

Our people, our place, our approach

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2015



NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

www.northumberland.gov.uk

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Foreword

I am delighted to present my first Annual Report as Director of Public Health for Northumberland.

Special thanks go to my Public Health team who have worked really hard to produce this and I am very proud of them. I would also like to thank our local residents, elected members and our partners in public health who have inspired me with their descriptions and tales of life in Northumberland. I feel immensely privileged to serve you all.

Public Health in Northumberland is taking a fresh approach to improving health outcomes in our population and reducing avoidable health inequalities. Our focus is much more upstream and asset based with the ambition of achieving countywide, resilient, flourishing communities who have high levels of wellbeing. It is collaborative and community focused, with the aim of increasing healthy life expectancy across the social gradient in a way which will increase health equity. We know from evidence that focusing solely on the disadvantaged will not deliver the reductions in health inequalities which we aspire to achieve in Northumberland. To reduce the steepness of the social gradient in health our actions must be universal and with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage.

Our approach has involved listening to what local people say helps them to feel well and gives them a purpose in life. This insight is helping us to reshape our public health strategy so that we can address, within our public health responsibilities, what really matters to local people and what will achieve the best outcomes. We have plenty of data which quantifies how healthy our population is, and we are now adding to this the rich qualitative data gathered from our local people's experiences to help us better understand the reasons for this.

As with many parts of the public sector we are experiencing substantial cuts to our finances. In these times of austerity it is essential that we make the best use of the resources that we have. In Northumberland we have an abundance of human resources (our people), natural resources (our place), and energy, passion and expertise of our residents, our elected members and our partners (our approach).

Tobacco, diet, physical activity and alcohol account for up to 50% of health outcomes in the population. Evidence also suggests that focusing on the 0-5 age group will have the greatest impact on addressing health inequalities. Concentrating on these priorities has the potential to transform health and wellbeing outcomes in our population. We have an evidence base which tells us what works, but harnessing the knowledge, skills and commitment of the people who live, work and volunteer in Northumberland is what will make it happen.

As Margaret Mead, cultural anthropologist, once said "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has".

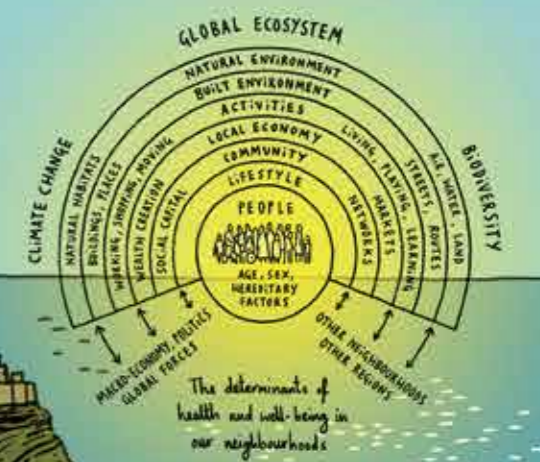
I hope you enjoy reading this report.



Penny Spring

Penny Spring
Director of Public Health

NORTHUMBERLAND



Northumberland as a place

Northumberland is a great place to live – with a long tradition of community solidarity and resilience.

Northumberland and its residents have a long history of strength, solidarity and resilience. There are more castles in Northumberland than any other county in England and many significant battles were fought on this soil to protect communities from invaders. The mineworkers of Northumberland and Durham stood against the powerful mine owners and were prepared to lose their livelihoods and homes in the fight for fairer employment rights. That struggle for fairness and equality is embodied by Emily Davison who fought for women's suffrage and is buried in her family's hometown of Morpeth. Today, the people of Northumberland portray the same resilience, passion and ambition as their predecessors. Although life in the 21st century is very different, the sense of community runs as deep as ever.

Blyth is a great example of this. It is a town with a history dating back to the 1100s as a vibrant centre of commerce in the North East; it had a busy port, railway connections, shipbuilding, the Bates Pit and a power station. We might look back on these times and think that working and housing conditions were more challenging than they are today, but these times are remembered fondly by those who live in Blyth for the strong community spirit.

The passion and pride that our communities have for where they live, coupled with resilience, solidarity and strength, are our greatest assets in meeting the future challenges of improving the health of our population.

"I CAME FROM A FAMILY OF FIVE GENERATIONS WHO WORKED IN THE MINES, AND MY HUSBAND WORKED IN THE PIT FROM THE AGE OF 15 UNTIL THEY FINALLY CLOSED IN 2007... YOU FINISHED SCHOOL ON A FRIDAY AND WALKED STRAIGHT INTO A JOB ON MONDAY, THE TOWN WAS VIBRANT WITH PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK."

Kath Nisbet, County Councillor for Croft



"THE PASSION AND PRIDE THAT OUR COMMUNITIES HAVE FOR WHERE THEY LIVE, COUPLED WITH RESILIENCE, SOLIDARITY AND STRENGTH ARE OUR GREATEST ASSETS"



TO MARK THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MINERS' STRIKE IN 2014, COMMUNITIES IN ASHINGTON WORKED WITH THE ARTIST PATRICK MURPHY TO TELL THEIR STORIES OF LOSS AND RESILIENCE.



'Bruised not Broken' as part of The Great North Passion Courtesy of BAIT

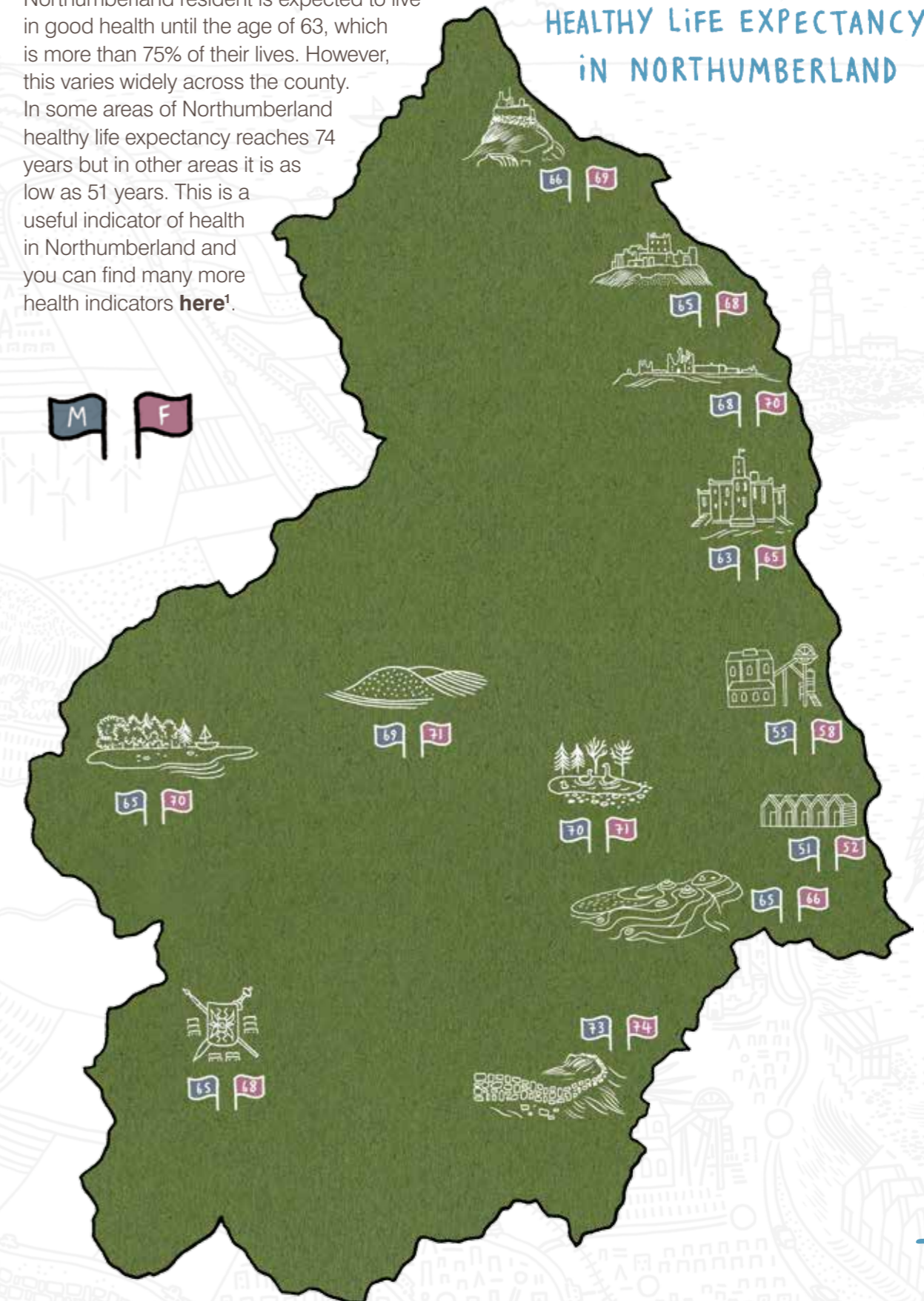


Health in Northumberland

Northumberland is generally a healthy place, but there is variation within the county.

According to national statistics the average Northumberland resident is expected to live in good health until the age of 63, which is more than 75% of their lives. However, this varies widely across the county. In some areas of Northumberland healthy life expectancy reaches 74 years but in other areas it is as low as 51 years. This is a useful indicator of health in Northumberland and you can find many more health indicators **here**¹.

VARIATION IN HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY IN NORTHUMBERLAND



WELLBEING



5 in 6 people have a high or moderate level of well-being
 5 in 6 have a high level of life satisfaction
 5 in 6 have a high level feeling of worthwhile



3 in 4 have a high level of happiness



2 in 3 have a low level of anxiety



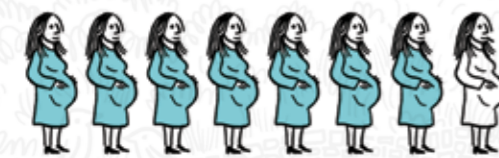
ALCOHOL 5 in 8 people drink alcohol



7 in 10 drink within the recommended limit of 14 units per week



SMOKING 5 in 7 people do not smoke



7 in 8 women do not smoke during pregnancy

WEIGHT 3 in 7 adults are a healthy weight



3 in 4 children aged 4-5 are a healthy weight



2 in 3 children aged 10-11 are a healthy weight

HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 82 YEARS



PEOPLE IN NORTHUMBERLAND LIVE 63 YEARS IN GOOD HEALTH



LIFE EXPECTANCY: 79 YEARS



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

For every 10 people, 5 are active for at least 150 minutes per week (the recommended level) and 2 are active but not to the recommended level



HEALTHY EATING

1 in 2 people eat the recommended 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day

WELLBEING • ALCOHOL • SMOKING • HEALTHY EATING (data source: Northumberland Lifestyle Survey 2014)
 HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY (data source: ONS) PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (data source: Active People Survey)
 WEIGHT (data sources: NCMP and Active People Survey)

Factors influencing health and wellbeing in Northumberland

Variations in health are caused largely by differences in the social and economic circumstances in which people live.

In our conversations with communities and elected members about what being well means to them, the areas mentioned most frequently are:

- ✓ being active
- ✓ feeling valued, happy and useful
- ✓ having confidence
- ✓ being independent
- ✓ having good opportunities for work and education
- ✓ achieving their aspirations

These views are well documented in public health theory. Whilst many people are aware that our genes and our health behaviours play a role in health, it is in fact the circumstances in which we are born, grow up, live, work and age that influence our health most. These social determinants of health are in turn shaped by a wider set of forces, such as economics, social policies and politics.

"...SOMETIMES IT'S JUST THE CONTACT WITH PEOPLE THAT'S AS VALUABLE, IF NOT MORE VALUABLE, FOR THEIR WELLBEING..."

Bell View Centre in Belford

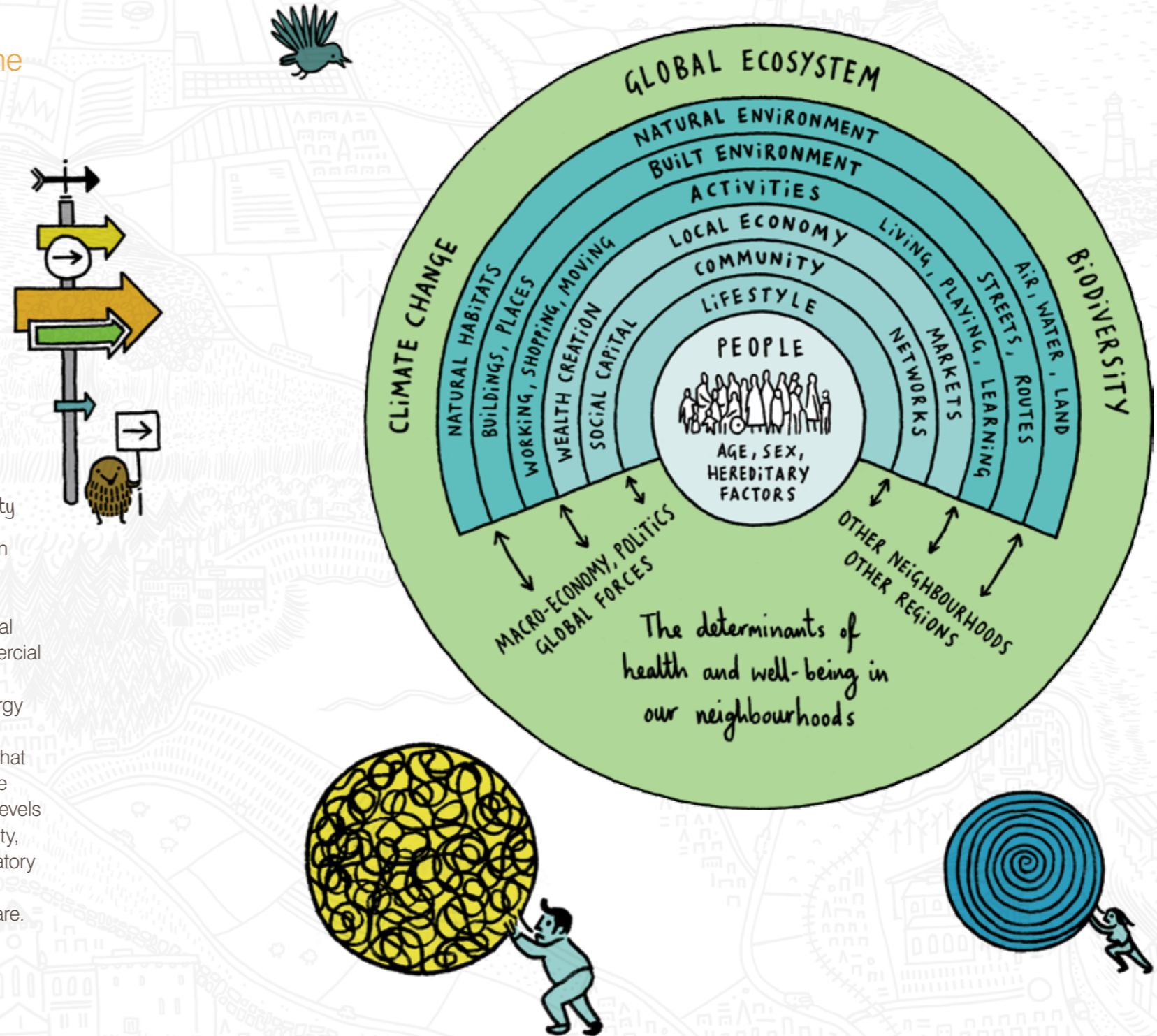
Examples of these social determinants include:

- our early childhood experiences and family life
- the quality of our education
- the physical environment in which we live
- the quality of our housing
- how much money we have
- how easy it is to access affordable and healthy food
- how included we feel in our community

Limitations in any of these conditions can powerfully influence our ability to make healthy choices. Even the lifestyles we lead are not exclusively down to individual choice. The emerging role of the 'commercial determinants' of health, such as the availability and promotion of cheap, energy dense food and drink, cheap or strong alcohol, and illicit tobacco often means that the healthier choice is not necessarily the easier choice. This results in increasing levels of the 'lifestyle diseases', including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and cancer, which increases pressure on our NHS and adult social care.

It is the variation in these social conditions which results in people experiencing different health outcomes. This is known as the social gradient in health but it is avoidable. Reducing health inequalities is a key priority for us in Northumberland.

By working with others we can help to make the healthier choice an easier choice, and by proportionately targeting our actions we can benefit all whilst reducing this gradient in health.



Public health is everybody's business

We intend to increase healthy life expectancy in our residents through addressing social inequalities in Northumberland. This will be achieved through working collaboratively with our Council departments, our partner organisations and our communities.

As health and wellbeing are influenced by so many different factors, the most effective way to enhance them and ensure equality in Northumberland is by improving the social conditions in which people live. Actions to achieve this across the life-course were identified in 2010 in the **Marmot Review of Health Inequalities**² and were reinforced in 2014 in the **Due North**³ report. These actions are listed below and include some areas for action at a local level which are recommended by Public Health England – click on these to find out more.



Give every child the best start in life

- Good quality parenting programmes⁴
- Improving the home to school transition⁵

Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives

- Building children and young people's resilience in schools⁶
- Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)⁷
- Adult learning services⁸

Create fair employment and good work for all

- Workplace interventions to improve health and wellbeing⁹
- Working with local employers to promote good quality work¹⁰
- Increasing employment opportunities and retention for people with a long-term health condition or disability¹¹
- Increasing employment opportunities and retention for older people¹²

Ensure a healthy standard of living for all

- Health inequalities and the living wage¹³
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Fuel poverty and cold home-related health problems¹⁴
- Improving access to green spaces¹⁵

Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention

- Prevention and early detection of long-term conditions

These actions span across all the social determinants of health and will have multiple benefits that extend beyond a reduction in health inequalities. Much of this work has already started in Northumberland and will have the greatest impact when we work in partnership with our:

- Council departments
- Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS
- Commissioned service providers
- Third and private sector organisations
- Local people

You can see how well we are performing in each area by checking the Marmot Indicators [here](#)¹⁶.

"...IT'S REMARKABLE HOW LITTLE PEOPLE REALLY KNOW ABOUT WHAT'S AVAILABLE TO THEM. I CAN HELP POINT THEM IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION JUST THROUGH TALKING TO THEM IN THE CAR..."

Volunteer RVS driver in Wooler



Public Health in Northumberland – what we do

The responsibility for public health has returned to the local authority, offering opportunities to influence the social determinants of health, and to develop an approach which focuses on wellbeing and the strengths and skills within our communities.

Public Health focuses on helping people to make healthy choices and reduce the risks of disease. Some of our responsibilities are nationally mandated by the Secretary of State for Health and other policy areas are

designated as local authority public health commissioning responsibilities.

The services we commission and our other functions are:

Nationally mandated commissioned services	Other commissioned services	Other functions
Universal health checks in children aged 0-5	Children aged 0-19	Health protection (mandated)
National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP)	School nursing	Public health advice
Sexual health (contraception & sexually transmitted infections)	Sexual health (advice, prevention & promotion)	Specialist research & intelligence
NHS Health Checks	Health improvement (physical activity, healthy weight, smoking & tobacco, substance misuse)	



Through workplace health we are also embedding public health throughout the Council so that our workforce will improve their own health and wellbeing, as well as that of the communities and families that they serve. Building on this work, the wider wellbeing of people in Northumberland will become the main focus of our work and is to be our new approach, working jointly across the Council.

"SIGNING UP TO THE [GET ACTIVE NORTHUMBERLAND] PROGRAMME WAS ONE OF THE BEST DECISIONS... THE EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN REALLY FUN, FRIENDLY, INFORMATIVE... SINCE THE COURSE I... HAVE A MUCH BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH MY CHILD WHEN IT COMES TO FOOD – I CAN NOW... ENSURE I'M GIVING MY FAMILY A HEALTHY BALANCED DIET"

Get Active Northumberland (GAN) Programme supports parents, children and young people who are concerned about their weight

"MY REASON FOR STOPPING SMOKING IS MY DAUGHTER AND SON – I DON'T WANT TO DIE YOUNG AND LEAVE MY KIDS WITHOUT A MAM"

Nicola, 27, a Beauty Therapist from Guidepost, stopped smoking with the support of Natalie her 8 year old daughter and Mandy from the Northumberland NHS Stop Smoking Service

After almost 40 years in the NHS, Public Health returned to the local authority in 2013. Here we can have a much larger impact on the social determinants of health through better integration with other functions. We are now in the early stages of working with other departments on topics such as 'making every contact count', licensing, planning, and sustainable and active travel. These are issues which will continue to be shared priorities for us in the coming years.



For more information on Public Health and what we do, [click here](#)¹⁷.

A focus on wellbeing

Improving wellbeing is proven to extend people's healthy life expectancy and helps to develop strong, resilient and independent communities who are less reliant on public services. This is our new focus.

Wellbeing is important for health as it can add years to our lives, improve quality of life, and is associated with healthy behaviours in both adults and children. In Northumberland we are starting to work closely with communities to improve health and wellbeing which will be achieved by focusing on what makes us well, rather than what makes us ill. This includes having autonomy, positive relationships, a purpose in life and self-acceptance, all of which enable communities to flourish. This is important to Public Health and to many other departments in the Council and partner organisations. We look forward to working jointly with them to improve wellbeing in Northumberland.

It is estimated that up to 40% of our wellbeing can be enhanced by getting involved in activities which are: meaningful and engaging; and build confidence and self-esteem. A set of five simple, evidence-based actions (connect, be active, take notice, give, keep learning) have been developed by the **New Economics Foundation** to help people identify such activities.

These 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' are key to Northumberland's focus on wellbeing. Click on each of the icons to find out more.



"AS PART OF MY RECOVERY [FROM ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE]... I USE THE STEPS OF WELLBEING... LOOKING AT WHAT I AM DOING WHEN I FEEL WELL AND WHAT I NEED TO DO WHEN I AM NOT WELL. I HAVE BECOME MORE AWARE AND MINDFUL OF MY RECOVERY AND WHAT I AM DOING TO STAY WELL."

Margaret, aged 70, had become dependent on alcohol after losing her husband. She graduated from Oaktrees, part of Northumberland Recovery Partnership and has been abstinent for 20 months.



Connect

...with the people around you. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

"...THE MEN'S COOKING SESSIONS... BY GOD, IT WAS GOOD FUN... WE HAD A LAUGH... AND IT WAS VERY, VERY VALUABLE... THE WELLBEING ASPECT OF GETTING PEOPLE TOGETHER WAS AS VALUABLE AS THE LOW COST AND HEALTHY EATING SIDE OF IT..."

Bell View Centre in Belford



Be Active

Being active makes you feel good. Discover an activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

"...REALLY ENJOYED [EXERCISE ON REFERRAL]... I FEEL MUCH HEALTHIER AGAIN... I'VE MADE LOADS OF NEW FRIENDS... IT HAS DEFINITELY LIFTED ALL THAT WAS FRIGHTENING... THAT HAS ALL GONE ALL TOGETHER NOW... I AM REALLY CONFIDENT AGAIN. I LOVE THE CLASS..."

Exercise on Referral Scheme



Take Notice

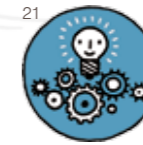
Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

"WE REALLY ENJOY WALKING/ RUNNING AROUND THE [BERWICK] WALLS, IT IS A NICE PLACE TO GO FOR A WALK DURING THE DAY... WE LIKE TO SEE NICE GARDENS, WITH FRIENDLY PEOPLE WALKING ABOUT"

Young Carers in North Northumberland

"THERE'S A CAMERA GROUP, CALLED CAMERADERIE... IT'S SELF-SUSTAINING NOW... IT'S A SELF-LED GROUP... YOU'RE OUT AND ABOUT ALL THE TIME TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS... MASSIVE WELLBEING PART OF IT... IT CATERS FOR ALL LEVELS... WE HELP EACH OTHER..."

Bell View Centre in Belford



Keep learning

Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

YOUNG PEOPLE FACED MANY BARRIERS WHEN THEY FIRST STARTED A COOKERY PROJECT IN ASHINGTON. PEOPLE WERE UNSURE OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITY TO RUN SUCH A PROJECT, BUT THEY OVERCAME THIS THROUGH THEIR DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT TO LEARNING, AND CREATING A FUN LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

Mixin' it Up project, Hirst Welfare Centre in Ashington



Give

Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

To support our focus on wellbeing in Northumberland we are developing a picture of wellbeing and resilience in our communities. This includes identifying community characteristics that promote wellbeing such as:

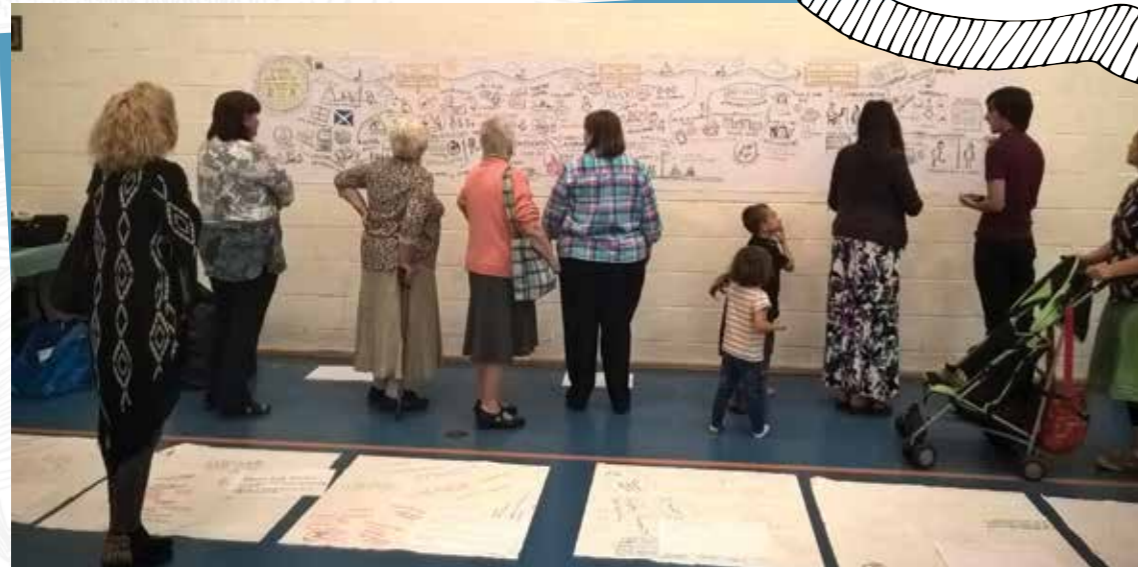
- relationships with others
- levels of volunteering
- satisfaction with varying aspects of life
- a sense of belonging to the local area

Through this work we are finding that many individuals, local groups and community organisations already have these characteristics and we will work to develop these further.

"WHEN YOU RUN SOCIAL GATHERINGS, PEOPLE COME. THEY GET TO KNOW YOU AND YOU GET TO KNOW THEM, AND YOU BUILD RELATIONSHIPS OVER TEA AND CAKES. WE MAKE SURE WE HAVE VOLUNTEERS TO TALK TO PEOPLE, AND THEY FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON FOR PEOPLE AND THEN WHAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL..."

Resident in Wooler

Read about our conversations with people in North Northumberland [here](#)²³



We intend to visit other communities in the county and one of our key ambitions at this early stage is to better understand existing assets in areas with high wellbeing, and share good examples across Northumberland. This will become easier as we build more relationships with local people. We have already met many passionate residents who care about where they live, who know how to solve the issues in their area, and who feel empowered and valued when they are involved in decisions that affect their area. Half of Northumberland residents agree that people pull together to improve the local area and we want to see this proportion grow. Our role now is to facilitate change to make it easier to be healthy, and to connect people with services and other partners.

"WE HAVE LEARNED THAT YOU CANNOT IMPOSE ANYTHING ON PEOPLE; IT MUST COME FROM THE COMMUNITY ITSELF"

Resident in Wooler

In recent months we have started visiting local communities and listening to what helps them to be well. In these conversations we are beginning to learn what is important to them and to identify 'strengths', or 'assets' that already exist in these communities.

Our aim is to work with local people by building on these positives and facilitating them to find and maintain local solutions which improve wellbeing. This 'asset-based approach' acknowledges that the expertise to improve health and wellbeing already exists in the community and that our role in Public Health is to facilitate rather than do.



Working with communities – building on the positives

Another aspect of this new focus is a listening relationship with our communities – listening to what matters to people and what works. Starting with the positives, we will work together to identify and shape initiatives to improve wellbeing and healthy life expectancy.



Challenges are also opportunities

We and our communities face many challenges, particularly around austerity and welfare reform. These challenges can be turned into opportunities as we re-think how we work by using our shared knowledge, vitality and community spirit to really make a difference. Doing what we have always done is not an option – now is the time to be brave.

The overarching goal of Public Health in Northumberland is to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and to reduce health inequalities. This can be achieved by proportionately targeting our actions, and in the context of shrinking financial resources and the recent welfare reforms, this becomes a huge challenge; but we embrace this challenge. By identifying community assets and working with local people to build on these we can work in a different way to help them to help themselves. The people of Northumberland will then see the positive health impact that they deserve and will have the power to sustain this. These challenges therefore provide opportunities for us all to be brave and do things differently.

"WE REALLY ARE WORKING TO HELP OURSELVES BUT SOMETIMES HELPERS NEED HELP..."

Resident in Wooler



We will challenge our thinking and move from a 'deficit model' to focusing on and maximising the strengths already in our communities. Having communities that feel valued, listened to and empowered has the greatest likelihood of improving health and wellbeing and resilience.

We will harness the skills and passion for Northumberland in our own workforce so that they can be agents of change, to seize every opportunity and make every contact with people a health improving opportunity.

We will look for every opportunity to work collaboratively with our partners to develop a shared language, understanding and approach which recognises and harnesses the strengths and skills in our communities.



Useful links

- 1 <http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#page/1/gid/1000042/pat/6/par/E12000001/ati/102/are/E06000057>
- 2 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>
- 3 <http://www.cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Due-North-Report-of-the-Inquiry-on-Health-Equity-in-the-North-final1.pdf>
- 4 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/good-quality-parenting-programmes-and-the-home-to-school-transition>
- 5 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/good-quality-parenting-programmes-and-the-home-to-school-transition>
- 6 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/building-children-and-young-peoples-resilience-in-schools>
- 7 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/reducing-the-number-of-young-people-not-in-employment-education-or-training-neet>
- 8 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/adult-learning-services>
- 9 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/increasing-employment-opportunities-and-improving-workplace-health>
- 10 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/increasing-employment-opportunities-and-improving-workplace-health/briefing-5b-working-with-local-employers-to-promote-good-quality-work>
- 11 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/increasing-employment-opportunities-and-improving-workplace-health/briefing-5c-increasing-employment-opportunities-and-retention-for-people-with-a-long-term-health-condition-or-disability>
- 12 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/increasing-employment-opportunities-and-improving-workplace-health/briefing-5d-increasing-employment-opportunities-and-retention-for-older-people>
- 13 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/health-inequalities-and-the-living-wage>
- 14 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fuel-poverty-and-cold-home-related-health-problems>
- 15 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/improving-access-to-green-spaces>
- 16 <http://admin.instituteofhealthequity.org/Content/FileManager/Indicators2015/LocalPDFs/marmot-indicators-for-local-authorities-in-england-2015-northumberland.pdf>
- 17 <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Care/Health.aspx>
- 18 <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/connect-for-mental-wellbeing.aspx>
- 19 <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mental-benefits-of-exercise.aspx>
- 20 <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mindfulness.aspx>
- 21 <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/learn-for-mental-wellbeing.aspx>
- 22 <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/give-for-mental-wellbeing.aspx>
- 23 http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Health-and-social-care/Public%20Health/Berwick-World-Cafe_Next-steps-Report.pdf



If you need this information in Large Print, Braille, Audio or in another format or language please contact us:

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NORTHUMBERLAND
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