

**HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**3 SEPTEMBER 2025**

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**DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 2025**  
**ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE: THE HEALTH OF DARLINGTON**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The Annual Public Health Report is an opportunity for the Director of Public Health to present an independent report on the health and wellbeing of Darlington. This year's report provides a snapshot of health across the life course, describing some of the key health issues for Darlington and celebrating the amazing work happening across the Borough.
2. To provide an update on the recommendations made in the 2023-2024 Annual Public Health Report.

**Summary**

3. The structure of the Annual Public Health Report is based on the framework used within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, highlighting health and wellbeing needs across the life course of Starting Well, Living Well and Ageing Well. The report provides a snapshot of key data across the life course and thematic recommendations. It is the intention for future reports to focus on the different stages of the life course in greater detail.
4. The first chapter of the report, Starting Well, considers the importance of a good start in life and the topics of:
  - (a) smoking during pregnancy
  - (b) breastfeeding
  - (c) healthy weight and good food
  - (d) oral health
  - (e) childhood immunisation
5. Starting Well recommendations are:
  - (a) Develop an oral health promotion strategy and action plan for Darlington.
  - (b) Expand toothbrushing schemes to more early years settings.
  - (c) Use data to develop a better understanding of rates of smoking in pregnancy within Darlington, to ensure support can be targeted at those areas with the highest rates.
  - (d) Build upon the recent success with increasing rates of breastfeeding at 6 to 8 weeks, with a clear focus on reducing the inequalities in breastfeeding that exist within Darlington.

- (e) Undertake work to understand the variation in uptake of childhood vaccination across Darlington, working with primary care and the school age immunisation service to increase the uptake of routine childhood vaccinations.
  - (f) Take steps to understand why there has been a reduction in the percentage of children in care who are up to date with the vaccine schedule, and use this information to implement action locally to improve uptake.
  - (g) Undertake an audit of hospital admission data for unintentional and intentional injuries in children, using the findings to develop an action plan to address identified priorities
6. The second chapter of the report, Living Well, considers the importance of staying healthy in adulthood and the many factors which can impact positive and negatively. The following topics are considered:
- (a) mental health and suicide prevention
  - (b) substance misuse
  - (c) smoking and tobacco control
  - (d) employment
7. Living Well recommendations are:
- (a) Develop and deliver a multiagency suicide prevention action plan, informed by the evidence base set out within the Suicide Prevention Strategy for England and local suicide data and trends, to support a reduction in rates of self-harm and suicide.
  - (b) Engage with local employers to inform the development of a healthy workplace offer for Darlington.
  - (c) Continue to increase the numbers of people with drug and / or alcohol addictions accessing treatment and recovery support, through reviewing all pathways into the service and working with local stakeholders such as the prison and probation services to increase referrals.
  - (d) Develop the rehab provision available to Darlington residents.
  - (e) Continue to increase the numbers of people accessing the smoking service and the number of successful quit attempts.
8. The third chapter of the report, Ageing Well, considers the importance of staying healthy as we age and changing patterns of disease. The following topics are considered:
- (a) falls in older people
  - (b) ageing well and physical activity
  - (c) long term conditions
9. Ageing Well recommendations are:
- (a) Build upon the delivery of the NHS Health Check Programme to identify opportunities to reach a broader cross section of the eligible cohort, to ensure those who could benefit most are accessing the offer.
  - (b) Review and strengthen pathways into services from NHS health checks, including stop smoking services and drug and alcohol services.
  - (c) Develop a public health approach to ageing well.

10. The 2023-2024 Annual Public Health Report 'Women's Health: Taking Action in Darlington' made three overarching recommendations, underpinned by a number of actions. Whilst work is ongoing to address the recommendations progress made to date is summarised below.
11. Recommendation One: All organisations identify their role in giving every child the best start in life.
  - (a) Work has commenced on the Pregnancy Anticipatory Care Model, led by CDDFT.
  - (b) CO readings are now being offered at every mandated health visitor contact, and referrals made to the stop smoking service when need is identified.
  - (c) Domestic abuse training offered to social care staff and a local domestic abuse working group established.
  - (d) Physical Activity Strategy Developed and going forward for approval.
  - (e) Healthy Early Years scheme expanded, to include other areas such as physical activity.
  - (f) The Breastfeeding Business Accreditation Scheme has been relaunched and is being used to engage with local businesses to support them to be infant feeding friendly.
12. Recommendation Two: All organisations recognise the specific health and care needs of women and across the health and care systems services respond to the needs of women.
  - (a) The Council is now represented on the regional public health network for Work and Health, and is developing an offer for local workplaces, with an initial focus on stop smoking support.
  - (b) The Breastfeeding Business Accreditation Scheme has been relaunched and is being used to engage with local businesses to support them to be infant feeding friendly.
  - (c) The Council has updated policies to support women during menopause and delivered a number of awareness raising sessions for staff and managers.
13. Recommendation Three: Organisations together take responsibility to create a safe environment for all people of Darlington, being mindful of implications from a female perspective.
  - (a) The Council is engaged in regional discussions about the Better Health at Work Programme, and is developing an offer for local workplaces, with an initial focus on stop smoking support.
  - (b) The physical activity strategy being developed includes a focus on active travel and safe green spaces.

## **Recommendations**

14. It is recommended that Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee:-
  - (a) Accept the recommendations of the Annual Director of Public Health Report.
  - (b) Make use of the Annual Director of Public Health report to support understanding of the population health and wellbeing needs across the life course.

## Reasons

15. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) The Health and Social Care Act 2012 sets out a requirement for all Directors of Public Health to produce an annual independent report on the health of their local population and for their local authority to publish it.
- (b) The annual report has used available epidemiological data, local case studies and information from services to highlight areas of concern and make recommendations of action, for consideration by partners and stakeholders.

**Lorraine Hughes**  
**Director of Public Health**

Enc: Director of Public Health Annual Report, 2024/25

Council Plan	This report supports the Council Plan ambition of Living Well and Staying Healthy, through the focus on health outcomes and inequalities.
Addressing inequalities	The report considers inequalities at a population level.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no implications arising from this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report has no impact on the Council's Efficiency Programme and supports the effective use of resources to address identified priorities.
Health and Wellbeing	The annual DPH report considers the health and wellbeing of the population of Darlington across the life course.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications arising from this report.
Wards Affected	The data presented in the report covers all wards.
Groups Affected	The annual DPH report focuses on the population of Darlington.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.