

Meeting of the Public Health Select Committee - 18th September 2023

Report of the Acting Director of Public Health

5 to 19 Public Health Programme

Purpose of report

1. To update members on the current Public Health workstreams relating to school aged children and young people in Dudley Borough. The report focuses on five areas; mitigating the impact of poverty, prevention and reduction of childhood obesity, vaccination uptake, emotional wellbeing and reducing risk taking behaviour.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - Members support service planning to ensure developments reflect the growing numbers and increasing diversity of children living in the borough and the focus on reducing children inequalities;
 - That members support development of a system-wide strategy coordinating actions to mitigate the impact of poverty on children. Also, to encourage system participation in the strategic mitigating poverty group and join the cost-of-living training opportunity arranged for councillors on 5th October 2023;
 - Members support development and implementation of a system wide, evidence-based programme to prevent, reduce and tackle childhood obesity;
 - Members support a revised communications plan to ensure children and young people, families, schools, and others are aware of the services available in the Borough to support health and wellbeing.

Background

3. This report focuses on Public Health programmes working with children and young people aged 5 to 19 years. However, we recognise the major impact of earlier experiences on children and young people's health and

wellbeing, in particular the vital importance of the First 1001 days of life. Healthy pregnancy and the care received in the first months and years of life has a profound impact on the health of children starting school and continues to have an impact on emotional health and resilience into adolescence.

4. We also recognise the increase in self-efficacy of children as they grow, and that the role parenting and close family play will change as a child moves through the teen years and into adulthood. This will vary according to the individual needs of the child, particularly for children with additional vulnerabilities such as a learning disability.
5. This report focuses on the data and activity relating to five areas of Public Health focused on school aged children:
 - childhood obesity
 - vaccination uptake
 - emotional health and wellbeing
 - risk taking behaviours amongst adolescents
 - child poverty
6. Figures 1 and 2 highlight key data relating to children and young people in Dudley, whilst figure 3 visualises the wider determinants of health and wellbeing for children.

Figure 1 Dudley Children in Numbers

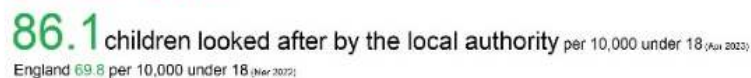
Population by school year (22/23)



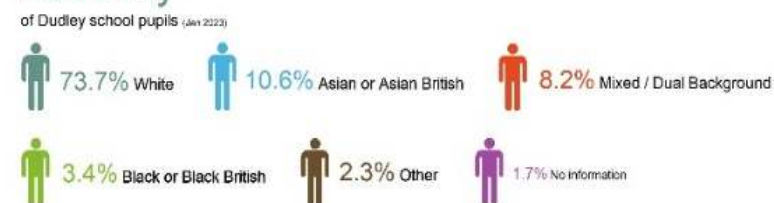
Education



Social Care



Ethnicity



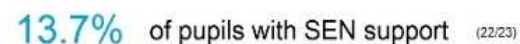
Income Deprivation



Free School Meals



Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)



11/05/2023



...the historic capital of the Black Country

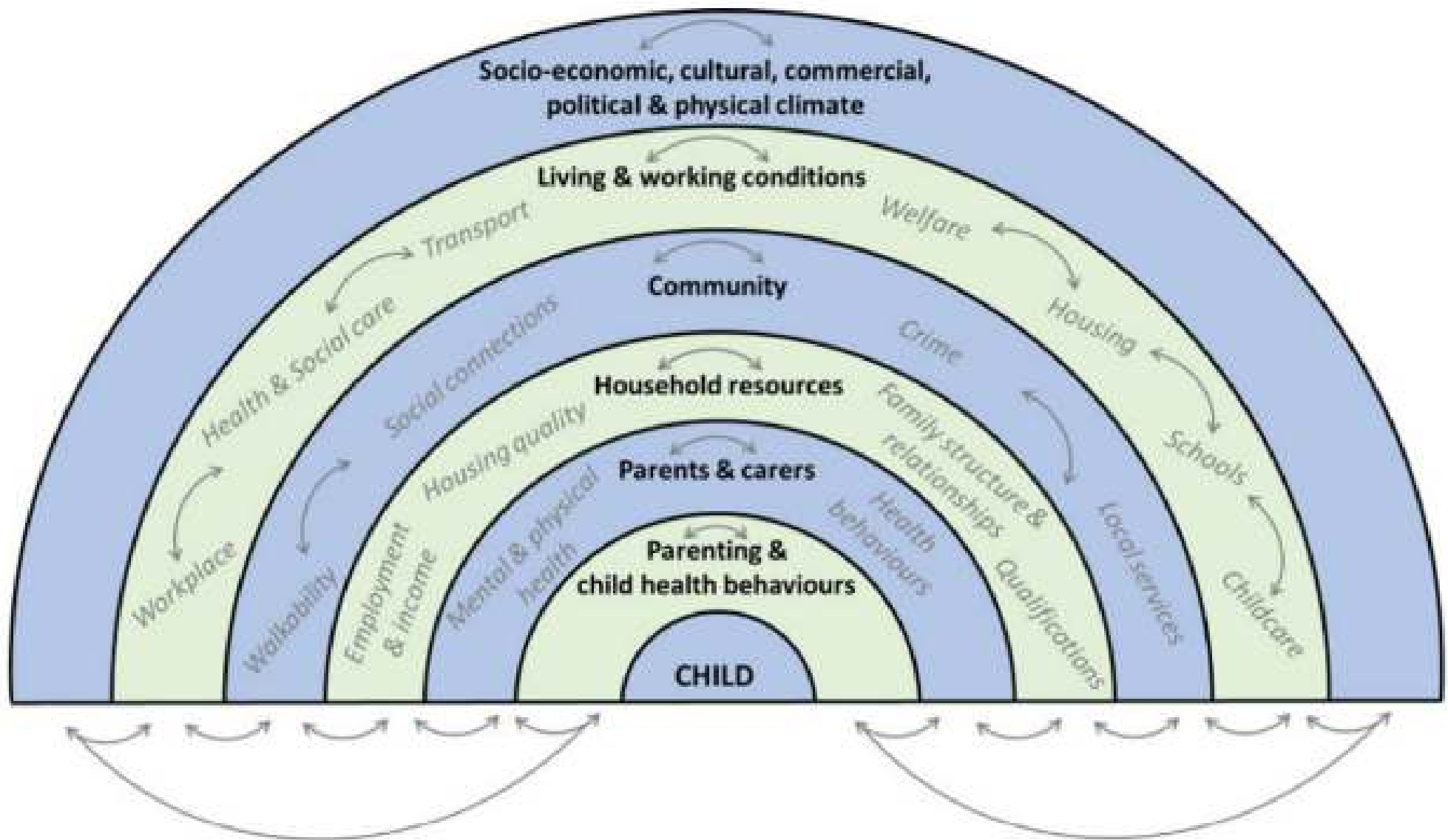


Figure 2 key performance indicators related to school aged children



Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Key stage 3	Key stage 4	Key stage 5
90.4% of children have received 2 doses of MMR by 5 years	3,509 children in Dudley are supported with an Education, Health and Care Plan		1.73% of under 18s become pregnant each year	
1 in 10 children are overweight or obese at reception age	4 in 10 children are overweight or obese when they leave primary school		9% of young people 16-18 years are not in education, employment or training	
Less than two thirds of children achieve a good level of development in reception	6.9% of primary aged pupils are persistently absent from school		85.1% of 12-13 year olds have taken up HPV vaccination, one of the highest in the region	
17.3% of 5 year old have visually obvious dental decay	Only half of children and young people are physically active; this is high compared to neighbouring areas		Hospital admissions due to substance or alcohol abuse is the lowest in the West Midlands	
21.2% of children live in absolute low income families				
20.8% of children take up free schoolmeals in primary years				

Figure 3 Social determinants of child health from Pearce et al, 2019¹

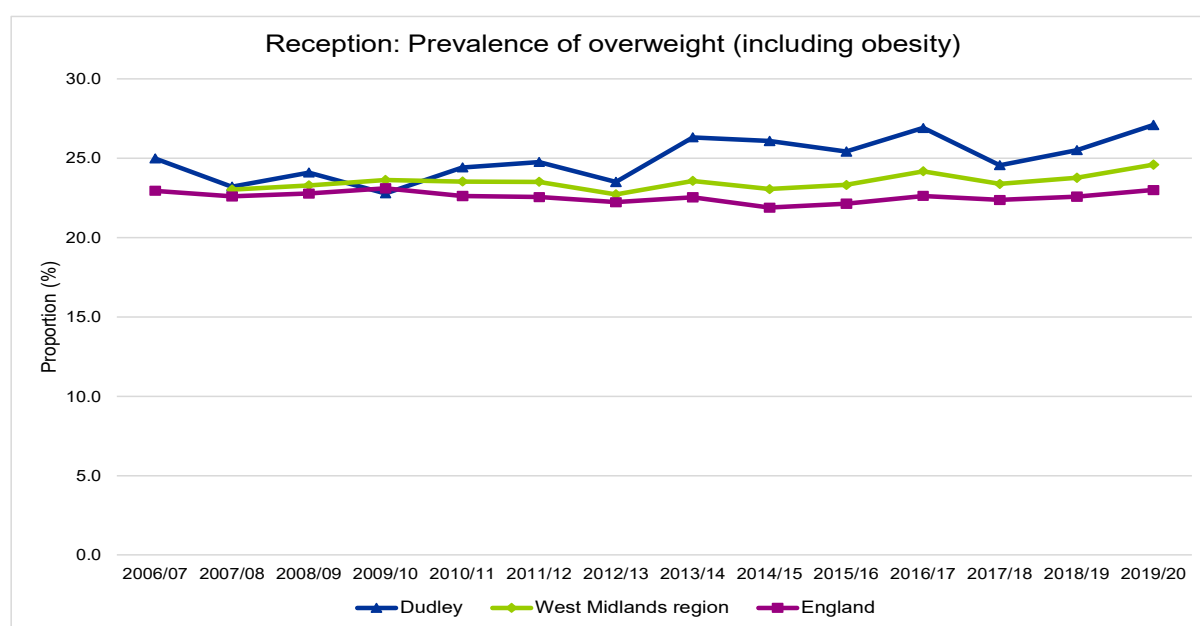


Childhood Obesity

7. Obesity is one of the biggest public health challenges facing our country – competing with tobacco for the leading cause of premature death¹. As well as causing obvious physical changes, it can lead to several serious and potentially life-threatening condition in adulthood including:
 - type 2 diabetes
 - coronary heart disease
 - some types of cancer, such as breast and bowel
 - stroke
8. Obesity in children can also affect their quality of life and teasing from other children leading to psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem.
9. The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) is delivered as part of the School Health Service and measures the height and weight of children in reception class (aged 4 to 5) and year 6 (aged 10 to 11), to assess overweight and obesity levels in children within primary schools.

Figure 4: Reception Prevalence of Overweight or Obese children in Dudley by year

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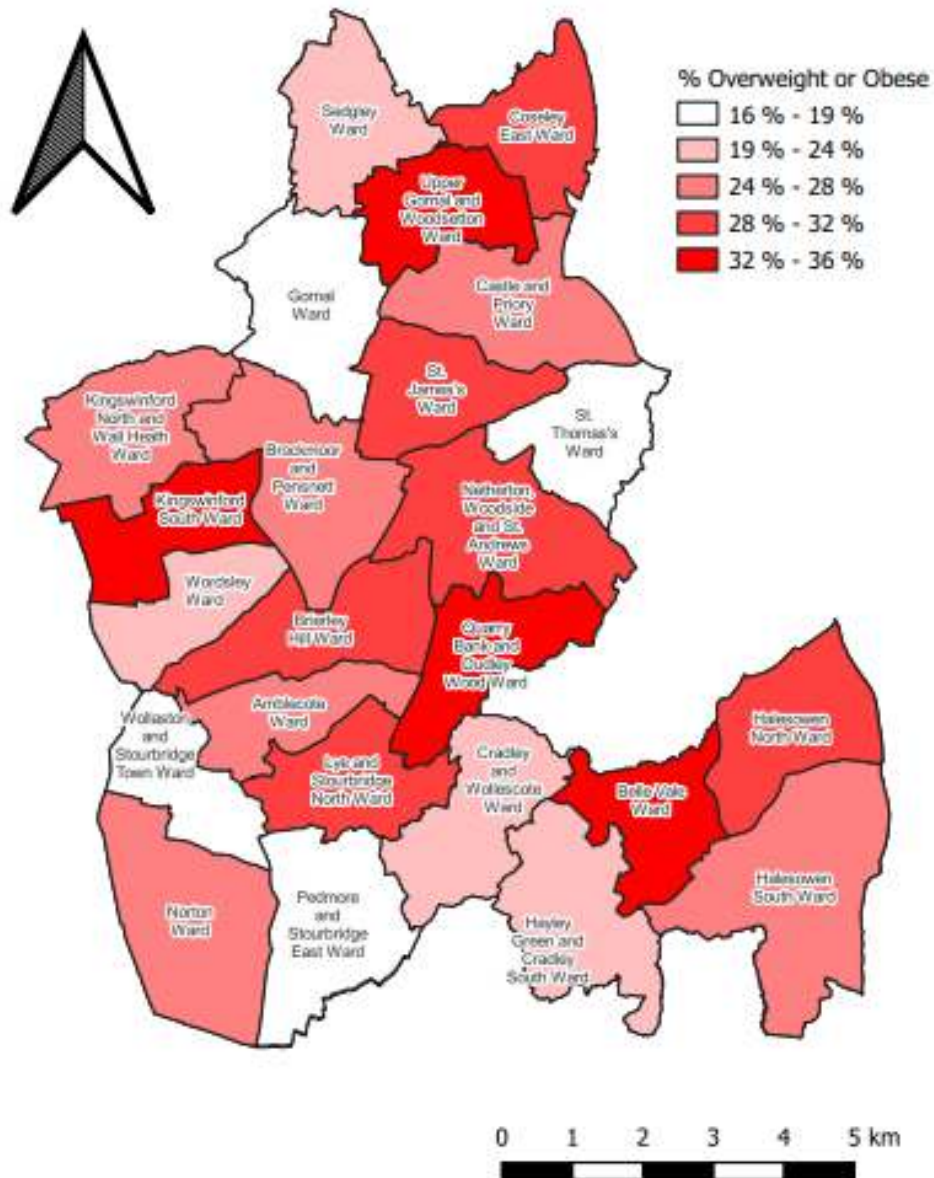


¹ <https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2019/07/23/the-prevention-green-paper-a-chance-to-turn-talk-into-action/>

11. Studies tracking child obesity have shown those overweight in reception are more likely to continue being overweight through year 6 into adulthood. The probability of children who are overweight or living with obesity becoming overweight or obese adults increases with age.
12. The prevalence of overweight and obesity in both reception and year 6 is higher than both national and regional figures. 12.3% of reception age children in Dudley are obese. By the end of primary school, this proportion rises to 26.9%

Figure 5: Reception: Prevalence of Obese children in Dudley by year

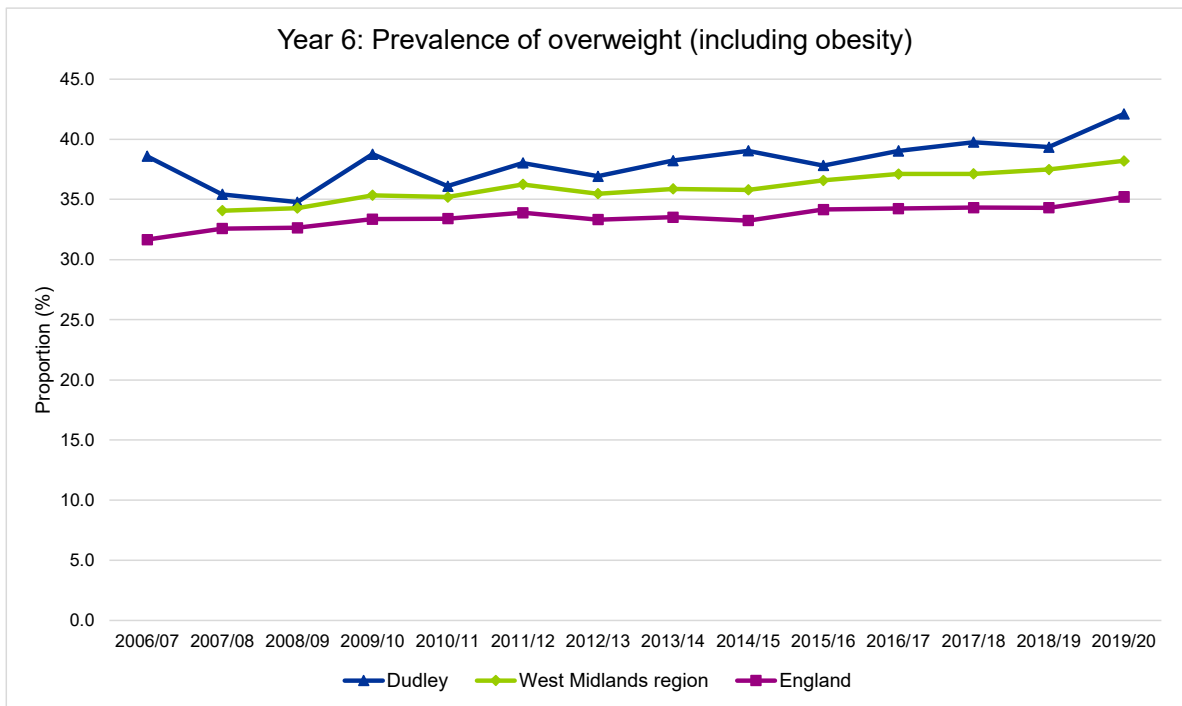
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Source: National Child Measurement Programme
 Produced by: Intelligence Team, Dudley MBC
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Figure 6: Year 6: prevalence of obese/overweight population in Dudley by year.

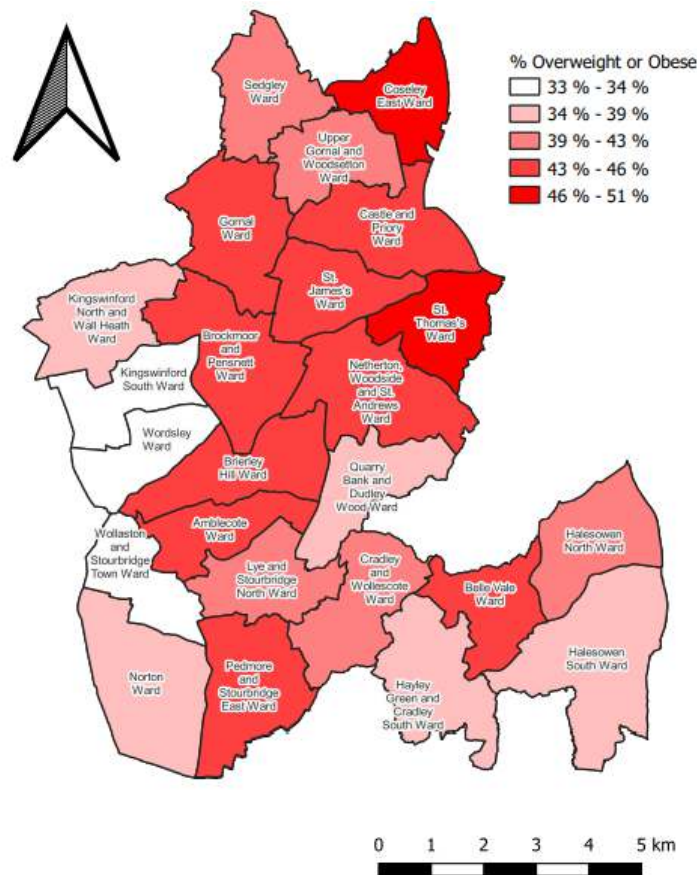
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15. One in every four children in Dudley are obese by the time they leave primary school, a figure that is increasing and getting worse.

Figure 7: Year 6: Prevalence of overweight or obesity in Dudley by ward

16.



17. The maps demonstrate that there are several wards that stand out in terms of obesity rates (St Thomas's being over half of the measured population (51%) being overweight or obese followed closely by Coseley East (47.5%).
18. Since transfer to Local Government, Dudley's Public Health team have invested over £1 million to prevent and reduce childhood obesity, with little impact on body mass index.

National interventions

19. In recent years we have seen national initiatives including:
 - A government-led social marketing campaign, Change4Life, running for nearly a decade.
 - New government standards for the procurement of food in the public sector and food provision in schools.
 - Restrictions on the marketing of food to children on TV.
 - Investment in cycling infrastructure.
 - The introduction of a strong fiscal intervention in the form of the soft drink industry levy.
20. Whilst local areas still have a role to play in supporting healthy lifestyles within their communities, some "top down" interventions are still required to enable and sustain change at a population level and halt the increase in all age obesity. The government published its policy paper, [Tackling Obesity: empowering children and adults to live healthier lives](#). This included legislation to end promotion of foods high in fat, sugar, and salt. However, implementation of associated legislation has now been delayed for a second time, with intended commencement of October 2024.

Current DMBC Workstreams

21. During 2020/2021, commissioned child weight management services, including those provided by our core Healthy Child Programme workforce (health visitors, school nurses) were paused. We took this opportunity to review the services and are currently proposing that due to the levels of obesity in childhood that 'healthy weight' support for children and young people should be universally offered (apart from Slimming World for the very overweight) regardless of weight status. The rationale for this approach is outlined below:
 - It supports a preventative approach to obesity and ensures every family can access support if required, regardless of weight status.

- Sustained and impactful behaviour change can take a long time to achieve changes in weight status and therefore may not be evident in the short term.
- A child's weight status should not be the only assessment made to determine whether a family requires lifestyle support/intervention e.g., a child with a healthy weight maybe inactive/sedentary and/or consume an unhealthy diet.
- Less of a focus should be on weight and more emphasis placed on healthy lifestyle habits that contribute to maintaining a healthy weight both now and in the future.
- The evaluation of services would no longer be based on changes in weight status, but on lifestyles changes, increases in confidence and improvements in mental health indicators, all essential prerequisites to long term healthy weight maintenance.
- Positive behaviour change is not always captured by assessing weight status e.g., an increase in physical activity levels or an increase in fruit and vegetable intake may not lead to a change in weight status, however both behaviours can have a significant impact on health outcomes and in the long term may lead to weight loss/healthy weight maintenance.
- It will remove the stigma which may help engage more families and consequently increase uptake and reach of support services.
- All family members can make changes together regardless of weight status, reducing stigmatisation of a young person that is overweight.

Vaccination Uptake

22. The UK routine vaccination schedule continues through the school years, with programmes for both age specific and seasonal vaccines commissioned by NHSE and delivered by the School Age Immunisation Team.
23. Pre Covid, Dudley had a higher population vaccination coverage than the English average for all child and pre-school vaccinations. However, an impact of the covid pandemic was a decrease in uptake of childhood vaccinations across England. Dudley followed this trend however the latest data shows that the level of decrease in Dudley was much less than in England. Therefore, vaccination figures in Dudley are generally higher than England average for all childhood vaccinations.

Table 1: Childhood vaccination uptake and trend in Dudley

24.

Population vaccination coverage in Dudley and England (2021/22 unless stated)	Percentage (%) of children receiving vaccination in Dudley (in England) 2021/22 figures unless indicated	Recent trend in percentage of children receiving vaccination in Dudley
Population vaccination coverage- Dtap/ IPV/ Hib (1 year old)	94.6 (91.8)	Decreasing
Population vaccination coverage- Dtap/ IPV/ Hib (2 years old)	94.6 (93.0)	Decreasing
Population vaccination coverage- PCV	96.1 (93.2) – 2019/20	Similar
Population vaccination coverage- Hib/ MenC booster (2 years old)	92.3 (89.0)	Decreasing
Population vaccination coverage- PCV booster	92.3 (89.3)	Decreasing
Population vaccination coverage- MMR for one dose (2 years old)	92.8 (89.2)	Decreasing
Population vaccination coverage- MMR for one dose (5 years old)	95.6 (93.4)	Decreasing
Population vaccination coverage- MMR for two doses (5 years old)	90.4 (85.7)	Decreasing

25.

The predominant age based routine vaccinations take place at

- 12-13 years old (year 8) for human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine The national HPV vaccination programme for girls was introduced in 2008, its aim being to protect women against infections which cause cervical cancer. In 2019 universal HPV vaccination was offered to 12 -13-year-old boys. This is now given as a single vaccine and has demonstrated a remarkable reduction in cervical cancer since introduction.
- 14-15 years old (year 9) for Meningococcal, tetanus, diphtheria and polio. These are given as two vaccines, given at the same time.

Figure 9: Year 9 uptake of HPV Vaccine

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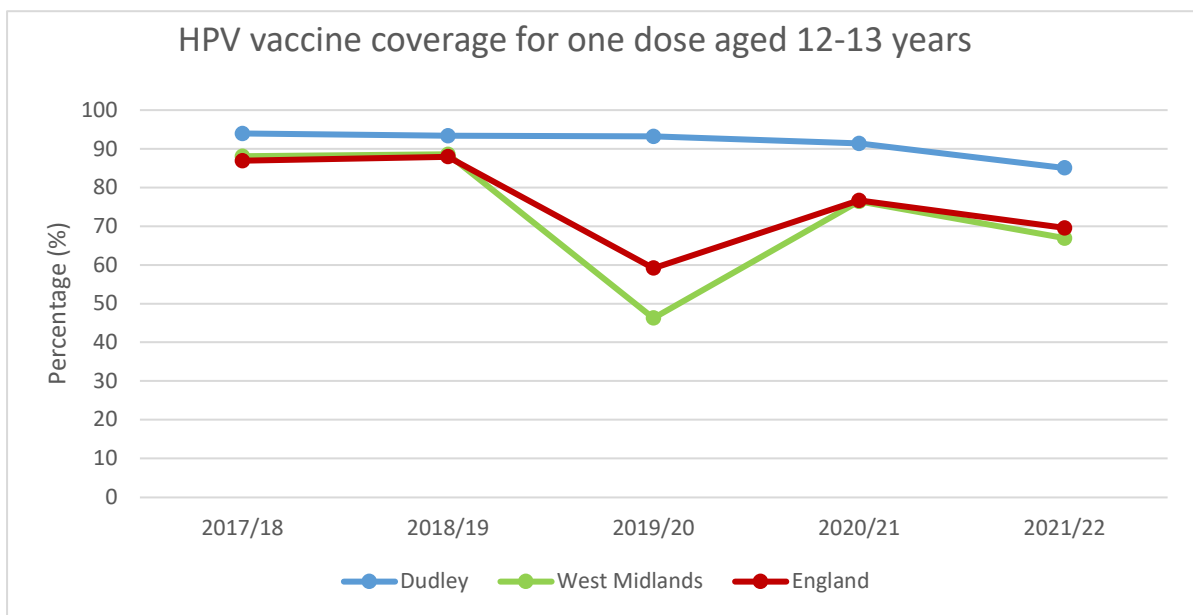
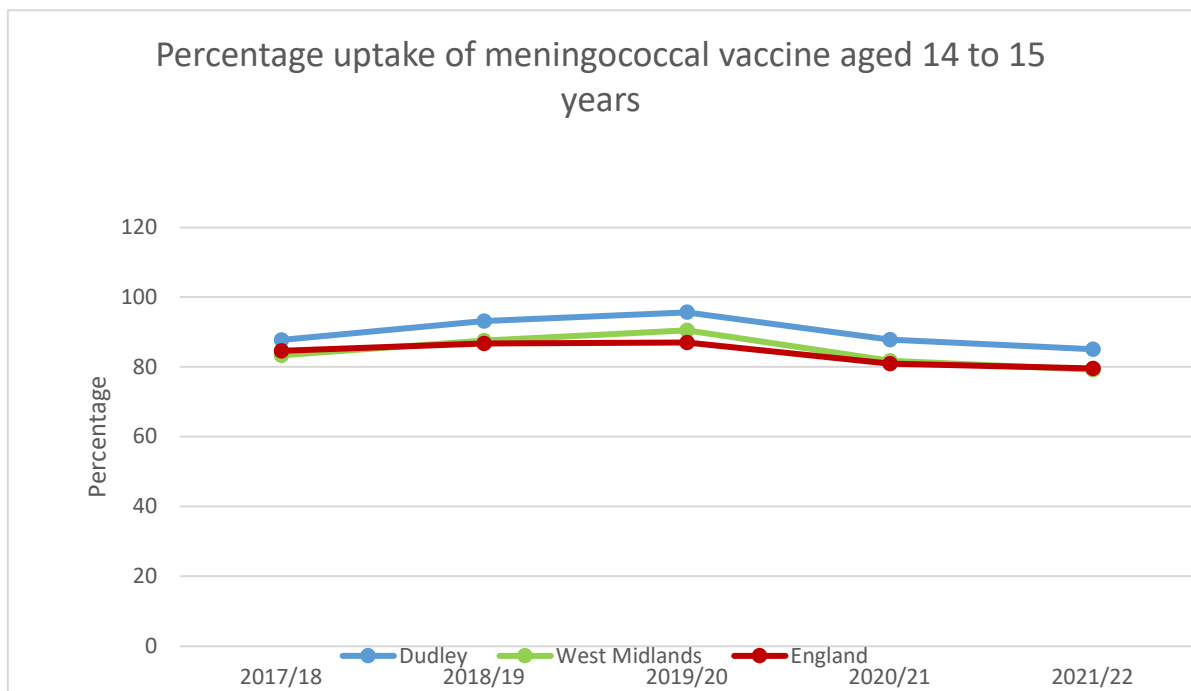


Figure 10 Year 10 uptake of Meningococcal vaccination

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28. As these vaccines are usually given at school, it is likely that pandemic related school closures may have led to reduced vaccine access. However, Dudley has maintained high levels of vaccine uptake compared to other areas.

29. Maintaining vaccination rates nationally remains a challenge.

- Despite this, Dudley consistently outperforms neighbouring authorities in the Black Country vaccination uptake. We do this by working closely with NHS commissioners and providers of vaccination services, to

ensure that despite the challenges we support them to overcome potential barriers.

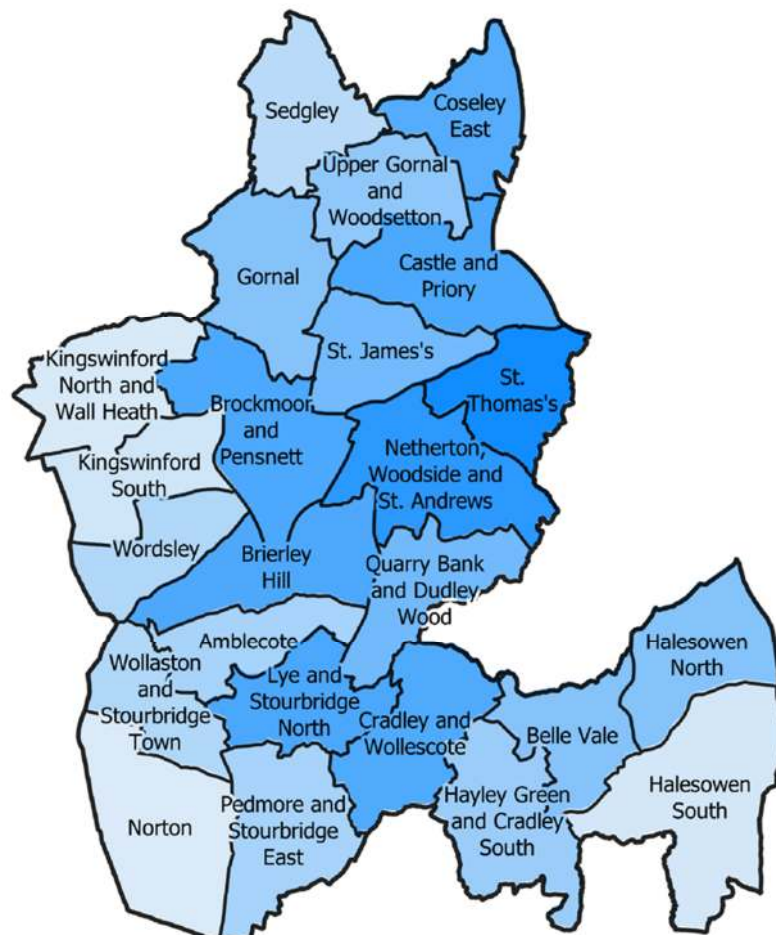
- We have established, an immunisation group chaired by the Head of Health Protection, that reports to the Health Protection Board, bringing together colleagues from across the system to identify risks, and solutions to ensure the best possible uptake. The Health Protection Team have developed an Immunisation resource pack and are delivering education sessions to our commissioned providers of 0-19 services, to ensure they feel confident to discuss immunisations with parents and children. We have also delivered education and training to Dudley College students on the importance of immunisations.
- We have worked closely with the ICB to establish innovative Pop-up vaccination solutions into our town centres (featured on Midlands Today) and as part of play week to offer improved access to both childhood and adolescent vaccinations as well as have conversations with those who may be hesitant.
- We are working with ICB colleagues on solutions to support vaccine uptake and general health inequalities in some of most vulnerable communities.
- We work closely with partners and our communication team to promote immunisation, including through our e-bulletins, Your Home Magazine and social media platforms.
- Finally, with winter approaching we will be working with the NHS and our education colleagues to ensure the best possible uptake for the school flu vaccination programme including those outside mainstream education.

Child poverty

30. Children and young people's physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing are significantly shaped by the social determinants of health into which children and young people are born, live, learn and grow. There is a complex interrelationship between the experiences an individual child has in a family and those they experience in the wider community. Negative experiences, both at home and in the community, may mean that children are not only at greater risk of poorer outcomes because of these experiences but also of engaging in harmful activities as they grow up which increase their risks still further. This can perpetuate inequality throughout life and from one generation to the next. It emphasises the importance of addressing the risk factors which make children more vulnerable at an individual level but also in terms of the causes of wider risk factors in families and within a community.²

Material well-being

31. Socio-economic disadvantage is one of the main causes of health inequalities in the UK. Factors such as income, employment, education, and community safety contribute around half of modifiable factors affecting health and life expectancy.
32. Poverty can be easily defined as households where expenditure on necessities exceeds income. However, there are a variety of national definitions including relation to mean national income, fuel poverty and eligibility to means tested welfare benefits. Data from 2020/21 indicates that nationally:
- 25% of children live in low-income households
 - 70% of these children live with an adult who works
 - 40% of people in receipt of Universal Credit are working adults
 - 15% of older people live in low-income households
33. Figure 11: Childhood deprivation in Dudley by ward: IDACI 2019



34. Table 2 (below) displays data on the percentage of children per ward living in relative low-income families, ranging from 10.7% in Norton ward, to 43.8% in St Thomas's ward.

35. Table 2 Percentage of children living in relative low-income families by ward (Source: Local insight)

Ward	Percentage
Amblecote	19.0%
Belle Vale	24.6%
Brierley Hill	33.8%
Brockmoor and Pensnett	34.0%
Castle and Priory	34.0%
Coseley East	32.5%
Cradley and Wollescote	33.3%
Gornal	24.6%
Halesowen North	24.7%
Halesowen South	11.7%
Hayley Green and Cradley South	20.9%
Kingswinford North and Wall Heath	11.1%
Kingswinford South	12.5%
Lye and Stourbridge North	34.1%
Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews	39.4%
Norton	10.7%
Pedmore and Stourbridge East	19.0%
Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood	27.7%
Sedgley	16.2%
St James's	27.6%
St Thomas's	43.8%
Upper Gornal and Woodsetton	22.7%
Wollaston and Stourbridge Town	17.4%
Wordsley	17.4%

36. Many of the key health behaviours significant to the development of chronic disease follow social gradient: smoking, obesity, lack of physical exercise, unhealthy diet etc. The current cost of living crisis, coupled with recent Covid-19 pandemic is resulting in ever increasing social and economic inequalities.
37. Income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) measures the proportion of all children aged 0 – 15 living in income deprived families. A higher score indicates that an area is experiencing high levels of deprivation.
38. Compared to other areas in the Black Country, Dudley has the highest IDACI rank (is the least deprived) notwithstanding this there are 28 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Dudley that fall within the 10%

most deprived areas in England when ranked on the IDACI measure. Dudley is still ranked 72 most deprived out of 317 local authorities.

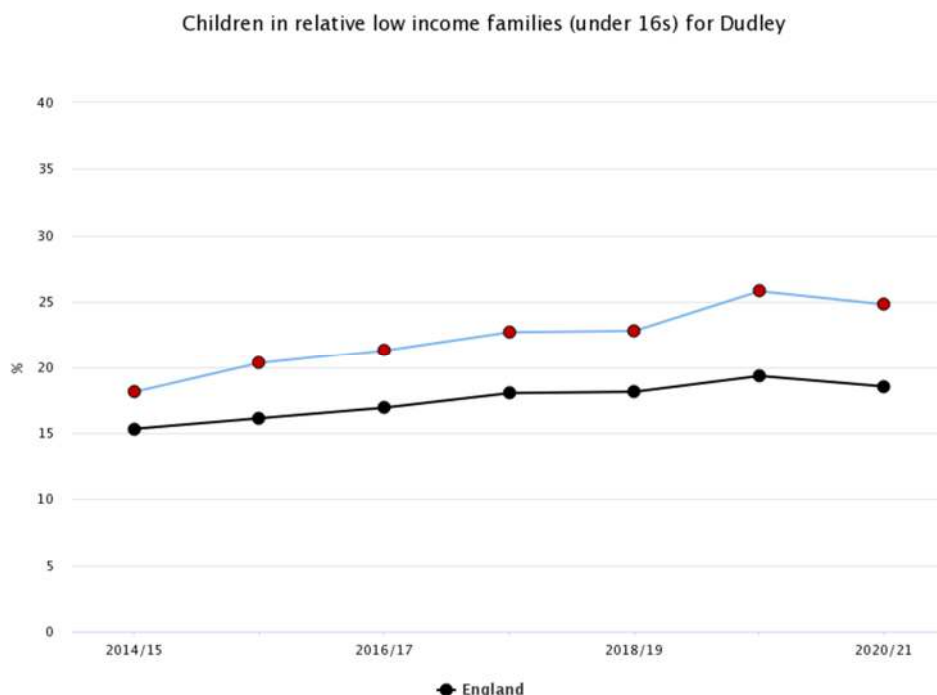
- 39. The ward with the highest IDACI score is Brockmoor and Pensnett and the ward with the lowest IDACI score is Kingswinford North and Wall Heath.
- 40. An alternate measure of poverty is related to household income.

Indicator	Definition
Relative low income	Households with income below 60% of the median in that year (currently below £18,000)
Absolute low income	Households with income below 60% of (inflation adjusted) median income as it stood in 2011 (currently less than £13,072)

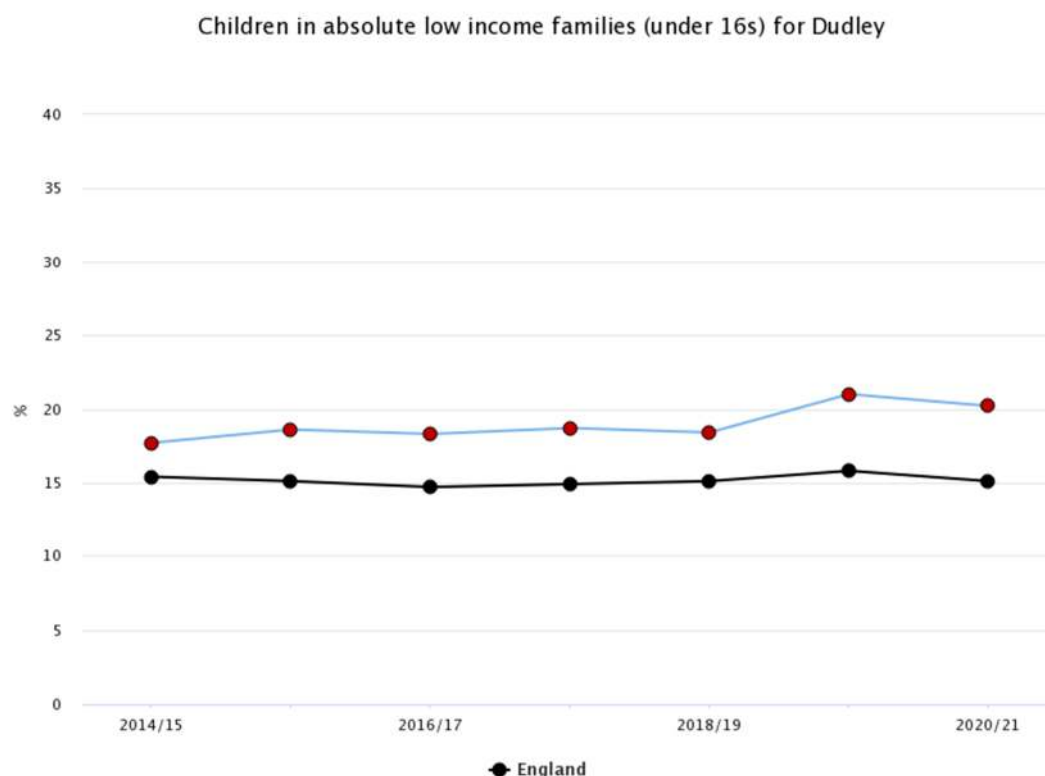
- 41. In 2020/21, a quarter of children in Dudley were in families with relative low income, which is similar to the West Midlands average. However, it is significantly higher than the England average of 18.5%. This trend is increasing and getting worse, with the gap between the England average and Dudley figures widening.

Figure 12: Children in relative low-income families (under 16s) for Dudley.

- 42.



43. In 2020/21, 20.2% of Dudley's children under the age of 16 years lived in households classed in absolute low income compared to 15.1% for England. This equates to 12,604 children, with the trend suggesting that this is increasing, and the gap between Dudley and England getting larger.
44. The lag in data does not take in to account the full effect of covid and recent cost of living crisis which other data suggests may have had a significant impact on Dudley children and their families.
45. Figure 13: Children in absolute low-income families (under 16s) for Dudley



What works to reduce poverty?

46. There is no quick fix to solving poverty, but several parts of the UK have implemented measures to reduce the impact of poverty in the short term and to reduce poverty in the longer term. This report highlights three approaches from parts of the UK.

Cost of living crisis in Wales

47. Poverty is a longstanding issue in Wales, with almost a third of children living in low-income households. Welsh housing stock is some of the least energy efficient in Europe, with as estimated 45% of households experiencing fuel poverty.

48. The 2023 Child Poverty Strategy for Wales³ is currently open to consultation and includes 5 objectives using a Public Health approach to tackle poverty.
- Reduce costs and maximise family income, including maximising take up of welfare benefit entitlements and the Healthy Start programme, supporting third sector organisations to reduce food poverty and extending provision of free school meals to all primary aged pupils.
 - Creating pathways out of poverty to enable people to fulfil their potential, ensuring all children have the best start in life, ensuring school education is cost neutral, and supporting those with disabilities into good work.
 - Supporting child and family wellbeing, including a child's rights approach across government; prioritising appropriate housing, supporting mental health and ensuring play, sport, and youth opportunities.
 - Building communities, recognising the role of local, accessible services, particularly in rural areas.
 - Challenge the stigma of poverty, enshrining the UN declaration on the Rights of the Child in law, delivering services with kindness and compassion and ensuring all educational settings are inclusive.
 - Collaboration across all services at national, regional, and local level.

Leeds City Council – Cost of Living Response

49. Research demonstrated that the resilience of low-income households to cope with a crisis was becoming weaker, with massive increases in needs for emergency welfare support post Covid-19 pandemic.
50. A Cost of Living and Welfare Board was developed to drive a city-wide solution to welfare provision and addressing the cost-of-living crisis, with a specific focus on food, fuel, housing, and digital inclusion.
51. Targeted interventions were developed including:
- Heating on Prescription, ensuring that those most at risk of ill health and hospital admissions due to the adverse effects of cold weather could access the Green Doctors service and receive fuel payments where needed.
 - 127 referrals from via Primary care
 - 755 households with a cold related illness were assisted
 - 1116 people were directly assisted to reduce fuel poverty
 - The Fire service used social vulnerability index and joint funded winter warm packs to families in need, which included blankets, hats, gloves and scarfs, thermal cup, hot water bottles.

³ Welsh Government (2023) [Child Poverty Strategy for Wales](#)

- Workforce Development: Developed resources and training to increase workforce knowledge of the support available in Leeds for fuel poverty and Winter Warmth initiative.

Havering Council: Cost of Living Response

52. In Havering, a third of children live in low-income households, with only a fifth of the population earning the Living Wage. Havering Council partnered with the local NHS to mitigate poverty, with the twin focus to “stay on target” and give “money to those that needed it before they needed it”.
53. The focus was on a specific group of people – those who use high energy medical equipment with long term conditions and disabilities. Using a direct marketing approach, they received 62 applications, including 20 made within the first hour, highlighting the need.
54. Review of the scheme found:
- Residents were keen to apply, there was very little concern from the public that this could have been a “scam”.
 - People reported that there was an easy application form process.
 - This was an effective use of cost-of-living help services.
55. Havering Council have since developed the model to expand the scope to include more medical equipment and increase the individual funding available.

Dudley position

56. Dudley’s Strategic Mitigating Poverty Group coordinates the system wide actions to prevent and mitigate poverty. In relation to child poverty, local coordination of national initiatives currently supports the following initiatives:

Free school meals

57. 10,5056 school age children receive income related free school meals in Dudley, which equates to 20.8% of primary aged pupils and 18.9% of secondary age pupils. Around 5% of eligible pupils do not take up the offer of free school meals. To receive income related free school meals, families must be in receipt of income related welfare benefits or have a household income less than £7,400 per year. If pupils are in receipt of free school meals, schools also receive a government funded pupil premium to reduce the attainment gap linked to poverty.

Holiday Activity and Food

58. Around half of children eligible for free school meals took part in the Holiday Activity Fund in 2022, with around a third of participants coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. 2,800 children and young people are registered to take part in activities over Summer 2023. Key themes are around food, physical activity, signposting, SEND and supporting families.

Household Support Fund

59. Since 2021, the Department for Work and Pensions have allocated £13,000,000 to Dudley residents via the Household Support Fund. Over half of the government's 23/24 Household Support Fund allocation for Dudley is directed to supporting households with children, with £2,043,393 dispersed over the past 12 months. Proactive support over school holidays has continued with vouchers worth £10 for each child every week of the school holidays issued to families in receipt of free school meals. Family Hubs and School have a pot of hardship funds that they can allocate as required by their families. This has been used for support from a lost bus fare home for a school child to supporting an energy bill for a family.
60. Dedicated funding has been identified for care leavers which has supported with a variety of needs from warm winter clothing to kitchen appliances.
61. Families can also access Household Support Fund via the application scheme, the Cost-of-Living Hubs and community based third sector organisations.
62. *"We didn't know support funds were held via Just Straight Talk until Public Health suggested that we speak with them. Thank you, for supporting the young mom and her baby with such care and compassion to ensure she has a safe home for her baby. I can honestly say I've noticed such a difference in the baby over the last couple of weeks."*
Family Nurse, Black Country Healthcare Foundation Trust

Black Country Food Bank

63. The 12 food banks operating across the borough provided 85,894 meals for children in 2022. In the first 6 months of 2023, demand for support from households with children has increased by 18% compared to 2022.

64. The new Recipe Bag project has launched in Dudley, providing ambient ingredients and a recipe card with a link to a YouTube channel showing the family exactly how to cook a meal for a family of four. Through this scheme 500 recipe bags have been provided equating to 2000 meals for families and pupil premium children. 10 recipes are currently 'live' with 10 more in the pipeline. These have also been utilised in a cookery project in partnership with the YMCA targeting child poverty and youth poverty with positive feedback.
65. From September 2023, the Food Banks will be approaching primary schools in Dudley to start cookery sessions with pupil premium families following pilots in Sandwell. These cooking classes will enable families to learn and work together to develop cookery skills and budgeting skills.
66. Due to public donations and funding from DMBC Public Health, the Food Bank has been able to support other third sector organisations with food and toiletry items to enable cooked meals, children's lunches and essential toiletry packs to children including refugee groups, baby banks and youth groups who look after SEND children.
67. Black Country Foodbank report a difficult start to 2023 as the Cost-of-Living Crisis has taken a hold and decreased donations at the same time as increasing demand. To ensure continuity of services, the Food Bank has had to bulk buy food and toiletries using the funding provided by Dudley Public Health.
68. *"This funding has been a lifeline and we are incredibly thankful for the acknowledgement of our services and the support we have received."*
Jen Coleman, Chief Executive Officer, Dudley Food Bank

Brierley Hill Baby Bank

69. In the last year, the Baby Bank have issued 587 packs for expectant and new families, an increase of 54.4% over the past year, and with a value of £700,000 in kind. They have achieved funding from the National Lottery and in-kind support for a van and driver. The volunteers continue to operate in an innovative way to support the support the most vulnerable families in the borough. They have worked with the Council and local NHS to research parents' experiences in the First 1001 Days of life and piloted a reusable nappy project.

Dudley Cost of Living Hubs

70. Dudley and Wolverhampton Citizens Advice have rolled out Cost of Living Hubs across the borough to provide immediate support for households facing crisis. This has been provided in partnership between

Dudley Council Public Health and Dudley Health and Care Partnership Board. 5,719 clients were supported in the first 6 months, with 62% being households with dependent children.

71. The Public Health team and system partner organisations are currently coordinating a system response to mitigate child poverty, by:
- Drafting a child poverty needs assessment and planning a strategic approach to child poverty using evidence-based approaches led by communities.
 - Developing a pathway with NHS and third sector organisations to address infant food poverty in the borough.
 - Working with Children Northeast on pilot programmes to poverty proof maternity and Early Years services, and poverty proofing the school day.
 - Piloting supportive conversations training around financial wellbeing with Family Hub teams.
 - Use Family Hubs and the Start for Life offer as a springboard to increase support in the first 1001 days of a child's life, supporting good parenting and parent and infant mental health.
 - Supporting inclusion in our schools to enable more children and young people to benefit from mainstream education and can engage in training, further education, or work after leaving school.

Emotional health and wellbeing

72. Good mental health is important for helping children and young people to develop and thrive. It is widely recognised that a child's emotional health and wellbeing influences their cognitive development and learning as well as their physical and social health and their mental wellbeing in adulthood.
73. There is good evidence to support the association between good mental health and education engagement and academic achievement. The benefits to preventing mental health problems in children and young people from arising, and intervening early where they do, can be significant for schools. For example, it may result in improved attainment, attendance, reductions in behavioural problems, as well as happier, more confident, and resilient children and young people⁴.

⁴ Public Health England (2021) [Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing: a whole school or college approach.](#)

The national picture

74. In the last three years, the likelihood of young people having a mental health problem has increased by 50%⁵.
- Five children in an average classroom of 30 are likely to have a mental health problem.
 - 52% of 17- to 23-year-olds have experienced a deterioration in mental health in the last five years, with 1 in 4 now having a probable mental health disorder.
 - 34% of those who do get referred into NHS services are not accepted into treatment.
 - 67% would prefer to be able to access mental health support without seeing their GP⁶.

75. The NHSE Wave survey for 2022 found significant differences in life experiences between those children with a mental health disorder and those without⁷.

	Children with a probable mental health disorder	Children without a mental health disorder
I feel safe at school	61.2%	89.2%
I have been bullied on social media?	29.4%	12.6%
I feel safe online	48.4%	66.5%
My family is struggling more with money now than last year	28.6%	19.9%

76. Children also reported that they were also less likely to report enjoyment of learning or having a friend they could turn to for support. Amongst young people aged 17 to 22 years with a probable mental disorder, experience of not being able to buy enough food or using a food bank in the past year was seven times higher than those without a mental health disorder. This demonstrates the close interplay between experience of poverty and emotional wellbeing.

⁵ The Childrens' Society (2022) [Children's mental health statistics](#)

⁶ Young Minds and the Children's Society (2021) [First port of call: the role of GPs in early support for young people's mental health.](#)

⁷ NHSE (2022) [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2022 - wave 3 follow up to the 2017 survey](#)

In Dudley

77. Local data for 2021-2022 shows that in Dudley, the rate of admission of young people due to mental health conditions and the rate of young people being admitted to hospital because of self-harm were both lower than the England average⁸.
78. Furthermore, local data indicates
- The most common primary needs of SEN pupils are moderate learning difficulties (2,093) followed by speech, language, and communication needs (1,801) and then social, emotional, and mental health needs (1,114)
 - In 2021, the percentage of school pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs recorded is 2.9%, higher than both West Midlands region and England average at 2.6% and 2.8% respectively. This trend increasing and getting worse,
 - there were 19,645 contacts with community and outpatient mental health services by individuals <18 years in 2019/20 within Dudley however the number of inpatient stays in secondary mental health services within the Dudley population is significantly lower than both the West Midlands region and England average.
 - Providers are reporting an increase in children and young people presenting with mental health needs and there is an increase in emotionally based school avoidance. This is a national issue and not confined to Dudley.
79. This need was further emphasised by the 2022 Make Your Mark survey; one of the top issues for young people in Dudley was mental health and support.
80. Data from the Black Country Integrated Care System area there has been a 57% rise in children in touch with mental health services between April 2021 and February 2023. There is an urgent need for further work to understand the needs of children and young people and determine the effectiveness and capacity of current service provision. There is also a need to implement evidence-based interventions to promote good emotional health and wellbeing for children and young people.
81. Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust are the lead provider for mental health services across the Black Country. The trust operates a Single Point of Access for referrals and a 24/7 urgent mental health helpline for people of all ages, including children and young people.

⁸ Office for Health Inequalities and Disparities (2023) Fingertips Maternal and Child Health Profiles

NHS led provision, including waiting times and caseloads is beyond the scope of this report.

What are we currently doing to support and improve Children and Young People's Mental Wellbeing in Dudley?

- 82.
- School Nursing⁹ – A universal service delivering the healthy child programme and providing the first point of contact for Mental Health support, signposting, and referral. Currently being re-modelled to strengthen the Mental Health element of work.
 - Here4YOUth – provided by Cranstoun, an open-door wellbeing service for young people to access via drop-in, outreach or social media. Offering a range of support and signposting including emotional wellbeing support, social prescribing, substance misuse support and sexual health services.
 - Happier Minds - A new mental wellbeing website for Dudley. It has pages for young people aged 11 and over, parents/carers and school professionals. It is intended to provide quality assured information and support and signpost to national and local services. The site is also being used to deliver topical messages providing a platform to support comms around issues including exam stress and transition.
 - Family Nurse Partnership¹⁰ – intensive, home-based support from pregnancy until a child is two years for younger parents. The programme focuses on self-efficacy, attachment, and supporting young parents' self-esteem.
 - Universal Emotional health and wellbeing Coordinators – Dedicated to identifying and co-ordinating universal mental health promotion and mental wellbeing initiatives and facilitating/supporting multi-agency working in relation to mental wellbeing.
 - What? Centre – providing counselling for young people who identify as LGBTQ+ and or/are a part of the BAME community.
 - Phase Trust – offering grief and loss support to children aged 7 – 11 years with underlying trauma and anxiety not able to be managed in mainstream provision.
 - Nurture and Resilience Programme– supporting schools to understand relational approaches and attachment awareness, developing theory and evidence-based practice to ensure that settings provide a supportive and safe space in which children and young people can learn and develop.
 - Theatre in Education Awareness sessions - on relationships, bullying and mental health for students in all education settings, to help recognise when support is needed and how to access sources of support.

⁹ This service is currently out to procurement and will form part of a 0-19 Children and Young People's Service

¹⁰ This service is currently out to procurement and will form part of a 0-19 Children and Young People's Service

- Harmony Project – a music-based initiative which incorporates the [5 Ways to Wellbeing](#) messages and signing. Developed as part of Children’s Mental Health Week 2022 and now an annual event.
- Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire – providing schools with data to support RSHE planning and health related activity.
- Workforce Development Training– delivered both virtually and face to face by statutory, voluntary, and private organisations to upskill the universal workforce in and allied with schools/education settings.
- Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) for schools to provide support and extra capacity for early intervention and help for mild to moderate mental health issues and promotion of good mental health and wellbeing have been welcome in Dudley. It was estimated that 35% of schools/colleges in England would have a MHST by the end of 2023-24. In Dudley we currently have over 50% of our schools supported by MHSTs with a further wave planned for January 2024.
- The Senior Mental Health Lead training has been offered to all eligible state-funded schools and colleges by 2025 to support the implementation a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. Dudley currently has a high uptake of this training with more schools applying for their training grant in order to complete one of the DfE accredited courses.

Young people’s behaviours including risk taking.

83. Young people can very often receive a ‘bad press’ regarding their behaviour and related to making decisions that adults may consider poor choices.
84. Besides their bodies visibly developing and changing, and being flooded with huge amounts of hormones, the teenage brain is under construction and is not fully developed until the mid-twenties. As these changes take place in the brain, children and teenagers are unable to access certain skills and abilities that adults may take for granted; a lack of executive functions can result in teenage risk-taking behaviours.
85. The teenage years are transitional, as the move from child to adolescent to adulthood. Whilst for many young people this transition is straight forward many others will feel extremely anxious and need support with their mental health. For others, this will be an experimental period where they want to try as many new things as possible that they feel show they are becoming an adult. Unfortunately, many of these new ‘things’ are usually considered as ‘risk taking’ behaviours which can cause harm to themselves or others.

86. Most children will have had decisions made for them by a carer during their lifetime whether at home or school. Therefore, when put in a situation where they need to decide on their own, with a brain not fully 'equipped', they may not be able to make an informed or sensible decision. Influence from peers or other who seek to exploit young people, the desire to 'fit in' and to be exciting contribute to risk taking.

Public health response

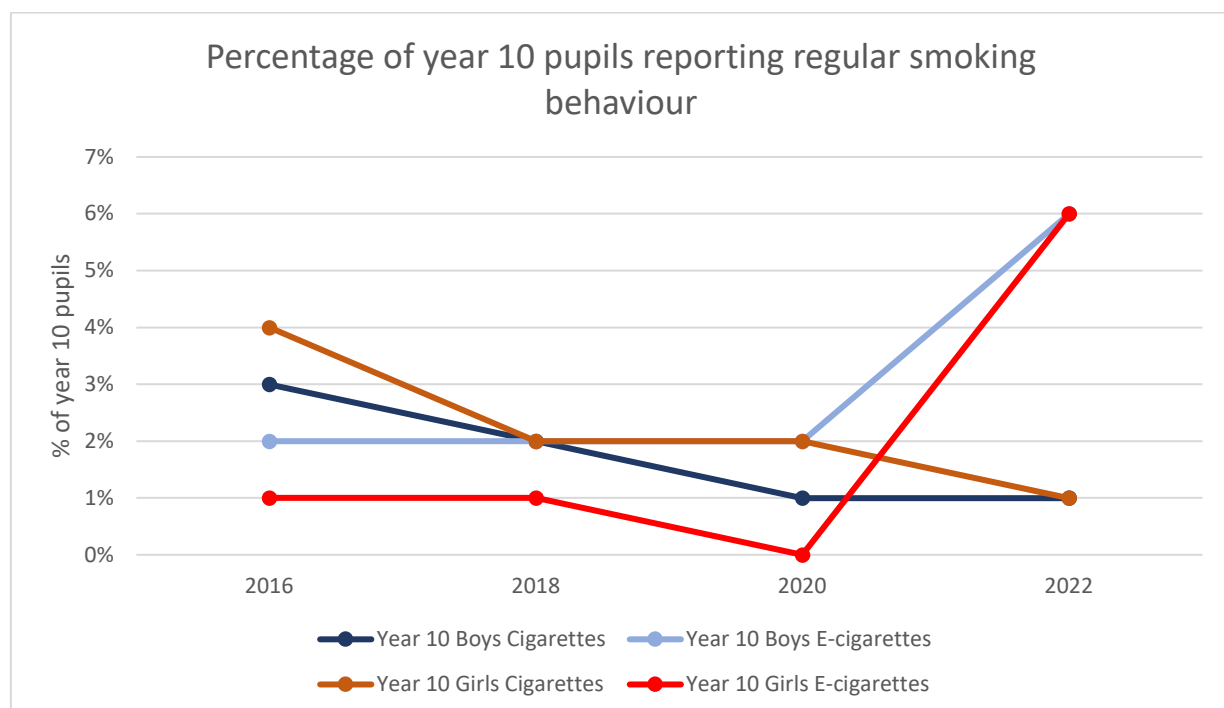
87. Public Health use data and evidence to commission services supporting around substance misuse, sexual health, and knowledge and skill development.

Substance misuse

88. Locally, 686 young people asked for support during the last year, some of these were wellbeing requests but 74 entered structured treatment for substance use. The main drug of choice for young people is cannabis, followed by alcohol and pills. Close working arrangement established between many other services for young people including the Youth Justice Service, safeguarding and CAMHs (Child and Adolescent Mental Health service).
89. Smoking rates have drastically declined for young people, with some taking up vaping. Training and advice have been produced for young people and schools to provide information about vaping.

Figure 14 Regular smoking and vaping in year 10 pupils

90.



Teenage conception and sexual health

91. *NB. Sexual health and relationships are a part of everyday life and are only considered as risky when; individuals are not protected from infection or pregnancy, it is not consensual, there is an exploitative element, the relationship is abusive.*
92. Locally 477 young people were seen by the young people's sexual health service between April and June 2023, with girls and women the predominant users.
93. Conceptions in girls under the age of 18 have continued to decline nationally and locally. Dudley mirrors the national picture for sexually transmitted infections. Dudley follows best practice testing, offering dual testing for chlamydia and gonorrhoea.

Pregnancy support

94. Dudley's Family Nurse Partnership Service supports pregnant young girls/women to ensure attachment and positive outcomes for both. There is a close partnership working arrangement between Brook and FNP.
95. Public Health are working on a teenage pregnancy policy to support education settings.

Our Commissioned providers

96. The Substance Misuse service provider is Cranstoun, providing a service for young people in Dudley called Here4YOUth, young people can 'walk in' or make appointments for health & wellbeing advice.
97. Young people who need support for substance misuse are seen in structured sessions using methods and venues agreed by the service user. Some of our most vulnerable young people are seen in this service, Here4YOUth act as advocates for the young people, enabling access to additional support.
98. This service also supports smoking and vaping cessation, prescribing Nicotine Replacement Therapy as needed.
99. The Sexual Health Treatment service provider is Brook. Brook provides education and advice for education settings explaining testing and treatment for positive results. They have several venues and methods for young people to access their support including telephone, media consultation and postal support to enable easier access. There is an anonymised Partner notification system in place to ensure positive STI results are followed up and treatment is accessed. Brook has secured

the all-age sexual health service provision for Dudley contract, starting on 1st November 2023. Brook provides support for the RSHE (Relationship and Sexual Health Education) agenda in schools and colleges.

100. The School Nurse service provides support for children, young people, their families and education settings from the child's age of 5 – 16 years. This service will expand to the age of 19 years, or 25 years with additional needs following procurement. The nurses support all aspects of health & wellbeing, offering immediate support and advice then referring on to higher level support/treatment when needed. They receive notifications from A&E when children & young people have visited hospital and will follow up with the child and family afterwards to ensure support is being accessed if needed.
101. School nurses liaise closely with other commissioned support services to ensure correct support by the most appropriate service is utilised. Substance misuse admissions to hospital are followed up and in liaison with Cranstoun. Smoking and vaping cessation is provided by the nurses, prescribing Nicotine Replacement Therapy as needed.

Education via theatre & workshops

102. [Loudmouth theatre](#) company provide sessions for children and young people, covering important issues in an age-appropriate way, including

Relationships and sexual health	Online safety
Puberty	Recognising abusive or exploitative situations
Power and abuse in relationships	Misogyny and harassment of girls
Bullying	Knife crime, gang culture and county

Mental Health

103. A piece of theatre is performed to a group identified in the education setting. Following the performance, characters are brought back to stage to be asked questions about their decision making or offered support from the audience. During this process discussion takes place about what could have happened to have a better outcome for the character. A workshop then follows with smaller numbers for all to ask clarification questions or explore further thinking to better understand the situations we could all find ourselves in. National and local sources of support and help are then shared should anyone need to discuss their thoughts or feelings further. The initial point of support is always the school nurse.

RSHE support

104. Training and resource support is commissioned and offered to all education settings and frontline staff to ensure staff are confident and equipped with up-to-date information to best support children and young people. The CYP team have established links with the education team and issue a termly newsletter for staff and parents with advice and support available. There are always local and national sources of support shared via the school bulletin. An event is planned for partners to come together as a marketplace to show case the support available for schools on 10th October at Saltwells 2023.
105. The Health-Related Behaviour Questionnaire is carried out every 2 years in education settings to identify local data. This anonymous survey gives children a voice on many issues and gauges their understanding and activity to help us and schools plan to best meet their needs.

Finance

106. The work is predominantly funded by the ring-fenced Public Health Grant. A small grant contribution towards substance misuse is made by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. A total of £500,000 from the Public Health reserves was allocated to support community hardship between 2022 and 2024. The Black Country ICB also supported creation of the Cost-of-Living Hubs via £75k of inequalities funding. In addition, Dudley residents have benefited from over £13 million income from government via the Household Support Fund since September 2021.

Law

107. These programmes support the statutory role of Public Health in improving population health and none mandated role to improve the health and wellbeing of children aged 5-19. The services also support the statutory duty of Dudley Council to protect children from all forms of abuse as outlined in the Children Act 1989. The School Nursing service undertakes the mandated National School Measurement Programme.

108. The Child Poverty Act 2010¹¹ commits the government to reduce child poverty and places specific duties on local authorities to work towards ending child poverty.

Specifically, it places a duty on each local authority to:

- cooperate with partners and other bodies to reduce child poverty, and work to mitigate its effects.
- produce an assessment of the needs of children living in poverty in its area (a child poverty needs assessment).
- prepare a joint Child Poverty Strategy with relevant partners.

Risk Management

109. Provision of the Healthy Child Programme is currently open to tender. There is a risk that a suitable provider is not identified.

Equality Impact

110. There are stark inequalities in child health, largely based along socio-economic and ethnic lines. Children, those living with disabilities or chronic health conditions and those who are carers are more likely to experience poverty. There are also disparities in risk taking behaviours, with boys more likely to require drug treatment or be involved with the youth justice system compared to girls.

111. Public Health activities aim to reduce health inequalities by ensuring services are accessible and acceptable to those who may find it most difficult to access support. Mandated aspects of services use universal proportionalism to ensure more resource is used for those communities which require greater support.

112. The Growing up in Dudley project is currently active and will elicit the views of children and young people about living in Dudley. Services outlined in this report regular receive feedback regarding service provision, using this to improve the offer to children and young people.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

113. The whole system approach identifies the need for all staff who work with children, young people, families, and carers to understand the factors affecting health and wellbeing and be able to give consistent messages regarding lifestyle.

¹¹ HM Government (2010) [Child Poverty Act 2010](#)

Commercial/Procurement

114. The 5-19 element of the Healthy Child Programme is currently open to tender.

Environment/Climate Change

115. Encouraging increased physical activity and active travel may reduce environmental pollution.

Council Priorities and Projects

116. These activities support the council priority for children and young people to have the best possible start in life in our Child Friendly borough.



Mayada Abuaffan
Acting Director of Public Health

Report Author: Angela Cartwright
Telephone: 01384 817184
Email: Angela.Cartwright@dudley.gov.uk