



a better u

# Our Approach to Prevention

## 2025 Update



@Become\_AbetterU



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South Tyneside Council

NHS

North East and  
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# 02

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# 03

## Foreword

In 2023 'a better u' Alliance designed a framework to support leaders from all organisations across South Tyneside to work together to embed the principles of a better u (abu).

A better u is underpinned by three principles of **proactive, personalised**, and **fair**, it's used across all health and care organisations in order to ensure equitable health and care opportunities for all our residents in South Tyneside.

It's designed as an approach to help local decision makers and leaders assess whether our health and wellbeing services are aligned to the abu principles, help identify key priorities for improving self-care, healthy behaviours, areas for co-produced improvements and implement actions accordingly.

We know if South Tyneside is to fully embrace the principles of a better u we need the supporting framework to ensure it becomes part of our everyday thinking, decision-making and delivery.

To achieve the vision of embedding abu across the health and care system, this work will depend on other Alliances and organisations across South Tyneside coming together to achieve this goal. Ultimately, we must all work together with system partners and alliances if we want an effective outcome.



# A healthier future starts with prevention

# 04

One of the most important roles of the health and care system—and government more widely—is to help people live longer, healthier lives. This means not just treating illness, but preventing it from happening in the first place, or stopping it from getting worse when it does.

But “prevention” can mean different things to different people. It might be about supporting someone to stop smoking, helping them stay active, or making sure they get the right care early on. What’s clear is that prevention matters.

In 2023, nearly 14% of all deaths in England—over 75,000 people—were considered preventable. Many of these were due to conditions like heart disease and certain cancers. And sadly, people in poorer areas are more likely to die early from preventable causes than those in wealthier areas. That’s not fair—and it’s something we can change.

**By focusing on prevention, we can:**

- **Improve lives:** Fewer people suffer from painful or disabling conditions.
- **Ease pressure on services:** Health and care systems are stretched – prevention helps reduce demand.
- **Boost the economy:** Healthier people can stay in work and contribute more to society.
- **Save money:** Many preventive actions are cost-effective and reduce the need for expensive treatments later.

We need a shift—from a system that reacts to illness, to one that proactively supports people to stay well, with personalised care and fair access for all.



**At South Tyneside Council, we are PROUD to lead this change. Our values guide everything we do:**

- P Professional** – We uphold high standards and take responsibility.
- R Respectful** – We value people and treat everyone with kindness.
- O Open and honest** – We build trust through transparency.
- U Understanding and engaging** – We care, listen, and work together.
- D Deliver what we say we will** – We keep our promises and strive for better.

Together, by living our PROUD values and putting prevention at the heart of our work, we can build a healthier, fairer future for everyone in South Tyneside.

Please note every effort has been taken to produce this document in line with Health Literacy Standards.

# Living Well Alliance – Making South Tyneside healthier

# 05



The Living Well Alliance is a group working together to help people in South Tyneside live healthier lives and age well. Their goal is to stop or slow down long-term health problems and reduce the impact of frailty (when people become weak or less able to do everyday things).

The Alliance brings together different teams and services to make sure they work well together, avoid repeating the same work, and focus on what matters most. They look at how different health issues affect people at the same time and find ways to support them.

They also support new ideas and proven ways to help people stay healthy, including non-medical support like community activities and advice services.

## What has been achieved so far

The Living Well Alliance has already made good progress in helping people stay healthy and reducing health inequalities. Here are some of the key successes:

- **Personalised Care:** Services like the Breathing Clinic, Proactive Care, and Pulmonary Rehab help people get support that suits their needs, improves their symptoms, and makes their experience better.
- **Early Help and Prevention:** Projects like the Community Outreach Team, NHS Health Checks, and Healthy Homes help spot health problems early and prevent them from getting worse.
- **Working Together:** Programmes like Virtual Wards and Care Closer to Home bring together health, care, and community services to work as one team.
- **Reducing Inequality:** Programmes such as Tackling Multiple Disadvantage, Healthy Weight, and Stop Smoking focus on helping people who often miss out on support. These projects involve the community and listen to their ideas.
- **Improving the System:** The Population Health Hub and Health Literacy work are helping to make long-term changes in how services are planned and delivered.

# Best Start in Life Alliance

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## Helping children, young people and families thrive

The Best Start in Life Alliance is a partnership in South Tyneside that brings together local organisations to improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families. Its vision is to make sure every child has the best start in life, enjoys good health, and grows up to be confident, resilient and independent.

### Why it was set up

**The Alliance was created to:**

- Provide leadership and challenge across services
- Support partners to work together and manage change
- Make sure key outcomes for children and families are being met



In 2022, South Tyneside Council and its partners refreshed the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which includes four main outcomes. One of these is Giving Every Child and Young Person the Best Start. The Alliance is responsible for driving this forward.

### What the alliance focuses on

**The Alliance monitors progress and leads work on the following priorities:**

- Priority 1: Develop and deliver a Child Development Strategy to help every child be ready for school.
- Priority 2: Create an Adolescent Health Offer to help young people understand their health and wellbeing, build strong relationships, and access the right support.
- Priority 3: Explore key issues from the Women's Health Strategy that affect children and families.



It also responds to other needs as they arise, especially those linked to the wider goals of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, such as:

- Fair access to services
- Involving the public and local communities in shaping support

The Alliance provides updates to the Health and Wellbeing Board, supports the development of Family Hubs, and helps make sure services are joined up and working well together.

## How the alliance works

### The Alliance aims to:

- Understand the wider factors that affect children's health and wellbeing
- Apply the a better u principles to services for children and families
- Encourage teamwork and shared action across organisations
- Support working groups to deliver person-centred care
- Make decisions that are good for people and good for the system
- Learn from what works and what doesn't
- Co-produce services with families and communities
- Improve outcomes in line with the Director of Public Health's Report

### Guiding principles

To deliver these priorities, the Alliance follows the same values as a better u:

- **Be proactive** – act early to support children and families
- **Be personalised** – tailor support to individual needs
- **Be fair** – make sure everyone has equal access to help

### It also commits to:

- Being open and honest
- Working in partnership
- Making the most of opportunities to join up services
- Building trust and making real change happen

# Healthy Schools Award

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## Supporting Health and wellbeing in education

The South Tyneside Healthy Schools Award has been running for over 30 years and continues to support schools in promoting health and wellbeing across their communities. The award is designed to reflect the needs and priorities of local schools and helps them celebrate achievements, identify areas for improvement, and embed health into everyday school life.

### Schools work towards the award by focusing on four key areas:

- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activity
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Personal, Social, Relationships, Sex and Health Education (PSRSHE)

The criteria are reviewed each year to make sure they reflect national guidance and local needs. They are tailored to different age groups, from Early Years through to Sixth Form.



**Healthy Schools  
South Tyneside**

### How it works

Schools receive tailored support from the Public Health Team to help them meet the award standards. Once accredited, schools hold the award for three years.

#### The programme is open to:

- Early Years Foundation Stage settings
- Primary schools
- Secondary and Special Education settings
- Further Education and Sixth Form colleges

All eligible schools in South Tyneside currently hold an up-to-date award, showing strong commitment to health and wellbeing.

Each school has a Healthy Schools Lead who coordinates the award process and connects with the wider Healthy Schools Network. The network meets regularly to share best practice, hear from guest speakers, and explore new ideas. Staff also receive a monthly Healthy Schools Newsletter, which includes:

- Updates on health campaigns and awareness weeks
- CPD and training opportunities
- Classroom resources
- News from Public Health and partner organisations

# 09

The Healthy Schools Award also supports schools in meeting Ofsted's '**personal development**' criteria and is celebrated annually at the **Public Health Awards**, where schools receive a plaque to mark their achievement.

See more about Healthy Schools by scanning the QR code.



## Case study: Hebburn Lakes Primary School – Creating a healthier, happier school environment

Hebburn Lakes Primary School successfully renewed their **Healthy Schools Award** for 2025, using the framework to strengthen both emotional and physical wellbeing across the school. A key part of their approach was the introduction of **Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL)**, which has transformed playtime into a rich, inclusive and active experience for all pupils.

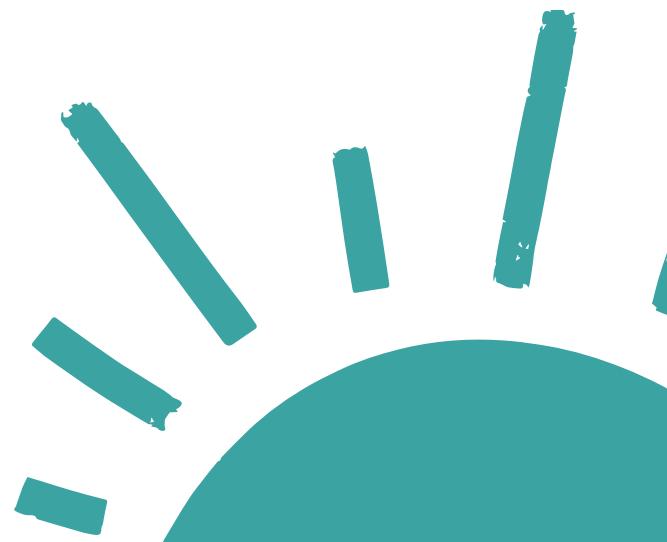
The school's commitment to OPAL has earned them **Platinum Recognition**—an achievement held by only 1% of schools nationally. This reflects their dedication to creating a positive, child-centred environment that supports learning, movement, and wellbeing.

## Leadership and environment

School leaders have made outdoor play a priority, ensuring that children of all ages can access high-quality outdoor spaces. These areas are designed to support the school's curriculum drivers, helping pupils apply key learning attributes during unstructured times. OPAL is now embedded into daily routines, promoting independence, creativity and social development.

## Physical activity and play

The school has invested in its outdoor environment, adding features like a **Trim Trail**, an **outdoor multi-gym**, and a wide range of play equipment including balls, bats, skipping ropes and hula-hoops. As part of their OPAL offer, they introduced **Wheelie Wednesday**, where children are encouraged to bring bikes, scooters or trikes to school. This initiative helps improve coordination and movement skills while making physical activity fun and accessible.



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## Confidence, Responsibility and Inclusion

To support pupil leadership and inclusion, the school introduced **OPAL Ambassadors** —a group of pupils who helped create the school's OPAL Charter.

**These ambassadors take on responsibilities such as:**

- Checking equipment for safety
- Reporting issues to staff
- Encouraging children who may be playing alone to join in

They also present the **Golden Bucket Award** to pupils who follow the charter, show kindness, help tidy up, or contribute positively to the play environment.



## Baby boxes

South Tyneside Family Hubs have been working with Health Visitors and The Children's Foundation to give young parents under 21 years with a baby box full of essentials for new babies.

We are delighted to announce we have been able to extend this to other vulnerable families in the borough thanks to extra funding from the North East Combined Authority



**The purpose of the baby box is to:**

- promote parent-baby bonding,
- encourage play,
- stimulate brain development
- help mental health and wellbeing of parents.

**The box contains books and toys as well as essentials to get families started with baby care, including:**

- Play mat
- Mattress
- Sleeping bag
- Nail clippers
- Hooded bath towel and
- Thermometers

# South Tyneside Family Hubs

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Find out about how South Tyneside Family Hubs can support you with feeding your baby.

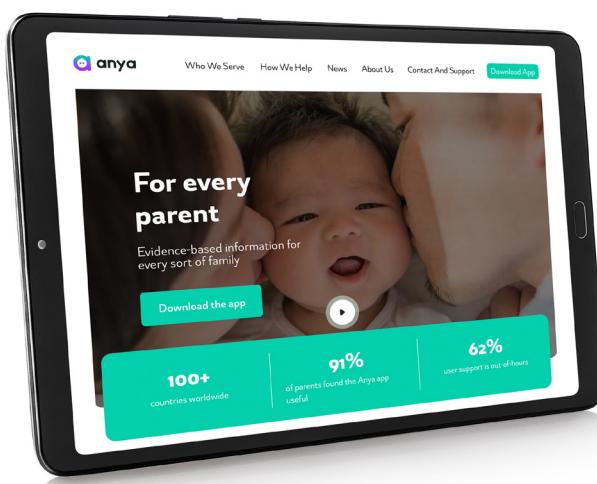
## Anya App

Did you know, there's an app in South Tyneside that gives parents practical and emotional support for breastfeeding and parenting - **anytime, anywhere.**

Parents can access the Anya app **FREE** during pregnancy until their child is two years old.

**The app offers 24/7 evidenced based support for the first 1001 days of a baby's life on topics including:**

- breastfeeding
- sleeping
- weaning and
- child development



## Solihull Antenatal

**This four-week programme is perfect for expectant parents and their families to learn more about:**

- getting to know your baby
- the stages of labour and birth
- feeding and
- caring for your baby



## Infant feeding workshops

Our Infant Feeding Workshops give crucial breastfeeding information. They also talk about how to **bond and build a relationship** with your baby from pregnancy until after birth.

We have a specialist Infant Feeding support team who are available to offer **advice, support and guidance** on breastfeeding and more complex breastfeeding related issues.

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## South Tyneside breastfeeding support groups

Our Breastfeeding Support Groups provide support, advice and information for breastfeeding your baby from our staff and other parents. They are a great **opportunity** to meet other breastfeeding parents and to share **ideas** and **experiences**.



## Breast pump loan scheme

This is **FREE** to residents who live in South Tyneside. Please call Riverside Family Hub for more information.

## Breastfeeding friendly venues

South Tyneside Council is working with partners across South Tyneside to support breastfeeding families. Places across the borough, including cafes, restaurants, leisure centres and community venues are working to make sure they **welcome** and **support** new mums to breastfeed.

Look out for the Breastfeeding Friendly sticker in venues around South Tyneside. Anywhere that has the sticker on show has signed up to the Breastfeeding Friendly Pledge.



**FOR every** BABY  
SOUTH TYNESIDE FAMILY HUBS

a **better** u

South Tyneside  
Alliance  
Adding years to life and life to years

 South Tyneside Council

# Safe and Healthy Places Alliance

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## Creating stronger, healthier communities

The **South Tyneside Safe and Healthy Places Alliance** brings together local partners to improve the places where people live, work and connect. It focuses on making communities safer, healthier and more sustainable, recognising that where we live has a big impact on our physical and mental wellbeing.

### Why it matters

The design and feel of our communities—both physical spaces and social connections—play a key role in tackling health inequalities. By improving housing, public spaces, and community networks, the Alliance helps people live longer, healthier lives.

### What the alliance does

The Alliance oversees a range of work programmes that aim to:

- Shape environments that support good health
- Strengthen community connections
- Tackle financial hardship and promote economic wellbeing

It supports two key outcomes from the **South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Strategy**:

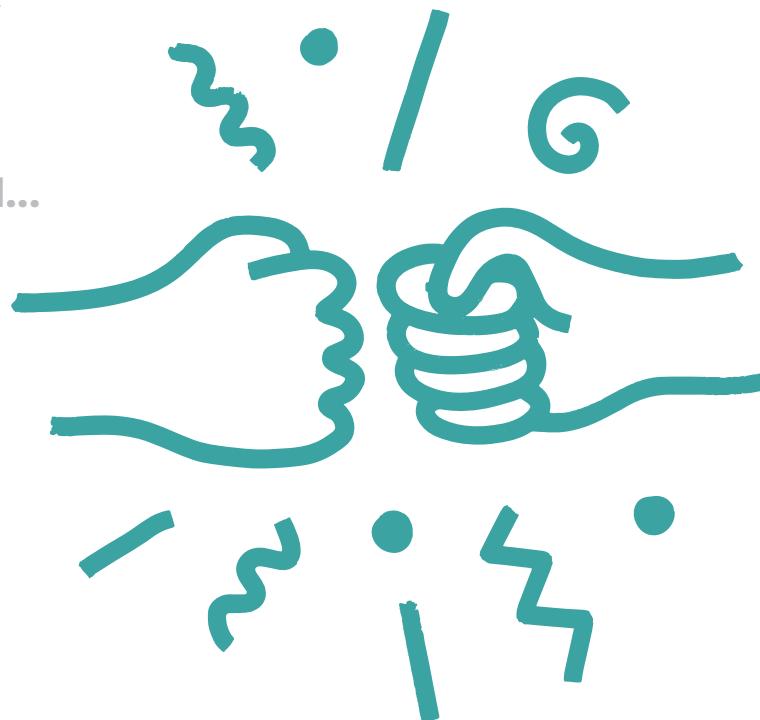
#### 1. Safe and Healthy Places

- Increase access to safe, sustainable housing
- Reduce homelessness and rough sleeping
- Improve housing quality and safety
- Strengthen community belonging and reduce loneliness
- Support climate adaptation and sustainability



Continued...

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## 2. Financial Security

- Improve support for people experiencing financial hardship
- Work with partners to address in-work poverty
- Use lived experience to shape services and decisions
- Influence national policy on poverty
- Promote access to secure, healthy employment



## How the alliance works

The Alliance uses a **partnership approach**, bringing together services and organisations to work towards shared goals. This helps build trust, increase capacity, and encourage innovation across the system.

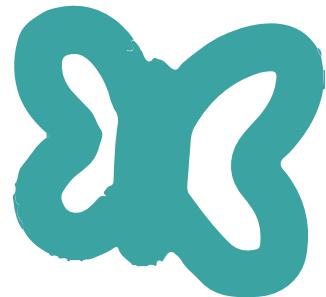
### It is committed to:

- Using high-quality data and evidence to guide decisions
- Co-producing plans and services with communities
- Monitoring and evaluating progress to ensure services are **proactive, personalised, and fair**

By working together, the Alliance helps create places where people feel safe, supported and connected—laying the foundations for better health and wellbeing across South Tyneside.

# Mental Health, Learning Disabilities & Neurodiversity Alliances

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**Supporting health and wellbeing  
across South Tyneside**

The Adults & Children Mental Health, Learning Disabilities & Neurodiversity Alliances work together to improve lives across South Tyneside.

Their work supports key strategies, including:

- **South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022** – promoting good mental wellbeing and social connection at every stage of life
- **Mental Health Strategy 2022–2026** – improving mental health from pregnancy through to older age
- **Learning Disabilities Strategy 2022–2026** – making sure people with learning disabilities and their families have equal opportunities
- **Autism Strategy 2022–2026** – identifying needs earlier and improving health outcomes for autistic people

**SOUTH TYNESIDE**  
**Learning Disability Strategy**  
**2022 – 2026**



Delivered in partnership with:



Continued...

## How the alliances follow the a better u principles

### Proactive

The Mental Health Strategy commits to “truly focusing on prevention.” One of its priorities is to promote mental health and prevent poor outcomes—especially for those most at risk of suicide or self-harm.

While we can’t prevent learning disabilities or neurodiversity, we can take early action to support people’s overall health and wellbeing. Examples include:

- A full physical health model for people with learning disabilities and/or severe mental illness
- Mental Health Support Teams in every South Tyneside school
- Community-based support to prevent crisis and reduce hospital admissions

### Personalised

The Alliances listen to people’s voices and focus on what matters to them. Services are designed to be person-centred and strengths-based.

In mental health, we work with people—not for them—to build on their strengths.

For people with learning disabilities, we train staff to deliver better person-centred care.

For autistic individuals, we’ve developed personalised neurodevelopmental assessment pathways for all ages.



### Fair

We know that people with learning disabilities, autism, or severe mental illness often face unfair access to care.

People in poorer areas are more likely to experience anxiety and depression—and less likely to complete treatment. Suicide and self-harm rates are also higher.

Some communities, including disability, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and LGBTQ+ residents, face discrimination and say services don’t meet their needs.

#### The Alliances aim to change this by focusing on:

- **Unfair access to support** (Mental Health Strategy)
- **Being an equal part of the community** (Learning Disabilities Strategy)
- **Tackling health inequalities for autistic people** (Autism Strategy)

# Case Study

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## Enhanced Primary Care Mental Health Team: A new approach to mental health support

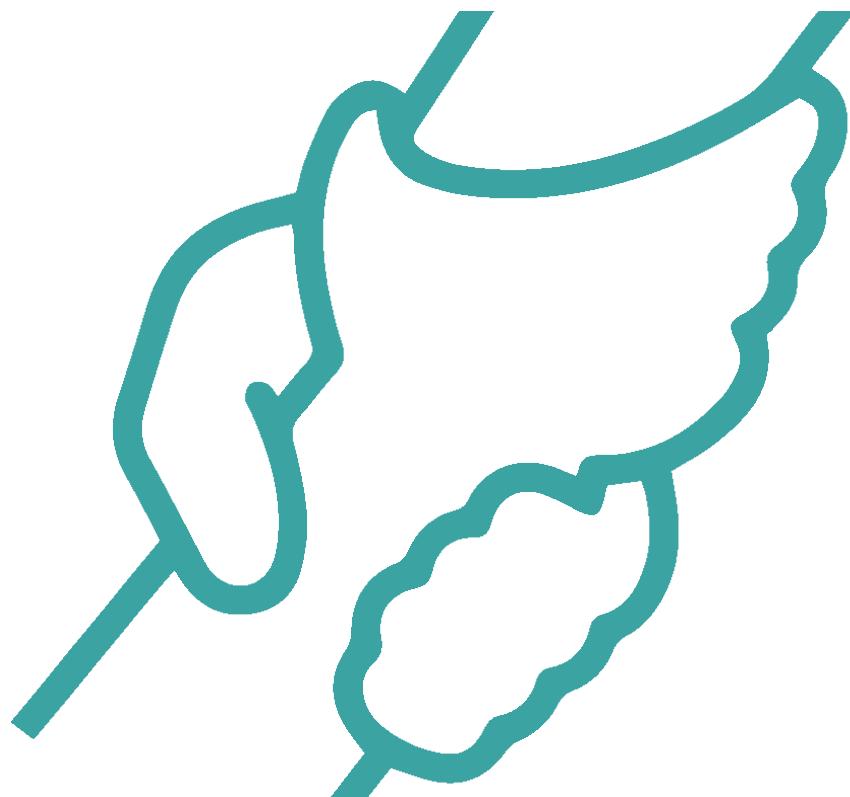
This year, South Tyneside launched the Enhanced Primary Care Mental Health Team—a new way of delivering mental health support that is proactive, personalised, and fair.

The team is part of everyday primary care, not a separate service. It helps people get the right support early, without needing a diagnosis or formal referral. It's designed to remove barriers, reduce crisis episodes, and make sure no one falls through the gaps.

### Why it was needed

In the past, mental health support was often reactive—people had to wait until things got worse before getting help. Many individuals with neurodivergence, dementia, or long-term mental health needs were missed because of strict thresholds or unclear pathways.

This new team changes that. It offers care based on need, not diagnosis, and focuses on trust, early support, and joined-up working.



Continued...

## What the team does

The Enhanced Primary Care Mental Health Team works in three key ways:

- **Monitoring** Regular health and wellbeing checks for people with support needs. This includes reviews for ADHD, dementia, emotional wellbeing, and physical health. These checks help spot issues early and support national priorities for people with learning disabilities, autism, and enduring mental health needs.
- **Reactive Intervention** A quick response when someone's mental health changes. People can access support directly—no referral needed. Appointments are longer, flexible, and trauma-informed to promote sustained engagement.
- **Case Finding** The team uses data to find people who may need help but aren't yet known to services. If someone is visiting their GP often or showing signs of distress, the team reaches out. This helps prevent crisis and makes care more equal.

## How it works across the system

- **All-Age Integration** Support is available across the life course—there's no handover between children's and adult services. This helps people with lifelong needs, like neurodivergence or cognitive decline, get consistent care.
- **Secondary Care Interface** If someone needs specialist support, the team works with secondary care to manage the transition. They stay involved throughout to make sure care is joined-up and duplication is avoided.

## Why it matters

This model is a transformational shift in how mental health care is delivered. It's built on lived experience, co-designed practice, and evidence-based care. It helps people feel supported earlier, reduces pressure on services, and makes sure care is fair and accessible for everyone.



# Poverty Truth Commission

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## Listening, learning and leading together

The **South Tyneside Poverty Truth Commission** is a powerful way to understand the real-life experiences of people affected by poverty. It brings together those with lived experience—known as Community Commissioners—and those in positions of influence—Civic Commissioners—to work side by side and shape meaningful change.

This approach has been used successfully in towns and cities across the UK. In South Tyneside, the Commission is hosted by Inspire, with support from the Council and other local organisations.

### Why it matters

The Commission creates space for honest conversations about poverty, helping decision-makers understand what life is really like for those facing financial hardship. It's not just about listening—it's about acting on what's heard to improve services, policies and systems.

By working together, the Commission helps build trust, challenge assumptions, and ensure that future decisions reflect the needs and voices of local people.

### How it works

- **Community Commissioners** share their experiences and insights about living in poverty.
- **Civic Commissioners**—including leaders from public services, businesses and community organisations—listen, learn and commit to making changes.
- Together, they co-produce recommendations that aim to reduce poverty and improve wellbeing across South Tyneside.

### How it aligns with a better u principles

The Poverty Truth Commission is a clear example of the a better u approach in action:

- **Proactive:** It uses real-life insight to identify barriers in health and wellbeing services, helping to make systems easier to access and more responsive.
- **Personalised:** It centres on listening to what matters to individuals and working together to create solutions that reflect their needs.
- **Fair:** It promotes equal opportunities, challenges inequality, and ensures no one is left behind—building a system that works for everyone.

# Local Area Coordination

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**Walking alongside people to build a better life**



**Local Area Coordination (LAC)** is a person-centred approach that helps individuals and families build the life they want, based on their strengths, goals and community connections. It's about walking alongside people—not doing things for them, but supporting them to take control and make positive changes.

## What it's all about

Local Area Coordinators work in specific neighbourhoods across South Tyneside. They support people to:

- Make new connections and friendships
- Get involved in local groups and activities
- Overcome personal challenges
- Share their voice and help improve public services
- Use their skills and talents to contribute to their community

Meeting a Coordinator is completely voluntary and starts with a simple conversation. People can connect with a Coordinator directly or through someone they know—like a friend, neighbour or local worker.

## How it works

The relationship is built on trust and led by the person. Together, they explore what a good life looks like and how to work towards it. There are no limits on how often or how long someone can meet with their Coordinator—it's based entirely on their needs and goals.

### Coordinators help people:

- Recognise their strengths, skills and resources
- Find local solutions before turning to formal services
- Access statutory support when needed, making sure it fits with their vision for a better life

## Where it's happening

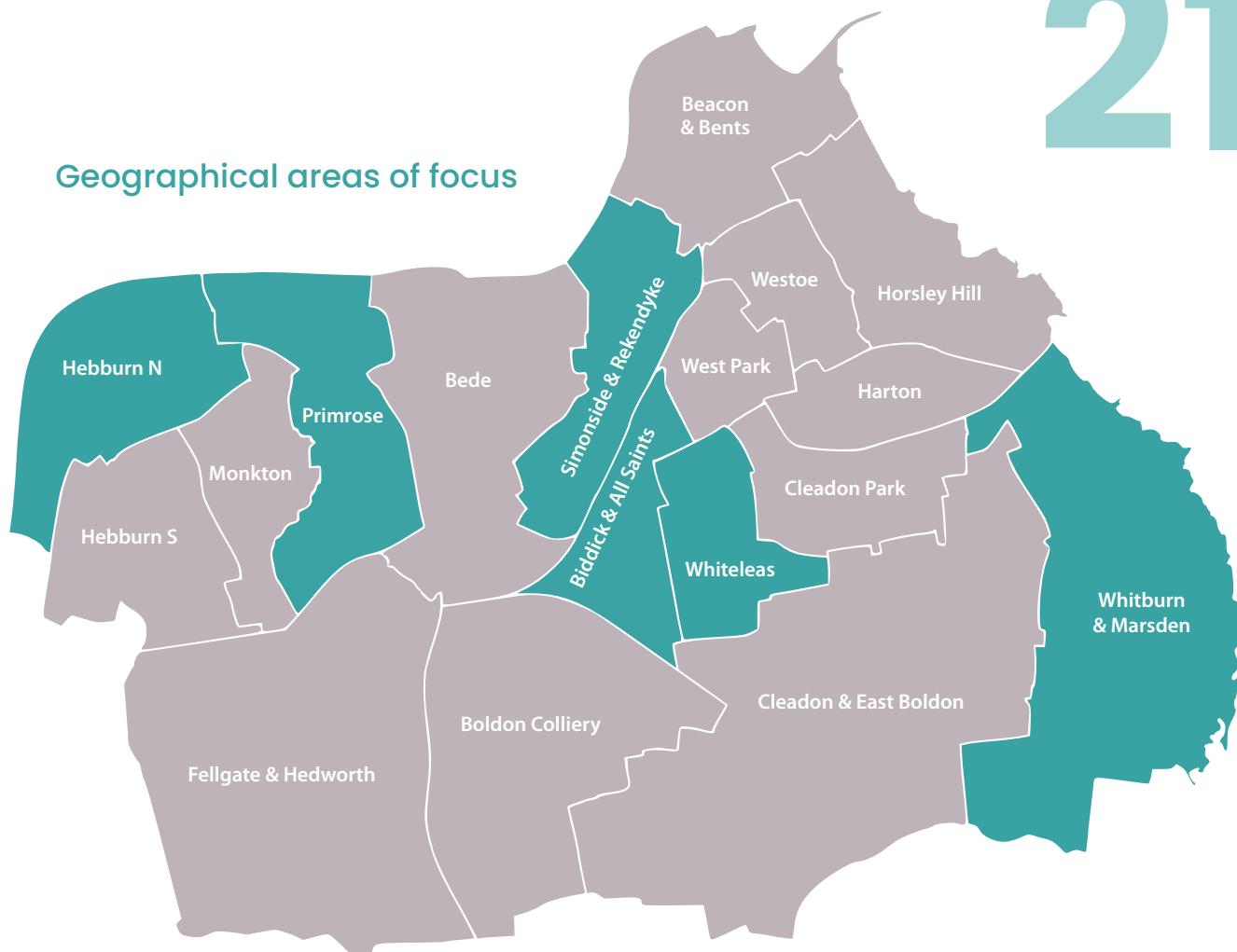
There are currently Local Area Coordinators working in:

- **Primrose Ward**  
(including Jarrow Town Centre)
- **Biddick and All Saints Ward**
- **Whitburn and Marsden Ward**

Plans are in place to expand the programme to:

- **Simonside and Rekendyke**
- **Hebburn North**
- **Whiteleas**

## Geographical areas of focus



## How it aligns with a better u principles

Local Area Coordination is a clear example of the a better u approach in action:

- **Proactive:** Coordinators help identify barriers early and support people to access services that are easy to use and tailored to their needs.
- **Personalised:** Every relationship is built around what matters most to the individual, with no fixed agenda or time limit.
- **Fair:** Everyone is welcome. The approach promotes equal access, reduces inequalities, and helps build a system that works for all.

You can find out more about Local Area Coordination, including how to get in touch with a Coordinator and read real stories from people who've made positive changes in their lives, on the South Tyneside website.

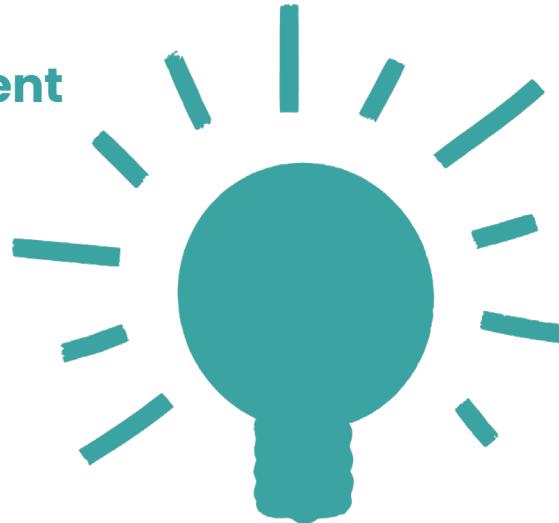
Find out more by  
scanning the QR code.



## Supporting a skilled & confident public health workforce

First Contact Clinical delivers the **a better** **u** training programme to professionals and volunteers across South Tyneside. The programme is designed to support prevention and promote healthier lifestyles by building knowledge, confidence and practical skills in key areas of public health.

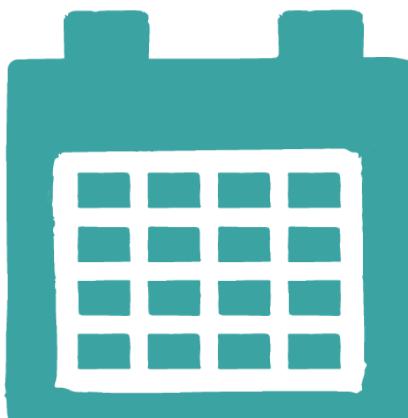
Training is available **face-to-face**, **virtually**, and through **e-learning**, making it flexible and accessible for all.



### What the training covers

The programme helps participants deliver brief interventions and support behaviour change in areas such as:

- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Obesity
- Mental Health
- Sexual Health



#### Face-to-Face Courses Include:

- A Life Worth Living – Suicide Prevention
- Alcohol and Substance Misuse
- Children and Young People (NEW)
- Conversation Skills
- Emotional Resilience
- Health and Wellbeing Day
- Self-Harm Awareness and Response
- Sexual Health
- Smoking Cessation (New Advisor, Refresher, VBA)

#### E-Learning Modules Include:

- MECC: Cancer
- MECC: Healthy Homes
- MECC: Oral Health
- MECC: Loneliness and Isolation
- MECC: Think Carer



## Understanding the wider determinants of health

As part of the **Public Health Workforce Development Programme**, First Contact Clinical also offers free modules that explore the broader social factors affecting health. These bite-sized sessions help professionals recognise and respond to issues that impact wellbeing beyond clinical settings.

### Topics include:

- **Cancer Awareness** – Early diagnosis, screening, and support
- **Being a Hidden Carer** – Identifying and supporting informal carers
- **Loneliness and Isolation** – Understanding social disconnection and how to help
- **Healthy Homes** – Exploring how housing affects physical and mental health
- **Oral Health** – Linking oral hygiene to wider health inequalities

These modules are designed to fit into busy schedules, with most taking around 30 minutes to complete.

## How it aligns with a better u principles

The training programme reflects the a better u values:

- Proactive: Equips the workforce to identify issues early and support prevention.
- Personalised: Builds skills to deliver tailored advice and interventions.
- Fair: Ensures everyone working in health and care has access to free, high-quality training.

## How to access training

To book a free place or explore available courses, visit:

[www.firstcontactclinical.co.uk/Courses/a-better-u-training](http://www.firstcontactclinical.co.uk/Courses/a-better-u-training)

Email: [training@firstcontactclinical.co.uk](mailto:training@firstcontactclinical.co.uk)

Call: 0191 432 9838

# South Tyneside Stop Smoking Service

## Supporting residents to quit for good

South Tyneside's Universal Stop Smoking Service is available to anyone who lives, works or volunteers in the borough. Delivered through local GPs and pharmacies, the service now includes a 12-week free offer of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and vapes to help people quit smoking.

While the service is open to all, feedback shows it doesn't always reach those who need it most. To improve this, the Public Health Team reviewed regional insights and carried out a local survey to better understand what support smokers want and need.

### Listening to our residents

**A short survey asked smokers:**

- Do you smoke?
- Would you like to quit?
- Would you know where to go for help?
- What would your ideal quit journey look like?

Most respondents said they wanted to quit and knew where to get help—but many preferred accessing support in community venues rather than GP practices or pharmacies. This insight helped shape a more **personalised and community-based approach**.



### Community-Led support – Small grants scheme

To reach more people, a small grants scheme was launched for voluntary sector organisations. This supports the wider prevention agenda by taking stop smoking support directly into communities.

**Organisations can apply for one of two options:**

- **Option 1:** Deliver a 12-week stop smoking programme with trained advisors.
- **Option 2:** Promote and refer people into the Council's existing Stop Smoking Service.

The Public Health Team supports successful applicants to maximise quit rates. The scheme will run for one year initially, with regular reviews. If gaps are identified, a specialist service may be commissioned to reach priority groups.

## Targeted outreach and workplace support

Public Health has expanded outreach support in:

- Workplaces
- Community settings
- Internal staff programmes

Officers promote the GP/pharmacy service, refer individuals, and deliver support directly as trained Stop Smoking Advisors. The goal is to embed stop smoking support into trusted spaces where people feel comfortable.

## Swap to Stop – making quitting easier

The Swap to Stop programme helps people aged 18+ switch from smoking to vaping by offering free vape starter kits in exchange for a referral into the Stop Smoking Service.

Led by the Public Health Team and delivered through a network of Swap to Stop partners, the programme is designed to reach people in everyday settings—such as early help services, food banks, adult social care, and mental health support.

Partners receive training to offer brief, tailored advice and support.

**The programme is built on the a better u principles:**

- **Proactive:** Reaches people where they are, without needing them to seek help.
- **Personalised:** Support is delivered by trusted professionals in familiar settings.
- **Fair:** Targets groups most affected by smoking-related health inequalities.

The programme is open to anyone who lives, works or volunteers in South Tyneside, with a focus on supporting vulnerable groups such as those experiencing unemployment, substance use, mental health challenges, or living in areas of deprivation.



# a better u Community Champions

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## Trusted voices for health and wellbeing

Community Champions are volunteers who live or work in South Tyneside and play a vital role in helping residents stay informed about health and wellbeing. As of September 2025, nearly 400 champions are actively supporting their communities.

Champions share trusted information with family, friends, colleagues and the wider public. They attend local events, connect with community groups, and help people understand what support is available and how to access it.

### What champions do

- Act as positive role models and public health advocates
- Support fellow champions and encourage new volunteers
- Attend events and help promote health messages
- Gather feedback from the community on public health campaigns
- Help identify gaps in communication and improve how messages are shared
- Champion future health priorities and key public messages
- Support wider health and social care initiatives across South Tyneside

Champions help ensure that residents receive consistent, evidence-based information to support self-care and healthier living. They also play a key role in helping people navigate conflicting or confusing health messages by promoting reliable sources and encouraging informed choices.

### How it started – from Covid Champions to a better u

The a better u Community Champions programme was launched in 2022, building on the success of the Covid Champions initiative. As the pandemic eased, the focus shifted to broader health and wellbeing topics, with an emphasis on prevention and self-care.

To support this transition, South Tyneside commissioned design agency Wriggle to create a recognisable brand for a better u. The branding helps residents easily identify health and wellbeing messages across the borough.

## Clear, colourful and community-Focused

The branding uses a main umbrella colour, with additional colours tailored to specific audiences:



This colour-coded approach has been extended to partner projects and services, including:

- Stop Smoking Services
- Smoking in Pregnancy Incentive Scheme
- Young Health Ambassadors
- Young Carers
- Breastfeeding Friendly Scheme

## Promoting health across South Tyneside

From **September 2025**, the a better u branding will be used to promote **Stop Smoking Services** as part of a borough-wide advertising campaign.

### This will include:

- Public transport spaces (buses, metros, bus stops, transport interchange)
- Targeted radio adverts
- Online press ads
- Supermarket advertising
- Petrol pump nozzles at Morrisons

The campaign will run in three bursts to align with:

- Stoptober
- New Year
- No Smoking Day (March)



# YOUNG HEALTH AMBASSADORS

South Tyneside Young Health Ambassadors (STYHA) is a programme led by the South Tyneside Public Health Team. We are a group of young people from school years 9-13 with a passion for health, who want to make a difference by raising health awareness for young people in South Tyneside.

## OUR CAMPAIGN!

Our campaign for 2024 focusses on mental health in young people.

During our public health training, we looked at local and national evidence around mental health and did some research into what services were available for young people in South Tyneside.

We found that although there are lots of services that can support them, young people didn't know they were there, let alone what they did or how to contact them! Added to this is the increased stigma around talking about mental health topics, making it difficult for young people to access support.

We decided to create a website, giving advice and guidance on mental health topics and encouraging everyone to talk about how they're feeling without judgement.



## THE PODCAST

As part of this, we have also created our podcast - What The Health Are You Talking About?! - where we have interviewed some of the services across the Borough to showcase what they do, how to access them, and give young people an idea of what to expect from them. This will ensure that young people are able to access the right service for them, in the right way, without having the stress of worrying about what to expect. We hope that listening to real people from the services in our area will make it easier and less scary to ask for help!



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THE PODCAST



VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE:  
SCAN ME



VISIT OUR  
YOUTUBE  
SCAN ME



supported by  
a better u

# a better u communications

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## Keeping South Tyneside connected and informed

Effective communication is at the heart of the **a better u** programme. We use a range of channels to keep residents informed about health and wellbeing, and to support our growing network of Community Champions.

### Reaching our communities

We regularly share updates through:

- **The Healthier Times e-newsletter**, distributed quarterly via the a better u Network and voluntary sector partners
- **The South Tyneside Council e-newsletters and Resident's Newsletter**, which reaches every household in the borough
- **Our a better u social media accounts** on Facebook, Instagram and X

These platforms help us share trusted health messages, promote local events, and celebrate the work of our champions. **In 2024, our five most popular Facebook posts reached nearly 35,000 views, with high engagement on topics like:**

- Mental Health
- a better u Drop-Ins
- Young Health Ambassadors
- Alcohol Awareness

**So far in 2025, the most viewed posts have focused on:**

- Loneliness and Social Isolation
- Stop Smoking Services
- Support for Carers
- Breastfeeding

### Champion communications

Our Community Champions receive a fortnightly e-bulletin packed with useful information, including:

- Local news and events
- Health campaigns
- Updates on services
- Research and consultations
- Volunteering and job opportunities
- Links to helpful websites

Champions are encouraged to share this information widely within their communities, helping to spread consistent and reliable health messages.

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## Drop-in events – informal, friendly and focused

We host monthly drop-ins at **Cleadon Park Library**, each themed around a different health and wellbeing topic. Past themes have included:

- World Mental Health Week
- Carer's Week
- Alcohol Awareness Week
- Self-Care Week

Local services and organisations attend with stalls offering advice, support and resources. These events are open to everyone and provide a welcoming space to chat, enjoy free refreshments and healthy soup, and connect with others.

### ‘a better u network event

**“Absolutely fantastic – I realised there is so much going on in South Tyneside”**

**“A great way to meet many old friends and make new ones”**

## Social media – building a better conversation

Our social media presence continues to grow:

- **Facebook:** 898 followers
- **Instagram:** 140 followers
- **X (formerly Twitter):** 591 followers

We work closely with the South Tyneside Council communications team to amplify health and wellbeing messages across their platforms, ensuring consistent and wide-reaching engagement.

### SWAP THIS for THIS

Sugar on porridge

Frosted flakes

Cereal bars

For fresh fruit toppings

For shredded wholegrain cereal

For natural yoghurt with fruit



# Community Health Champions

April 2024 – March 2025

  @Become\_AbetterU  @AbetterUsouthtyneside



in partnership with



## Connecting communities through volunteering and local Services

Plinth is South Tyneside's community engagement platform, hosted by Inspire. Originally developed to promote volunteering opportunities, it has grown into a dynamic tool that connects residents with local events, services and activities.

Plinth supports both voluntary sector organisations and residents, offering features that make it easier to find, share and access community support.

### How organisations use Plinth

**Voluntary and community organisations can use Plinth to:**

- Record and manage information about service users and volunteers
- Make secure referrals to partner organisations
- Promote services and activities on the South Tyneside Community Page

This helps build stronger connections between services and ensures residents are supported in a joined-up, person-centred way.

### How residents use Plinth

**Residents can search for activities and services using filters such as:**

- Type of activity
- Location
- Day of the week

This makes it easy to personalise searches and find opportunities that match individual needs and interests.

The **Volunteer Opportunities Page** is a live listing of current roles across the borough. Inspire acts as South Tyneside's **volunteer bureau**, offering one-to-one support through **Community Connectors**. These connectors take time to understand each person's interests and help them explore suitable volunteering options, including support with applications if needed.

Plinth is promoted through council newsletters, flyers and community events. Inspire also works with frontline teams—such as the **Let's Talk Team, Department for Work and Pensions, and Guiding Home**—to embed Plinth into everyday practice. This ensures the platform is used **proactively** and **fairly**, helping more residents access the right support at the right time.

# HealthNet

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## A collaborative space for health and wellbeing

HealthNet is a monthly in-person meeting that brings together voluntary sector organisations and public sector partners across South Tyneside. It provides a space for collaboration, learning and innovation in health and wellbeing.

**Each session features a range of presentations on topics such as:**

- Public health strategies
- New NHS services
- Voluntary and community-led initiatives

HealthNet encourages open discussion and shared thinking around how to reduce health inequalities and improve outcomes for local people. It's a valuable opportunity for organisations to connect, share ideas and work together to shape a healthier South Tyneside.



# Enabling partners in 2026

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## Building a healthier system together

Creating a healthy South Tyneside means building the right conditions for people to take control of their health—now and in the future. In 2026, we're focusing on strengthening the system by enabling partners to work together in new, more effective ways.

### Key components for a healthy system

To support this, we're developing a joined-up approach across the borough and within the Council. This includes:

- **System Leadership** – Encouraging leaders to embrace change and explore new ways of working. This means having different conversations with the public, co-designing and co-producing services with residents.
- **Capability Building** – Offering structured education for professionals, carers and volunteers. Training is available both in-person and online, covering general and topic-specific areas.
- **Peer Support Networks** – Creating opportunities for people to connect, share experiences and support one another.
- **Community Asset Development** – Working with communities to build on existing strengths, identify gaps, and support the creation of new resources.
- **Accessible Resources** – Providing clear, up-to-date information about what's available in local communities—both online and in physical formats.
- **Commitment to Change** – Supporting staff to take part in training that builds co-production skills and encourages innovation.

This approach ensures that **health promotion is embedded** across all services and sectors, helping us build a system that is proactive, personalised and fair.

# Areas for development in 2026

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## Health Literacy – Making information clear and accessible

In 2026, we're continuing to develop **Health Literacy South Tyneside**, a programme that helps professionals and organisations share health information in ways that are easy to understand.

Together with **a better u** partners, we've created a **Health Literacy Awareness Education Programme**, delivered by our public health training providers. The programme highlights the challenges people face when trying to understand health information and supports the workforce to communicate clearly—without jargon.

**We're working to improve how information is shared across all formats:**

- Verbal
- Written
- Digital
- Environmental

This helps residents make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.

## Training for all

Health Literacy training is now available to:

- **Council employees**
- **External organisations**
- **Anyone involved in delivering health and wellbeing initiatives**

By supporting people, improving systems, and working together, we're making self-care easier and more accessible for everyone in South Tyneside.

## Expanding our social media reach

In 2026, we're excited to grow our online presence by launching a LinkedIn account. This platform has a more professional and corporate focus, which means we'll be able to connect more effectively with our partner organisations and the voluntary and community sector (VCSE).

**Through LinkedIn, we'll share:**

- Upcoming **events and training opportunities**
- **Consultations and research**
- Co-production activities and updates

This expansion will help raise awareness of the **a better u** brand and our core principles. It also opens the door to **new collaborations** with VCSE organisations across a wider geographical area, helping us to build stronger networks and reach even more communities.

## **For further information:**

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