

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO HEALTH  
AND WELLBEING  
BOARD**

**24 FEBRUARY 2021**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR  
OF COMMISSIONING,  
NHS TEES VALLEY  
CCG**

**NEEDS LED NEURODEVELOPMENTAL PATHWAY FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide an update on the implementation of the 'Needs Led Neurodevelopmental Pathway' for children & young people across Hartlepool & Stockton - on -Tees.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Health & Wellbeing Board is asked to:

1. acknowledge the work undertaken, to date.
2. continue to support the 'needs led' approach

**BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 As previously reported to the Health & Wellbeing Board, there has been considerable partnership activity between Tees Valley CCG, Stockton -on -Tees Council, Hartlepool Borough Council, and the Parent Carer Forums to improve the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pathway for children & young people.
- 2.2 Extensive consultation with parent carers highlighted the need for change. Parents felt unsupported in meeting the needs of their children and having to navigate a complex, disparate health, education and social care system. This was compounded by long waiting times for a diagnostic assessment.
- 2.3 Tees Valley CCG invested in a waiting time initiative and joint work was undertaken to identify improved ways of working across health, education and social care. A 'needs led' approach adopted by St Helen's was identified as best practice through their SEND inspection, and following meeting with their commissioners and a partnership decision, it was determined that this model would be implemented across North Tees.
- 2.4 A period of 12 months was spent planning the move to this 'needs led' approach. The ethos of the model is that families are able to access the relevant support they need

from health, education and the local authority to meet the needs of their child whilst they are on the diagnostic pathway.

### 3. ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN

- 3.1 A family support service was commissioned across North Tees for families to access. The service was co-produced and subsequently monitored in partnership with the Parent Carer Forums. The service was accessible to families without a diagnosis. A training package was made available to all education settings and Local Authority front line practitioners to upskill them in supporting the needs of families and children.
- 3.2 A service to support families to meet the sensory needs of their children was also commissioned through North Tees & Hartlepool Foundation Trust. The 'Sunflower' service offers 3 workshops for parents to enable them to understand and better support the sensory needs of their child.
- 3.3 It is to be noted that the Family Support Service and the Sunflower Sensory Service were commissioned jointly by Tees Valley CCG and Stockton Borough Council.
- 3.4 Tees, Esk & Wear Valley (TEWV), as the ASD pathway co-ordinator, worked with Parent Carer Forums to improve their letters and the regularity and methods of communication with parent carers.
- 3.5 A task & finish group met monthly to identify the services in Stockton which could provide support to families where a 'neurodevelopmental' need was identified; this was to become the 'bubble of support' and is illustrated below:



- 3.6 A website has been launched which details the new pathway and provides links to all of the services in the 'bubble of support'; the feedback from the website has been positive. For reference this can be viewed at: <https://teesvalleyccg.nhs.uk/our-work/hartlepool-stocktons-needs-led-neurodevelopmental-pathway/>
- 3.7 Additional investment has been provided to TEWV from Tees Valley CCG to create a 'neurodevelopmental team' for children & young people aged 5-18 which will sit across Hartlepool & Stockton. Referrals for an autism assessment will be received directly into this team. Previously all assessments went through core CAMHS which increased the length of time a child would be waiting for the specialist element of the assessment process. All referrals for ASD will now be submitted on a referral form completed by a relevant professional in partnership with the family. This ensures that the views of the parent, professional and child (where possible), are received along with any additional reports/evidence which the parent or professional already has i.e. school reports, education psychology reports etc. Upon receipt the referral will be triaged by a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) made up of representatives from TEWV, North Tees & Hartlepool Foundation Trust (NTHFT), the education team and the Early Help team from the Local Authority. The information on the referral form and the evidence submitted will enable the MDT to make an informed decision as to the next steps for the child.
- 3.8 With the correct data sharing arrangements in place, this triage enables health, education and social care to have a greater strategic oversight of the needs of children in the borough at the earliest opportunity. It enables support to be triangulated across all disciplines to ensure the needs of the child are addressed. The MDT will determine whether there is enough evidence for referral onto the specialist pathway or whether alternative support would be more appropriate e.g. speech & language assessment or input from the Early Help team etc. This process is not to prevent children getting onto the specialist pathway, it is to ensure they feel supported and their needs are met at the earliest opportunity without the need to be on a specialist pathway. Referrals will only be made to CAMHS if the MDT feels there could be a co-morbid mental health need.
- 3.9 Both the referring professional and the family will receive feedback from the MDT with details of the support they can access following the triage of the referral.
- 3.10 During this time, the CCG has reviewed the Sunflower Sensory Programme and it has proven to be successful in delivering its objectives and it has received much positive feedback from parent carers. Therefore this service will continue to be delivered by NTHFT as part of this pathway. The Family Support Service has also been reviewed in partnership with Stockton Borough Council and the Parent Carer Forum. Again feedback was positive; however through parental engagement we identified that changes were required to the service specification. It was also agreed that the service will be commissioned across the CCG footprint to support the needs led approach being introduced in South Tees and Darlington. A representative from Stockton Borough Council is involved in updating the service specification.

#### 4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The 'Over 5's' pathway went live from September 2020. MDT's have been held for the referrals which have been received. It is acknowledged that the pandemic has impacted on the number of referrals received and the ability to carry out some elements of the ASD assessments. This is due to the requirement to carry out observations of the child in a number of settings and it was not possible to carry these out due to restricted access to education settings.
- 4.2 However, TEWV are looking at different ways of being able to carry out these observations and all children seen by the MDT have received information on support they can be accessing whilst waiting for the full Autism assessment.
- 4.3 From February 2021, assessments for ADHD will be included in the Neurodevelopmental Pathway. This will again streamline the process for these assessments, removing the need for the child to be assessed by Community CAMHS unless there is a co-morbid mental health need. It is will also enable the synergy of assessments for children being considered for both ASD and ADHD.
- 4.4 From February 2021 the co-ordination for the 'Under 5's' pathway is moving from TEWV to North Tees & Hartlepool Foundation Trust (NTHFT). This will streamline the process for families and result in families only having to link with one Foundation Trust. The triage model in place for the over 5's will be adopted in the under 5 model and will utilise local authority staff from the 0-19 service and Early Years Education Team.
- 4.4 The CCG, Local Authority and Parent Carer Forum continue to work in partnership to promote the 'needs led' approach with ongoing feedback being sought from parents as to the effectiveness of the approach.

The chair-person of the Parent Carer Forum has provided the following information summarising implementation of the neurodevelopment pathway from their perspective:

*'One of the major areas of change has been the introduction of the Neurodevelopment pathway since September. As a forum we have expressed the importance of communication with parents around this. This has resulted in the production of easy to understand information and a direct link with the neuro team with a telephone number and a newsletter too.*

*Areas of concern had been previously raised, especially around communication and information sharing, but we have seen action and progress in moving towards a resolution.*

*In turn we have seen a much more settled response from parents compared to those on the previous pathway prior to September 20, with evidence showing that parents understand the diagnostic process and how to access this. This is seen by parents sharing the CCG/TEWV pathway information as a point of reference and the telephone number to enable parent/carers to make direct contact to get concerns answered quickly (There is an element of empowerment and responsibility taking, for parents, linked to this).*

*Since September we have not heard one piece of negative feedback regarding the over 5's Neurodevelopment pathway from those parents currently on it- in fact those parents are now sharing their positive reflections which is a refreshing change. There had been grumbles about the under 5 pathway delays and transfer, but this is to be expected and is being managed.'*

The CCG, Local Authority and Parent Carer Forum will continue to work in partnership to promote the 'needs led' approach and respond to on ongoing feedback from parents.

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