



## Growing Healthy Stockton-on-Tees Consultation and Engagement: Service Review

FEBRUARY – MARCH 2023



HEALTHWATCH STOCKTON-ON-TEES | CATALYST HOUSE, 27 YARM ROAD,  
STOCKTON-ON-TEES, TS18 3NJ |

WEBSITE: [WWW.HEALTHWATCHSTOCKTONONTEES.CO.UK](http://WWW.HEALTHWATCHSTOCKTONONTEES.CO.UK)

TELEPHONE: 01642 688312

EMAIL: [HEALTHWATCHSTOCKTON@PCP.UK.NET](mailto:HEALTHWATCHSTOCKTON@PCP.UK.NET)



Summary.....	3-7
Introduction.....	8-9
Background and Methodology.....	10
Findings.....	11-15
Main Findings.....	16
Recommendations.....	17



## Summary

[Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees \(HWS\)](#) collaborated with the Stockton-on-Tees Community Wellbeing Champions (SCWC) and Stockton-on-Tees Public Health (SPH) to support the review of the 0-19/25 Service.

The purpose of the engagement was to ensure that the voices of local children, young people, their families, and those involved in supporting them are central to the review and re-commissioning of the 0-19/25 service.

The Public Health vision is to enable children and young people with the building blocks to secure the foundation for a healthy life, working with families to promote wellbeing, protect from illness and injury and prevent ill health at the earliest opportunity through prevention and early intervention.

Since the commissioning of the current 0-19/25 service in 2018, the children's landscape has evolved. The recent school system reform proposes that more schools are converted to academy status and operate differently. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic brought significant challenges which are still affecting many local children and young people, affecting their mental health and education. This is an opportunity for the public to give feedback to help determine the future needs of the service.

Working in collaboration, using combined resources and skills the aim of this work was to achieve a greater understanding of the needs of children and young people and the solutions required to ensure our children and young people (CYP) are supported with best start in life.

The consultation considered the following objectives:

- Work in partnership with children, young people, their families, people working to support them and the wider communities of Stockton-on-Tees.
- Challenge the existing 0-19/25 service and look for ways to improve.
- Identify unmet needs of CYP and their families.
- Shape the future service to better meet the needs of children, young people and their families.
- Measure satisfaction with the service.



The service areas that the consultation will consider are:

- 0-5 Health Visiting Service
- 5-19 (25 with Special Educational Need and disabilities SEND) School Nursing Service
- Children and Family Healthy Weight Service (Growing Well Growing Healthy)

Two surveys were designed, one for children and young people to complete from their perspective and the other was designed for 0-19 parents, carers, and families.

A total of 89 parents and carers and 9 young people completed the survey questions.

The overall findings from the engagement, based on what young people have told us is;

#### **Results from the Children and young people survey on the 0-19 service**

- Only 44% knew where to get help if their family did not have enough food.
- When asked in their view how dangerous smoking, alcohol, vaping, and gambling were on health 78% thought smoking was very harmful, however 56% thought drinking alcohol and gambling were a little harmful and 22% were not sure.
- 78% of people knew who they would go to for help with alcohol, smoking, vaping and relationships, but only 55% knew where to go for help with weight management and 44% did not know where they would go for advice regarding LGBTQIA.
- The most popular answer for who the young people would go to for advice was a resounding 78% who would go to a parent or family member, closely followed by talking to a friend and 33% would look on the internet. No one said they would speak to a teacher or a school nurse.
- The most prevalent factor that would prevent a young person talking about their worries or concerns was lack of trust or a previous bad experience, embarrassment or not being taken seriously were also seen as important contributory factors.
- When asked what the best way would be to talk about worries with an adult who is not a parent or carer, the preferred options were in person or text messaging, with a definitive response was that it was NOT in school.



Of the nine young people spoken to none were aware of having ever spoken to a school nurse.

## Results from the 0-19 Parents, Carers and Families Survey

### Health Visiting Service

- 21% of those providing feedback cared for children with SEND.
- 36% did not know what help was available for them or their child in their local area.
- 73% reported receiving help from the Health Visiting Service in the last two years.
- 77% of those who received help from the Health Visiting Service said that their needs had been met and 16% described their needs as not being met.
- There was positive feedback of the existing Health Visitor Service with 84% of people rating the service 3 or above (1=Low 5=High) describing the service as good overall.

*“Health visitor was very supportive and identified that I needed help with postnatal depression. She checked in and visited regularly and referred me to services.”*

*“Vast majority of staff have been lovely.”*

- There was little knowledge of baby weighing services, one person told us they were advised to buy own scales.
- Better communication and a consistent Health Visitor would have been seen as helpful, with more face-to-face meetings. Various people provided feedback that their Health Visitor had changed and that this had led to disruption, some people reported still not having contact with a new Health Visitor. It was also stated that moving home caused additional disruption and there was concern “that people fell through gaps.”

*“We had to chase up things like weigh-ins a lot and repeat things due to lack of communication amongst team. Breastfeeding support was hit and miss for my wife, some HV's were supportive and great but one was slightly dismissive and wasn't encouraging about it when our son wasn't gaining weight for his initial centile.”*



*“Someone that was assigned to you. Kept in contact with you. Even just a call to check how things are going. Felt like just left to wing it as a first-time parent. Appointments few and far between. Phoned the line for advice never there always just ringing.”*

*“It has been over a year since I saw health visitor and my son isn't even two.”*

*“Didn't feel very welcoming when phoned to change appointment time. Some form of communication would have been ideal.”*

*“The health visitor has never been the same. Not sure if the child development has been at the right rate or right for the age or milestones.”*

- There was very little knowledge or awareness of breast-feeding support, weighing, weaning and behavioural support were also services that those we spoke to would have found helpful, they described how there was a lack of clear accessible information.
- Feedback was given to us those babies born during COVID-19 felt forgotten.

*“Lonely time, isolating not seeing people, not knowing if I was doing the right things as a parent. Even just a check-in to know someone was there. But nothing, there has been times when I've questioned if my child is normal as I've got nothing to compare to. I questioned their growth and development on own again nothing to compare to. Really feel on my own it's like there isn't a service even there.”*

- Family Hubs were seen as a great source of information, it was echoed by various people that better signposting to Family Hubs would have been helpful.

*“Hubs are more useful.”*

- Father-specific support would be seen as advantageous.

*“Wasn't much support for dads during pregnancy and after birth so now wouldn't feel comfortable going to groups.”*



*“More support for older children, family hubs offer great support for littler children but need more for older children and teenagers.”*

*“More youth activities and access to sports centres / gyms after school.”*

### School Nursing Service

- 94% of those spoken to had not received support from a school nurse.
- 5 people have said they had accessed a school nurse in the last two years of those 100% rated the service 4 or 5 (1 = Low 5= High).

### SEND

- When asked ‘Thinking about the last two years. The service was able to support my child or children with their SEND needs?’ 73% said no.
- One person provided feedback detailing how they felt there was a lack of support after leaving school and their child now suffers with depression.
- Focused social groups for those with a SEND diagnosis seemed to be lacking.

*“Something existing for carers of children with send. Snaps have parent group once a week but nothing autism specific.”*

*“More support and communication with professionals when a child is getting assessed for neurodevelopmental struggles and when diagnosed.”*



## Introduction

Local Healthwatch have been set up across England to create a strong, independent consumer champion with the aim to:

- Strengthen the collective voice of citizens and communities in influencing local health and social care services to better meet their needs.
- Support people to find the right health and social care services for them by providing appropriate information, advice and signposting.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees works with local people, patients, service users, carers, community groups, organisations, service providers and commissioners to get the best out of local health and social care services. This doesn't just mean improving services today but influencing and shaping services to meet the needs of the local communities tomorrow.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is steered by a [Board of volunteers](#), commissioned by the Local Authority and accountable to the public. Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees are the only non-statutory body whose sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak-out on their behalf. The service is managed by [Pioneering Care Partnership](#), a leading third-sector charitable organisation aiming to improve health, wellbeing and learning for all.

Healthwatch has:

The statutory right to be listened to:

- Providers and Commissioners must respond to Healthwatch within 20 days of submission of requests for information or reports.
- The statutory power to Enter & View publicly funded health and social care services.
- A statutory seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board.





## Stockton-on-Tees Community Wellbeing Champions (WBC)

In November 2020, Public Health Stockton-on-Tees commissioned Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP) to provide the Stockton-on-Tees COVID-19 Community Champion project, with the aim of working together with communities within the Borough to better understand the impact of COVID-19; the messages and restrictions and to engage those communities in creating solutions to

- minimise the risk of transmission,
- minimise barriers and challenges,
- minimise impact on wellbeing.
- dispelling myths

To ensure the success of the service, reliable and active volunteer Champions from a wide range of communities were sought to support access to the heart of communities, the role of the champions was to ensure that communities received factual and current messages to help alleviate the challenges posed throughout the pandemic. This important work helped to understand the views and perceptions of the public and allow for a two-way flow of information. In return for their time and commitment, the volunteers were supported and listened to, received reliable answers to their questions and were offered training.

In Autumn 2022, the decision was made to widen the remit of the COVID Champions and to become the new Stockton-on-Tees Community Wellbeing Champions (SCWC). Using the same model, the network empowers and supports the residents of Stockton-on-Tees to stay up to date with broader Public Health priorities, including winter vaccine information, advice around seasonal illness, mental health and wellbeing, weight management and health related impacts cost of living crisis.

The network aims to promote positive messaging, provide support, and identify any barriers that face our communities. Wellbeing Champions share the reliable and consistent information from Public Health Stockton-on-Tees with friends, family and their community and act as a conduit to intelligence back to the team so that services can be shaped to meet the needs of the communities they serve.



### **Background and methodology:**

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) has produced its Children and Young Peoples Strategy which provides details of the local authorities' ambition for long term change.

Embedded within this strategy is the mission to ensure that service user voice is at the heart of service delivery and design.

*“Focused on creating the right conditions to make Stockton-on-Tees a great place to grow up, is also focused on similar priorities - helping young people to achieve a sense of self; ensuring there are stable and supportive relationships and providing opportunities for young people to engage in and be supported by wider society. We believe we are setting out a coherent, consistent basis by which we can improve the life chances of children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees, informed by evidence and the views of young people.”*

### [Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2023](#)

To find out the views and experiences of local people with regard to 0-19/25 service, including Health Visitors, School Nursing and the Children and Family Healthy Weight Service. HWS collaborated with the Stockton-on-Tees WBC throughout the period of March 2023 to promote the consultation and provide additional engagement opportunities to Stockton-on-Tees residents.

HWS and the WBC attended six Community Centres, delivering 11 different sessions aimed at parents, carers, and children throughout the area to gather information and feedback.

- Billingham Family Hub - Community Garden -Family Biscuit Ninja - Stay and Play
- Yarm Wellness Toddler Group
- Redhill Family Hub - Babbling Babies - Stay and Play
- Youthy Club Vibe - SEND
- Thornaby Family Hub - Breast Friend - Babbling Babies
- Stockton Family Hub - Stay and Play - Babbling Babies

In total 98 people completed survey responses and with additional feedback was gathered from those not wanting to complete the surveys.



## Findings:

### Summary of Feedback Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

- Of the people spoken to there was little knowledge of clear pathways both prior to diagnosis and beyond.
- There was little to no knowledge of Educational Care Plans or what this would entail.
- There was positive feedback about existing services and the need for more specialised social activities.
- The cost of travel and accessibility of services was raised as a concern.

### Feedback SEND

- One person whose child has SEND attends Stockton-based services including Billingham Family Hub, Autism Angels, Autism Matters and praised them all for the work they, she has not accessed local authority-ran services.
- A Grandparent of a child with SEND had no knowledge of an EHSC plan, she explained “we don’t even know what that is.”
- Another person who has a child with SEND explained their experience of getting a diagnosis and support, they found the pathway very confusing and found it difficult to understand who did what. They also mentioned that while their child was on the pathway without diagnosis, they felt that they were not taken seriously enough by services until there was a diagnosis.
- The Youthy Club Vibe - speaking to a variety of parents and carers for children with a SEND diagnosis expressed there were some clashes between the Youthy Club and Arctic Piranha and felt their child missed out, they also felt there was not enough social activity for those with a SEND diagnosis.
- One person explained how their oldest child is on the pathway and is suspected to have severe autism, they have violent breakdowns and do not like to be around their sibling. They are worried there is no support for their younger child and that their development has been delayed due to their parents having to care for the older sibling; most groups for supporting children who are siblings of children with SEND are offered to those aged five and older. Detail was also provided of the struggles getting to services as there are no local services and had to rely on public transport, that their child struggles to use. Daisy Chain are Stockton-based but they live in Billingham.
- Four parents we spoke to with children who were recognised with SEND, were not aware of the children having an educational care plan to support their journey.



- Two parents discussed their children been assessed for autism, and one with autism and ADHD. Both reporting they did not know what to expect beyond the information on the letters received from appointments they had attended. Both said they would like to know how it all works/fits together and what they needed to do. Neither parent knew what an educational plan was.
- One person gave feedback that they had spoken to their GP and teachers to ask for an assessment but felt no one was helping.
- A clearer understanding of who is who and what services they offer, even after diagnosis of autism it's still confusing.

*“Support beyond school/college more awareness, less judgement on individuals, less labelling more understanding from tutors/teacher’s specialist groups should be available outside.”*

*“Advocacy for schools would be ideal, Daisy Chain did provide this service, but it stopped so some advocacy support when dealing with schools would really help.”*

### Summary of Feedback Health Visitor Service

- Many parents were unaware of the specific role of the Health Visitor service after the initial visits post birth.
- Some people were unaware of how to access a Health Visitor or where to go for advice and support.
- The Family Hubs were seen as a great source of information, however communication about where they are, and services offered is sporadic. This could be provided with more detailed information at initial Health Visitor appointments for follow up support.
- Health Visitors within the Family Hubs would be seen as useful and effective.
- Some parents felt more comfortable speaking to staff as opposed to Health Visitors, a regular visiting Health Visitor could build better relationships with parents.

### Feedback Health Visitor Service

- Parent of a 10-month-old, spoke of their experiences with Health Visitors, there had been three different Health Visitors within 10 months, they explained they would have found the service much more beneficial if they could work with one to be able to build a relationship.



- At another venue various parents expressed their difficulty with the Health Visitor service throughout COVID-19 pandemic and how they find it much more beneficial now they are not restricted to online appointments and limited in the number of appointments they can have.
- At a Babbling Babies session, parents said that there wasn't much contact with a Health Visitor and that they are find things out by the friends who have had babies before them. They said there was no access to weight clinics and that Family Hubs were a source of information, however new mums are not told about the Family Hubs, they didn't even know they existed, it was via peers that they found out.
- We managed to talk to a Health Visitor, who is campaigning for better access to a Health Visitor and to be able to be more visible at the Family Hubs.
- One person explained how her husband struggled during pregnancy and after birth as he felt there is no provision for men; as a result, he would feel uncomfortable taking their child to things like the Stay and Play sessions as he feels he isn't confident enough through his lack of support.
- It was felt that services were “*slow to get back up and running after COVID*” with one person reporting they felt let down during the pandemic and if this was their first child, they would have been even more anxious and stressed.
- Many of those spoken to were not aware of the role of Health Visitors beyond the initial visits following birth, there was little awareness of where to get babies weighed after initial visits.

*“Feel really let down by the services and very, very alone. Has my child missed out?”*

- Three teenage parents spoke of their lack of awareness of what to do or where to find support. All said they would welcome support from professionals.
- Cost of living was highlighted as the biggest concern, travel and clothing costs is a significant concern to the parents spoken to.
- Families Health provided feedback that they felt they had a lot of support from Health Visitors and were fully aware of the services they offered. Parents at the hub said it was a great service, supporting issues around cost of living, such as clothing. Parents said they felt more comfortable speaking to staff at the hub than asking a health visitor for advice.

*“Publicising support available. When I attended a preparing for baby course there was a lot of “we'll talk about this, but you'll already know” which isn't*



*helpful for if you don't know, the course leaders shouldn't assume everyone knows the obvious."*

### Summary of Feedback School Nursing

- There is very little knowledge or awareness of School Nursing Services both with staff and the public.

### Feedback School Nursing

- A Stockton Wellbeing Champion provided feedback that not many of the students access the 0-19 services, there had been one student who had been referred to the School Nurse Service and another student who had been referred to the Growing Well Growing Healthy service but were reluctant to talk about their experience.
- At another session it was apparent when talking to parents that they were unaware of the School Nurse Service. They said if they had concerns for their children that they would have spoken to staff members rather than the School Nurse.

*"Is that still a service?"*

*"Are they in every school or do they go into the schools?"*

- A staff member at another session was also unaware of the school nurse service, explained Rosebrook Primary School doesn't have any meeting rooms for there to be a "sitting" school nurse.
- Yarm Wellness Centre there was very little awareness of a School Nursing Service.
- Attendance at all groups highlighted there was no knowledge a school nurse existed and believed this service had ceased.

*"Having more of an awareness of the school nurse would've helped with 11-year-old eating issues. When talking to the school I got referred into the 0-19 service which I found helpful."*

### Summary Feedback Breast Feeding Support

- There is very little knowledge or awareness of any Breast-Feeding Support Services. However, of those who provided feedback it would be a useful service that would have supported them to breast feed.



### Breast Feeding Support

- Another area of feedback we received was from a parent who expressed they were unaware of the breast-feeding support service and had to give up breast feeding as it was too painful.
- Most people providing feedback around breast feeding support said they were unaware of any support service and that it would have been beneficial to them. However, one person had received support and praised the service.

*“I know my family haven't felt supported by the services at all. Other than the breast-feeding team, they were helpful and had regular contact great advice and support from them. Thank you.”*



**Main Findings:**

There was some positive feedback gathered about the existing Health Visiting Service, although lack of contact, accessibility and knowledge of support available was regularly raised throughout.

Communication and pathway difficulties were raised consistently regarding access to support, both from parents/carers with or without a diagnosis of SEND.

Although Family Hubs are seen as a great source of information, accessibility to them was raised as an issue due to travelling requirements and being out of area. Extending the hubs, with robust communication about what is available, more social activities, increased staffing capacity and embedding the Health Visiting Service would be seen as a positive outcome and a good use of the hubs.

Pathways for those with a SEND diagnosis and prior are not clear, those we spoke to would have benefitted from better advice and communication about next steps.

There was a consistent message gathered that there is not enough provision for young people, such as access to a Youth Club or Gym outside of school hours.





## Recommendations

### School Nursing Service

- There is very little knowledge or awareness of a school nurse, schools to promote their service and provide detail of the school nurse offer.
- School Nursing service to provide regular updates to parents on key priorities and themes by form of ebulletin/text message service.
- School Nurse to introduce themselves to parents/carers when children begin their educational pathway.
- Young people described 'not' wanting to access support via school, alternative pathways to be identified.
- Further exploratory work to be completed with young people to determine a new health and wellbeing offer.
- Those parents and carers we spoke to said there is not enough support for older children and teenagers. Access to social activities outside of school was considered important, together with financial support particularly during the cost-of-living crisis.

### Health Visiting Service

- Consistent clear information to be provided, detailing the support available and how/where to access.
- Health visitors to be present at Family Hubs on a regular basis for drop-in clinics, weighing, weaning and behavioural advice.
- The family hubs were seen as a good resource, all parents, and carers to be given information at first point of contact.
- Specific support groups to be delivered within Family Hubs that provides behavioural advice and mental health support for parents and carers.
- Option of an email service for parents/carers to address some of the capacity issues.

### Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

- Clear information to be provided to those seeking a potential SEND diagnosis to support with understanding the local area offer and next steps.
- Support groups to be extended throughout the local area to improve accessibility and raise awareness.
- Health Visitor visibility at Family Hubs to support initial questions and concerns.



- Clear communication about waiting times and delays to be provided and signposted to interim support groups.
- A support pathway that extends beyond school age would be beneficial.
- A directory containing information about what services are available upon initial diagnosis.

## Responses

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council:

<https://www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk/sbc-response-growing-healthy-consultation-engagement-report>

**Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees and the Stockton-on-Tees Wellbeing Champions would like to thank all those who provided this valuable feedback**

