbrough. The final home is in the process of implementation.

1.2. Health Protection Programme

- 1.2.1. Public Health have been working with young people to co-produce sexual health awareness videos which will be launched during Sexual Health Week 14th-20th September and to support the regional Elephant in the Room campaign promoting condom use and STI awareness in under 25's. The Elephant in the Room is a regional resource funded by the Directors of Public Health and the ICB.

- 1.2.2. The HIV Prevention and Support Service Pilot which launched in April 2026, has delivered 12 peer support meetings, supported people to access and re-engage with HIV treatment working closely with James Cook University Hospital, and presented its work at a regional HIV conference. The service is also working with our Drug and Alcohol services to develop a South Tees chemsex training programme for frontline staff (Chemsex refers to the use of specific drugs before or during sexual activity).
- 1.2.3. Additional developments include a more consistent and accessible service offer for people involved in sex work, helping to reduce barriers to support and improve outcomes.
- 1.2.4. Following the syphilis care pathway work, Public Health have been working in partnership with UKHSA and James Cook University Hospital to secure funding to pilot a universal opt out testing for syphilis in the third trimester. The pilot is in response to the high rates of syphilis in Middlesbrough which are highest in heterosexual females.
- 1.2.5. Work is progressing on the South Tees Sexual Health Strategy with a multi-disciplinary reference group meeting every 6 weeks, providing assurance.

1.3. *III Health Prevention Programme*

- 1.3.1. **Schools Fluoride Varnish Programme** - awaiting contracts being distributed to the dental practices for the schools in Middlesbrough. Working with the PH Dental Consultant to develop the medical and consent forms to be distributed to schools along with a communications plan for schools and parents.
- 1.3.2. **Supervised Toothbrushing Programme** – the Tees Oral Health Group has collaborated to develop a recruitment video for schools and nurseries to highlight what the Supervised Toothbrushing Programme is, how it is delivered and the benefits of participating in the programme. This will be utilised from September 2026 to support the recruitment of settings across South Tees.
- 1.3.3. **Colgate Resources** – the first delivery of 2026/27 has taken place. The supplier is preparing toothbrushing packs to be distributed to schools, nurseries and community settings from August 2026 onwards.

1.4. *Vulnerabilities Programme*

- 1.4.1. **Changing Futures** programme (CF) has commenced in Middlesbrough with Keyworkers embedded within Middlesbrough Council's Housing Solutions team, receiving referrals directly from housing colleagues and working with individuals who meet the programme's multiple vulnerabilities criteria. The team is integrated within these new arrangements, enabling earlier identification and engagement of people with complex needs and strengthening partnership working around housing stability and prevention. During the first quarter of delivery, six people were supported to the point where they no longer required ongoing intensive support, demonstrating positive early outcomes for some of the most vulnerable residents.

- 1.4.2. Middlesbrough successfully submitted its draft **CF Delivery Plan** to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The plan was intentionally structured at a high level around the agreed priority themes and cohort groups, an approach endorsed by MHCLG colleagues at this stage. This provides the programme with the flexibility and time required to work with partners to develop and agree the detailed delivery model, outcomes framework and associated costings by October 2026.
- 1.4.3. **Enhanced Caseworkers**, commissioned through NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) Reducing Health Inequalities funding are embedded within frontline services at James Cook University Hospital's Accident and Emergency Department, the Crisis Suite at Roseberry Park, and the local Emergency Services call centre. Working alongside staff in these settings, they identify and engage people experiencing multiple disadvantage, bridge gaps between services and support access to appropriate interventions with the aim of preventing crises and reducing unplanned demand on services. In the first quarter, 66% of the individuals supported by the Enhanced Caseworker team experienced a reduction in subsequent attendance at James Cook University Hospital and/or the Crisis Suite.

1.5. Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme

- 1.5.1. **Mental Health Awareness Week 2026**, themed '**Action**'. The South Tees Wellbeing Network launched the '**Just One Thing**' campaign, encouraging partners, community groups, organisations and individuals to take a simple action to support wellbeing. In partnership with local voluntary sector mental health providers, the network delivered a briefing and shared wellbeing resources and support services to help organisations promote and embed wellbeing in their workplaces.
- 1.5.2. **Tees Mental Health Training Hub** contract has been funded for a further 3 years following a Tees Authorities quotation exercise. The hub will provide a range of free courses to people who work or volunteer across Tees. The wide range of courses delivered via flexible formats including digital are designed to increase mental health and suicide prevention knowledge and skills across a range of settings and develop confidence to initiate and engage in conversations about mental health.
- 1.5.3. **Dementia Action Week 2026** – Middlesbrough Dementia Network coordinated a full programme of activities to improve public awareness, understanding of dementia and access to community activities. Activities included a lunch and learn session with South Asian Community, support from a range of organisations at diagnostic clinics, information stands and an online question panel for 100's of NHS staff to support their learning of dementia

1.6. Start Well

1.6.1. The Start Well board for Children and Young People's public health is agreeing milestones for the key projects and priorities for the year ahead. This work will be presented to council directorates over the next month. The board will be identifying priority areas and key activities for the wider council to deliver on as part of a "Health in all family policies" approach working with Children's services and other directorates in the council. The following major projects have been agreed for the year:

- **Best Start & School Readiness:** A new workstream had been set up to develop a Public Health approach to improve early childhood development and school readiness through strengthened Best Start pathways.
- **Healthy Schools:** Develop and deliver a unified offer that supports whole-school health, strengthens PSHE delivery, and reaches all school-age children, including consideration of those outside mainstream education
- **Teenage Pregnancy:** Reduce unintended teenage pregnancy rates and improve outcomes for young parents through targeted prevention and coordinated early intervention.

1.7. Best Start & School Readiness

- 1.7.1. The first group meeting was in June and the group will focus on school readiness pathways, obesity offer and training the early years teams in Public Health approaches.
- 1.7.2. An action plan is in development to prioritise areas of work, partners involvement and measures of success. There is also an overarching discussion taking place about the CPD needs across the various workstreams, including health.
- 1.7.3. Healthy Start Scheme – continuing to promote the scheme and the vitamins available to families. Promotional cards have been distributed to midwives and health visitors to signpost families to the healthy start vitamins which can be collected from the family hubs. Training has also taken place with family hub staff to increase awareness of the scheme and how staff can support families to apply to the Healthy Start Scheme.
- 1.7.4. Infant Feeding Strategy is progressing with engagement across the infant feeding system. The group is reviewing previous investment and developing priorities for the next four years. Once the strategy is published, an action plan will be developed which will be overseen by the South Tees Infant Feeding Steering Group.
- 1.7.5. An infant feeding crisis pathway has been identified as a gap from the UNICEF Baby Friendly assessments across services in South Tees. A pathway will be developed with potential support from the Crisis and Resilience Fund to ensure support is available for families who are experiencing food insecurity to achieve food resilience.

Healthy schools

1.7.6. A whole school approach to Public Health is being developed by the “Healthy Schools” group. This will include work to:

- Create health promoting environments and relationships in school settings
- Develop a unified public health offer which is accessible to schools, young people and parents

11-19 health and well-being service

1.7.7. The development of the 11-19 Young People’s service is on track with the first phase of consultation concluded and the service model in development with a system-wide steering group along with regular communications.

1.7.8. Robust consultation activity has taken place capturing stakeholders from across the children’s system with over 65 stakeholders involved across various activities which has informed the 11-19 service Theory of Change and desired outcomes.

1.7.9. Key service priorities identified across consultation include a tiered approach to support across intensive and specialist clinical support for those young people with complex health needs and universal and community offer to support health inequalities, key themes of the offer will be healthy relationships, healthy choices and healthy lifestyles.

1.7.10. A project management approach has taken place with a Project on a page (POAP) being selected as the governance and project controls including project charter, workbook and risks logs, project timescales are still on track.

1.7.11. Procurement pathways for the clinical element of the service are still in negotiations with one chosen option being the joint service functions between Middlesbrough and RCBC school nursing services, options appraisal regarding various shared services is currently being explored.

1.7.12. One key line of work is around the website offer and digital resources as interim stop gap to help direct professionals and young people to suitable national.

Teenage pregnancy

1.7.13. The South Tees Teenage Pregnancy Partnership is now fully established, meeting 6 weekly. The partnership is working through a nationally recognised self-assessment audit tool to inform an Action Plan with the aim of reducing unintended conceptions and improving outcomes for teenage parents and their children.

1.7.14. 2-year funding for a quality assurance post to support schools with mandated PHSE will focus on teenage pregnancy, supporting the “Healthy Schools” offer.

1.7.15. Targeted communications campaign promoting sexual health support, free condom offer and contraception from pharmacy for young people planned for September, including higher education settings and those not in education.

- 1.7.16. The most recent national teenage pregnancy dataset, published in June 2026 and relating to 2023 data, showed an increase in both conceptions and maternities among under-18s in Middlesbrough. Working in partnership with a range of agencies, analysis of multiple datasets was undertaken to identify patterns and geographical areas of higher conception rates and to inform targeted support and interventions. This included reviewing postcode-level data for young women accessing abortion services alongside local maternity data, enabling resources and preventative activities to be focused where they were most needed.

1.8. Health Determinants Research Collaboration South Tees

- 1.8.1. We currently have eleven champions in Middlesbrough and are keen to recruit more HDRC Champions act as key links between the HDRC ST and services. They help us stay informed of any directorate or operational changes, support by sharing updates about research projects, training and resources and events, and promote research opportunities with colleagues. **We have a Research Champions event scheduled for 16th September** for LA staff who are interested in joining us.
- 1.8.2. To build bridges between communities and local authorities we ran sessions with local authority staff and some of our Community-based Researchers where they could discuss the issues for both in collaborating. A report is in development.
- 1.8.3. Our HDRC portal is undergoing an update, and we expect to have a page dedicated to South Tees residents soon.