

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

AGENDA



Monday 8 September 2025

at 5.00pm

in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Councillors Allen, Hargreaves, Harrison (C), Lindridge, Little, Morley, Napper, Nelson, Oliver, Scarborough (VC)

Parish Council Co-opted Member:

M Ireland (Dalton Piercy Parish Council)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee held on 23 June 2025 (*previously circulated and published*)
- 3.2 To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership held on 14 March 2025

4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS

- 4.1 Budget Monitoring Report - Quarter 1 2025/26 – *Director of Finance, IT and Digital*

5. KEY DECISIONS

- 5.1 Corporate Complaints Monitoring Report for 2024/25 and new customer feedback and complaints policy – *Monitoring Officer*

CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire alarm or a bomb alarm, please leave by the nearest emergency exit as directed by Council Officers. A Fire Alarm is a continuous ringing. A Bomb Alarm is a continuous tone. The Assembly Point for everyone is Victory Square by the Cenotaph. If the meeting has to be evacuated, please proceed to the Assembly Point so that you can be safely accounted for.

5.2 Antipoverty Strategy and Action Update – *Director of Public Health*

6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

6.1 Housing Management Service Complaints Policy: Annual Performance Monitoring Report – *Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)*

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7.1 Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Update – *Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources*

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – Monday 24 November 2025 at 10.00am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool



SAFER HARTLEPOOL PARTNERSHIP MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

14 March 2025

The meeting commenced at 12 noon in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Responsible Authority Members:

Councillor Brenda Harrison, Elected Member, Hartlepool Borough Council
Councillor Karen Oliver, Elected Member, Hartlepool Borough Council
Tony Hanson, Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and
Regulatory Services, Hartlepool Borough Council
Sylvia Pinkney, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services, Hartlepool Borough
Council
Alan O'Donoghue, Hartlepool District Commander, Cleveland Police (VC)
Tom Legg, Hartlepool Neighbourhood Policing Inspector
Gordon Bentley, Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC
ICB)
Sean Smith, Cleveland Fire Authority
Neil Harrison, Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services

Other Members:

Jonathan Brash, MP for Hartlepool (C)
Craig Blundred, Director of Public Health, Hartlepool Borough Council
Matt Storey, Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland
Sally Robinson, Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning
Services, Hartlepool Borough Council

Non-Voting Observer, Councillor Jorgeson, Representative of Audit and
Governance Committee, Hartlepool Borough Council

Also present:

Councillor Sue Little
Michael Gardner, Siobhan Rafferty, Claire Renwick and Lucie Wilson,
Homeless Team

Officers:

Rachael Readman, Trading Standards and Licensing Manager
Joan Stevens, Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Manager
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

28. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Denise McGuckin (Managing Director), Jill Harrison (Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services), Jo Heaney (Chair Youth Offending Board), Ann Powell (Head of Cleveland Area, National Probation Service), Angela Corner (Thirteen Group).

29. Declarations of Interest

None.

30. Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2025

Confirmed.

31. Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews

(Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services)

Purpose of report

To share learning from the second national analyses of Safeguarding Adult Reviews with members of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership, in particular the recommendations that relate to how Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) work more effectively with Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).

Issue(s) for consideration

The analyses taken together provided a significant knowledge base about adult safeguarding in England across all types of abuse and neglect. They highlight both the shifts that have taken place and the challenges that endure. An executive summary of the second analysis identified the headline findings, drawing on the detail contained in the following three stages.

Stage 1 – Case characteristics, nature of the abuse and neglect, SAR reviewing process.

Stage 2 – Analysis of learning.

Stage 3 – Conclusions and improvement priorities.

The proposals from the analyses were detailed in the report and had been considered by the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB) and it was recognised that there had been significant progress made in terms of engagement, awareness raising and sharing information, as well as promoting effective operational and strategic working relationships. It was noted that adult safeguarding training was available to all partners and a leaflet summarising available training and other resources was attached at Appendix 1. It was acknowledged that there may be opportunities for further

collaborative working on issues that have implications for both the Safer Hartlepool Partnership and TSAB and any feedback on areas where this could be explored was welcomed.

The Chair highlighted that safeguarding adults involved some of the most vulnerable people in society. The Chair added that partners who support vulnerable adults were only encouraged to participate in training and this was not good. Clarification was sought on the availability of statistics showing the number of people from the different organisations that had received training. The Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services indicated that across the Tees Valley the completion rate of safeguarding training was around 80%. The Chair asked that an overview of the level of training undertaken by all partner organisations supporting vulnerable adults be collated and reported back to the Partnership.

Decision

- (i) That an overview of the participation in safeguarding training undertaken by all partner organisations be reported back to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership in the new municipal year.
- (ii) That the learning from the national analysis of SARs was noted.

32. Tees Domestic Abuse Perpetration Strategy - OPCC

Consideration of this item was deferred to the next meeting of the Partnership.

33. SHP Action Plan *(Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services)*

Purpose of report

To provide an outline of the priorities and actions of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services presented a report which provide an overview of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership's performance linked to the priorities outline in the Community Safety Plan 2024/27. The action plan was attached at Appendix 1 and it outlined the activities carried out by partners across the priorities of the 2024/2027 plan.

It was noted that some partners produce action plans to accompany strategies such as Domestic Abuse and Drugs and Alcohol. Links to

these were included in the action plan to ensure that it fully reflected the work being carried out by all partners.

The Chair highlighted that there was a presentation later on the agenda outlining the priorities and action plan of the Community Safety Plan.

Decision

The Safer Hartlepool Partnership Action Plan 2024/25 was noted.

34. Face the Public Session

The District Commander for Hartlepool from Cleveland Police provided the Partnership with a detailed and comprehensive presentation that outlined the typical demand in any one day for Cleveland Police along with promising crime reductions across the town. It was acknowledged that the three-year Community Safety Plan will be implemented in alignment with the Cleveland Police and Crime Plan 2024–2029. Additionally, as part of the Safer Hartlepool Action Plan, three specific crime types were identified as priority areas for Cleveland Police. This focus was driven by notable increases in these crime types over the 12 months leading up to January 2025, compared to the same period in the previous year. It was expressed that this will require an effective partnership approach through the SHP.

Retail Crime – 16.5% (plus 322)
Personal Robbery – 28% (plus 31)
Drug Related Offences – 30.5% (plus 107)

The District Commander indicated he was hugely impressed with the Safer Hartlepool's Partnership's engagement and overall work with all communities across Hartlepool.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) provided a presentation which outlined the statutory responsibility of Safer Hartlepool Partnership which was to develop and implement a Community Safety Plan. The Plan would set out how the Partnership intended to address crime and disorder, substance misuse and re-offending issues in Hartlepool. The current priorities of the Community Safety Plan were noted as:

- Anti-social Behaviour
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Domestic Violence and Abuse
- Serious Violence

It was noted that the performance against the Community Safety Plan was monitored by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership. The Assistant

Director, Regulatory Services confirmed that Partners contribute to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership Action Plan by providing an outline of the work they were carried out. This included crime and disorder, substance mis-use, re-offending and the specific priorities of with the Community Safety Plan. It was noted that the action plan was a living document and allowed partners to include new initiatives to fully reflect the work being carried out.

The Chair highlighted that during the current municipal year, the Safer Hartlepool Partnership examined anti-social behaviour at the ramp in York Road, retail crime and off-road bikes. During the discussions on these issues a number of positives were raised but there were also some concerning statistics. There were a number of members of the public in attendance and the Chair invited them to address the Partnership.

There were numerous issues raised by the members of public in attendance and they were addressed as follows.

- Concerns were raised at the relocation of the drugs and alcohol support centre that had been relocated next door to a children's day nursery in Tees Street. The Leader of the Council indicated that this service had been relocated on a temporary basis during the refurbishment of the Whitby Street Centre. It was acknowledged that this was a temporary arrangement but the Director of Public Health indicated a separate discussion outside of this meeting could take place with regard to any specific concerns with the arrangement.
- In relation to the training of carers, concerns were raised at the level of training available and undertaken for carers in the private sector. The Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Specialist Services confirmed that anyone who was contracted to provide care and support would be required to undertake an element of training to cover any specific or specialized requirements of their role. The Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Specialist Services indicated that a separate discussion outside of this meeting could take place with regard to any specific concerns in relation to training requirements for carers.
- In relation to the ramp in York Road, there were a number of issues with anti-social behaviour in the area which had led to some customers visiting the shops and banks in the area feeling intimidated. The District Commander for Hartlepool acknowledged that while enforcement was needed in and around that area, that was not solely the answer. There was a need to better understand the root cause of why people were behaving that way, whilst ensuring suitable support and intervention was provided to divert vulnerable members of the community from such behaviour. It was discussed that the Safer Hartlepool Partnership would enable agencies to work together to do this. It was highlighted that there had been an increased visibility by

Cleveland Police with foot patrols on a daily basis. The Chair suggested that the greater use of dispersal orders should be explored further as it was important to ensure the area was safe, hospitable and secure for the public. The District Commander for Hartlepool added that there were dedicated police officers in neighbourhoods with dedicated wards and everyone was encouraged to get to know their dedicated officers as they were a valuable source for advice. The Chair asked for the details of the affected premises near the ramp and he would endeavour to visit the premises. A representative from Wharton Annex addressed the Partnership urging people to show compassion for people and signpost people to the support that was available, such as Cornerstone and the Drug and Alcohol Service. The Chair made a pledge that there would be a police/street warden presence on the ramp going forward to get on top of the issue. The Chair sought a commitment from partners to ensure that there was a wider presence on the ramp to help address the factors that influence the negative behaviour. It was suggested that the increased presence of police officers be extended to include the area around the Mill House Leisure Centre.

- There had been a number of incidents of off-road bikes along York Road, including some going through red lights. The Chair indicated that a number of draft actions in relation to off-road bikes had been agreed by the Partnership and a range of measures were being explored, including the use of drone technology, investment in stingers and talking to fuel suppliers to cut off the supply of fuel. The District Commander added that electric bikes and scooters were presenting a new challenge, and concerning police analysis indicated that those involved in off-road and electric bike incidents were predominantly males aged 14-19 years old. It was discussed that engagement with parents was key to dealing with this issue, along with dedicated interventions with schools and colleges, with increased communication on ways to report such incidents to police.
- The issue of child protection was raised and it was noted that this was not included within the Community Safety Plan specifically. The Chair agreed, adding that more legislation on children health and wellbeing was needed through parliament to ensure these issues were embedded in policies and plans of all agencies.
- The importance of human rights and mental health and wellbeing was raised. A specific issue around the use of a gym during covid was referred to. The Chair highlighted that there were a lot of issues of mental health post covid. The Chair added that there were avenues to instigate complaints against the local authority or Police including through the Local Government Ombudsman for complaints. The Chair noted that Officers were available to speak about the issue immediately following the meeting.
- Clarification was sought on the inclusion of the community and voluntary sector on the membership of the Partnership. The Chair indicated that the membership of the Partnership would be

reviewed to ensure the community and voluntary sector were more involved. In addition, more face the public events would be scheduled as this event had been well attended and resulted in some interesting discussions.

- It was noted that the Children's Services Committee through a Working Group were exploring the increasing number of children who were permanently excluded from schools as this was a huge issue and impacted on the children's future into adulthood.

The Chair thanked everyone who had attended and engaged with the Safer Hartlepool Partnership, it had been invaluable and demonstrated that detailed constructive discussions can go a long way to making the town better.

Decision

The discussions and comments were noted.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Chair reported that a schedule the schedule of meetings would be confirmed at the beginning of the municipal year.

The meeting concluded at 2.50pm

CHAIR

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

8 SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter 1 2025/26

Report of: Director of Finance, IT and Digital

Decision Type: Budget and Policy Framework

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- that is connected, sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
- that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community. (Organisation)

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of:

- i) General Fund forecast revenue outturn for 2025/26;
- ii) Reserves forecasts;
- iii) Housing Revenue Account forecast outturn for 2025/26;
- iv) Corporate Income Collection Performance; and
- v) Capital Programme Monitoring 2025/26.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The cost pressures reported to Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee throughout 2024/25 have largely continued into the 2025/26 financial year. The significant financial pressures being experienced by the Council are from inflationary and on-going increased demand, areas of income shortfall and significant cost pressures for Children's Social Care external placements. The latter increasing significantly again in quarter 1 of 2025/26.

- 3.2 General inflation has risen in recent months with the Consumer Price Index rising to 3.8% for July, which is the highest rate since January 2024, with further rises expected through the summer months. This inflation is compounding the profound impact of the now permanently embedded inflationary increases over the last 2 years. The Bank of England continue to set their policy approach to support their objective of reducing inflation to their 2% target.
- 3.3 The in-year forecast overspend outlined in this report and wider financial position of the Council will necessitate in-year corrective action to be taken. Messaging regarding spend efficiency measures and reviewing staff vacancies continues, alongside action to mitigate the children's social care financial position.
- 3.4 Since the 2025/26 budget was approved in February 2025, the Council have received confirmation of the Public Health grant allocation for 2025/26. The increase in grant to £10.355m, and also some minor budget adjustments in other areas are included within the budgets shown in this report.
- 3.5 The latest 2025/26 forecast revenue outturn position for the Council is outlined below.

4. GENERAL FUND FORECAST REVENUE OUTTURN 2025/26

- 4.1 The current forecast outturn position is an overspend of £2.375m. The position by service area is detailed in **Appendices A to E**, with further commentary on variances set out from section 4.3 onwards.
- 4.2 As shown in the table below the financial position within Children's Services continues to be of serious concern given the level of forecast overspend. Forecast underspends in other areas have partially mitigated these Children's Services cost pressures.

Departmental Budgets	Q1 Forecast Outturn - Overspend/ (Underspend)
	£'000
Adult & Community Based Services	800
Children's & Joint Commissioning Services	4,490
Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services	145
Finance, IT and Digital	(140)
Legal, Governance and HR	(95)
Corporate	(2,825)
Total Forecast Budget Overspend	2,375

Adult and Community Based Services

- 4.3 The projected outturn is a net departmental overspend of £0.800m, consisting of a £0.350m overspend within Adult Social Care and a £0.450m overspend within Preventative & Community Based Services. This overspend represents less than 2% of the department's overall net budget.
- 4.4 The overspend within Adult Social Care mainly relates to demographic pressures, greater costs and increased income budgets across Older People and Working Age Adults packages of care budgets and also income from Telecare charging being lower than budgeted. It is still early in the financial year, and these budgets will continue to be closely monitored.
- 4.5 The overspend within Preventative & Community Based Services mainly relates to reduced income across Cemeteries and Crematoria and Carlton Adventure and historic budget pressures for the Borough Hall and Town Hall Theatre. Work is being undertaken in each of these areas to explore options for increasing income or delivering services differently.

Children and Joint Commissioning Services

- 4.6 As part of the 2025/26 budget setting process additional specific resources of £6.9m were provided into Children's Social Care, given their unprecedented budget pressures. This is in addition to normal inflationary budget increases. Notwithstanding this significant budget increase the projected outturn is an overspend of £4.490m.
- 4.7 The main reasons for the overspend is the increase in the numbers and costs of children requiring external residential placements and the associated impacts on social work staffing workloads and budgets. This reflects the increasing complexity of children's needs and the significant fees being charged by the external care market. Overall Hartlepool's Children in Care numbers per 10,000 children, continue to be above regional and national averages.
- 4.8 With regard to external placement pressures, the current top 25 highest cost external placements are costing in the region of £240,000 per week. The average cost of the current 45 external placements is £7,500 per week, with a range of £3,900 to £28,850 per week. There are currently 7 placements in excess of £10,000 per week.
- 4.9 Although the overall number of children in our care has remained relatively stable at around 340, it is important to note that this is not a fixed cohort of children. Some children positively return home, and some children move into special guardianship order (SGO) or child arrangement order (CAO) arrangements. These SGO and CAO arrangements, although no longer classified as within our care, still retain financial support payments from the Council. This is another area of budget pressure.

- 4.10 To mitigate these cost pressures, 4 key strands of activity are progressing and are being overseen by Senior Management. The activity strands are; Edge of Care support, fostering and placement planning, reunification and care leavers support.
- 4.11 The Council is in the process of opening a new in-house children's home (planned to open in Autumn 2025) with the possibility of further new homes over the next 12 months. Following approval by Council, the Council has committed to supporting a local charity in their bid to develop a children's home, providing more local, lower cost capacity. Both developments will help reduce our exposure to the significant fees being charged by the external care market.
- 4.12 The Council is considering its own local fostering drive and is also included in a large-scale regional recruitment initiative. In addition, increased staffing resources have been provided during 2025/26. The Edge of Care team are providing support to families who are at risk of having children enter the care system. Increased respite support provision has also commenced.
- 4.13 Locally case reviews continue to be carried out to ensure care is being provided at the correct level, whilst also challenging costs. Further activity to maximise partner contributions to care costs where appropriate has commenced. Regionally, in the medium-term, partnership working is being considered to try and address care market failures. Following successful pilots elsewhere in the country supported by the DfE, a project to consider a North East Regional Care Cooperative has commenced. Further work and consideration of this partnership will be carried out over the coming months.
- 4.14 From National Governments perspective the 'The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme' was published earlier in the year. These changes centre around implementing "Family Help and multi-agency child protection reforms that make greater use of Family Group Decision Making. The rollout of these reforms represents a significant step forward in delivering on the government's mission to provide children with the best start in life and break down barriers to opportunity." The approach to meeting the reform requirements, to commence during 2026/27, is currently being developed.
- 4.15 The MTFS only provides resources for £1.5m of budget growth in 2026/27 and future years. As such the department has been tasked with reducing the overspend to a maximum of this level.

Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services

- 4.16 The current forecast outturn for the department is an overspend of £0.145m.
- 4.17 There is a forecast adverse variance in relation to fee income in a number of areas including:
- Planning
 - Strategic Asset Management
 - Public Protection

- Procurement and Reprographics.

- 4.18 There is a forecast adverse variance of £0.075m in relation to Facilities Management which reflects the uncertain position following a reduction in the number of schools that buy back the service. A saving of £0.100m was taken as part of the 2025/26 budget process, the adverse variance is reflected within the figures reported in the “Budget Savings Monitoring” section of the report.
- 4.19 Following usage changes in relation to Concessionary Fares there is a net adverse variance of £0.200m within Sustainable Transport. This budget has consistently underspent for a number of years and a saving of £0.300m was taken as part of the 2025/26 budget process. The adverse variance is reflected within the figures reported in the “Budget Savings Monitoring” section of the report.
- 4.20 However, there are a number of forecast favourable variances offsetting the position as outlined in Appendix C and the department will continue to monitor the position closely and action will be taken to attempt to mitigate the forecast overspend position.

Finance, IT and Digital

- 4.21 The current forecast outturn is an underspend of £0.140m. This is owing to favourable variances from staffing vacancies and staff not being at the top of their grade, which is offsetting a pressure in income generation and additional printing and postage.

Legal, Governance and HR

- 4.22 The forecast outturn is an underspend of £0.095m which mainly relates to vacant posts, staff not being at the top of their grade, and savings on supplies and services.

Corporate Areas

- 4.23 Interest income generated from the investment of the council’s reserves, continue to provide a vital revenue stream to support the overall budget position. Interest of c£2.7m is forecast to be generated in 2025/26, with the council taking advantage of continued high rates of interest. As previously noted, these returns will not be achievable into future years as reserve cash balances reduce, coupled with the expected downwards trend on interest rates.
- 4.24 The national pay offer for 2025/26 was agreed during July. The agreed pay increase from April 2025 is 3.2% for all employees. The pay award is marginally higher than the 3.0% increase provided for through the 2025/26 budget setting process.

- 4.25 A 2025/26 funding allocation increase from the Extended Producer Responsibilities grant is offsetting adverse variances in relation to property and other minor expenditure and income shortfalls.

Budget Savings Monitoring

- 4.26 The 2025/26 budget included the implementation of £2.849m of approved savings plans for year. A number of plans have now been delivered, which is positive given the demands and pressures services have experienced. Directors continue to take the necessary action to mitigate any delays or issues with implementation.
- £1.546m (54.3%) of the savings have been fully realised.
 - £0.963m (33.8%) of savings where good progress is being made, with a good prospect that full savings will be achieved.
 - £0.340m (11.9%) is in respect of areas where delays and issues have been encountered, meaning savings are unlikely to be delivered as planned during 2025/26. These are included as pressure/overspends in the outturn position. Further information on the main areas are noted below.
- 4.27 A review of the work and charging arrangements for the Management Information Team within Children's Service has not yet delivered the planned £0.040m savings. Schools buy-backs have been less than anticipated in this area.
- 4.28 The forecast saving from the Concessionary fares budget has not materialised at the anticipated level. A saving of £0.300m was factored into the departmental budget for 2025/26, which re-based the budget, informed by charges in recent years. Due to increased bus usage by Hartlepool residents within the latest data, Hartlepool's relative share of the Tees Valley arrangements has increased.
- 4.29 A planned saving of £0.100m from a review of Schools Catering and Cleaning, is forecast to be only partially achieved in 2025/26. At present £0.075m is forecast not to be achieved during 2025/26, this is as a result of increased costs of providing the services, and some schools no longer buying back the council services.

Dedicated School Grant

- 4.30 Until the 2022/23 financial year, the Council had successfully managed High Needs Block (HNB) costs within the available annual grant allocation and HNB reserves. This has been achieved despite a significant increase in demands on this service, including the impacts arising from the pandemic.
- 4.31 Outturns for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were overspends of £2.348m and £3.343m, respectively. These overspends were considered necessary to invest in

Hartlepool provision and so avoid placement of pupils with SEND outside the town, wherever possible. In time, this approach will reduce costs for independent and out of town provision and provide an improved outcome for Hartlepool children. A key part of this strategy was the opening of Hartlepool Free School in September 2024. Whilst the Free School transitions to full capacity over a 5-year period, the lag in funding contributes to the financial pressure on the HNB – circa £0.514m in 2024/25 and an estimated £0.243m in 2025/26.

- 4.32 At the end of 2024/25 the DSG was £4.932m in deficit. Accounting regulations covering the period up to 31st March 2028 (previously March 2026) do not allow this balance to be included in the General Fund. In accordance with accounting regulations this balance was transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account which is an unusable reserve.
- 4.33 During 2024/25 the Council produced a DSG Management Plan for submission to the Department for Education (DfE). This was a complex spend, demand and demographics data exercise, which documented 4 years of actual data, the current years budgeted data and 6 years predicted data. Following meetings with the DfE the plan has been agreed and has continued to be updated and monitored.
- 4.34 The 2025/26 High Needs Budget exceeded the funding allocation by £4.257m. Mitigations included limiting inflation on Top Up Funding and Special Schools funding, putting in place a target to reduce the Out of Area and Independent School places by meeting need in Hartlepool provision. The transfer of £0.436m (0.5% the maximum without Secretary of State approval) from the Schools Block and uncommitted funding of £0.080m from the Central School Services Block to the High Needs Block which was also proposed by School Forum and agreed by Children's Services Committee.
- 4.35 The 2025/26 projected outturn is an overspend of £5.030m, a further £0.773m than the budgeted overspend. This is predominantly owing to increases in payments to schools for Individual Pupil Support and increased spending on school based Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) which keeps Hartlepool children being educated in the Town. This has resulted in a small saving in out-of-town specialist provision.
- 4.36 Nationally the HNB DSG is a forecasting deficit of £5bn by the end of 2025/26. This has been recognised by Government who included in their spending review plans funding to make mainstream provision more inclusive and deliver the specialist interventions children need to improve their outcomes, stopping parents having to fight for support. Further details on the Government plans for the SEND system are expected as part of a Schools White Paper due to be published in the autumn.

Reserves

- 4.37 The current reserves position and the forecast usage of reserves by year is summarised in the table below, with a more detailed analysis included at **Appendix M**.

Reserve Area	Balance as at 31st March 2025 (Revised)	Forecast Usage		Forecast Balance as at 31st March 2029
		2025/26	2026/27 to 2028/29	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Unearmarked General Fund	5,500	0	0	5,500
Budget Support Fund	7,672	(3,375)	(1,500)	2,797
Budget Support – Transformation and Invest to Save	3,400	(1,700)	(1,350)	350
Other Revenue Reserves	21,767	(10,952)	(6,478)	4,337
Revenue Reserves Total	38,339	(16,027)	(9,328)	12,984
Capital Reserves	17,983	(17,620)	(363)	0
TOTAL	56,322	(33,647)	(9,691)	12,984

- 4.38 Please note the information provided excludes any ring-fenced School, HRA and unusable reserves given their restricted nature.

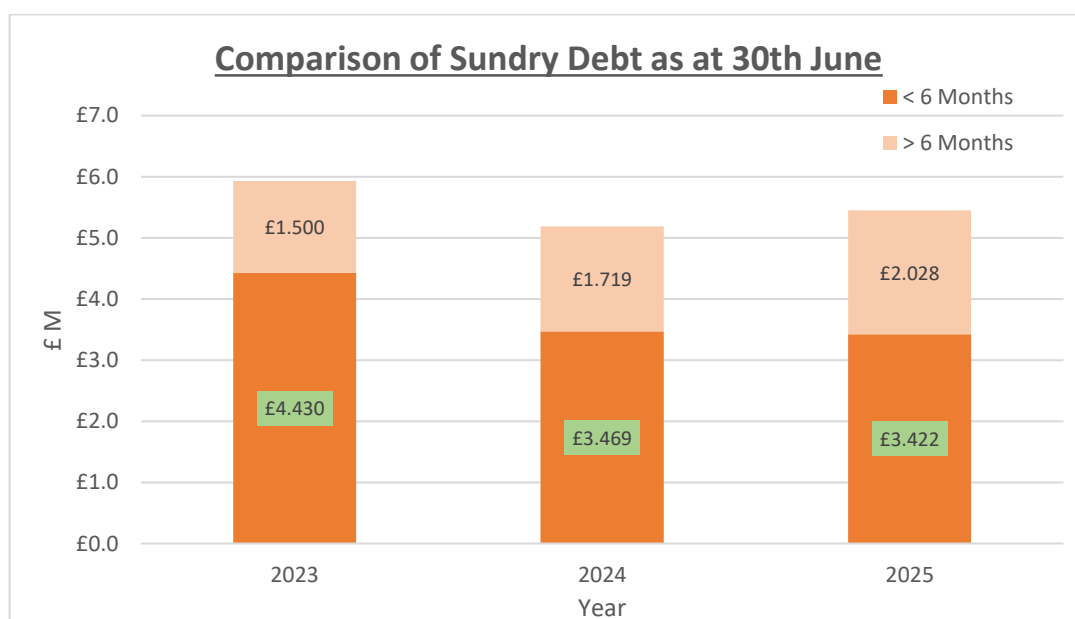
5. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

- 5.1 The HRA is budgeted to make a £0.008m surplus for the financial year. The forecast net nil actual position is expected to result in a £0.008m adverse variance when compared to budget. Further details provided at **Appendix F**.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that issues in relation to damp and mould will continue to arise resulting in a forecast adverse variance on the maintenance budget.
- 5.3 It is anticipated that this adverse position can be mitigated through a combination of the following:
- Slightly higher than anticipated rental income
 - Reduction in voluntary contribution to the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR).
- 5.4 It should be noted that this reduces the future resilience of the HRA, as there will be less funding available for major repairs.
- 5.5 The HRA reserve is expected to remain at £0.500m
- 5.6 The HRA capital position is outlined in **Appendix G**.

6. INCOME COLLECTION AND COLLECTION FUND

Sundry Debts

- 6.1 The Council collects significant Sundry Debts income for the payment of services provided by the Council. In total, £9.446m in sundry debts were raised in the first three months of 2025/26. As of 30th June 2025, £7.020m (74.32%) of this amount had been collected.
- 6.2 Robust procedures for collecting the remaining outstanding debt are in place. The following graph shows the comparable positions on 30th June for the last three years for long-term debt and current debt, which have been outstanding for less than six months.



- 6.3 Debtors totalled £5.450m as of 30th June 2025, of which £3.422m (62.79%) relates to current debts (less than 6 months old). Included within current debts (less than 6 months old) is debt where the customer has been invoiced for the whole of 2025/26, but payment is to be received in instalments throughout the year.
- 6.4 Debts greater than 6 months old total £2.028m. 99.56% (£2.019m) of this amount is under recovery action and 0.44% (£0.009m) is now considered unrecoverable.

Council Tax

- 6.5 The in-year performance to the end of June is slightly up on 2024/25. As at the 30th June 2025 the Council had collected 26.65% of the 2025/26 liability, compared to 26.42% for the previous year. Arrears collection continues to perform well.

- 6.6 Members may recollect that increased efforts were to be made targeting potential single person discount (SPD) fraud. In the first quarter of the year the number claiming the discount has reduced by 177. The current claimant count is 16,526 a reduction of 885 (5%) from the 17,411 claiming SPD in March 2024 when the fraud awareness campaign began.
- 6.7 As at the end of June the Local Council Tax Support claimant count was 13,109 of which there were 8,664 working age claimants. There has been a slight decrease in working age claimants since the beginning of the year.
- 6.8 The Collection Fund in respect of Council Tax continues to be closely monitored.

Business Rates

- 6.9 At the 30th June 2025 the Council had collected 26.60% of the 2025/26 liability compared to 26.89% for the previous year. This is slightly down on 2024/25, but business rate collection tends to be volatile during the year, and is also impacted by changes to liability for businesses. At this stage we expect collection rates to be in line with 2024/25.

7 CAPITAL MONITORING

- 7.1 Details of actual expenditure, budget variations and reprofiling of budget are provided in **Appendices H to L** and summarised below. Where applicable expenditure has been reprofiled into future years. Resources will also be carried forward to fund these commitments.

Department	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/25	Actual to end Q1 (30/06/25)	Budget	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations	Reprofiling of Expenditure	Revised Budget
	£'000	£'000	2025/26 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2025/26 £'000
Major Regeneration Schemes	117,940	35,581	3,397	57,947	0	(25,407)	32,540
Adult & Community Based Services	9,224	5,232	569	2,120	650	0	2,770
Children's & Joint Commissioning Services	14,646	3,171	1,307	9,230	943	(1,858)	8,315
Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services	32,903	10,968	1,875	18,805	712	(488)	19,029
Corporate	2,475	333	28	1,871	30	0	1,901
Total Capital Expenditure	177,188	55,285	7,176	89,973	2,335	(27,753)	64,555

- 7.2 As shown in the above table, actual 2025/26 in-year capital expenditure to 30th June 2025 (end of Q1) totals £7.176m and reprofiling of expenditure into future years totals £27.753m. After taking account of the reprofiling and budget variations the forecast capital expenditure in 2025/26 now totals £64.555m.

- 7.3 The main areas of cost variation during quarter 1, included within the £2.335m additional scheme and cost variations column above are; an in-year increase in the disabled facilities grant from government, successful grant awards in relation to Carlton Adventure, Art Gallery tower and Warms Homes schemes, additional schools capital grants and additional highways maintenance funding.
- 7.4 The main areas of reprofiling of expenditure included within the £27.753m column above are the Towns Fund Middleton Grange scheme (£9.141m) and the Levelling Up Screen Production Village scheme (£12.437m). Both schemes have secured approval from MHCLG to extend delivery to March 2027, which aligns with the respective scheme delivery timescales.
- 7.5 Full details of any variances and reprofiling of expenditure are shown in **Appendices H to L**.

Capital Receipts

- 7.6 There were no significant capital receipts received in Quarter 1.

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	No relevant issues.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	The financial implications are fully set out in the main body of the report.
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No relevant issues.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	No relevant issues.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
CONSULTATION	No relevant issues.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) Note the 2025/26 forecast outturn position of £2.375m overspend and the accompanying financial performance for the year;
- ii) Note the forecast use of reserves at paragraph 4.37;
- iii) Note the 2025/26 forecast outturn in relation to the Housing Revenue Account detailed within Section 5 of the report; and
- iv) Note the capital programme position and approve budget variations.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To inform Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee of the Council's 2025/26 financial forecast outturn position.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-
None

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

James Magog
Director of Finance, IT and Digital
Email: james.magog@hartlepool.gov.uk

Paul Dixon
Assistant Director, Finance
Email: paul.dixon@hartlepool.gov.uk

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 14/08/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 14/08/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 14/08/2025

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/26 as at 30th June 2025

2025/26 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
	Adult Social Care		
74	Carers	5	Minor Variances.
4,419	Commissioning - Adults	120	Relates to a combination of historic income pressures relating to Court of Protection administration fees and increased spend across supplies and services budgets.
219	Departmental Running Costs	0	
144	Direct Care & Support (including Telecare)	80	The overspend relates to Telecare income being lower than forecast.
766	LD & Transition Social Work	0	Staffing underspends have contributed towards the departmental salary abatement target.
2,238	Locality & Safeguarding Team	(90)	The underspend relates to staff savings from incremental drift and vacancies over and above the departmental salary abatement target.
1,304	Mental Health Services	(10)	The underspend relates to staff savings from incremental drift and vacancies over and above the departmental salary abatement target.
1,594	OT & Disability Equipment	0	
30,665	Packages of Care	285	The overspend mainly relates to increased costs, demand and income targets across a number of Older People and Working Age Adults packages of care budgets.
189	Transformation & Digital	(20)	The underspend relates to staff savings from incremental drift and vacancies over and above the departmental salary abatement target.
1,343	Working Age Adult Day Services	(20)	The underspend relates to staff savings from incremental drift and vacancies over and above the departmental salary abatement target.
42,955	Adult Social Care Sub Total	350	
	Preventative & Community Based Services		
67	Adult Education	(25)	Mainly relates to increased income from grants.
82	Allotments	0	
31	Archaeology	0	
(257)	Coast, Countryside, Heritage and Cemeteries	190	The overspend mainly relates to historic income pressures within the Cemeteries and Crematoria service area.
1,205	Community Hubs	30	The projected overspend mainly relates to historic budget reductions linked to branch library closures.
80	Cultural - Events and Theatres	150	The overspend mainly relates to historic income pressures across both the Town Hall Theatre and Borough Hall.
538	Cultural - Museums and Galleries	(5)	Relates to various minor underspends across a number of areas.
647	Sports, Leisure & Recreation Facilities	110	The projected overspend mainly relates to reduced income at Carlton Adventure.
2,393	Preventative & Community Based Services Sub Total	450	
45,348	Adult & Community Based Services Total	800	

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/26 as at 30th June 2025

2025/26 Budget	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable)	Director's Explanation of Variance
£'000		£'000	
	Children's Services		
3,449	Children & Families	565	Overspend mainly relates to increases in the number of children subject to Child Arrangement Orders, Special Guardianship Allowances or receiving a Direct Payment.
27,200	Children in our Care	4,395	Overspend mainly relates to an increase in the number of children in our care requiring residential placements. This reflects the increasing complexity of their needs and the significant fees being charged by the external care market.
(63)	Early Intervention	(55)	Favourable variance mainly relates to staffing savings arising from vacancies and incremental drift.
508	Housing, Hardship & Welfare	(400)	Favourable variance mainly relates to the receipt of 'one-off' grants and staffing costs.
0	Play & Care	25	Service now ended (June 2025) as part of the 2025/26 MTFS savings proposals however budget was deleted from April 2025.
5,655	Safeguarding Children	245	Overspend mainly relates to increased social worker staffing costs.
683	Standards, Engagement & Development	0	
1,121	Strategic Commissioning	(280)	Favourable variance mainly relates to the receipt of a number of temporary, 'time limited', grants.
311	Youth Justice Service	0	An underspend is forecast, mainly arising from staffing savings, however any underspend will be transferred to the ring-fenced YJS Partnership Reserve.
38,864	Children's Services Sub Total	4,495	
	Education (excluding DSG)		
167	Access to Education	(5)	
59	Central Support Services	0	
507	Other School Related Expenditure	0	
457	Raising Educational Achievement	(10)	Favourable variance mainly relates to increased income generation offsetting overspends on training and room hire.
643	Special Needs Services	(30)	Favourable variance mainly relates to staffing savings arising from vacancies and incremental drift.
448	Strategic Management	40	Overspend reflects cost of interim arrangements.
409	Youth Service	0	
2,690	Education Sub Total	(5)	
41,554	Children's and Joint Commissioning Services Sub Total	4,490	
	Public Health Grant		
4,059	Children's Services	(1)	Minor variances.
2,714	Substance Misuse Services	(27)	Underspend mainly relates to staff vacancies. This underspend will be transferred into the ring-fenced Public Health reserve at year end.
2,176	General Public Health Support Services	(282)	Increased grant allocation. Work on-going to determine how to effectively allocate the remaining ringfenced balance on public health activity.
636	Sexual Health Services	8	Planned spend originally to be funded from PH reserve.
27	Smoking Cessation	24	Planned spend originally to be funded from PH reserve.
460	Physical Activity	0	
14	Mental Health	0	
57	Health Checks	28	Forecast spend higher than budget.
212	Obesity	0	
(10,355)	Public Health Grant	0	
0	Contribution to ring-fenced Public Health Grant reserve (Substance Misuse)	27	This relates to the underspend on Substance Misuse Services and has been transferred to the Public Health Grant reserve.
0	Contribution to ring-fenced Public Health Grant reserve (General)	223	General net underspend transferred to the ring-fenced Public Health grant reserve.
0	Public Health Grant	0	
41,554	Children's and Joint Commissioning Services Total (including Public Health Grant)	4,490	

	Dedicated Schools Grant	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable)	
13,077	Early Years Block	(300)	
17,900	High Needs Block	5,030	
0	Schools Block	0	
30,977	TOTAL Dedicated Schools Grant	4,730	

DEVELOPMENT, NEIGHBOURHOODS & REGULATORY SERVICES

Appendix C

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/26 as at 30th June 2025

2025/26 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
	Neighbourhood Services		
0	Building Design Team	(50)	Forecast favourable variance reflects increased productivity in relation to large capital schemes.
133	Construction Team	0	
360	Engineering Services (including Coastal Protection and Contaminated Land)	(125)	Forecast favourable variance reflects additional income generation in relation to a change to the allowable recovery of costs for a number of grant schemes.
3,324	Environmental Services	(60)	Forecast favourable variance reflects lower than budgeted Fleet SLA costs.
2,890	Highways	(95)	Forecast favourable variance reflects use of grant funding and action taken to mitigate adverse variances elsewhere.
2,339	Passenger Transport	(90)	Forecast favourable variance reflects SEN transport savings as a result of the new SEN school which has reduced the amount spent on out of town travel. The cost of tenders for the September cohort were also lower than anticipated. There has also been an increase in fees to reflect costs of service provision.
492	Planning & Development	90	Forecast adverse variance reflects shortfall in planning income, the number of large planning applications is expected to be lower compared to previous years.
171	Road Safety	0	
1,006	Street Lighting	50	Forecast adverse variance reflects ongoing maintenance costs and column replacements. Action will be taken to mitigate this variance but at present an adverse variance is anticipated.
1,923	Sustainable Transport	200	Forecast adverse variance reflects usage changes in relation to Concessionary Fares costs which are significantly higher than in previous years.
(96)	Vehicle Fleet	0	
7,726	Waste Services	0	
20,268	Neighbourhood Services Sub Total	(80)	
	Regulatory Services		
(733)	Car Parking & Enforcement	0	
938	Community Safety & Engagement	(80)	Forecast favourable variance is linked to vacancies and the service actively managing the budgets to offset pressures elsewhere.
1,169	Facilities Management	75	Forecast adverse variance reflects uncertain position in relation to a reduction the number of schools that are buying back the service and the potential under recovery of direct costs. The position will be closely monitored throughout the year.
239	Health & Safety	0	
724	Public Protection	100	Forecast adverse variance reflects shortfall in licensing income.
2,337	Regulatory Services Sub Total	95	
	Development & Growth		
442	Economic Growth	0	
97	Procurement & Reprographics	85	Forecast adverse variance reflects income shortfalls in relation to Reprographics.
(73)	Strategic Asset Management	145	Forecast adverse variance reflects shortfall in relation to fee income.
92	Strategic Development & Sustainability	0	
558	Development & Growth Sub Total	230	
	Strategic Management & Admin		
299	Strategic Management & Admin	(100)	Forecast favourable variance reflects anticipated over achievement of the salary abatement target.
23,462	Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Total	145	

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/26 as at 30th June 2025

2025/26 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
	Development and Growth		
229	Communications and Marketing *	5	Adverse variance owing to delay in income generating activities.
170	Corporate Strategy and Performance *	0	
399	Development and Growth Sub Total	5	
	Corporate and Financial Services		
(1,068)	Central Administration Recharges	0	
1,491	Corporate Finance	(30)	Favourable variance owing to posts not being at the top of the grade.
224	Internal Audit	0	
774	Shared Services	(20)	Favourable variance owing to vacant posts and posts not being at the top of the grade.
268	Corporate Management Running Expenses	(25)	Favourable variance owing to savings on the corporate subscriptions budget.
1,689	Corporate and Financial Services Sub Total	(75)	
	Customer Services and IT		
425	Benefits	(90)	Favourable variance owing to a vacant post, posts not being at the top of the grade, additional income generation and non pay savings.
288	Corporate ICT	(10)	Favourable variance owing to vacant posts.
1,108	Customer and Support Services	(40)	Favourable variance owing to vacant posts and posts not being at the top of the grade.
26	Registration Services	30	The adverse variance is owing to a reduction in income generation on both birth and death registration resulting from services being transferred to North Tees Hospital, along with a reduction in ceremonial certificates.
1,319	Revenues	(15)	Favourable variance owing to vacant posts, posts not being at the top of the grade and non pay savings.
(842)	Revenue & Benefits Central	55	The adverse variance is owing to overspends in supplies and services.
2,324	Customer Services and IT Sub Total	(70)	
4,412	Finance, IT & Digital Total	(140)	

* These budgets report to the Managing Director

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/26 as at 30th June 2025

2025/26 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
	Legal		
50	Civic Attendants	0	
131	Democratic	(10)	Favourable variance owing to reduced hours and posts not being at the top of the grade.
540	Human Resources	0	
758	Legal Services	(20)	The favourable variance is owing to additional income generation.
158	Managing Director's Office	(10)	Favourable variance owing to posts not being at the top of the grade.
172	Municipal Elections and Registration of Electors	(40)	Favourable variance owing to fallow year for municipal elections.
45	Other Office Services	0	
116	Scrutiny	0	
149	Support to Members	(15)	Favourable variance expected owing to savings on supplies and services budgets.
34	Trade Union	0	
10	Corporate Training	0	
2,163	Legal, Governance and HR Total	(95)	

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT for 2025/26 as at 30th June 2025
Appendix F

2024/25 OUTTURN		2025/26 BUDGET	2025/26 Forecast Outturn as at 30/06/2025	Variance	COMMENTS
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	
	Income				
(1,914)	Dwelling Rents	(1,915)	(1,937)	(22)	Favourable variance reflects higher anticipated rent collectable than budgeted owing to lower void rates for higher rent properties.
(42)	Income from Insurance Claim	0	0	0	
(24)	Non-dwelling Rents - Other Income	(30)	(25)	5	
(7)	Charges for services and facilities	(4)	(8)	(4)	
(1,987)	Income sub total	(1,949)	(1,970)	(21)	
	Expenditure				
662	Repairs and maintenance	538	662	124	Forecast adverse variance reflects the anticipated increase in the number and higher value repairs for damp and mould issues.
453	Supervision and management	487	496	9	
19	Rents, rates, taxes and other charges	20	20	0	
5	Right to Buy Reserve	5	5	0	
-	Provision for bad or doubtful debts	-	-	0	Reflects a reduction in the voluntary contribution to mitigate adverse variances from high repairs expenditure.
398	Depreciation (Major Repairs Allowance)	431	336	(95)	
2	Discretionary Housing Payments	4	2	(2)	
13	Debt Management costs	13	13	0	
435	Net Interest payable	443	436	(7)	
1,987	Expenditure sub total	1,941	1,970	29	
0	HRA (Surplus) / Deficit for the year	(8)	0	8	
	Movement on the HRA Reserve				
(500)	HRA Reserve Opening Balance	(500)	(500)	0	
-	(Surplus)/Deficit for the year	(8)	-	8	
(500)	HRA Reserve Closing Balance	(508)	(500)	8	

COUNCIL HOUSING CAPITAL SCHEMES

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 30th June 2025

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/25	2025/26 Actual to end Q1 (30/6/25)	Budget 2025/26 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations 2025/26	Reprofiling of Expenditure 2025/2026	Revised Budget 2025/26	Comments
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
S106	Affordable Housing	1,431	0	0	1,425	6	(1,206)	225	S106 Developer Contributions to be reprofiled.
7182	Empty Homes - Phase 3	618	103	0	515	0	(515)	0	Individual business case approval required for each scheme. No immediate plans to utilise this borrowing approval albeit development schemes are currently being designed and modelled due to recent more favourable funding conditions.
7726	Resettlement Accommodation	1,306	1,306	0	114	(114)	0	0	Scheme complete and final grant claim submitted. Funding to be reprofiled and allocated to future HRA Schemes
8106	New Build	370	1	0	255	114	(369)	0	Individual business case approval required for each scheme. No immediate plans to utilise this borrowing approval albeit development schemes are currently being designed and modelled due to recent more favourable funding conditions.
8799	Major Repairs	210	103	0	107	0	0	107	HRA capital work funded from the MRR reserve.
9294	HRA Adaptations	141	41	0	100	0	0	100	HRA capital adaptations to housing stock funded from the MRR reserve.
New	Social Housing Decarbonisation Phase 3	450	0	0	450	0	0	450	
COUNCIL HOUSING - CAPITAL SCHEMES		4,526	1,554	0	2,966	6	(2,090)	882	

MAJOR REGENERATION SCHEMES

APPENDIX H

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 30th June 2025

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/25	2025/26 Actual to end Q1 (30/06/25)	Budget 2025/26 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations	Reprofiling of Expenditure	Revised Budget	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	2025/26	2025/2026	2025/26	
8958	A19/ Elwick Road/ North Lane Junction and Elwick Road/Hartlepool Western Link Project	24,497	1,962	78	1,723	0	0	1,723	
7550	CIP - Highlight	34,650	21,585	2,814	13,065	0	0	13,065	Further contract variation costs have been identified by the contractor and these are being closely reviewed and challenged. An
9101	CIP - Borough Hall Improvement	2,300	139	8	2,161	0	(1,661)	500	Rephased to 26/27.
NEW	CIP - Town Hall Theatre Improvement	700	42	0	658	0	(408)	250	Rephased to 26/27.
9159	CIP - Wingfield Castle and Dam Board	4,027	741	61	3,286	0	0	3,286	
9161	CIP - NMRN & Museum of Hartlepool	7,500	3,651	0	849	0	(849)	0	Rephased to 26/27. Awaiting updated plans from NMRN.
9162	CIP - Museum of Hartlepool	1,000	203	94	797	0	(500)	297	Rephased to 26/27.
9130	CIP - Business Park Investment	760	461	0	299	0	0	299	
TBC	CIP - Bowling Club Refurbishment	600	0	0	0	0	0	0	
TBC	CIP - Brierton Sports Complex	534	23	0	511	0	(411)	100	Rephased to 26/27.
9165	Towns Fund - Middleton Grange	13,860	39	0	13,821	0	(9,141)	4,680	RIBA stage 2 (Concept design) has been concluded. Towns Fund grant usage deadline revised by MHCLG to March 2027. Budget reprofiled accordingly.
9231	Towns Fund - Waterfront Connectivity	5,968	372	31	5,828	(232)	0	5,596	Town Deal Board approved transfer of funding to Wesley Chapel scheme.
7715	Towns Fund - Wesley Chapel	1,632	1,370	0	30	232	0	262	Town Deal Board approved transfer of funding to Wesley Chapel scheme.
9234	Towns Fund - Health and Social Care Academy	1,250	1,215	0	35	0		35	
9247	Levelling Up - Screen Production Village	18,662	3,778	311	14,884	0	(12,437)	2,447	The RIBA stage 3 (Outline design) has been concluded with submission of full planning applications, and RIBA stage 4 (Technical Design) is now in progress. LUF2 grant usage deadline revised by MHCLG to March 2027. Budget reprofiled accordingly.
Major Regeneration Schemes		117,940	35,581	3,397	57,947	0	(25,407)	32,540	

ADULT & COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

APPENDIX I

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 30th June 2025

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/25	2025/26 Actual to end Q1 (30/06/25)	Budget 2025/26 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations 2025/26	Reprofiling of Expenditure 2025/2026	Revised Budget 2025/26	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
7218	Disabled Facilities Grant	6,038	3,271	545	1,222	323	0	1,545	Increased DFG grant funding received for 2025/26.
7711	Carlton Adventure Centre	502	32	0	402	68	0	470	Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme grant funding received.
7811	Summerhill Cycle Hub	533	501	0	32	0	0	32	
9332	Centre for Independent Living	66	3	0	47	16	0	63	Additional funding (reserves).
9212	Relocate Cemetery Office	90	82	0	8	0	0	8	
8088	Community Hub South - Kitchen Replacement	47	47	0	8	(8)	0	0	Scheme complete. Funding returned to Corporate.
8088	Community Hub Central - Internal Alterations	34	34	0	22	(22)	0	0	Scheme complete. Funding returned to Corporate.
9232	Playground Equipment - Levelling Up Parks Fund	97	78	0	19	0	0	19	
Allot	Other Allotment Schemes	192	135	0	57	0	0	57	
8700	Waverley Allotments - Adult Education Scheme	51	50	0	1	0	0	1	
8828	Crematorium refurbishment	848	668	0	180	0	0	180	
9311	Changing Places - Community Hub Central	76	76	0	29	(29)	0	0	Scheme complete. Funding balance returned to Disabled Facilities Grant budget.
7716	Seaton Library refurbishment	235	222	1	13	0	0	13	
8534	Church Street Townscape Heritage Project	113	33	23	80	0	0	80	
NEW	Art Gallery Tower Refurbishment	302	0	0	0	302	0	302	Successful Arts Council grant funding award.
	Total Adult & Community Based Services	9,224	5,232	569	2,120	650	0	2,770	

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 30th June 2025

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/25	2025/26 Actual to end Q1 (30/06/25)	Budget 2025/26 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations	Reprofiling of Expenditure	Revised Budget	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
7768	Supporting Treatment and Recovery Together (START) - Substance Misuse Service	3,600	208	1,253	3,392	0	0	3,392	
8072	ICS Case Management Improvement	37	0	0	37	0	0	37	
9246	Children's Centre - Family HUB	236	178	0	0	58	0	58	New grant funding received.
9439	Bevan House - Clinical Room	30	28	2	0	2	0	2	Funded by RCCO.
9421	Purchase Children's Home	1,000	254	2	746		0	746	
7149	Star Centre Children's Home	658	666	(8)	34	(42)	0	(8)	Scheme complete - £42k under budget. Adjustment of £8k re prior year over provision.
7355	CECA IT Infrastructure and Technology	42	18	0	24	0	0	24	
7355	CECA TVCA Grant Unallocated	31	0	0	31	0	0	31	
7474	High Tunstall 3G Pitch	36	22	0	14	0	0	14	
7478	High Tunstall Grass Pitch	15	0	0	15	0	0	15	
7521	Two Year Old FNE Capacity Funding	23	0	0	23	0	0	23	
9243	Rossmere Youth Centre Refurbishment	1,300	1,192	1	108	0	0	108	
7727	Throston Youth Project Centre Refurbishment	91	91	0	0	0	0	0	
7384	Devolved Schools Capital	559	227	2	178	(18)	0	160	Less grant funding received owing to academisation.
9238	Energy Efficiency Capital Funding	111	99	0	12	0	0	12	
7142	Schools General - Fire Safety Modifications (Conditions) 23/24	44	0	0	44	0	0	44	
7142	Kingsley - Fire Safety Modifications	113	76	0	170	(133)	0	37	Funding allocated to individual Fire Safety Modifications schemes.
9516	Kingsley Primary School Fire Stopping Works (Ph 1)	49	0	6	0	49	0	49	
9517	Kingsley Primary School Fire Stopping Works (Ph 2)/Kitchen Shutter	95	0	6	0	95	0	95	
NEW	Golden Flatts Primary School - Heating Emitters / ventilation	26	0	0	26	0	0	26	Scheme on hold.
NEW	Golden Flatts Primary School - Lintel Replacements	30	0	0	30	0	0	30	Scheme on hold.
NEW	Golden Flatts Primary School - Building Stonework	20	0	0	20	0	0	20	Scheme on hold.
NEW	Golden Flatts Primary School - Kitchen Floor Replacement	10	0	0	10	0	0	10	Scheme on hold.
NEW	Golden Flatts Primary School - Mains Water & Gas	112	0	0	112	0	0	112	Scheme on hold.
9508	Horizon School - Heating, Pipework	115	5	0	71	39	0	110	Additional Conditions funding from 25/26 programme
9506	High Tunstall College of Science (North Building) - Electrical Rewire	92	8	0	80	4	0	84	
9507	High Tunstall College of Science (Shine Centre) - Electrical Rewire	40	4	0	36	0	0	36	
9434	Horizon School - Student Entrance Door Replacement	38	14	3	24	0	0	24	
9513	Greatham ARP	8	0	8	19	(11)	0	8	Returned to Special Provision Unallocated.
9498	Fens Primary School Refurb Toilets	34	0	0	0	34	0	34	
9499	Fens Primary School Heat Emitter Replacement	23	0	0	0	23	0	23	
9500	Kingsley Primary School Renew External Paving	14	0	0	0	14	0	14	
9510	Lynnfield Primary School Heating, Pipework, Radiator Renewal (Ph 3of3)	65	0	0	0	65	0	65	
9501	Rift House Primary School Window Replacement (Ph 2of2)	34	0	32	0	34	0	34	
9502	Rift House Primary School Electrical Rewire (Ph 2of4)	73	0	0	0	73	0	73	
9503	Throston Primary School Resurfacing and Drainage	21	0	0	0	21	0	21	
9504	Throston Primary School Toilet Renewal	50	0	0	0	50	0	50	
9515	Throston Primary School Fire Stopping Works (Ph 3of3)	72	0	0	0	72	0	72	
9505	High Tunstall College of Science Refurb Changing Rooms	25	0	0	0	25		25	
9511	Rossmere Children's Centre Fascia, Soffits and Gutters Replacement	15	0	0	0	15	0	15	
9004	Schools General - Schools Condition - 24/25 onwards	1,266	0	0	582	(446)	0	136	Funding allocated to individual Schools Conditions schemes.
9004	Schools General - Contingency	100	0	0	13	87	0	100	
9004	Schools General - Suitability Unallocated (SEMH)	730	0	0	730	0	0	730	
9004	Schools General - Basic Need	1,716	0	0	1,716	0	(1,716)	0	Rephased to 2026/27.
9004	Schools General - Special Provision	1,457	0	0	624	833	0	1,457	New grant funding received.
9004	Schools General - Conditions unallocated	142	0	0	142	0	(142)	0	Rephased to 2026/27.
7731	Early Years	121	81	0	40	0	0	40	
7743	Early Years North West Area	127	0	0	127	0	0	127	
	Total Children's and Joint Commissioning Services	14,646	3,171	1,307	9,230	943	(1,858)	8,315	

DEVELOPMENT, NEIGHBOURHOODS & REGULATORY SERVICES

APPENDIX K

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 30th June 2025

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/25	2025/26 Actual to end Q1 (30/06/25)	Budget 2025/26 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations	Reprofiling of Expenditure	Revised Budget	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
S106	Developers Contribution Fund	8,454	265	16	8,189	0	0	8,189	
7466	DSO Vehicle Purchase (updated for revised programme)	7,928	3,528	52	4,323	0	(123)	4,200	Forecasted to spend £4.2m in 2025/26, remainder rephased to 2026/27.
9514	Warm Homes Local Grant scheme	51	0	0	0	51	0	51	Successful funding from the Department of Energy Security & Net Zero - Year 1 - Providing Energy Efficient measures to privately owned homes.
8306	Schools - Kitchen Refurbishment	249	37	0	212	0	0	212	
7272	Wheelie Bin Purchase (current year allocation only)	353	173	17	90	0	0	90	
7344	NIP - Brougham (was Hindpool Close) Play Area	89	60	26	29	0	0	29	
7437	NIP - Sinking Fund	62	0	0	62	0	0	62	
7440	NIP - Central Park	120	118	0	2	0	0	2	
8996	NIP - Improvements to Parks	277	252	0	25	0	(25)	0	Funding Rephased.
9147	NIP - CCTV in parks	34	24	0	10	0	0	10	
9396	Waste Transfer Station	200	0	0	200	0	(200)	0	Redcar waste station - No current developments for this to start in 2025/26 - Funding Rephased.
7744	Food Waste Capital Transitional Grant	807	0	0	807	0	0	807	
7066	Avondene Accommodation, Church St	102	0	1	102	0	0	102	
7220	Private Sector Housing Grants	84	15	0	69	0	0	69	
7577	EDM Hartlepool North NDIP Study	50	0	0	50	0	(50)	0	Work not starting until 2026/27 - Funding Rephased.
7900	EDM Hartlepool Marina - North Pier	479	56	4	423	0	0	423	
7902	EDM Hartlepool Drainage Schemes	36	6	0	30	0	(30)	0	Work not starting until 2026/27 - Funding Rephased.
8578	EDM Management Unit Study	28	0	0	28	0	0	28	
9331	EDM Hartlepool Easington Road Storage & Screen Study	60	0	0	60	0	0	60	
9332	EDM Hartlepool Bamburgh Rd Surface water drainage study	60	0	0	60	0	(60)	0	Work not starting until 2026/27 - Funding Rephased.
9429	EDM West Park Flood Scheme	825	442	326	383	0	0	383	Scheme is being delivered on behalf of Environment Agency. Funding claimed to match expenditure.
LTP	LTP Integrated Transport Block (ITB) - Indicative	5,495	2,192	114	1,777	0	0	1,777	Budget realigned between LTP to reflect correct split between ITB & SHM.
LTP	LTP Scheduled reconstruction - Indicative	5,718	3,383	1,319	1,610	0	0	1,610	Budget realigned between LTP to reflect correct split between ITB & SHM.
LTP/8722	LTP Additional Scheduled Highways Maintenance (SHM) Allocation	461	0	0	0	461	0	461	Additional Highways Maintenance Allocation in 2025/26.
LTP/8722	LTP Road Resurfacing Fund - Indicative	617	417	0	0	200	0	200	Additional Highways Maintenance Allocation in 2025/26.
7512	Tofts Farm Solar PV	264	0	0	264	0	0	264	
Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Total		32,903	10,968	1,875	18,805	712	(488)	19,029	

CORPORATE

APPENDIX L

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 30th June 2025

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/25	2025/26 Actual to end Q1 (30/06/25)	Budget 2025/26 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations	Reprofiling of Expenditure	Revised Budget	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
7036	Uncommitted Corporate Capital Fund	190	0	0	190	0	0	190	
7041	Corporate Capital Pot	620	0	0	349	30	0	379	
7065	Fire Risk Assessments (Fire Stopping / Compartmentalism)	100	15	0	85	0	0	85	
7200	Civic Centre Capital Project	75	13	0	62	0	0	62	
8970	Historic Quay Dilapidation Work	97	0	0	97	0	0	97	
7771	Borough Hall - Capital Maintenance	161	41	0	120	0	0	120	
7728	Exmoor Grove - Replace external windows and doors	50	19	0	31	0	0	31	
9329	Crematorium - Rewire	85	50	0	35	0	0	35	
NEW	Health and Safety Maintenance Fund	963	123	22	840	0	0	840	
NEW	Boys Welfare - Replace Water Heater	4	0	0	4	0	0	4	
7741	Exmoor Grove - External Ramp	30	2	0	28	0	0	28	
NEW	Brierton Sports Centre - Replace Lighting	10	0	0	10	0	0	10	
9436	Community Recovery	90	70	6	20	0	0	20	MHCLG Capital Grant for Community Recovery.
	Corporate Total	2,475	333	28	1,871	30	0	1,901	

RESERVES FORECASTS (EXCLUDING SCHOOL BALANCES, HRA AND UNUSABLE RESERVES)

APPENDIX M

	Balance as at 31st March 2025	Forecast Use of Reserves				Forecast Balance as at 31st March 2029
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Reserve	5,500	0	0	0	0	5,500
Budget Support Fund (BSF)	7,672	(3,375)	(1,500)	0	0	2,797
BSF - Transformation Costs	2,000	(1,000)	(500)	(500)	0	0
BSF - Invest to Save	1,400	(700)	(350)	0	0	350
Revenue Grants Unapplied	9,107	(6,021)	(1,243)	(976)	(125)	742
Business Rates Risk Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0
Insurance Fund	2,902	(65)	(65)	(65)	0	2,707
Children in our Care Reserve	1,230	(200)	(1,030)	0	0	0
BSF - Treasury Management Income	650	(650)	0	0	0	0
Asset Management Reserve	840	(840)	0	0	0	0
Earmarked Revenue Reserves under £1m	7,038	(3,176)	(2,170)	(804)	0	888
Revenue Reserves Total	38,339	(16,027)	(6,858)	(2,345)	(125)	12,984
Earmarked Capital Reserves	6,303	(5,940)	(363)	0	0	0
Capital Grants Unapplied	11,680	(11,680)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	56,322	(33,647)	(7,221)	(2,345)	(125)	12,984

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

8 SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: CORPORATE COMPLAINTS MONITORING
REPORT FOR 2024/25 AND NEW CUSTOMER
FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Report of: Monitoring Officer

Decision Type: Key - CE98/25

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community. (Organisation)

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee of the 2024/25 outturn position in relation to corporate complaints and those considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The Committee is also requested to agree an updated Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy for implementation from 1st April 2026.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Within the current Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy there is a requirement to provide an annual report to elected members detailing the number of corporate complaints received by the Council along with the outcome of those complaints. The annual report is also used to share the information contained within the Local Government and Adult Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) annual letter to the Council which details the complaints received and investigated by them. By doing this we fulfil the LGSCO expectation that their Annual Letter be reported to elected members in a timely manner.

- 3.2 On 1st April 2025 the LGSCO introduced a new Complaints Handling Code across their own caseload, and this has also been piloted by several local authorities. Although not statutory, there is an expectation that all local authorities will follow the Code from 1st April 2026 and the LGSCO will be assessing our approach to complaint handling against this code in their annual letters from next year. The Code covers complaints that fall under our Corporate Complaints Procedure and will not apply to areas where there is already a statutory complaints process in place, specifically complaints related to Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, Housing Management Service and Public Health.
- 3.3 The Code puts complaint handling at the heart of corporate governance within the Council and requires the regular reporting of performance to allow for effective scrutiny of service delivery. The LGSCO states that there should be a mechanism for centrally recording and reporting complaints, outcomes and service improvements.
- 3.4 The Code places responsibility on councils to put things right as soon as possible without the public having to escalate their concerns to the Ombudsman. The LGSCO believes that there should be a single model of complaint handling which makes it easier for local people to hold their local authority to account.

4. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS – CORPORATE COMPLAINTS 2024/25

- 4.1 During 2024/25 the number of corporate complaints remained the same as the previous year however, the proportion that were upheld increased to 47%.

Year	Number of complaints	Number upheld or partially upheld	Percentage upheld or partially upheld
2024/25	15	7	47%
2023/24	15	5	33%
2022/23	9	3	33%
2021/22	12	4	33%

- 4.2 **Tables 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix 1** set out further information on the corporate complaints received during 2024/25 and includes details of the upheld complaints.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (LGSCO) – ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2025

5.1 The LGSCO Annual Review 2025 Letter, received 21st May 2025 sets out the annual statistics on complaints made to the LGSCO about Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) for the year ending 31st March 2025. The data shows both the complaints and the enquiries that the LGSCO has recorded along with any decisions they have made.

5.2 In summary:

- In 2024/25 the LGSCO received 27 complaints or enquiries about HBC, which is an increase of 6 on the previous year.
- The LGSCO made decisions on 26 of these complaints or enquiries during 2024/25 and the outcomes were:

Decision	Number
Referred back for local resolution	5
Closed after initial enquiries	17
Detailed investigation - Not upheld	2
Detailed investigation - Upheld	2
Total	26

Please note the number of complaint enquiries the LGSCO received during the year does not always match the number of decisions made as not all complaints investigations were completed within the same year.

- The data shows that four of the complaints received by the LGSCO were investigated and of those, two were upheld. Therefore, the upheld rate is 50%. This is lower than the 100% upheld rate in 2023/24 and lower than the average upheld rate for LGSCO complaints investigated across similar authorities which is 80%. However, our numbers are very small, and this can skew the percentage figure significantly.
- When calculated as a rate of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents our rate is 2.1. The average for similar authorities is 5.3 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.
- Further detail on the 2 complaints upheld is provided in **Table 4 in Appendix 1**.

- There have been 8 complaints upheld in the last 5 years out of a total number of 105 complaints received by the LGSCO. This represents an upheld rate of 8% of the total number received by the LGSCO over the 5-year period. Of the 17 complaints that went on to be investigated by the LGSCO over the past 5 years the upheld rate is 47%. Further details are provided in **Appendix 1 Table 5 and Table 6**.
- **Table 7 in Appendix 1** shows how Hartlepool compares favourably with the other 11 North East Local Authorities with the 2nd lowest upheld rate in the region. Hartlepool was also 2nd highest for the percentage of upheld cases where a satisfactory remedy was provided before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

5.3 Once a corporate complaint investigation has been completed the complainant is advised of their right to approach the LGSCO. The fact that only a few complainants choose to do so provides reassurance that our approach to corporate complaints is robust.

6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE AND REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS POLICY

6.1 In light of the LGSCO's new Complaints Handling Code being introduced, the existing Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy (July 2021) has been reviewed to ensure compliance with the Code. Attached as **appendix 2** is the proposed updated and renamed Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. A fresh, new approach has been taken to the format of the Policy to ensure that it is customer friendly and accessible online as well as in a PDF document.

6.2 The main changes to the policy are:

- **A focus on Early Resolution** – The policy emphasises the need for services to try and resolve any areas of dissatisfaction as a service request at the earliest opportunity to prevent it escalating to a formal complaint investigation.
- **Changes to response timescales** – In order to comply with the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code the response times at both stages 1 and 2 need to change. Stage 1, the formal response from the service, should be completed providing an explanation, apology and/or resolution where appropriate within **10 working days**. Stage 2, the review of the first

stage by an appropriate officer, should be completed within **20 working days**.

- **Introduction of an annual self-assessment** - The Code requires the Council to complete an annual self-assessment that will be reported alongside the Annual Complaints Report for scrutiny and challenge. This will be brought to this Committee each Autumn.
- **Introduction of a Member Responsible for Complaints** – The Code requires that an elected member be identified as the Member Responsible for Complaints. It is proposed that the Chair of this Committee be given the role as it is this Committee that is responsible for overseeing corporate complaints.

6.3 Although the Committee is asked to agree the new policy now it will not be implemented until 1st April 2026. This is to allow time to introduce new procedures and ensure staff are fully trained and ready to deliver the new approach. It will also allow time for the promotion of the new approach to residents and elected members.

7. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	<p>Poor complaint handling provides risks to the organisation around reduced customer satisfaction, reputational damage and the potential of an adverse report from the LGSCO.</p> <p>If the LGSCO Complaints Handling Code is not adhered to the Council could be at risk of an adverse report from the LGSCO.</p>
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No relevant issues.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	We have a statutory duty to co-operate with the LGSCO during complaint investigations.
SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	The Single Impact Assessment included as Appendix 3 identifies no impact for any of the protected characteristics as the Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy will be available for all residents. However, there is an expectation

	<p>in the new Code that organisations should collect data on the protected characteristics of complainants at the first point they raise a complaint. This data should only be made available for statistical analysis so that we can assess whether our complaint system is equitable and fair and whether it disproportionately affects different groups. We will look to introduce this into our complaint intake processes from 1st April 2026 and the analysis of this data will inform the preparation of our Annual Report in future years. This data will also be used to inform future reviews of the Feedback and Complaints Policy and related internal procedures.</p> <p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion requirements will be considered in the delivery of the Policy and in the preparation of the supporting procedures, officer guidance notes, officer training and letter templates.</p>
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
CONSULTATION	No relevant issues

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee are recommended to note the update on complaints received during 2024/25 and are requested to agree the new Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy for implementation from 1st April 2026.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee have responsibility for the monitoring of the Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Finance and Policy Committee 16th September 2024 - Corporate Complaints Monitoring Report for 2023/24.

11. CONTACT OFFICERS

Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and HR / Monitoring Officer
Hayley.martin@hartlepool.gov.uk
01429 284322

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 12 Aug 25
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 12 Aug 25
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 12 Aug 25

Complaints Summary 2024-25

Table 1: Corporate Complaints in 2024-25

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total Number of Corporate Complaints	Number of Corporate Complaints Upheld
Total Number of Corporate Complaints	3	5	4	3	15	7
Finance, IT and Digital Services (FIT&DS) Department	0	2	1	0	3	1
Development, Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services (DN&RS) Department	1	0	2	2	5	3
Children's and Joint Commissioning Services (C&JCS) Department	1	1	1	1	4	1
Adult and Community Based Services (A&CBS) Department	1	1	0	0	2	2
Legal and HR (L&HR) Department	0	1	0	0	1	0

Table 2: Historical Comparison of Corporate Complaints

	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23		2023/24	
	Number of complaints	Upheld	Number of complaints	Upheld	Number of complaints	Upheld	Number of complaints	Upheld
Total Number of Corporate Complaints	25	11 (44%)	7	3 (43%)	12	4 (33%)	15	5 (33%)

Table 3: Details of Corporate Complaints Upheld in 2024-25

Dept.	Complaint Description	Outcome of complaint
DN&RS	Complaint about traffic issues resulting from the fireworks event.	The complaint was partly upheld, and the complainant received an apology for the fact that an event steward was not based on De Havilland Way in 2024. A full debrief will be conducted with all internal and external stakeholders to review future arrangements including traffic management and options for road closures. This review will hopefully result in developing best practices for all future events in Seaton Carew.
DN&RS	Complaint about various housing tenancy issues including information sent in a letter, conduct of officers and failure in communication	The complaint was partly upheld as the housing service team failed to clarify the support arrangements in place for the complainant leading to a misunderstanding between the complainant and the service. The complainant received an apology and notification that the service will now amend its suite of letters to include an option to request alternative meeting locations such as home visits where necessary. A review of training needs for staff with regards to working with vulnerable persons or individuals with special needs will also be undertaken.
DN&RS	Complaint about traffic issues resulting from the Fireworks event. (Please note that this complaint was from a different complainant to the one included above).	The complaint was partly upheld, and the complainant received an apology for the fact that an event steward was not based on De Havilland Way in 2024. A full debrief will be conducted with all internal and external stakeholders to review future arrangements including traffic management and options for road closures. This review will hopefully result in developing best practices for all future events in Seaton Carew.

Dept.	Complaint Description	Outcome of complaint
FIT&DS	Complaint about Council Tax issues including Single Person discount entitlement, transfer of direct debit arrangements and format and wording of correspondence.	The complaint was partly upheld as the transfer of direct debit agreements should not have been made without the complainant's agreement. An apology was issued to the complainant, and procedures have been amended to prevent this happening in the future
ACBS	Complaint about communication between an allotment holder and the allotment team.	The complaint was partly upheld. The investigation identified that a warning letter was issued correctly but that a Council Officer had used disrespectful language in a telephone conversation with the complainant. An apology was made to the allotment holder and staff training has taken place. Finally, it was confirmed that the Adult and Community Based Service meeting discussion about allotments was not one that tenants were able to participate in.
ACBS	Complaint that tenants from Rossmere Allotment were using a strip of land behind Clarkson Court to store items, disposal of materials and fly tip rubbish.	The complaint was partly upheld. The investigation could not prove that all the rubbish was from the allotment holders although there was photographic evidence that some of the rubbish was. The land is not owned by the Council and there was no proof that the allotment boundary fence had been removed by the tenants. The Allotment team has agreed to replace the boundary fence between the allotment and the strip of land. The investigation also recognised the time and trouble the complainant has taken over the past 3 years to bring this matter to the Council's attention and the distress due to this delay. The complaint was issued with a formal apology along with a time and trouble payment for the delay. The Council will also contact the landowner to discuss ongoing maintenance of this piece of land. Allotment holders have been reminded where the boundaries lie and that there is no access to this land and it should not be used as storage.

Dept.	Complaint Description	Outcome of complaint
CS&JC	Complaint about failure to facilitate Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and lack of support.	The complaint was partly upheld. The investigation identified that a number of EHCP review meetings, draft EHCPs with changes and final EHCPs were not held / issued within the established timeframes. An apology was made to the student and their family for the delay in those relevant years. Since the investigation service improvements have been made with more capacity added to the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Team. The complainant has escalated this to the Ombudsman and it is currently being investigated.

Table 4 – Outcome of LGSCO Complaints 2024-25

Reference	Description of complaint	Outcome	Date completed
Upheld (2 complaints)			
23 014 300	X complained about the Council's failure to take ownership of land used as a car park under the terms of a legal agreement. X also complained that the evidence they had provided to the Council about anti-social behaviour had not been presented to members of a committee tasked with considering this issue.	<p>The LGSCO found fault in the way the Council had acted but found no evidence to show the fault caused an injustice to X or to others.</p> <p>To avoid the recurrence of the fault we have reviewed our policy, practice and procedure relevant to section 106 agreements and future cost implications. Officers have been made aware of this review and its outcome, so they are aware for the production of any future section 106 agreements.</p>	09/05/24
24 018 746	Miss X complained about a Council Officer's conduct during a telephone call. She said she had received a warning letter for her own behaviour during the call, but the Council Officer had not faced any sanction. She also complained about the complaints handling. Miss X said she had lost trust in the Council. She wants an apology and compensation.	<p>The LGSCO did not fully investigate this complaint as they felt that further investigation would not lead to a different outcome. In response to the Council's complaint, we accepted that the Officer spoke inappropriately to Miss X during a telephone call and any action taken in respect of the Officer was a private matter between employer and employee. We did however send Miss X a written apology. The LGSCO said that the apology remedies any injustice caused and further investigation by themselves would not lead to a different outcome.</p> <p>During our investigation Miss X accepted she spoke with a raised voice in the call. It said she also spoke for a prolonged period in a critical manner. Due to this action we are satisfied it was appropriate to issue a warning letter to Ms X for her own conduct. This decision was made in line with our appropriate internal guidance. There is not enough evidence of fault to justify the LGSCO continued involvement.</p>	21/11/24

Table 5: Historical Comparison of Complaints and Enquiries Received by LGSCO for the last 5 years – Hartlepool

	Adult Care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and other services	Education and Children's Services	Environment Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
2024/25	5	4	2	8	3	2	1	2	0	27
2023/24	2	0	1	9	1	4	1	3	0	21
2022/23	3	0	3	10	1	0	0	0	1	18
2021/22	5	1	3	6	1	1	1	2	0	20
2020/21	4	1	2	2	0	1	1	4	1	16

Table 6: Historical Comparison of Decisions Made by LGSCO for the last 5 years - Hartlepool

	Incomplete or Invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for Local Resolution	Closed after Initial Enquiries	Detailed Investigations/Outcome			Total	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
					Not Upheld	Upheld	Uphold Rate		
2024/25	0	0	5	17	2	2	50%	26	80%
2023/24	0	0	6	11	0	2	100%	19	79%
2022/23	1	1	5	10	2	0	0%	19	72%
2021/22	0	0	5	15	4	1	20%	25	64%
2020/21	1	0	7	4	1	3	75%	16	N/A
5 YEAR TOTAL	2	1	28	57	9	8	47%	105	N/A

Table 7 - North East Local Authorities – 2024/25 LGCSO comparison

	Number of detailed investigations	Complaints Upheld		Upheld cases where the authority provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman (%)	Cases we were satisfied the authority successfully implemented our recommendations to remedy the complaint (compliance rate) (%)	Number of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents
		Number	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	
Hartlepool	4	2	50%	50%	100%	2.1
Durham	16	11	69%	18%	100%	2.1
Northumberland	18	15	83%	0%	100%	4.6
Newcastle	11	7	64%	29%	100%	2.2
Sunderland	9	6	67%	17%	100%	2.1
Gateshead	7	6	86%	33%	100%	3.0
South Tyneside	11	4	36%	25%	100%	2.7
North Tyneside	10	8	80%	25%	100%	3.8
Darlington	6	6	100%	33%	100%	5.4
Stockton	8	8	100%	38%	100%	4.0
Middlesbrough	6	6	100%	17%	100%	3.9
Redcar & Cleveland	5	3	60%	67%	100%	2.2

Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy

Introduction

Hartlepool Borough Council aims to provide high quality services that meet the needs of local people. To support this aim the Council welcomes all customer feedback.

This policy sets out how feedback and complaints can be submitted and outlines the support that is available to a complainant when making a complaint.

Customer feedback

The Council welcomes feedback and wants to learn from both good and bad experiences. This will help improve services we offer across the Council. If your feedback is specifically about an officer of the Council, it will be shared with the individual and their manager. The service may wish to contact you to discuss your comments further, but this may not always be the case.

Regular updates on customer feedback are provided to senior officers and Councillors to ensure that what we are learning drives improvements in our services.

Complaints

The Council recognises complaints as a way to understand concerns from members of the public about the services it delivers. Complaints help the Council to put things right, improve service delivery and ensure that members of the public are satisfied with the Council and the services it provides.

Complaint process – trying to resolve the issues quickly

Effective complaint handling enables individuals to be heard and understood. The starting point for this is a service request. In most cases the Council should be able to put things right through normal service delivery processes and respond to expressions of dissatisfaction at the earliest opportunity. Early resolution through a service request is an opportunity for the Council to put things right quickly before it becomes a complaint.

A service request is defined as:

“a request that the Council provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision”.

Service requests are not complaints but may contain expressions of dissatisfaction. The Council should have the opportunity to deal with a service request, within a reasonable timescale, before it becomes a complaint. A complaint may be raised if you are unhappy with the response to your service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. We will not stop our efforts to address the service request if a complaint is made.

What is defined as a complaint?

The Council uses the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman definition of a complaint

‘An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.’

The Council has a number of complaint procedures including this Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. We will confirm which is the most appropriate for your complaint and let you know. The Council expects any complaints to be made within 12 months after the date of the issue or the date when you became aware of the issue. In some circumstances we might extend this time limit.

Stage 1

The Council aims to resolve most Stage 1 complaints promptly with an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the complainant where appropriate. Complaints will be acknowledged and logged at Stage 1 of the complaint's procedure **within 5 working days of the complaint being received**.

The Council aims to provide a full response to Stage 1 complaints **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.

Should this timescale need extending due to the complexity of the case, or for another reason, the Council will inform you of the expected timescale of the response. The Council aims for any extension to be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) for the extension will be clearly explained to you.

The complaint response will address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions along with any appropriate recommended remedies. If any points of your complaint cannot be considered under this Complaint Policy, then they will be identified and where possible the appropriate route for your complaint to be taken will be explained.

The response will also provide details on how to request that your complaint is considered at Stage 2 of the Council's procedure, should you remain dissatisfied.

If you raise additional points of complaint whilst your complaint is being considered at Stage 1 then will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response. However, if you raise additional points after you receive your Stage 1 complaint response these may need to be considered as a new complaint.

Stage 2

You may request for your complaint to be considered at Stage 2 if all or part of the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction. We expect that you will raise a stage 2 complaint within 20 working days of receiving the outcome of your Stage One investigation. There may be circumstances when this timescale could be extended, in this event it will be discussed with the complainant.

An acknowledgment of your request for Stage 2 will be sent within **5 working days** of the request being received. The acknowledgement will provide a summary of the Council's understanding of any outstanding issues and the outcomes that you are seeking along with an expected response date. If your complaint is not appropriate for review at Stage 2, you will be informed of the reasons why and your options for next steps.

A review of your complaint will be undertaken by an appropriate officer of the Council, but this will not be the same person who considered your complaint at Stage 1. We aim to issue a response within **20 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.

Stage 2 will involve a review of the response which was provided at Stage 1 to ensure that the response was accurate, thoroughly investigated and opportunities to resolve the matter have been adequately considered. Should the timescale need extending due to the complexity of the case, or for another reason, the Council will inform you of the expected timescale of the response. The Council aims for any extension to be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) for the extension will be clearly explained to you.

The Stage 2 response will be the Council's final response to your complaint and will confirm the following in writing to the complainant:

- the complaint stage;
- the Council's understanding of the complaint;
- the decision on the complaint;
- the reasons for any decisions made;
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right;
- details of any outstanding actions; and
- details of how to escalate the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If you have been through all stages of the Council's complaints process and you still remain dissatisfied, you can ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to consider your complaint. You can find more information about this on the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's website](#).

The Ombudsman investigates complaints in a fair and independent way - it does not take sides. It is a free service.

The Ombudsman expects you to have given the Council a chance to deal with your complaint, before you contact them.

About the Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman looks at individual complaints about councils and some other organisations providing local public services. It also investigates complaints about all adult social care providers (including care homes and home care agencies) for people who self-fund their care. There are some [limits on what the Ombudsman can look at](#). For example, the Ombudsman may not consider your complaint if you have not been significantly personally affected by the issue you are raising, or if you have a right of appeal to a court or tribunal.

Contact

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

What do you need to provide to make a complaint?

Complaints can be made by email, over the telephone, by letter, face to face or online. Whatever way you make a complaint; the Council will ask you to provide:

- name and contact details (unless submitting an anonymous complaint).
- details of your complaint - it is useful for you to provide dates and times where relevant to assist with an investigation and any evidence you wish to be considered.
- a desired outcome. This will help the Council understand what you would like to happen as a result of submitting your complaint. The Council will try to meet desired outcomes however it is not always possible to do so. Should this be the case, an explanation will be provided.
- consent (where appropriate). If someone else is acting on your behalf to submit a complaint (e.g. an advocate or family member), the Council will require your consent in writing or documentation providing the relevant legal powers for them to do so (e.g. Power of Attorney).

Contact Details:

To provide feedback or make a complaint, please use the contact details below.

Online

You can submit feedback or make a complaint using our online form [Customer Feedback and Complaints](#)

Email

Email your feedback or complaint to customer.comments@hartlepool.gov.uk

Phone

Call the Council Contact Centre on 01429 266522

Post

Write to us at:

Customer Feedback and Complaints

Civic Centre

Victoria Road

Hartlepool

TS24 8AY

Complaints about a contracted or commissioned service provided on behalf of the Council

If your complaint relates to a service which is delivered on behalf of the Council by a contractor or third-party provider the Council would welcome the opportunity for them to put it right in the first instance (Stage 1). You may then request for your complaint to be considered at Stage 2 if all or part of the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction. Stage 2 complaints will be considered by the Council.

If you are unable to discuss the matter with the contractor, have not received a response from them or wish to have your complaint considered at Stage 2 you can contact us.

Support for complainants

The Council recognises that receiving appropriate support when making a complaint is important for some people. The nature of certain complaints may lead to some complainants feeling that they would like another person's support to guide them through the process or to represent them. The information below provides details on the support available when making a complaint.

Advocacy support and representation

If you want to share your views with the Council about a service we provide, but need some support to do this, you can ask someone to act as your 'advocate'. An advocate is someone who can support you to express your views and wishes to help you to raise a concern or make a complaint. They can contact the Council on your behalf if you agree to them doing so. The Council will only discuss your concerns with an advocate after you have given your consent for us to do so. To allow someone to act on your behalf please complete the relevant consent form.

An advocates' role is to listen to your views and concerns and help you to explore your options. They can provide information to help you make an informed decision, accompany you to meetings and contact us on your behalf. An advocate should not give their personal opinion, try to make decisions for you or make judgements about you.

Professional advocacy services can be accessed through some organisations and charities. Friends, family and carers can also act as an advocate.

Below are the details of some advocacy services that are available:

- the [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) who can provide advice and guidance in making a complaint.
- if you are a child or young person the [National Youth Advocacy Service](#) can provide individual advocacy and arrange of information, advice and support to ensure your voice is heard when decisions are being made about you.

Making a complaint on behalf of someone else

If you would like to make a complaint on someone else's behalf please be aware that before accepting the complaint the Council will need to confirm that you have the authority to do so. If the individual involved can make decisions in their own right, the Council will need to ensure that they have provided their consent for you to act on their behalf. This is because providing you with a response to their complaint may involve disclosing personal information and so the Council needs to ensure that their rights are protected. The Council will contact the individual to ask them to complete and sign a consent form. In circumstances where the individual does not have the capacity to complain in their own right, the Council will ask to be provided with relevant documentation to confirm that you have the relevant powers in place to act on their behalf. This may include documentation such as Power of Attorney. If we require such information we will contact you.

Members of Parliament (MPs) and Councillors

You may ask a Member of Parliament (MP) or a local Councillor for support in making a complaint. MPs or local Councillors who state that they are acting on behalf of the complainant will be assumed to have consent to do so. This is because the Council does not generally have to get the express consent of an individual to disclose personal information to an elected member as defined by Schedule 1, Part 2, paragraph 23(3) of the Data Protection Act.

Accessibility and additional languages

The Council wants all its customers to feel that they are able to send their feedback and/or complaints for consideration. If you have any additional needs not covered on this webpage please contact customer.comments@hartlepool.gov.uk

Expectations of complainant behaviour

The Council appreciates that complaints are sensitive in nature and that complainants may feel passionate about their concerns. Council Officers should, at all times, treat you with respect as an individual, listen to your concerns, providing you with the information as necessary.

The Council also expects complainants to behave in a respectful manner throughout the process. This involves not using unacceptable language, derogatory terms, being personal in nature or threatening, either verbally or in your correspondence to the Council. If complainants decide not to behave in a respectful manner, the Council will take appropriate action to support and protect its staff. We reserve the right to cancel any complaint that contains excessive foul and abusive language. The Council will consider the guidance and good practice advice provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in dealing with these matters.

The Council has a [Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy](#) that outlines the expectations of customers behaviour and what may be put in place to assist and protect all parties.

Other Information

Joint responses

If a complaint relates to more than one service area within the Council, a lead service will be agreed, and a coordinated response will be prepared. One response will be provided to your complaint. There is a joint protocol between local authorities and health partners with respect to dealing with complaints that cover both health and local authority joint service provision. This protocol will be used to determine how your complaint will be handled. You will be notified with a point of contact and an expected response date.

Collective complaints

Where appropriate, complaints made by a number of individuals on the same subject will be dealt with as one investigation. It may be appropriate for each complainant to receive a response directly unless a representative has been nominated on behalf of the group of individuals.

Withdrawing a complaint

You may withdraw your complaint at any time by contacting the Council. Consideration will be given as to whether the concerns raised still need to be fully investigated, for instance if there were safeguarding concerns relating to you or other individuals, or if there's a wider public interest. If you feel unable to continue with your complaint then you may withdraw it and raise it again when you feel able to do so. If you raise the complaint again in the future consideration will be made at that point as to whether it is still reasonable to accept the complaint.

Deceased individuals

In circumstances where the individual is deceased and you would like to make a complaint about the service they have received, the Council will require you to provide documentation to confirm that you have been granted the right to their personal information. Documentation may include Grant of Probate or a Letter of Administration. If you are unsure what documentation you need to provide, please contact the Council and you will be advised further.

Learning from feedback and complaints

Regular updates will be provided to the Executive Leadership Team and Councillors including the Annual Complaints report. This report will highlight the number and types of complaints we have had over the year including complaints that have been escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The report will highlight any trends in complaints as well as recommendations that have been implemented during the year to improve services. The Annual Report will also report on the Self-Assessment in line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code. We have a named 'Member Responsible for Complaints', the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee, who is responsible for complaints and receives regular updates.

Exclusions and complaints not covered by this policy

There may be several reasons why the Council cannot accept your complaint, however each complaint will be considered on its own merit, and we will not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints. If the Council decides not to accept your complaint, we will clearly explain the reasons why and tell you of your other possible options. We will also inform you of your right to take our decision to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Possible reason for exclusion

- **Service request**

Service requests will not be dealt with under this procedure. If received service requests will be directed to the relevant service area for consideration. An example of a service request is reporting a pothole or streetlight to be fixed or fly tipping to be cleared.

- **Concluded or complaints older than 12 months**

Complaints which have already been fully investigated by the Council and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman will not be dealt with under this procedure. Complaints made 12 months or more after the date of the issue or the date of the complainant becoming aware of the issue will not usually be investigated. In some circumstances this time limit may be extended.

- **Decision on Council Policy**

Complaints about the council's policies and about decisions made by elected members at council meetings do not fall within the remit of this procedure. However, complaints are sometimes made to officers about decisions made by the council and its decision-making bodies. These complaints will be recorded and forwarded to the relevant policy committee chair and the complainant informed that this has been done. A substantive response should then be made to the complainant by the relevant policy committee chair.

- **Interaction between the Code with other complaints processes**

The Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy does not cover complaints which are already covered by statutory processes set out in law or other guidance. For example, this may include Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Public Health and Housing Management. Where a complaint includes something that is covered by a statutory complaints process then the whole complaint will be dealt with under the statutory process, unless the points of complaint can be easily separated and responded to separately.

- **Schools and Academies**

Each school must have a procedure in place to deal with complaints. Complaints procedures may vary from school to school, but these should be made available upon request. The Council has no power to investigate a complaint about the internal management of a school. Further information on school complaints can be obtained from the Department for Education at www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

- **Data Breaches and FOI's**

Complaints regarding Data Protection will be dealt with under the Council's [Access to Information](#) page on our website. If you are unhappy with the response to your FOI, you can request an internal review and escalate to the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) (ICO) if you remain unhappy.

- **Legal proceedings**

If legal action is being taken either by yourself or by the Council, the Council may not deal with your complaint if it is considered that to do so would prejudice the conduct of those proceedings. There may also be circumstances where a complaint may need to be put on hold until after the legal proceedings have taken place. In either case, you will be informed of the Council's decision.

- **Existing appeals process**

The Council will not deal with complaints under this procedure regarding services where there are existing appeals processes. You will be advised of the relevant appeals process and given details of how to make an appeal. An example of this may be the school admissions panel who deal with matters of dissatisfaction regarding decisions on school placements.

- **Employee conduct or behaviour**

Complaints about members of staff either in isolation or as a wider complaint can be submitted by emailing: customer.comments@hartlepool.gov.uk. These will be investigated however, depending on the nature of the complaint about the member of staff, it may not be possible to share with you the full details of the investigation and outcome.

- **Elected Members**

Complaints about Councillors are reviewed under the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. More information can be found on the Council's website.

- **Complaints about others** e.g. utilities, other government bodies or private businesses. These complaints are not covered by this procedure and those companies or government departments should be approached directly to make a complaint.

- **Social Media**

The Council will not respond formally to complaints which have been uploaded to any social media platform. Please use the contact details outlined below to make a complaint.

- **Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints (i.e. where individuals do not provide their name or contact details) may be investigated. However, it will not be possible to provide a response. If an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information to enable the Council to investigate or to take further action, the Council will not investigate. Investigation may not be possible if the impact on the individual raising the complaint nor identify whether there are any conflicts of interest or other ongoing action such as appeals or court action etc. Anonymous noise complaints cannot be investigated.

- **Groups of people who may not raise a complaint**

For example, complaints made on behalf of another public body e.g. parish council, NHS Trust, government department. The complaints process is not an appropriate route to resolve disputes between public bodies. However, members of other public bodies may raise complaints in a personal capacity or on behalf of an individual or group of individuals.

For example, complaints from local Councillors or Members of Parliament (MPs) about issues of wider public interest. These are best addressed through local "member enquiry" processes.

- **Enforcement Conduct Board (ECB)**

Complaints regarding enforcement services may be more appropriately dealt with via the Enforcement Conduct Board. If you make a complaint regarding the actions of an enforcement service, the Council will advise what the most appropriate process is for you to follow.

Privacy Information and Data Protection

All personal information collected is for the purpose of responding to customer feedback and complaints. It will only be shared with relevant service areas of the Council or third parties where necessary and where the law enables the Council to

do so, for example, MPs or Councillors, or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman if they are investigating your complaint. For more information about how the Council processes your personal information visit [Access to Information](#)

We aim to collect data on the protected characteristics of complainants, but this will not be made available except for statistical analysis. You do not have to provide this information for your complaint to be considered. However, by analysing this data, we can assess whether our complaint systems are equitable and fair and whether it disproportionately affects different groups. This analysis will inform the preparation of our Annual Complaints Report.

Confidentiality

The Council considers the importance of confidentiality when handling customer feedback and complaints. However, to enable a complaint investigation to be undertaken, personal information will be shared with the investigating officer and on occasions other officers where necessary. Personal information will not be shared with anyone unnecessarily and will be handled in line with data protection legislation. If information is given to the Council in confidence, the information will not be disclosed without consent, unless the Council has a legitimate or legal reason to do so for example a safeguarding concern regarding a child or young person.

The Local Government Act 1974 gives the Ombudsman powers of the High Court to ask for evidence or witnesses without asking for consent from the complainant. So if the Ombudsman asks we will share all necessary information with them in relation to your complaint.

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Section 1 – Details of the proposed action being considered

1.1 Lead Department:	Legal, Governance and HR
1.2 Lead Division:	N/A

1.3 Title of the proposed action:
Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy

1.4 Brief description of the proposed action:
To review the Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and develop an updated Policy ensuring compliance with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) Complaint Handling Code.

1.5 Who else is involved:
Departmental Complaints Lead Officers and ELT.

1.6 Who will make the final decision about the proposed action:
Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee.

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

1.7 Which wards will be affected by the proposed action? Tick all that apply					
All wards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hart	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seaton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Burn Valley	<input type="checkbox"/>	Headland & Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Throston	<input type="checkbox"/>
De Bruce	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manor House	<input type="checkbox"/>	Victoria	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fens & Greatham	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rossmere	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A - Internal council activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foggy Furze	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural West	<input type="checkbox"/>		

1.8 Completed By:		
Name	Job Title	Date Completed
Catherine Grimwood	Performance and Partnerships Manager	10.8.25

1.9 Version	Author	Summary of Changes	Date

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Section 2 – Explaining the impact of the proposed action

2.1 What data and evidence has informed this impact assessment?

The LGSCO's Complaint Handling Code and the Council's existing Corporate Complaints Comments and Compliments Policy (July 2021).

The equality profile of Hartlepool residents from the Council's annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report.

2.2 If there are gaps in evidence or not enough information to assess the impact, how have you addressed this or how will you address it?

Gap(s) Identified	How it / they have or will be addressed
Data on the protected characteristics of complainants.	There is an expectation in the new Code that organisations should collect data on the protected characteristics of complainants at the first point they raise a complaint. This data should only be made available for statistical analysis so that we can assess whether our complaint system is equitable and fair and whether it disproportionately affects different groups. We will look to introduce this into our complaint intake processes from 1 st April 2026 and the analysis of this data will inform the preparation of our Annual Report in future years and future reviews of the Feedback and Complaints Policy and related internal procedures.

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

2.3 Risk Score

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Age		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Disability		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Gender Reassignment		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Pregnancy and Maternity		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Race (Ethnicity)		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Religion or Belief		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Sex		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Sexual Orientation		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Care Leavers (Local)		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Armed Forces (Local)		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.
Poverty and Disadvantage (Local)		
✗ No Impact	N/A	# See note.

Note: The Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy will be available for all residents. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion requirements will be considered in the delivery of the Policy and in the preparation of the supporting procedures, officer guidance notes, officer training and letter templates etc.

Section 3 - Mitigation Action Plan or Justification

Group(s) impacted	Proposed mitigation	How this mitigation will make a difference	By when	Responsible Officer
N/A				

Justification If you need to justify your proposed action explain this here
N/A

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Section 4 - Sign Off

Responsible Officer sign off:	
Name	Catherine Grimwood
Job title	Performance and Partnerships Manager
Assistant Director / Director sign off:	
Name	Hayley Martin
Job title	Director of Legal, Governance and HR

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

8 SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: ANTIPOVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION UPDATE
Report of: Director of Public Health
Decision Type: Key Decision - CJCS 167/25

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- Where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- That is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 This report provides updates regarding:
- Implementation of the “Investigation into Child and Family Poverty in Hartlepool” recommendations (approved by Finance & Policy Committee in 2023)
 - Hartlepool Poverty Truth Commission, Hartlepool's Antipoverty Strategy and Hartlepool Antipoverty Action Group progress

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Hartlepool is the fifth most income deprived local authority in England with around 23% of Hartlepool residents classed as income-deprived in 2019. Child Poverty in Hartlepool has risen over the last decade to 39%. Poverty, particularly child poverty, has a significant impact on health, education, work and the whole of a person's life. Tackling poverty benefits both individuals and the wider community through reduced need for health/social care, a more prosperous local economy and greater community cohesion. Tackling poverty also contributes towards the council's vision and key council priorities. To succeed in addressing poverty it is important that local people with experience of poverty are involved in decision-making and that effective, coordinated action is taken by people and organisations across the whole system.

3.2 In 2021-23, HBC's Audit & Governance committee conducted an "Investigation into Child and Family Poverty in Hartlepool". In July 2023, Finance and Policy Committee approved the report's recommendations, including:

- Establishing a Poverty Truth Commission and incorporating lived experience of socio-economic disadvantage at all levels of decision-making and policy development
- Examining voluntary adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty and amalgamation of impact assessments into a single assessment. Also, if new or increased poverty impact is identified during implementation, re-visiting the impact assessment and considering further actions
- Using a "hand-up vs hand-out" & preventative model, refreshing the Child & Family Poverty Strategy & changing debt-collection processes to better support people in poverty
- Local monitoring of progress (A&G updates on recommendations, annual poverty data update to ward councillors & Hartlepool-specific indicators) and communication with schools, VCS and partners

3.3 While the scrutiny report was progressing through committees, a partnership of people and organisations interested in tackling poverty formed. This became Hartlepool Poverty Action Group and is open to any person or organisation willing to support Hartlepool's anti-poverty work. It includes senior leaders and staff from multiple sectors and residents with lived experience of poverty. Members of the Hartlepool Poverty Action Group subsequently began implementation of the scrutiny report recommendations, development of Hartlepool's Antipoverty Strategy and other antipoverty actions.

4. PROGRESS

4.1 Progress in implementing the "Investigation into Child and Family Poverty in Hartlepool" recommendations (approved by Finance and Policy Committee) and other antipoverty action includes:

- An active Poverty Truth Commission where residents with lived experience of poverty, senior leaders and other stakeholders are working together on the three priorities of good homes, community spaces and access to leisure activities. Thrive¹ was funded to provide facilitation of this work, initially for 18 months. The required £33,450 funding was secured through equal contributions from the Director of Public Health, the Head of Housing Hardship and Welfare Support Services and the Head of Service for Community Hubs. An additional £24,000 funding (£12,000 matched funding from the Council and Thrive) was secured to continue this work till Dec 2025. Recent Poverty Truth Commission activities include:
 - Meetings planning actions to address the three priorities voted for at the Poverty Truth Commission launch event². This includes

providing input into key information to share on housing sections of the council website.

- A “Say it with flowers” campaign³ to enable residents to nominate community spaces for improvement.
- Improvements to the Brus Tunnel community space (e.g. tidying, a new swimming safety banner, flower planting) and discussion with tunnel users and stakeholders about potential future improvements.
- A full page of free children’s Easter Holiday activities in Hartlepool Life, with plans for a similar page for each major school holiday
- Socio-economic Disadvantage has been adopted locally by the Council as a protected characteristic and is included the new Single Impact Assessment
- Hartlepool’s Antipoverty Strategy (Background paper) has been developed by the Poverty Action Group. This strategy includes action to reduce poverty now and prevent future poverty. Progress by the Poverty Action Group or its members includes:
 - Production of a 4-page “Did you know...” wraparound regarding benefit entitlements, affordable safer credit, financial support options and local advice services for Hartlepool Life newspaper. This was funded by a several partners, designed with residents and more than 18,000 copies produced in October 2024. QR codes in the wraparound linked to a website set-up to provide electronic access to the information and other useful tools/resources. In the first 3 months, the webpage received over 1000 views from over 750 unique visitors
 - Development and delivery of staff training regarding poverty, benefits entitlements and local support services. This was trialled with hub staff and commissioned by Adult Social Care. The pilot was estimated to provide 40 people getting Telecare with potentially £40,000 in benefits entitlement. The training was mandatory for adult social care staff and promoted across Children's and Adults Services. Training was also developed for community champions and volunteers.
 - Development of childcare training courses to support the high demand for childcare staff. This supports the trainees into childcare work and supports other residents’ ability to work through greater access to childcare
 - Successful discussions regarding changes to Council Tax letters/envelopes to encourage people to open them and access available support. Discussion of auto-enrolment of Free School Meals (assurance received that this will be implemented in

September). Discussions between Ward Councillors and residents regarding opportunities to work more closely together. Discussions regarding Council debt collection processes with advocacy via MP and other national routes

- Advice service opening times and access options changed to better meet resident needs
- Development of a comprehensive local poverty dashboard

5. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 It is recommended that Hartlepool's Antipoverty Strategy, and its implementation, is supported.
- 5.2 It is recommended that progress regarding anti-poverty action in Hartlepool is noted.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	None
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	None
SUBSIDY CONTROL	None
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	None
SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE – APPENDIX A)	Positive impact expected regarding reducing socio-economic disadvantage through multiagency anti-poverty action. Positive impact on inclusion of diverse groups expected by explicitly considering how fairer access to resources can be enabled
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	Council staff attend anti-poverty meetings as part of their existing roles. Positive benefits of staff involvement are expected given benefits have been reported by staff, residents and senior leaders
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	None

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	None
CONSULTATION	Members, staff and residents are involved in decision-making within Hartlepool Poverty Action Group and Hartlepool Poverty Truth Commission via meetings, direct discussion and email

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is recommended that Hartlepool's Antipoverty Strategy, and its implementation, is supported.
- 7.2 It is recommended that progress regarding anti-poverty action in Hartlepool is noted.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Support for Hartlepool's Antipoverty Strategy by Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee assists continued action by Council staff and members in implementing the strategy.
- 8.2 Awareness of progress regarding antipoverty actions by Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee enables monitoring of this key issue by the committee, including opportunity to influence and/or support future action.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Hartlepool's Antipoverty Strategy
- 9.2 Web links referenced in the report:
1. Information about Thrive: <https://thrive-teesside.org.uk>
 2. Hartlepool Poverty Truth Commission Launch information: <https://thrive-teesside.org.uk/hartlepool-poverty-truth-commission-launch-event/>
 3. Say it with flowers campaign to improve community spaces: <https://thrive-teesside.org.uk/say-it-with-flowers/>

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

Craig Blundred
 Director of Public Health
Craig.blundred@hartlepool.gov.uk

Catherine Guy
Public Health Registrar
Catherine.guy@hartlepool.gov.uk

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 15.08.2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 15.08.2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 15.08.2025

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Guidance for completing this form is available in the “Single Impact Assessment: Toolkit for Officers”, available from the Single Impact Assessment page on the intranet at <https://hbcintranet/Pages/Single-Impact-Assessments.aspx>.

Section 1 – Details of the proposed action being considered

1.1 Lead Department:	Children’s Services and Joint Commissioning
1.2 Lead Division:	Public Health
1.3 Title of the proposed action:	
Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee support for Hartlepool’s Antipoverty Strategy, and its implementation	
1.4 Brief description of the proposed action:	
It is recommended that Hartlepool’s Antipoverty Strategy, and its implementation, is supported by Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee. This would assist with continued action by Council staff and members in implementing the strategy that has been developed.	
1.5 Who else is involved:	
The development of the strategy involved senior leaders and staff from multiple sectors and residents with lived experience of poverty (coordination was through the multiagency Hartlepool Poverty Action Group). Implementation will involve the same multiagency group.	

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form**1.6 Who will make the final decision about the proposed action:**

Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee will make the decision about the Committee's support for Hartlepool's Antipoverty Strategy, and its implementation

1.7 Which wards will be affected by the proposed action? Tick all that apply

All wards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hart	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seaton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Burn Valley	<input type="checkbox"/>	Headland & Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Throston	<input type="checkbox"/>
De Bruce	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manor House	<input type="checkbox"/>	Victoria	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fens & Greatham	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rossmere	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A - Internal council activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foggy Furze	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural West	<input type="checkbox"/>		

1.8 Completed By:

Name	Job Title	Date Completed
Catherine Guy	Public Health Registrar	22/08/25

1.9 Version	Author	Summary of Changes	Date

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form**Section 2 – Explaining the impact of the proposed action****2.1 What data and evidence has informed this impact assessment?**

Given the expected positive impact on people experiencing disadvantage of supporting the antipoverty strategy (which has been developed using data, evidence and lived experience involvement), a proportionate assessment using local and national poverty related data, evidence, reports and guidance has been conducted.

The 6 priority themes within the Hartlepool Poverty Strategy are:

1. Residents' voice in decisions
2. Maximising income and reducing costs
3. Making work a route out of poverty
4. The best start in life for the next generation
5. Influencing action
6. Good homes

2.2 If there are gaps in evidence or not enough information to assess the impact, how have you addressed this or how will you address it?

Gap(s) Identified	How it / they have or will be addressed
N/A	

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form**2.3 Risk Score**

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Age		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: e.g. Almost certain 4 Impact score: e.g. Major 3 Overall score: N/A	Supporting the antipoverty strategy is likely to have a positive impact given priorities include a particular focus on age groups at higher risk of poverty (e.g. children are more likely to live in poverty and suffer greater impacts from poverty and a key priority is the best start in life for the next generation). The Antipoverty Strategy actions also address poverty across all age groups.
Disability		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Supporting the antipoverty strategy is likely to have a positive impact given people with a disability are more likely to experience poverty. In this strategy positive impacts are particularly likely through the priorities of maximising income, addressing barriers to work, ensuring fair access to resources for children with different needs, accessible services and addressing residents' different housing needs.
Gender Reassignment		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Gender reassignment is not specifically addressed within the antipoverty strategy and no evidence was found for a negative impact. There may be positive impacts given since the strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty, and the strategies priorities include inclusive and fair workplaces and services. However, this positive impact may be challenging to robustly measure.
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Marital status and Civil Partnership is not specifically addressed within the antipoverty strategy and no evidence was found for a negative impact. There may be positive impacts given since the strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty, and the strategies priorities include inclusive and fair workplaces and services.

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Pregnancy and Maternity		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Supporting the antipoverty strategy is likely to have a positive impact given the antipoverty strategy priorities include a focus on giving the next generation the best start in life. Proposed actions include: Work with residents and services to ensure support from pregnancy to adulthood is effective in reducing or preventing poverty now and in future generations
Race (Ethnicity)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Race (Ethnicity) is not specifically addressed within the antipoverty strategy and no evidence was found for a negative impact. The strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty. There may be positive impacts given since the strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty, and the strategies priorities include inclusive and fair workplaces and services. However, this positive impact may be challenging to robustly measure.
Religion or Belief		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Religion or Belief is not specifically addressed within the antipoverty strategy and no evidence was found for a negative impact. The strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty. There may be positive impacts given since the strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty, and the strategies priorities include inclusive and fair workplaces and services. However, this positive impact may be challenging to robustly measure.
Sex		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Sex is not specifically addressed within the antipoverty strategy and no evidence was found for a negative impact. The strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty. There may be positive impacts given since the strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty, and the strategies priorities

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

		include inclusive and fair workplaces and services. However, this positive impact may be challenging to robustly measure.
Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Sexual Orientation		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Sexual Orientation is not specifically addressed within the antipoverty strategy and no evidence was found for a negative impact. The strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty. There may be positive impacts given since the strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty, and the strategies priorities include inclusive and fair workplaces and services. However, this positive impact may be challenging to robustly measure.
Care Leavers (Local)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Care Leavers are not specifically addressed within the antipoverty strategy and no evidence was found for a negative impact. The strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty. There may be positive impacts given since the strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty, and the strategies priorities include inclusive and fair workplaces, housing and services. However, this positive impact may be challenging to robustly measure.
Armed Forces (Local)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Armed Forces are not specifically addressed within the antipoverty strategy and no evidence was found for a negative impact. The strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty. There may be positive impacts given since the strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty, and the strategies priorities include inclusive and fair workplaces, housing and services. However, this positive impact may be challenging to robustly measure.
Poverty and Disadvantage (Local)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score: N/A	Supporting the antipoverty strategy is likely to have a positive impact given the strategy vision is for all our residents to live fulfilling lives, free from the effects of poverty. Proposed actions have been developed using data, evidence and lived experience involvement to reduce poverty and disadvantage.

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

<input type="checkbox"/> No Impact		
------------------------------------	--	--

Section 3 - Mitigation Action Plan or Justification

Group(s) impacted	Proposed mitigation	How this mitigation will make a difference	By when	Responsible Officer
N/A – No negative impact anticipated				

Justification If you need to justify your proposed action explain this here

N/A - No negative impact anticipated

Section 4 - Sign Off

Responsible Officer sign off:	
Name	Dr Catherine Guy
Job title	Public Health Registrar
Assistant Director / Director sign off:	
Name	Craig Blundred
Job title	Director Of Public Health

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Once the Single Impact Assessment is completed please send to impactassessments@hartlepool.gov.uk.

Section 5 - Review (To be completed after implementation)

5.1 Review completed by:		
Name	Job Title	Date review completed

5.2 Did the impact turned out as expected?

5.3 Were the proposed mitigations the correct ones and were they successful in reducing any negative impacts?

5.4 Were there any unexpected outcomes?

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form**5.5 Following the review please identify next steps here (Select one)**

- ☐ Additional mitigation required (give details below - 5.6)
- ☐ Original proposed course of action needs to be revisited
- ☐ No further action required

5.6 Additional mitigation(s) or justification

Group(s) impacted	Proposed mitigation	How this mitigation will make a difference	By when	Responsible Officer

Justification If you need to justify your proposed action explain this here

Submit form with completed review to impactassessments@hartlepool.gov.uk

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

8TH SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE COMPLAINTS
POLICY: ANNUAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING
REPORT

Report of: Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)

Decision Type: Non-Key Decision

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- | |
|---|
| - where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People) |
| - with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community. (Organisation) |

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To present the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment for 2024/25 and, to seek a governing body response to this; ensuring that Committee has scrutinised the organisation's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code sets out best practice for landlord's complaint handling procedures, to enable a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector, regardless of the size or type of landlord. The Code encourages landlord-tenant relationships so that residents can raise a complaint if things go wrong.
- 3.2 From 1st April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code became statutory, meaning that social landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements.

- 3.3 This Code aims to support the earliest resolution of complaints while the matters are still within the landlord's own procedure. This can avoid issues escalating with further detriment to the resident, requiring more time and resource by the landlord to remedy.
- 3.4 The Code should empower those handling complaints within an organisation and encourage involvement in complaint resolution, develop staff ownership, decision-making and engagement and, ensure the appropriate resources and tools are provided to handle complaints.
- 3.5 The Code also acts as a guide to residents of what to expect if they make a complaint and improve access and awareness of the procedure when they need it.
- 3.6 Part of the new statutory nature of the Code means that landlords are required to submit an annual submission of their performance against the Code to ensure they are compliant. There has been a change to the year 2 (2025/26) annual submission dates following feedback captured by the Housing Ombudsman. A review of the process found the submission timescale challenging for landlords to meet due to various operational requirements and so the Housing Ombudsman has therefore implemented the following for year 2:
- Submissions for landlords with under 1,000 homes "to be provided within 6 months after their financial year-end" – i.e. 30th September for the Council.
- 3.7 The Code also requires landlords to have a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) on their governing body to provide assurance to the governing body on the effectiveness of its complaints system, including challenging the data and information provided to Committee. The Housing Ombudsman is looking for the MRC within each organisation to promote a culture of openness and transparency in relation to complaints made by residents. It also expects the MRC to provide assurance that systems are in place to capture learning from complaints, that the governing body is engaged with this and to ensure senior level ownership of learning and accountability stemming from complaints. The Chair of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee assumes the role of the MRC for the Council to drive a positive complaint handling culture throughout the organisation.
- 3.8 The Housing Ombudsman also has a legal duty to ensure landlords complaint procedures and responses are compliant with the Code.
- 3.9 Where a landlord does not meet the requirements in any of the areas and does not move into compliance within a reasonable timescale, the Ombudsman may issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO).

4. HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE COMPLAINTS POLICY

- 4.1 Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code therefore complaints relating to the housing management service are no longer dealt with and reported on under the umbrella of the Council's Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.
- 4.2 A standalone Housing Management Service Complaints Policy has been developed in line with the statutory requirements of the Code; this policy was approved by delegated decision and came into effect on 1st April 2024. A copy of the policy is attached as **Appendix 1**. This policy has to be distinct from the Council's Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and from the 1st April 2024 all complaints relating to the Council's housing management services have been dealt with under this new policy. The policy has been updated to include reference to the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee rather than the Finance and Policy Committee.
- 4.3 The policy clearly defines what is considered a complaint as prescribed by the Code and states that complaints can be made through this policy by:
- a person or persons who are or have been in a landlord/tenant relationship with the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service; or
 - someone who has applied for a property owned by the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service (other than statutory allocations and applications for assistance from people who are homeless or threatened).
- 4.4 The policy also sets out the complaints handling process including the two stage process, if the issue cannot be resolved through a service request, how the Council will put things right and remedy and details the Housing Ombudsman's service.

5. ANNUAL COMPLAINT PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 In order to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code, landlords must produce an annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:
- the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements;
 - a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance - this must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept;
 - any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;

- the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
 - any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and
 - any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.
- 5.2 The annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the section of the organisation's website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this. The organisation's annual self-assessment should be included within this report. The purpose of the self-assessment is to set out how landlords demonstrate their complaint handling service complies with the provisions of the Code. In addition, the self-assessment supports landlords to inform residents about service provision.
- 5.3 In line with the requirements of the Code, the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report has been produced and, included within this, is the annual self-assessment. This report and self-assessment are set out in **Appendix 2**.
- 5.4 The report sets out the Council's ethos in terms of complaints handling, a summary of complaints in 2024/25, trends, risks and service improvement and learning. The self-assessment demonstrates whether the Council's policies and practices comply with the Code. When the self-assessment was undertaken, the Council met all of the Code requirements.
- 5.5 Since the introduction of the Code there has been an increase in the number of complaints that have been received and dealt with by the Council with 7 complaints recorded in total during 2024/25 (7 Stage 1 complaints with 1 complaint progressing to Stage 2). The highest volume of complaints being about the repairs service. This is up from 1 complaint received the previous year investigated at Stage 1. Further details on the complaints are included in **Appendix 2**.
- 5.6 Whilst the increase in complaints may initially seem negative, since the introduction of the new Code, the service has promoted the complaints process in correspondence and contact with residents so that residents clearly understand what they can do if they are unhappy and how they can make a complaint. The service is also proactive now in seeking continuous feedback from residents specifically about the repairs service through the introduction of the housing repairs satisfaction survey sent out to the customer following the completion of a repair. Dissatisfaction raised by residents about the repairs service has then been responded to via a service request as necessary, to proactively address and resolve the issues and prevent future problems.

- 5.7 Complaints can be used to provide valuable feedback and can lead to a positive contribution to the improvement of service delivery. The rise in complaints can also be a sign of improved resident awareness, an indication that residents are more empowered to voice concerns and that they are aware of their rights and how to escalate issues when necessary, coupled with the Council having a more proactive approach to addressing issues within a targeted timescale especially around the repairs service. The increase in the volume of complaints does also mirror the national picture with the Housing Ombudsman revealing figures showing huge increases in the numbers of complaints from residents on social housing following the introduction of the new Code – with repairs being the area that residents make the most complaints about.
- 5.8 The Code allows the Council to take a consistent and transparent approach, allowing residents easier contact with the service to express any areas of dissatisfaction. The aim of the Code is to try and ensure, that where possible, issues are dealt with quickly before escalating to the formal complaints process where appropriate. This is reflected in the data on service requests dealt with in 2024/25. The service responded to 21 service requests in 2024/25 with 1 case progressing to a Stage 1 complaint. This was the first year the service has formally recorded service requests and is therefore unable to compare this data to previous years.

6. GOVERNING BODY'S RESPONSE

- 6.1 In order to meet the requirements of the Code, Members are asked to consider the 2024/25 Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report, inclusive of the self-assessment. A formal response from Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee for publication is required, which will be published as the Council's governing body's response.

7. FUTURE MONITORING OF PERFORMANCE

- 7.1 Complaints relating to the Council's housing management services will continue to be reported to Committee on an annual basis. In order to meet the annual timescales set by the Housing Ombudsman, reports will be brought to Committee in advance of the Housing Ombudsman's deadline – meeting schedule permitting.
- 7.2 Future reports will continue to include, as a minimum, the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment for consideration and will request a governing body's response to these.

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	<p>Poor complaint handling provides risks to the organisation around reduced customer satisfaction and reputational damage. It could also lead to increased financial costs to the HRA for example, void loss, if residents are dissatisfied with the housing management services they receive.</p> <p>Where a landlord does not meet the compliance requirements in any of the areas and does not move into compliance within a reasonable timescale, the Housing Ombudsman may issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO) on the organisation.</p>
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No relevant issues
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>The Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1st April 2024, meaning that social landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements.</p> <p>Part of the statutory nature of the Code means that landlords are required to submit an annual submission of their performance against the Code to ensure they are compliant.</p> <p>The Code also requires landlords to have a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) on their governing body to provide assurance to the governing body on the effectiveness of its complaints system, including challenging the data and information provided to Committee. The Housing Ombudsman expects the MRC within each organisation to promote a culture of openness and transparency in relation to complaints made by residents. To provide assurance that systems are in place to capture learning from complaints, that the governing body is engaged with this and to ensure senior level ownership of learning and accountability stemming from complaints. The Chair of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee assumes the role of the MRC for the Council to drive a positive complaint handling culture in the organisation.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman also has a legal duty to ensure landlords complaint procedures and responses are compliant with the Code.</p>

SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	<p>The Housing Management Service Complaints Policy is available for all residents, across all wards who are or have been, in a landlord/tenant relationship with the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service or, have applied for a property owned by the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service.</p> <p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion requirements have been considered in the delivery of the Policy and in the preparation of the supporting procedures, officer guidance notes, officer training and letter templates etc.</p> <p>We recognise that our residents are more frequently making the service aware of specific needs and vulnerabilities relating to physical and mental health conditions.</p> <p>Formally recording this data is an area for future development, exploring options like establishing a Priority Services Register, so that we can ensure services are being effectively delivered to meet the individual needs of our residents and support vulnerable customers.</p> <p>A Single Impact Assessment will be considered in the development of processes for the collection of this data.</p>
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
CONSULTATION	The Chair of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee has been consulted on the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and a Forward from the Chair / Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) included.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members are asked to:

- i) note the changes to the Housing Management Complaints Policy; and
- ii) review the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment for 2024/25 and provide a formal response in writing from Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee for publication as the governing body.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 i) to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the organisation's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code; and
- ii) to ensure a governing body's response is provided, to meet the requirements of the Code.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Housing Ombudsman new Complaint Handling Code
[The Complaint Handling Code | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- 11.2 Finance and Policy Committee Annual Performance Monitoring Report 2023-24 [Agendas, reports and minutes | Hartlepool Borough Council](#)

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

Kieran Bostock

Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)
Hartlepool Borough Council
Email: kieran.bostock@hartlepool.gov.uk
Tel: 01429 284291

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 13th August 2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 13th August 2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 13th August 2025



Housing Management Service Complaints Policy

September 2025

Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service Complaints Policy

- 1.1 Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service, known as the Landlord throughout this policy, aims to provide high quality housing management services that meet the needs of local people. We want to make our service as efficient and effective as possible. To do this we need to know whether we are getting it right and how we can improve our service.
- 1.2 In response we promise to listen carefully to what people have to say and respond promptly to their comments and complaints. Any information that is provided will be treated confidentially. We aim to deal with any complaints impartially, objectively and professionally. Making a complaint will not affect the treatment or services that individuals or their family receive.
- 1.3 This policy has been developed in line with the statutory requirements of the [Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code](#).
- 1.4 Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service defines a **complaint** as...

...an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.

- 1.5 The Landlord and the resident must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. A service request is a request from a resident that requires an action to be taken to put something right. A service request is not a complaint but will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.
- 1.6 Complaints can be made through this policy by:
 - a person or persons who are or have been in a landlord/tenant relationship with the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service; or
 - someone who has applied for a property owned by the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service (other than statutory allocations and applications for assistance from people who are homeless or threatened).

2. Exclusions

- 2.1 We, as the Landlord, will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If we decide not to accept a complaint we will set

out the reasons why and provide evidence to support our decision. Each complaint will be considered on its own merits.

- 2.2 This policy sets out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered a complaint and these circumstances will be fair and reasonable to all residents. Exclusions include:
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.
 - Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim such as a claim form and Particulars of Claim, have been filed at court.
 - Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.
 - If the complaint refers to a service not provided by Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service.
 - If it relates to a policy approved by Committee, unless it's about the failure to comply with this policy.
- 2.3 We will accept a complaint that has been referred within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident being aware, unless it is excluded on other grounds. As a Landlord we will consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there is a good reason to do so.
- 2.4 If we decide not to accept a complaint we will provide an explanation to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process along with the resident's right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman. If then the Housing Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Housing Ombudsman may tell us, the Landlord, to take on the complaint.
- 2.5 We will not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints, we will consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.

3. Confidentiality and privacy

- 3.1 Information will only be shared as outlined in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. We will keep a full record of the complaint, any review and the outcome at each stage, including all documents, relevant correspondence with the complainant or their representative and other parties, surveys and report.

4. Accessibility and awareness

- 4.1 At the outset and at every stage of the complaints process we will provide clear guidance as to who will be responding to a resident's complaint, including how to escalate if the resident is dissatisfied with the response.

- 4.2 As the Landlord we will provide different channels through which a resident can make a complaint. We have considered our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments required by residents who may need to access the complaints process.
- 4.3 Residents can raise their complaint in a number of ways:
- by completing a complaints form;
 - in writing a letter or by email;
 - over the telephone or in person to any member of staff to be redirected to the Housing Management Service.
- 4.4 Residents have the opportunity to have a representative to deal with their complaint on their behalf. This could be an advocate, a Councillor or Member of Parliament or a family member or friend. We will need to confirm, in writing, that this person has the authority and consent to represent you. This is because providing a response to the complaint may involve disclosing personal information relating to the resident and Hartlepool Borough Council need to ensure that the rights of the individual are protected.
- 4.5 At any point of the complaints process the resident is entitled to engage with the Housing Ombudsman about their complaint and the contact details are:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET

Online form: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/>

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Phone: 0300 111 3000

Complaints Handling Process – Summary

Service Request

If you have a request for a service or a problem please get in touch and we will seek to resolve as soon as possible. If any specialist services are required we will ensure that you, the resident, is kept up to date with progress. Service requests can be made via Customer Services on 01429 523336 or by email to customerservice@hartlepool.gov.uk



Stage 1

If you are dissatisfied with how we have dealt with your service request you can then raise a complaint. This can be done via letter, email, over the phone or in person. Your complaint will be acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days** of receipt. A full response will be issued **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.



Stage 2

If all or part of your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction then you can request for it to be progressed to Stage 2 – a final response. A request for Stage 2 will be acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days** of receipt. We will issue a final response **within 20 working days** of the escalation being acknowledged.



Housing Ombudsman

If you are still unhappy with the outcome you have the right to ask the Housing Ombudsman to review your complaint. The Housing Ombudsman is an independent body set by law to review housing complaints. (www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

Complaints Handling Process - Detailed

5. Stage 1

- 5.1 If an issue cannot be resolved through a service request the complaint should be escalated to a Stage 1 complaint. Complaints can be received in a variety of forms – by letter, email, over the phone, online form and in person. Where complaints are taken over the phone or in person then the person taking the complaint will record the name and contact details of the complainant, their preferred method of contact and the detail of their complaint. We will look at resolving the complaint promptly with an explanation, apology or resolution provided where appropriate.
- 5.2 Stage 1 complaints will be acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days** of the complaint being received. We will confirm the subject of the complaint to ensure we are investigating the right issue(s). A full response will be issued **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.
- 5.3 If an extension on this timescale is required due to the complexity of the complaint then you, the resident, will be informed of the expected timescale for response. Any extension will be no more than 10 extra working days without good reason and that reason will be clearly explained. When you, the resident, are informed of an extension you will also be provided with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.
- 5.4 If additional complaints are raised during the investigation, these will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if they are related and the response has not yet been issued. Where the Stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code.
- 5.5 The response to Stage 1 will address all the points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. The response will confirm the following in writing to you, the resident, at the completion of Stage 1 in clear, plain language:
- a) The complaint stage;
 - b) The complaint definition;
 - c) The decision of the complaint;
 - d) The reasons for any decision made;
 - e) The details of any remedy offered to put things right;
 - f) Details of any outstanding actions; and
 - g) Details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if you are not satisfied with the response.

6. Stage 2

- 6.1 If all or part of your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction at Stage 1 you can request that it your complaint be progressed to Stage 2. The Stage 2 response will be our final response. Your request for Stage 2 will be acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days** of receipt of your request.
- 6.2 You are not required to explain your reasons for requesting Stage 2 consideration but we, the Landlord, will make reasonable efforts to understand why you remain unhappy. The investigating officer for Stage 2 will not be the same person who considered your Stage 1 complaint.
- 6.3 We will aim to issue a final response to Stage 2 **within 20 working days** of the escalation request being acknowledged. If an extension is required due to the complexity of the complaint you will be informed of the expected timescale for a response. Any extension will be no more than 20 working days without good reason and the reason(s) for the extension will be clearly explained. If we inform you of an extension we will also provide you with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.
- 6.4 The response will be provided when the answer to the complaint is known and not when the outstanding actions are completed. Outstanding actions will still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to you, the resident. We will address all points raised in the defined complaint providing clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
- 6.5 We will confirm in writing the following at the completion of Stage 2:
- a) The complaint stage;
 - b) The complaint definition;
 - c) The decision of the complaint;
 - d) The reasons for any decision made;
 - e) The details of any remedy offered to put things right;
 - f) Details of any outstanding actions; and
 - g) Details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the response.

7. Putting things right

- 7.1 If something has gone wrong we will acknowledge it and set out any actions we have already taken, or intend to take, to put things right. These can include:
- Apologising;
 - Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;

- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
- Taking action if there has been a delay;
- Reconsidering or changing a decision;
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
- Providing a financial remedy; and
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

7.2 We will take into account the guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman when deciding on any appropriate remedy. The remedy will reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified. The remedy will clearly set out what will happen and by when with agreement with the resident.

8. Housing Ombudsman Service

8.1 The Housing Ombudsman can independently review a complaint from a resident if it has been through the full Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service Complaints Procedure (Stages 1 and 2). The Housing Ombudsman is an independent body set up by law to review housing complaints. Throughout the process all complainants will be told of their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service if they are still not satisfied and will be provided with contact details. (www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

9. Other Information

Collective complaints

- 9.1 Where appropriate complaints made by a number of individuals on the same subject will be dealt with as one investigation. It may be appropriate for each complainant to receive a response directly unless a representative has been nominated on behalf of the individuals.

Withdrawing a complaint

- 9.2 You may withdraw your complaint at any time by contacting the Housing Management Service and letting them know. Consideration will be given as to whether the concerns raised still need to be fully investigated, for instance if there were safeguarding concerns relating to you or other individuals.

Anonymous Complaints

- 9.3 All anonymous complaints i.e. where an individual does not provide their name or contact details will be reviewed and investigated where appropriate, however it will not be possible to provide a response. If an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information to enable the Council to investigate or take further action, then the Council will not be able to investigate.

Social Media

- 9.4 In line with Council procedure, the Housing Management Service will not respond formally to complaints which have been uploaded to any social media platform. Please use the contact details outlined above.

Persistent and Unreasonable Complaints and Complainants

- 9.5 In general, dealing with a complaint is a straightforward process but in a minority of cases people pursue their complaints in a way that can impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource implications for the authority. A separate Corporate [Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour](#) policy is in place for the Council to deal with the very small number of complainants whose frequency of contact with the Council, unreasonable or persistent complaints, or unacceptable behaviour makes it necessary for special measures to be taken.

- 9.6 Before implementing any of the provisions set out in this policy, officers must consider whether Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service's procedures have been followed correctly, whether full and reasonable responses have already been given and whether the complainant is now inappropriately persistent or behaving unreasonably.

Privacy information and Data Protection

- 9.7 All personal information collected is for the purpose of responding to customer feedback and complaints and will only be shared with relevant service areas of the Council or third parties where the law enables the Council to do so (e.g. MPs or councillors). For more information about how the Council processes your personal data please visit:
https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20032/access_to_information/500/access_to_information

Confidentiality

- 9.8 The Housing Management Service will consider the importance of confidentiality when handling customer feedback and complaints. However to enable a complaint investigation to be undertaken, personal information will be shared with the investigating officer and on occasions other officers where necessary. Personal information will not be shared with anyone unnecessarily and will be handled in line with data protection legislation.

Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

- 9.9 We will produce an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code, which will contain an analysis of the complaints received and the outcomes. It will also highlight any service improvements made as a result of learning from the complaints as well as any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Housing Ombudsman. The annual self-assessment will be published on our website alongside our governing body's response.

Scrutiny and oversight: continuous learning and improvement

- 9.10 As a Landlord we will look beyond the circumstances of an individual complaint and consider where service improvements can be made for all residents as a result of finding fault. Any wider learning and improvements will be reported to stakeholders where required.

- 9.11 The Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services is accountable for complaint handling with regards to the Housing Management Service and the Chair of Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee has lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaints handling culture in the Housing Management Service. This elected member will be known as Member Responsible for Complaints – MRC. The MRC and the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee will review as a minimum:
- updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint performance;
 - issues and trends arising from complaint handling;
 - updates on Housing Ombudsman investigation and compliance; and
 - the annual complaints performance and service improvement report.

Review of Policy

- 9.12 This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code as required by the Housing Ombudsman.



Hartlepool Borough Council's Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report

Forward

Hello and welcome to the Council's second annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report. As Chair of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee it continues to be my responsibility to lead a positive complaints handling culture for our housing management service here at the Council.

I believe handling complaints well isn't just a case of following the procedure. How we respond to, and handle complaints, is indicative of the wider organisational culture. Our organisational values and behaviours feed through to the way complaints are dealt with to ensure residents are listened to, complaints are welcomed and problems are resolved quickly and effectively. Effective and timely resolution of complaints is a top priority for the Council and we view complaints as an opportunity for learning, to continually improve services, as well as our customer's experience.

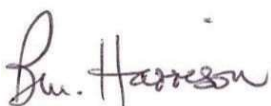
Since the introduction of the Housing Ombudsman's new statutory Complaint Handling Code we have seen an increase in the number of complaints that have been raised by our residents last year about the housing management service – with 7 complaints being raised in total, up from 1 complaint in 2023/24. Whilst this may initially seem negative, complaints are used to provide valuable feedback and make a positive contribution to improving how our services are delivered.

We hoped the Housing Management Complaints Policy coming into effect on 1st April 2024 would improve resident awareness and allow residents to feel more empowered to voice concerns and ensure that they are aware of their rights and how to escalate issues when necessary. Making it as easy as possible for residents to make a complaint.

The service is now also proactive in seeking continuous feedback from residents and I am hopeful that the introduction of the repairs service satisfaction survey has provided residents over the past year with the opportunity to let us know, after each repair, if they are unhappy with the service they have received.

The complaints we have received, together with the service requests that have been recorded last year, have been carefully considered to ensure that emerging trends and performance issues are closely scrutinised and changes are implemented.

Our aspiration is for everyone to live in a well-managed, safe and well-maintained home, but if you feel we are not delivering this at any time, we want to hear from you.



Brenda Harrison

Chair of Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee and
Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

Introduction

Since the introduction of the Housing Management Service Complaints Policy on the 1st April 2024 the Council has closely monitored complaints and has had a welcoming, open and transparent approach to complaint handling.

This report along with our self-assessment, sets out how we are performing as a service in terms of complaint handing including the volumes, categories and outcomes of complaints and explores our learning and future service improvements.

Summary of complaints

Year	Number of service requests	Number of complaints	Number of stage 1 complaints	Number of stage 2 complaints	Number upheld or partially upheld at stage 2	Percentage upheld or partially upheld	Refusals	Complaint referrals to the Housing Ombudsman
2023/24	N/A	1	1	0	0	0%	0	0
2024/25	21	7	7	1	1	100%	0	0

Year	Stage 1 response within 10 working days	Percentage stage 1 response within 10 working days	Stage 2 response within 20 working days	Percentage stage 2 response within 20 working days
2023/24	1	100%	N/A	N/A
2024/25	6	83%	1	100%

Reason for complaints

Five of the seven stage 1 complaints received were related to the repairs service carried out by Hartlepool Borough Council in residents’ homes. The reason for these complaints were cited as dissatisfaction with our response time to carry out repairs and then completing the necessary follow up works in a timely manner.

Communication from the repairs service to the resident was also raised as a reason for the complaint.

One of the repair complaints was regarding a repair, which had been recharged to a resident and disputed.

In addition, one complaint related to advice provided by the Housing Management Team relating to notice periods when ending a tenancy.

The stage 2 complaint (also dealt with at stage 1) was initially regarding staff conduct and concerns about a letter sent regarding arrears, but then also included how the Council responded to the individual needs of our resident and how services should be tailored to meet those needs.

Trends and risks

The majority of service requests and complaints received in 2024/25 related to the repairs service provided to residents in their homes. 19 of the 21 service requests and five of the seven stage 1 complaints were raised by tenants due to dissatisfaction regarding these repairs. For context, the Council carried out 1446 responsive repairs in residents’ homes within the financial year and therefore expressions of dissatisfaction received equate to 1.7% of overall jobs completed.

Since April 2024, on the completion of a repair, our residents are now contacted to complete a short satisfaction survey. Whilst overall satisfaction is high, the survey has given residents a greater opportunity to feedback on the repairs service and has actively encouraged complaints. It is likely that this has therefore contributed to the increased number of complaints received about the repairs service.

Each of the complaints received were investigated and feedback provided to the resident. The findings of each of these stage 1 complaints did not determine that the Council was at fault and whilst improved communication could have enhanced the residents experience, no errors were found in the service that was delivered. The volume and nature of the complaints does not highlight any additional levels of risk within the service the Council is delivering to residents. It does suggest that customers are aware of how to make a complaint and are confident to express dissatisfaction to us and that the complaint handling process is working efficiently.

Service improvement and learning

As a result of some of the repair complaints received the Housing Maintenance Team has introduced some additional ‘tool box talks’ to cover topics such as communication with residents and the quality standards that are expected. These are helpful to instill a positive complaints handling culture and to improve the repairs service provided to our residents. As future issues are raised by residents these ‘tool box talks’ will be tailored to cover any relevant issues. We will continue to seek feedback from residents on completion of all repairs and welcome complaints regarding the housing management service.

In terms of service development and improvement, the next stage will be to enable residents to report repairs online to improve access to our repairs service. This will also help to communicate with our residents details about the repairs process and provide clear timescales for delivery of any repairs and follow up works that may be required. It is anticipated that the online reporting of repairs will be available for residents to access later this year.

Reporting performance

Under the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code we have completed the self assessment, which is to assess our compliance with the Code. The self-assessment accompanies this report as Appendix 1. This annual report and our self-assessment will be published to our residents following Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee (formally Finance and Policy Committee) in September 2025.

Year	Findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Housing Ombudsman
2023/24	0
2024/25	0

Future improvements

We recognise that our residents are more frequently making the service aware of specific needs and vulnerabilities relating to physical and mental health conditions. This can be in the context of requesting quicker response times for repairs to be undertaken or when staff are dealing with a tenancy enforcement case. The ongoing programme of home inspection visits is helping to identify any vulnerabilities and support tenants where necessary to ensure we are able to provide them with the service that best meets their needs. Formally recording this data is an area for future development, exploring options like establishing a Priority Services Register so that services can be effectively delivered to meet the individual needs of our residents to support vulnerable customers.

Continue to embed the complaints handling culture across the organisation and keep staff training up to date on recognising customer dissatisfaction and effective complaints handling.



Appendix A: Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.

Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.’</i>	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 1.4
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 1.5 An expression of dissatisfaction by a resident will be considered a complaint in line with the Council’s adopted definition of a complaint set out in paragraph 1.4
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 1.5 The Council has robust processes in place to respond to service requests and complaints. Service requests and complaints are defined in the policy and both are recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 1.5
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Yes		Details of how to complain are included in the housing repairs satisfaction survey sent out to each resident after a repair has been completed. Details of how to complain will be included in other future satisfaction surveys – including the next tenant perception survey

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 2.1
2.2	<p>A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 2.2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 2.3
2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 2.4
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 2.5

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.2
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.3 Refresher training provided to officers on Housing Management Complaints Policy – May 2025
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 1.1. The Council uses complaints to improve service delivery Until April 2024 complaints from residents were processed through Hartlepool Borough Council's Corporate Complaints Policy. The standalone Housing Management Complaints Policy in place since April 2024 makes the complaints process more accessible and transparent for residents and we've seen an increase in the volume of complaints in 2024/25 as a result

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See Complaint Handling Process Summary - page 5
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraphs 8.1 and 9.9
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.4
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.5 This is also included in response and extension letters

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	Given the size of the LAs housing stock, complaints handling is dealt with by Principal Officers within Housing Management supported by the Service Support and Development Team Overall responsibility for complaints handling currently sits with the Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes		The Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services has access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints and has the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes		Hartlepool Borough Council has a complaints guide and toolkit for officers to provide training and guidance to those dealing with complaints in the authority. Investigating Officer training is also held periodically, which the differences between the Corporate Complaints Policy and Housing Management Complaints Policy are highlighted

Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	The Housing Management Complaints Policy was approved by delegated decision in March 2024 for use from 1st April 2024. This policy is reviewed annually See paragraph 1.2
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See Complaint Handling Process Summary - page 5
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See Complaint Handling Process Summary - page 5
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	N/A	N/A	N/A
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.2
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.2
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 	Yes		Covered in the Council’s complaints guide and toolkit for officers dealing with complaints in the authority to ensure all complaint handlers are appropriately trained to handle complaints in the correct manner

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraphs 5.3 and 6.3
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.2
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.5 and 6.5
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 3.1 All data and information relating to service requests and complaints is held within the Housing Management Service system. Information on Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints is held in the Department's Complaints Management Database. Some information is also held on the

				relevant tenancy record
--	--	--	--	-------------------------

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.1 to 7.2
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour	See paragraph 9.5, which includes a link to the Council's Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.5

Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.1
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.2
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.2
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.3

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.3 This is included in response and extension letters
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.5 Actions are tracked and actioned through the Housing Management Service system to manage actions resulting from the investigation of complaints
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.5 The Council has template response letters that align with the complaints policy to assist complaints officers to ensure they address all points raised in the complaint definition and these are amended on review

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.4
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response. 	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	<p>See paragraph 5.5</p> <p>The Council has template response letters that align with the complaints policy to assist complaints officers to ensure they address all points detailed in paragraph 5.5 of the policy. These are kept under review and updated following any feedback from complainant</p>

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.1
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.1
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.2
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.2
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.3

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.3
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.3
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.4 Actions are tracked and actioned through the Complaints process and records of actions maintained
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.4

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.5 The Council has template response letters that align with the complaints policy to assist complaints officers to ensure they address all points detailed in paragraph 6.5 of the policy
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.1 Any final response under Stage 2 would currently be signed off by the Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services; this is an internal procedure

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	<p>Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices. 	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.1
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.2
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.2 Actions are tracked and actioned through the Complaints process and records of actions maintained

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.2

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.	Yes	Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report	

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	Yes	Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report Agendas, reports and minutes Hartlepool Borough Council	Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and annual self-assessment to be considered by the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee on 8th September 2025 for consideration. The report and self-assessment will be published on Council's website alongside the Governing Body's response following the meeting of the Committee
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	N/A	N/A	N/A
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	N/A	N/A	N/A
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.10 to 9.11
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.10 to 9.11
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	Agendas, reports and minutes Hartlepool Borough Council	Learning and service improvements will be included in the report due to be considered by Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee on 8th September 2025

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.11
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.11
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	Agendas, reports and minutes Hartlepool Borough Council	<p>Annual reporting to Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee (formally Finance and Policy Committee) on complaints handling performance. Performance is reported annually as this is considered to be proportionate to the size of the Council's portfolio.</p> <p>Complaints handling performance relating to 2024/25 will be considered by Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee on 8th September 2025.</p>

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.	Yes		Performance is reported to the MRC and governing body annually, as this is considered to be proportionate to the size of the Council's portfolio and the number of complaints received. Reporting procedures are kept under review in line with the number of complaints received.
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.	Yes	Complaints about Council owned social rented housing Hartlepool Borough Council	The policy reflects the standard objective taking into account the points outlined in 9.8 of the self-assessment.

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

8 SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: ANNUAL EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

Report of: Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources

Decision Type: For information

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- that is connected, sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
- that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community. (Organisation)

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) update to Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee which includes the Annual Equality Report for 2024/25. Through the publication of this Annual Equality Report we aim to demonstrate our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty with regard to people affected by our policies and practices and our employees. We are also using this report to publish our gender pay gap data and demonstrate the progress made in delivering the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy agreed by Finance and Policy Committee in March 2023.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires us, along with other public sector organisations, to comply with the Equality Duty, which came into force in April 2011. The duty covers nine protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- race
- religion and belief
- pregnancy and maternity
- sex
- sexual orientation

3.2 The General Duty requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- foster good relations - including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.3 There are a number of specific duties that are intended to enable more effective performance of the general duty, and to standardise some of the work of general duty holders. These complement the general duty but don't replace it and are often referred to as the Public Sector Equality Duty. These specific duties are:

- Publish one or more equality objectives at least every 4 years;
- Publish information on general duty compliance with regard to people affected by your policies and practices every year;
- Publish information on general duty compliance with regard to your employees every year;
- Publish gender pay gap information by 31 March every year.

4. 2024/25 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION REPORT

4.1 The 2024/25 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report as set out in appendix 1 has been prepared to highlight the range of activity delivered by the Council in relation to the EDI Policy agreed by Finance and Policy Committee in March 2023. The report also demonstrates our compliance with the specific duties as set out in paragraph 3.3 above.

4.2 The report includes a Hartlepool Population Equality Fact File setting out the data available in relation to the 9 protected characteristics. In addition, it sets out the data available in relation to our locally adopted areas of consideration which are care leavers, the Armed Forces Community (as established in our Armed Forces Covenant) and inequality related to poverty and disadvantage.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	Failure to consider equality, diversity and inclusion issues is a significant risk as the Council has a legal duty as established by the Equality Act 2010. The Equality and Human Rights Commission is the regulatory body responsible for enforcing the Equality Act 2010 and they have a range of legal and enforcement powers available to them. Ultimately, failure to consider EDI may lead to reputational damage and financial penalties.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	There are no additional financial implications of this report however as noted above failure to consider EDI may lead to financial penalties for the Council.
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No implications.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>As set out in section 3 the Council has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act. • Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. • Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. <p>The EDI Policy that Finance and Policy Committee has previously approved provides the strategic framework for ensuring we comply with our legal duty.</p>
SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Not required.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No implications.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No implications.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No implications.

CONSULTATION	No implications.
---------------------	------------------

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee are requested to note the 2024/25 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report as set out in appendix 1.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee have overall responsibility for the equality and diversity as set out in the Constitution.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Update report to Finance and Policy Committee, 16th September 2024.

Equality Objectives report to Finance and Policy Committee, 7th April 2025.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

Hayley Martin
 Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources
 01429 523002
Hayley.martin@hartlepool.gov.uk

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 12 August 2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 12 August 2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 12 August 2025

2024/25

**Equality, Diversity
and Inclusion
Report**



Contents

Introduction	3
Hartlepool Population Equality Fact File	5
Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce Equality	9
- Our workforce profile compared to the community we serve	10
- Our workforce profile in 2024/25 compared to our workforce profile in 2023/24	13
- Recruitment	15
- Leavers	16
- Gender Pay Gap	18
- Consultation and Employee Engagement	20
Update on the Council's Equality Objectives	22
- Progress made in 2024/25	23
- Activity planned for 2025/26	40

Introduction

As a Council, we are committed to challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity in all aspects of our work. Our approach to Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) outlines our commitment as an employer, as a service provider, and as a community leader. We aim to focus on people who access our services by looking at their whole identity and recognising and valuing that each individual resident, visitor, partner, service provider, service user and employee is unique. The Council is committed to promoting a community and organisational culture that fully respects and values everyone's differences and needs.

We are clear that EDI should influence how we act as an employer; how we develop, evaluate and review our policies; how we design, deliver and evaluate services, and how we commission and procure from others. Equality Impact Assessments form an integral part of our decision-making process and reports to Council and all Council Committees must demonstrate how EDI has been considered in the proposals being brought forward so that Elected Members can make informed decisions. Procurement and commissioning activities also require consideration of EDI as a matter of routine.

As a Council we take all complaints seriously and they are responded to following the Council's agreed Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure. The outcome of complaint investigations and lessons learned from complaints are actioned and monitored. Any complaints relating to equality characteristics are considered by senior managers. We are also keen to understand the views of our local community and to involve them in shaping our services through our consultation and engagement activities. We recognise that some people may have difficulties accessing traditional consultations and we endeavour to be as open and inclusive as possible. Where individuals face barriers to being involved we are keen to work with them to identify alternative methods for engagement or provide additional support to enable them to be involved e.g. sign language interpreters or easy read formats of documents.

The information collected through consultation helps to inform the Council when it is thinking about things like changing services, checking on how well services are performing and deciding what should be the Council's priorities in the future. People can access consultations through the Council's Your Say, Our Future site.

Within our EDI Policy, agreed in March 2023, we have extended our approach to EDI beyond the 9 legally protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 to also give consideration to those who are care leavers and the Armed Forces Community (as established in our Armed Forces Covenant). We also consider inequality related to poverty and disadvantage recognising that this relates to individuals as well as children and families.

Through the publication of this Equality Report we aim to demonstrate our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty with regard to people affected by our policies and practices and our employees. We are also using this report to publish our gender pay gap data.

Hartlepool Population Equality Fact File

Data from the 2024 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2025 unless stated otherwise.

Total Population = 98,180

Population aged 16+ = 79,636

Households = 40,930 (Source: Census 2021, ONS)

Sex:

Percentage of the total population who are male = 48.9%

Percentage of the total population who are female = 51.1%

Percentage of population aged 16+ who are male = 48.2%

Percentage of population aged 16+ who are female = 51.8%

Age:

Total population broken down by age bracket (percentage)	Male only population broken down by age bracket (percentage)	Female only population broken down by age bracket (percentage)
15 and under = 18.9%	15 and under = 20.0%	15 and under = 17.8%
16 – 25 = 11.6%	16 – 25 = 12.2%	16 – 25 = 11.0%
26 – 35 = 12.6%	26 – 35 = 12.5%	26 – 35 = 12.7%
36 – 45 = 12.3%	36 – 45 = 12.0%	36 – 45 = 12.6%
46 – 55 = 11.7%	46 – 55 = 11.6%	46 – 55 = 11.9%
56 – 65 = 14.2%	56 – 65 = 14.0%	56 – 65 = 14.3%
66 – 75 = 10.4%	66 – 75 = 10.4%	66 – 75 = 10.4%
76 – 85 = 6.1%	76 – 85 = 5.6%	76 – 85 = 6.6%
86 and over = 2.1%	86 and over = 1.6%	86 and over = 2.6%

Data from the Census 2021, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Ethnicity:

Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh = 1.7%

Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African = 0.5%

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups = 0.7%

White = 96.5%

Other ethnic group = 0.6%

Religion:

Christian = 52.5%

Buddhist = 0.2%

Hindu = 0.2%

Jewish = 0.0%

Muslim = 1.3%

Sikh = 0.2%

Other religion = 0.3%

No religion = 40.1%

Not answered = 5.1%

Disability:

Long-term health problem of disability where day-to-day activities are limited a lot = 11.4%

Long-term health problem of disability where day-to-day activities are limited a little = 11.5%

Day-to-day activities not limited = 77.1%

Gender:

Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth = 94.5%

Gender identity different from sex registered at birth = 0.4%

Not answered = 5.1%

Sexual Orientation:

Straight or Heterosexual = 91.1%

Gay or Lesbian = 1.5%

Bisexual = 1.1%

Other Sexual Orientation = 0.2%

Not answered = 6.1%

Other areas of priority from the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy:**Armed Forces:**

Proportion of usual residents who previously served in UK regular armed forces = 4.1%

Data from the Census 2021, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Care Leavers:

Total number of care leavers aged 17 to 18 = 27

Total number of care leavers aged 19 to 21 = 94

Total number of care leavers aged 22 to 25 = 99

Data from the annual SSDA903 Children Looked After Return as at 31st March 2025 (reporting year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025)

Poverty and Disadvantage:

Percentage of children living in families with less than 60% of the median UK household income, after housing costs have been taken into account = 31.9%*

2023/24 data from the Local Child Poverty Statistics 2025 produced by the Loughborough University Centre for Research in Social Policy and commissioned by the End Child Poverty Coalition.

* The data above is based on calculations that build on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HMRC Children in Low Income Families dataset, published in March 2025. This DWP dataset estimates the percentage of children living in households with below 60% median income in each local area. The data are produced by adjusting the Before Housing Costs (BHC) statistics available in the Children in Low Income Families (CiLIF) release, using administrative data on rents for local authorities, combined with household-level data from the Understanding Society longitudinal survey to estimate the relationship between housing costs and the relative risk of being in poverty before and after housing costs.

Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce Equality

This section of the report provides a summary and analysis of Hartlepool Borough Council's workforce, excluding Local Authority Maintained Schools. The workforce profile is shown as at 31st March 2025, while the data is for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. The data included in this section of the report is based on individuals and their main posts in the Council, excluding Local Authority Maintained Schools, and not workers e.g. casuals. Therefore, where an individual holds more than one post with the Council (e.g. multiple part time positions) they will only be included once.

Hartlepool Borough Council's aim is to have a workforce that reflects the diversity of our residents, customers and stakeholders and we recognise that promoting equality benefits public services for all.

The Council has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people. As part of this Act, the public sector equality duty requires the Council to show how it is meeting its responsibilities as an employer, including a requirement to publish information regarding our workforce. This report forms part of the Council's response to that duty, providing a summary and analysis of Hartlepool Borough Council's workforce against protected characteristics.

Our workforce profile compared to the community we serve

Hartlepool Population		Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce
<p>Population = 98,180*</p> <p>*of which 79,636 are aged 16+</p> <p>(Source: 2024 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2025)</p>	Headcount	<p>Employees working for HBC = 2,107</p> <p>Total Full Time Equivalents = 1705.3</p>
<p>Male = 48.2%*</p> <p>Female = 51.8%*</p> <p>* Percentage of population aged 16+</p> <p>(Source: 2024 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2025)</p>	Sex	<p>Male = 27.5%</p> <p>Female = 72.5%</p>
<p>66+ = 23.0%*</p> <p>56-65 = 17.5%*</p> <p>46-55 = 14.5%*</p> <p>36-45 = 15.2%*</p> <p>26-35 = 15.6%*</p> <p>16-25 = 14.3%*</p> <p>* as a percentage of the population aged 16+</p> <p>(Source: 2024 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2025)</p>	Age	<p>66+ = 3.6%</p> <p>56-65 = 27.3%</p> <p>46-55 = 24.2%</p> <p>36-45 = 20.1%</p> <p>26-35 = 18.5%</p> <p>16-25 = 6.3%</p>

Hartlepool Population		Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce
<p>Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh = 1.7%</p> <p>Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African = 0.5%</p> <p>Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups = 0.7%</p> <p>White = 96.5%</p> <p>Other ethnic group = 0.6%</p> <p>(Source: ONS Census 2021)</p>	Ethnicity	<p>BME = 1.1%</p> <p>White / Other = 71.6%</p> <p>Undeclared = 27.2%</p>
<p>Christian = 52.5%</p> <p>Buddhist = 0.2%</p> <p>Hindu = 0.2%</p> <p>Jewish = 0.0%</p> <p>Muslim = 1.3%</p> <p>Sikh = 0.2%</p> <p>Other religion = 0.3%</p> <p>No religion = 40.1%</p> <p>Not answered = 5.1%</p> <p>(Source: ONS Census 2021)</p>	Religion / Beliefs	<p>Christian = 24.9%</p> <p>Buddhist = Suppressed, less than 5</p> <p>Hindu = 0.0%</p> <p>Jewish = 0.0%</p> <p>Muslim = 0.2%</p> <p>Sikh = 0.0%</p> <p>Other religion = 1.2%</p> <p>Not stated = 48.6%</p> <p>Prefer not to say = 1.7%</p> <p>None = 23.3%</p>
<p>Long-term health problem of disability where day-to-day activities are limited a lot = 11.4%</p> <p>Long-term health problem of disability where day-to-day activities are limited a little = 11.5%</p> <p>Day-to-day activities not limited = 77.1%</p> <p>(Source: ONS Census 2021)</p>	Disability	<p>Disabled = 2.9%</p> <p>Not disabled = 64.0%</p> <p>Undeclared = 32.9%</p> <p>Prefer not to say = 0.1%</p>
<p>Proportion of usual residents who previously served in UK regular armed forces = 4.1%</p>	Armed Forces	<p>Undeclared = 99.5%</p>

Hartlepool Population		Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce
Data from the Census 2021, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)		<p>Previously served in Reserve Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5</p> <p>Previously served in Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5</p> <p>Spouse of someone currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5</p> <p>Spouse of someone previously served in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5</p>

Our workforce profile in 2024/25 compared to our workforce profile in 2023/24

Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce 2023/24		Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce 2024/25
Employees working for HBC = 2,113 Total Full Time Equivalents = 1,670.1	Headcount	Employees working for HBC = 2,107 Total Full Time Equivalents = 1705.3
Male = 26.5% Female = 73.5%	Sex	Male = 27.5% Female = 72.5%
66+ = 3.1% 56-65 = 27.4% 46-55 = 25.2% 36-45 = 20.4% 26-35 = 18.1% 16-25 = 5.8%	Age	66+ = 3.6% 56-65 = 27.3% 46-55 = 24.2% 36-45 = 20.1% 26-35 = 18.5% 16-25 = 6.3%
BME = 0.9% White / Other = 68.1% Undeclared = 31.0%	Ethnicity	BME = 1.1% White / Other = 71.6% Undeclared = 27.2%
Christian = 21.2% Buddhist = Suppressed, less than 5% Hindu = 0% Jewish = 0% Muslim = Suppressed, less than 5% Sikh = Suppressed, less than 5% Other religion = 1.2% No religion = 19.3% Not stated = 56.8% Prefer not to say = 1.3%	Religion / Beliefs	Christian = 24.9% Buddhist = Suppressed, less than 5% Hindu = 0.0% Jewish = 0.0% Muslim = 0.2% Sikh = 0.0% Other religion = 1.2% No religion = 23.3% Not stated = 48.6% Prefer not to say = 1.7%
Disabled = 1.9% Not disabled = 60.1% Undeclared = 38.0% Prefer not to say = N/A this data was not available in 2023/24	Disability	Disabled = 2.9% Not disabled = 64.0% Undeclared = 32.9% Prefer not to say = 0.1%

Workforce Summary

The data highlights that:

- 55% of the workforce are over 45 years old and over a quarter of the workforce are over 55 years old. The aging profile of our workforce is recognised and we are making plans to support succession planning and the development of future leaders and managers in the organisation. This profile has not changed significantly from the previous year;
- We have a predominantly female workforce which can in part be attributed to a greater number of female part-time workers across the Council and the flexible/family friendly working policies available to Council workers;
- Limited information has been provided by our employees in relation to their ethnicity, religion/beliefs and disability status. Employees have the ability to update their own personal details online through the Council's HR/Payroll system and provided a paper form is available for those employees without access to the internet at work. This has resulted in a small reduction in the percentage of employees undeclared/not stated for ethnicity and religion/beliefs. A prefer not to say option has been expanded to some categories this is to enable employees to provide a more accurate response.

Recruitment

The following table sets out the profile of the 1,942 internal/external applicants, applying for job vacancies with the Council, during 2024/25 and how this compares with the previous year:

	Applications Received 2023/24	Applications Received 2024/25
Sex	Male = 29.02% Female = 57.68% Undeclared = 13.30%	Male = 30.8% Female = 53.2% Undeclared = 16.0%
Age	65+ over = 0.31% 56-65 = 6.34% 46-55 = 13.87% 36-45 = 19.79% 26-35 = 31.13% 16-25 = 28.56%	65+ over = 0.5% 56-65 = 6.3% 46-55 = 13.4% 36-45 = 17.6% 26-35 = 28.5% 16-25 = 33.7%
Ethnicity	BME = 7.27% White / Other = 69.02% Undeclared = 23.71%	BME = 10.0% White / Other = 68.2% Undeclared = 21.8%
Disability	Disabled = 2.94% Not disabled = 69.59% Undeclared = 27.47% Prefer not to say = N/A this data was not available in 2023/24	Disabled = 3.6% Not disabled = 72.0% Undeclared = 24.2% Prefer not to say = suppressed less than 5

Recruitment Summary

The data highlights that:

- The majority of applicants were female (53.2%).
- Over half of the applicants were aged 35 and under.
- The percentage of BME applicants had increased compared to the previous year.
- The percentage of disabled applicants had increased compared to the previous year.

Leavers

The following table sets out the profile of the 316 employees who left the Council during 2024/25 and how this compares with the previous year:

	Leavers 2023/24	Leavers 2024/25
Sex	Male = 33.0% Female = 67.0%	Male = 30.1% Female = 69.9%
Age	66+ = 9.4% 56-65 = 27.3% 46-55 = 15.7% 36-45 = 16.1% 26-35 = 16.1% 16-25 = 15.4%	66+ = 6.6% 56-65 = 24.7% 46-55 = 15.5% 36-45 = 16.8% 26-35 = 18.4% 16-25 = 18.0%
Ethnicity	BME = Suppressed, less than 5 White / Other = 65.5 % Undeclared = 33.7%	BME = 1.6% White / Other = 69.0 % Undeclared = 29.4%
Religion / Beliefs	Christian = 17.6% Other religion = Suppressed, less than 5 No religion = 21.3% Undeclared = 57.7% Prefer not to say = Suppressed, less than 5	Christian = 23.4% Other religion = 2.2% No religion = 28.5% Undeclared = 44.0% Prefer not to say = Suppressed, less than 5 Muslim = Suppressed, less than 5 Sikh = Suppressed, less than 5
Disability	Disabled = 2.6% Not disabled = 59.6 Undeclared = 37.8%	Disabled = 1.6% Not disabled = 63.6% Undeclared = 34.8%

Leavers Summary

The data highlights that:

- The turnover rate of the Council for 2024/25 was 15.0%.
- Of those who left the organisation:
 - 49.4% left by voluntary resignation

- 10.4% left to retire
- 40.2% left for other reasons

Gender Pay Gap

The Council's mean gender pay gap:

2024/25	2023/24
-3.16%	-1.69%

The mean is the average of the figures and is calculated by adding up all the figures and divided by the total number of figures.

The Council's median gender pay gap:

2024/25	2023/24
0.73%	0.74%

The median is the salary figure that sits in the middle when all figures are ordered lowest to highest.

The overall mean gender pay gap for the Council is -3.16%, which means that female employees, overall, receive, on average, 3.16% more total pay than male employees.

The Council's gender pay gap falls well below the national public sector mean and median of 12.9% and 13.5% respectively*.

* Data Source: ONS 2024 Provisional Public Sector Gender Pay Gap

Understanding our gender pay gap

Female employees continue to receive more total pay than male employees do. This can be attributed to the higher percentage pay increase, applied to the Councils lowest paid employees, combined with a greater proportion of the lower paid employees being female.

What are doing to ensure our 'pay gap' does not increase?

- Making the workplace more accessible, by enabling greater flexibility via a range of policies that allow for flexible working, flexitime,

emergency dependants leave, shared parental leave, hybrid, 9 day fortnights, compressed hours and home working.

- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy recognises the value of 'helping all those who work for the Council to develop their full potential so that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised fully to create a borough of opportunity for all.'
- Continue to provide learning and development opportunities to all employees, including developing/enhancing our digital offer to enable access for the whole workforce
- Continue to develop and where possible expand apprenticeship opportunities, including degree level apprenticeships for both new and existing employees. This will assist employees to fulfil their aspirations and support them to progress within their chosen career path.
- Monitor the annual review and 1:1 process through the employee annual employee survey and corporate compliance monitoring. This is to ensure all employees are provided with the opportunity to discuss any concerns with their manager and identify development opportunities.

<u>Gender Pay Gap – Quartile Analysis by Employee</u>					
	Total	Female	Male	Female (%)	Male (%)
Lower Quartile	527	429	98	81.4%	18.6%
Lower Middle Quartile	527	340	187	64.5%	35.5%
Upper Middle Quartile	527	375	152	71.2%	28.8%
Upper Quartile	526	384	142	73.0%	27.0%
Total	2107	1528	579	72.5%	27.5%

Consultation and Employee Engagement

Consultation with Trade Unions

The Council works in partnership with Trade Unions and meets regularly to discuss issues affecting the Council and its workforce, including matters in relation to equality. The Trade Unions can also provide a range of support to their members on individual workplace or personal issues.

Employee Engagement

We are committed to employee engagement and seek to ensure that the right conditions are in place for all members of our workforce to give of their best each day. We want our employees to be committed to our organisational goals and values and be motivated to contribute to the overall success of the organisation whilst being supported to enhance their own sense of well-being.

There are various ways in which we undertake employee engagement and some approaches vary between departments. Whole Council engagement activities that are delivered corporately include:

Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Roadshows

ELT Roadshows are held twice a year and are open to all employees. Multiple sessions are held across 2 weeks and all are led by a member of ELT covering the same content. The sessions are delivered at different times and days and at a range of venues across Hartlepool to enable as many employees as possible to attend. There is also an online session included which is recorded and made available for any employees unable to attend.

ELT Roadshows provide an opportunity to hear first-hand about emerging areas of Council work such as the budget setting process or development of the Council Plan. They are also an opportunity for employees to ask questions of senior managers and get involved in activities to inform the development of Council policy such as Hybrid Working.

Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) Managers Forum

The HBC Manager Forums provides monthly online briefing / discussion sessions with all employees who have managerial responsibility. It is chaired by the Managing Director. Recent sessions have covered budget updates, the Council's Transformation programme, community cohesion, risk management and the Employee Wellbeing Strategy.

Annual Employee Survey

An employee survey was undertaken in autumn 2024 and the findings and corresponding action plan to address areas identified for improvement have been shared. In future employee surveys will be undertaken once a year to benchmark progress.

Staff Equality Network

The aim of the Staff Equality Network is to facilitate direct engagement with employees representing the full range of protected characteristics. The network also welcomes employees who actively support the promotion of equality and diversity or who have a specific personal interest in the subject area. The network has a dedicated Teams Channel to enable regular and timely communication with one another. The network also feed ideas into the annual campaign calendar to help facilitate engagement across the wider workforce.

Your Say Staff Hub

Our online Staff Hub available to all staff via the Council's consultation and engagement platform. Only employees can access the Staff Hub and it is used to share employee specific consultation for example the development of our hybrid working policy or quick polls on specific topics of interest. The Staff Hub also provides host to a mental health hub, menopause hub, cost of living crisis support hub and the equality network hub.

Update on the Council's Equality Objectives 2021/22 – 2023/24

Until April 2025, the Council's equality objectives have been based on the strategic objectives set out in our Council Plan. By doing this we aimed to demonstrate that EDI was a core part of what we do as an organisation and not an add on activity. The Council's vision as set out in our Council Plan 2021/22-2023/24 provided the equality objectives for 2024/25:

Hartlepool will be a place...

...where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives;

...where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm;

...of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all;

...that is sustainable, clean, safe and green;

...that has an inclusive and growing economy;

...with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

Progress made in 2024/25

Hartlepool will be a place where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.

Maximising the opportunities that people with additional needs have.

We have developed our volunteer offer and have supported 33 individuals with additional needs in a volunteer placement.

Working with a reablement officer we have supported 9 young people with additional needs in travel training to improve their experience and confidence in independent travel that will help them access our supported internship programme in the future.

We have also worked with Adult Social Care providers to develop opportunities for volunteering, work experience and supported internship placements.

We have delivered Supported Internship programmes for young people aged 16-24 and people with additional needs aged over 25 years old. In 2024/25 3 young people successfully gained full-time employment.

Support Hub Wellbeing Offer

The Support Hub continues to act as first point of contact for Adult Social Care. Following the principles and values of the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI) Community Led Support (CLS) programme, the community navigators take a strength based, person-centred approach to working with people to empower them to maximise their independence and reconnect with their community.

Dementia Friendly Hartlepool

Hartlepool Community Hubs delivered dementia friendly social activities during Dementia Action week which were promoted along with the other activities in the week. The team also supported with the creation of publicity materials to promote all DAW activities. The team continue to sit on the Dementia Friendly Hartlepool steering group.

Reading Well Collections

We have continued the expansion of the Reading Well Collections in our Community Hubs. This includes a series of self-help book collections to support adults with minor mental health issues, long term conditions and those living with dementia. Reading Well for Dementia books were added to the collection (one

Hartlepool will be a place where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.

set in Community Hub Central, one set in Community Hub South). These were promoted during Dementia Action Week. Other collections continue to be available and promoted across venues.

Development of Waverley Allotment into Waverley Outdoor Community Hub

At Waverley, we welcome everyone, especially people with limited access to nature. In 2024 we joined the Safe Place Scheme to ensure anyone who may be/feel vulnerable can visit if they don't feel safe or need some help.

At the allotment, we have/had 15 active volunteers and 2 supported interns. We have also worked in collaboration with the following support services to support disadvantaged groups; the Council's Resettlement Team, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Mental Health Services, Horizon School, Groundworks, Thirteen Group. Feedback suggests service users are vastly benefiting from their therapeutic interventions at the site. We also delivered our summer Holiday Activity and Food Programme provision in Summer 2024 onsite and welcomed families accessing the Resettlement Team to provide a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.

Blood Pressure Checks and Support at Community Hubs

In a pilot programme with North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, blood pressure (BP) kiosks and home monitoring kits have been sited in Community Hub's Central and South, with staff on hand to provide advice to residents to improve the uptake in BP readings and early detections of many serious health conditions.

During the pilot, Hartlepool had the highest number of BP checks completed overall (182 checks in six months). There are two established permanent testing stations in Community Hub Central and Community Hub South, as well as outreach in Seaton Carew Community Hub, Tofts Farm Depot, community events and Salaam Centre.

The checks are favouring towards more deprived populations quite significantly (lots of checks in IMD 1 – the most disadvantaged communities in Hartlepool), which is one of the project aims.

After initial BP checks 28 people have gone onto home monitoring and GP review and 29 referred to the GP for review who may have not wanted to home monitor. There have been 6 people who have been referred for a same day

Hartlepool will be a place where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.

review with their GP for very high BP results. This equates to a minimum of 6 people whose risk of heart attack, stroke and other serious health problems has been identified in the community via a non-clinical intervention available for free to all residents.

Free menstruation packs at Community Hubs and branch libraries

The “Ask for Sandy” packs are available in all Community Hubs and libraries and posters are displayed in all toilets regardless of gender to be fully inclusive of anyone who needs menstruation products. Stocks are maintained via partner donations and staff donations.

Refurbishment of Seaton Carew Library

Rebranded Seaton Carew Community Hub, the venue reopened on 2nd April 2025. The venue now has accessible doors and toilet, plus dimmable lighting for those with sensory needs.

The venue is running regular activities including Stories and Rhymes, adult social group, Scrabble group, reading groups, Stretch and Tone sessions. It has also welcomed author events and will be facilitating Learning for Inclusion courses delivered by Hartlepool Jobs and Skills in 2025/26.

Jobs & Skills Hubs

We continue to develop our Jobs & Skills Hubs to engage priority groups including disability/health problems, economically inactive and lone parents so they receive tailored support to progress closer/into work.

In the last 12 months, the Jobs & Skills Hubs have delivered employment support to 1,717 unique residents and this has led to, at least, 190 adults progressing into employment over this period within Hartlepool. In addition, at least 544 have progressed into education or volunteering in the last 12 months via the Hubs.

There were 2,781 individual engagements over the last 12 months which was an increase of 254 or 10% from 2023/24. The main reasons for visiting the Jobs & Skills Hubs were:

- 16% for Jobsearch/Application Support
- 25% for Course Information
- 32% for Independent Careers Guidance

Hartlepool will be a place where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.

- 11% for Digital Support
- 8% for CVs & Interview Preparation
- 8% for Work Placements

The main Jobs & Skills Hub is based in Community Hub Central. Over the last 12 months, the Service has expanded to provide outreach at Seaton and Hub South.

Over the next 6 months, the Service is working to have dedicated Jobs & Skills Hubs in both Headland Library and Community Hub South. This will expand the support so more adults can be supported to move into work in Hartlepool.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Courses

There were 31 adults enrolled on bespoke ESOL courses at the start of September 2024 across Entry 2, Entry 3 and Level 1 with these courses continuing until July 2025.

In addition, there have been 230 adults on wider accredited ESOL skills courses between September 2024 and March 2024.

The ESOL provision continues to be delivered in partnership with Hartlepool College of Further Education, Jobcentre, and the Council's Resettlement Team. Our bespoke courses incorporate both the ESOL qualification alongside activities so that adults integrate within the community such as shopping, health improvement and signing up to Library Service.

Independent Living and Employability Programmes - Care Leavers, young carers and ex-carers

A 12-week course was delivered by the Jobs and Skills Hub for 8 young care leavers and in partnership with the Council's Staying Close Team. This included topics such as cooking, cleaning, booking appointments, budgeting, and housing. A further programme is being discussed with the Team.

In addition, there were two sessions delivered alongside Hartlepool Carers. This supported 13 young carers who were provided with dedicated support around independent living and employment support. In addition, partnership working is continuing to improve pathways for young carers and to ensure that they can access our provision including Careers Events.

Hartlepool will be a place where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.

Changing Place Facilities

Two new 'Changing Place' facilities were constructed in 2024/25 with 50% of the funding coming from a government grant. There is a new facility in the Central Hub and another facility attached to the new toilet facilities at Seaton Carew. Both facilities were approved by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) and Changing Places. There are now 4 registered changing place facilities within the Borough of Hartlepool.

National Autism Society (NAS) – Advanced Status Award

The Centre for Independent Living has been awarded advanced status by the NAS for its work for people with Autism.

World Mental Health Day

The event held at the Centre for Independent Living was held on 10/10/2024 and attended by over 200 people. There were 18 stall holders, wellbeing activities throughout the day and a choir. The event was hosted by Healthwatch Hartlepool, with support from a number of local organisations. The focus was on mental health at work. Together all the online mental health support provider worked with public health to create a wellbeing wall, whilst staff and members of the public benefitted from mindfulness sessions hosted by Alice House Hospice.

National Safeguarding Awareness Week (NSAW)

The NSAW across Tees focused on the theme "Working in Partnership" with daily sub-themes. Key activities included:

- a Social Media Campaign which reached over 22,000 people.
- Radio and Newspaper Ads featured on Hits Radio, the Gazette, and Hartlepool Life.
- Webinars covered topics including professional curiosity, autism and suicidality, financial abuse, and exploitation.
- Community engagement included podcasts, local business collaborations, and information dissemination in diverse communities.
- Workshops and Presentations were held for adults with learning disabilities.
- Educational Resources included safeguarding videos and learning briefings.

Hartlepool will be a place where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.

The campaign also coincided with Carers Rights Day, integrating its themes into the activities.

A Spotlight on Carers – Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB)

The Spotlight on Carers Week and Elder Abuse campaign aimed to raise awareness about the needs and challenges faced by carers and older adults.

Key activities included:

- workshops and collaborations partnered with local carers services.
- posters were created and shared detailing carers services and support across Tees.
- Webinars were held including sessions on identifying and supporting carers, and spotting and stopping abuse of older adults.
- The launch of the "Hidden Harms" animation by TSAB
- TSAB newsletter distributed to over 2000 professionals.
- A new carers webpage was promoted.

The campaign emphasised the importance of recognising carer stress, conducting carers assessments, and addressing domestic abuse and homicide among older adults.

Learning Disability week

Several events and activities were held at the Centre for Independent Living to mark Learning Disability week:

- art exhibition
- a social care quiz
- people wrote about what it was like to have a learning disability and what was important to them.
- A coffee morning was held which was attended by over 100 parents, carers and people with a learning disability.

Throughout the week the Community Learning Disability Team gave out advice on the importance of staying well and active and spoke to parents and carers about annual health checks and health action plans.

A Spotlight on Discriminatory Abuse

The Spotlight on Discriminatory Abuse campaign was hosted by TSAB and aimed to increase awareness due to a noted decrease in understanding of this issue. Key activities included a Social Media Campaign to raise awareness.

Hartlepool will be a place where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.

Online Webinar delivered by Karl Mason, attended by 57 professionals, with 100% reporting increased knowledge and confidence in applying what they learned.

TSAB Webpages were updated to include a resource toolkit including comprehensive information and resources on discriminatory abuse. The campaign successfully enhanced understanding and provided valuable resources.

Bariatric chairs

Bariatric chairs have been available in Community Hub Central and Community Hub South since June 2024. These are available to ensure those people requiring a chair that can support a greater weight, are able to access community hubs, activities and the People's Network. They will be able to do that safely and comfortably, reducing the risk of injury.

Safeguarding, PROTECT and PREVENT Training for Community Hub Staff

Staff are trained in Safeguarding, PROTECT and PREVENT. Community Hub venues now have safety lockdown/lock-in procedures in case of emergency to ensure we can keep users of our services safe. Staff continue to be trained in mandatory training, along with additional safeguarding training such as Leisurewatch.

Safeguarding, Mental Health and Prevent training

The Jobs & Skills Service continues to promote a wide range of learning opportunities available to staff, residents and businesses covering key themes including Safeguarding, Mental Health, Protect and Prevent. Over the last 12 months, training has been delivered to businesses/organisations in key sectors including Early Years, Education, Healthcare and Construction. Jobs & Skills also ensured that these topics are embedded within all of our learning.

Hartlepool will be a place of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

Poverty Truth Commission

The Poverty Truth Commission, facilitated by Thrive Teesside with support from the council's Poverty Action Group, continues to work to shine a light on hardship and normalise conversations around talking about life's struggles with the aim of communities helping each other through a network of Hartlepool Helpers, Community Champions and Navigators. The official launch took place in May 2024. The Commission is a unique and powerful way of developing new insights and initiatives to tackle poverty. The idea is built on the concept that lasting social change only happens when people who are struggling come together with those in positions of power to tackle key issues. The creation of the Hartlepool Poverty Truth Commission was a recommendation that came out of an investigation into family poverty by the Council's Audit and Governance Committee.

Crossing the Tees Festival – June 2024

Twoomph!, an open mic poetry event for all genders, was delivered. Poets from Tees Women Poets and others presented work which covered a range of topics, many relating to lived experiences which covered topics such as abuse, gender reassignment, and grief, using poetry as an outlet to express their emotions.

Event hosted with Trisha Ashley in Conversation with Juliet Greenwood where Trisha, a visually impaired author, spoke about her work, and how her sight loss has affected the way she approaches her writing.

Colours of Courage – Building an Inclusive Teen Zine Sanctuary

A project to maximise the library offer for teenagers by creating a DIY zine library and creation station was delivered in the summer of 2024. The project combined art and literacy skills in workshops to create zines, learn creativity methods to improve wellbeing, a stronger, inclusive Hartlepool Community, to inspire young people, develop their self-awareness and break down barriers; whilst also providing a safe creative space for the LGBTQ+ community during pride and beyond. The project included:

- Creation of "The Den", a dedicated teen zone with a zine creation station, which is now a permanent area in the first floor of Community Hub Central.
- Activities in the run up and during Hartlepool Pop-up Pride, with young people from Hart Gables LGBTQ+ charity.

Hartlepool will be a place of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

- An exhibition from queer artists displayed in Community Hub Central during July.
- Hartlepool's first Zine festival at Community Hub Central.

The events were enjoyed by many people from across the community.

Community Volunteering offer across Preventative and Community Based Services

Volunteer recruitment and management has been centralised for all volunteers across Preventative and Community Based Services by the Community Hubs Volunteer Coordinator. Paperwork has been reviewed and amended, and pathways have been agreed. All potential volunteers who want to volunteer within Community Hubs, Museum of Hartlepool, the Art Gallery, Cemetery and Crematorium, Active Hartlepool, and Tees Archaeology all start their journey with the Volunteer Coordinator to do their paperwork, DBS, inductions and are then supported by a member of staff in the locality service where they volunteer. This has improved the experience of volunteers and the learning from this will be used to review volunteering across all the Council.

Reading for Wellbeing offer

Community Hubs have delivered a Reading for Wellbeing offer, supported with Know Your Neighbourhood funding, to target residents at risk of chronic loneliness to take part in social activities surrounding reading for pleasure.

Two part-time Community Reading Officers have established a number of reading groups across the town, targeting LGBTQ+, care leavers, 18-40 men and residents of sheltered accommodation. They have also provided 1:1 reading support to many residents. The groups have also engaged in a number of social activities outside of their regular meetings, including activities at Hartlepool Art Gallery.

The programme was due to end in March 2025 but has been extended until the end of July 2025.

"First attending the wellbeing reading group at South Hub, I felt quite anxious, I'd never been to anything like this before and to be honest I didn't read much. However, I felt desperately lonely. New to the area with no one I knew I met Lesley [Community Reading Officer] at Seaton library, and she invited me to attend. Within the first ten minutes I'd say I'd never laughed so much for ages, my sides ached, and we even talked about different things we'd read, but in a

Hartlepool will be a place of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

fun way. I think I learnt far more than I expected too over the weeks and months and little by little I built my confidence and friends. Now I am applying for a job with the council because I heard about it through the group. It sounds dramatic, but my life has actually changed because I went to the reading group, I feel happier, less lonely and actually now understand what community spirit means”
– Rae, Hartlepool LGBTQIA+ Reading Group attendee

Opening Hours for Libraries and Community Hubs

A four-week consultation was completed between May and June 2024 with 922 contributions, 22% of which did not use a Community Hub service at a time.

Proposed opening hours following the consultation were agreed and the opening hours changed in November 2024. This included Saturday opening at Community Hub Central, longer hours on Saturdays at Community Hub Seaton Carew, and later evening hours until 5pm or 6pm at least 1 day a week at each venue.

This has made the venues more accessible to those who are in education or full-time employment.

Health Improvement Training Programme

Introduction of a Health Improvement Training Programme to improve health literacy, awareness and understanding to empower local people. Delivered in a way that is meaningful and accessible to residents. Good health literacy can overcome some of the barriers of health inequality. The Health Improvement Trainer has delivered:

- weight loss programmes to 50 attendees.
- Delivered Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training to 146 frontline staff from HBC, VCSE and businesses
- Developed two Health Zone areas in Community Hub Central and South which is an area where people can get their BP monitored, get weighed, access MECC Gateway online service directory, and home to information resources, posters, leaflets and display models.
- Campaigns have been delivered around healthy eating, alcohol consumption, cancer and these have been in the Community Hubs, within HBC wider teams and at community events.
- 170 women attended the women’s health event at Community Hub South in March 2025.

Hartlepool will be a place of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

Learning for Inclusion offer

Our Learning for Inclusion provision provides fun and flexible informal learning opportunities which engage adults to address some of the needs and priorities of our local communities. Our offer is designed to improve social mobility, enhance wellbeing, improve essential skills, and increase community cohesion in Hartlepool.

We have a wide range of activities available such as woodturning, horticulture, family homework clubs, and cooking. Since August 2024, 631 adults have enrolled on Learning for Inclusion provision within Hartlepool.

Literacy & Numeracy Strategic Partnership

The first Literacy Summit was held 24th February 2025 with:

- 95 attendees from local businesses, NHS, VCSE, elected members, and HBC staff
- 85 attendees completed pledge forms to join the literacy network
- 76 attendees indicated their commitment to thematic sub-groups.

Hartlepool Art Gallery

The BM exhibition at the gallery explored themes of identity and sexuality and was a great success, with Young Producers co-curating the Council collection which was exhibited alongside world renowned artists. The Learning Team worked with the artist EC Carter to provide a six-week programme of work, which was displayed in the community exhibition space at the gallery, with a celebration event for students and family. Young People speaking on camera about the exhibition can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/427155713550540>

We continue to support Young Producer (YP) programme via regular meetings, opportunities and events. YP are currently working on plans to create an interactive mystery activity within the museum. One member of YP has been working with Gallery staff to create their own exhibition based on women's health, which will be displayed on one of our sites.

Artist Julie Cockburn worked with the members of the Women's Health Hub on practical skills such as embroidery and weaving, resulting in an exhibition of their works.

Hartlepool will be a place of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

The learning team staff worked with artist EC Carter and START to hold a six-week engaging art project exploring themes of addiction, mental health and resilience. This resulted in an exhibition for Recovery Month 2024.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/165bgQV5LL/>

Hartlepool's first Pop Up Pride event on 6th July 2024 was hosted by the Gallery in partnership with Curious Arts and HartGables. The event was a great success with large scale engagement. We collected physical and digital contributions that have been accessioned into the Council's LGBTQ+ collections.

The Council have supported community days at the waterfront museum sites including a community day with South East Asian community in Tees Valley hosted in April with the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

Marsha Garrett was commissioned to research into our collections with an African provenance. Marsha spent quality time with our collections and created a bespoke talk using her research at the gallery for the public, which was very well received by all.

The team worked with Transformers HPL to deliver a range of activities during Black History Month including:

- Traditional African drumming workshops at Hartlepool Art Gallery and Museum of Hartlepool.
- Question and Answer sessions with the public.
- A display an exhibition of objects and art for the month at Hartlepool Art Gallery.
- A cooking session with The Vestry Café, teaching students how to create traditional African meals, which were then served at the café.

The service took part in Tees Valley Museums Group (TVMG) Togetherfest working with a targeted group, Hartlepool Families First, along with open access sessions ranging from babies to older children to have a 'Tiger who came to Tea' themed storytelling session, crafts and activities.

We continue to embed Poverty Proofing throughout our venues and programmes with Family Sessions and school groups remain free of charge.

Through the Stories from the Sea project, we have been examining the queer and global majority histories of Hartlepool through our maritime and social history collections. We have worked extensively exploring these collections,

Hartlepool will be a place of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

building relationships, creating exhibitions and putting on events such as free arts activities on LGBTQI+ History Month.

During Creative Careers Week in November the Team visited English Martyrs school to promote creative careers industries to students. We took a range of objects, sign-up sheets and information.

We held some consultation days at the Museum of Hartlepool with free arts and crafts activities, refreshments and information gathering activities to gain insight from visitors. We regularly converse with targeted groups to gain their input and held our first ever Arts Day for home educators, as part of a joint initiative with TVMG.

Hartlepool will be a place that is sustainable, clean, safe and green.

Waterfront Connectivity

The Waterfront Connectivity Phase Two project, part of the Hartlepool Town Deal, began in March. The project will see improvements to footpaths, cycling routes/facilities, streetlighting and signage in and around Hartlepool marina and The Waterfront, and builds on the success of a pedestrian route linking Seaton Carew to Hartlepool Marina which opened in 2023.

Jobs and Skills Website

The digital enrolments module was successfully launched in August 2024, in advance of the 2024/25 Academic Year. This is part of the Jobs & Skills website which allows residents to find out about all the current and future courses which are available across a wide range of subjects including Literacy, Numeracy, Digital, ESOL, Education, Early Years, Health & Social Care, Business and Learning for Inclusion.

Hartlepool will be a place that has an inclusive and growing economy.

Health and Social Care Academy

The Health and Social Care Academy (HSCA) at the University Hospital of Hartlepool was officially launched in September 2024. One of five of Hartlepool Borough Council's Town Deal transformation projects £1.25m in funding was secured back in 2022 to support its development at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust. The new academy has a dedicated academy manager and clinical training team. It includes a bespoke 'at home' simulation suite, an immersive suite, a four-bed training bay, ICT suite, trainee common room and several flexible training and classrooms.

Young People in Tech

The BIS, the centre for creative businesses in Hartlepool, hosted a special event aimed at young people interested in successful tech careers. Students from Hartlepool Sixth Form College and others from across Tees Valley attended the Powering Potential event organised by education charity The Talent Foundry and funded by Dell Technologies. The event gave the students the opportunity to gain a unique insight into the tech industry and receive tailored mentoring from professionals. Over the course of the day-long Powering Potential event, the students took part in a series of workshops and masterclasses covering different areas of the tech sector, and they were supported by volunteers from a range of local and national tech companies.

ESOL Pilot Course

A bespoke Level 1 ESOL course has been developed to incorporate both the ESOL qualification alongside employment related activities so that adults can gain the skills needed to progress into work. There are 10 adults enrolled on the course which started in September 2024 and will finish in July 2025. This is being delivered together with Jobcentre.

Employment Events

The Jobs and Skills Service took part in the following events:

- Work, Wealth and Wellbeing Event as part of National Older Workers Week
- Careers Event as part of National Careers Week
- Jobs Fair as part of Youth Employment Week

UKSPF Move Forward Programme

Led by the Council's Jobs and Skills Service across the Tees Valley, Move Forward has supported 637 adults which is 117 more than the contract target by the end of March 2025. In the same time period, 184 have progressed into employment which is 64 more than the contract target. This success has led to the programme being extended for a further 12 months by TVCA.

Hartlepool will be a place that has an inclusive and growing economy.

Multiply Programme to improve numeracy skills

Led by the Council's Jobs and Skills Service, Multiply has been highly successful with 1,355 undertaking bitesize provision by the end of March 2025. In the same time period, 340 have completed substantial learning which is 20 more than the contractual target for 2024/25.

This impact has led to TVCA highlighting our provision as best practice and we were the best performing Multiply contract within Tees Valley.

Employment Pathway

In the last 12 months, since launching the employment pathway the Jobs & Skills Hubs have delivered employment support to 1,717 unique residents and this has led to, at least, 190 adults progressing into employment over this period within Hartlepool.

In addition, at least 544 have progressed into education or volunteering in the last 12 months via the Jobs & Skills Hubs.

Hartlepool will be a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

Workforce

The Council has delivered a range of activity for our workforce to reflect our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI):

- Relaunched Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy.
- Implemented an EDI action, ensuring EDI is embedded into our working practices and is central to our culture.
- Ensured all new employees and those changing job roles, are aware of the Council's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion by including in the new Council induction Arrangements.
- Made all new employees aware of the Staff Equality Network, how to become a member and/or feed into the group on an ad-hoc basis.
- Promoted the Staff Equality Network to existing employees to encourage new membership and engagement.

Hartlepool will be a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

- All new managers were requested to complete the Manager's Induction Programme, including attending the mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training.
- Improved and promote the EDI learning and development offer to all employees through the Workforce Development Programme 2024/25.
- Identified, promoted and delivered EDI Lunch and Learn Sessions to all employees on topics including mental health and care leavers.
- Promoted Apprenticeships to care leavers by working with the Through Care Team as part of the annual apprenticeship recruitment campaign
- Developed a policy and process for an annual Work Experience Programme including Care Leavers, individuals with SEND, students and ad-hoc requests.

Scrutiny Investigation - Accessibility of Council Services in Hartlepool for Those with Disabilities and Long-Term Conditions

Since the Scrutiny Investigation was completed, work has been underway to deliver on the agreed action plan. Updates for 2024/25 include:

- Guides to creating accessible content and booking interpreters are available for staff.
- A Text Relay service is now in use via customer services for all Adult Social Care Team including Adult Safeguarding / ISPA with access to the Relay UK app. This has also been introduced in the Support Hub.
- Deaf awareness training is available for all staff and has been added to the Workforce Development Programme from 2024/25.
- Compatibility checks have been conducted on the civic centre loop system and have confirmed compatibility with modern hearing aids.

Accessibility of Council Governance Arrangements

The range of activities that the Council has in place to improve the accessibility of Council governance arrangements have been promoted in Hartbeat, the Council's magazine that goes out to every household in the Borough. These activities include:

- The use of accessible locations at a range of times (morning, afternoon and early evening).
- Notices of meetings published online and displayed on the notice board at the Civic Centre.

Hartlepool will be a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

- Agendas of meetings are available on request in a range of both paper and electronic formats, including larger font sizes, other languages and in audio format.
- A loop system, microphones and presentation screens are used in committee rooms and the Council Chamber and video recordings of Full Council meetings are published on the Council's website.

Armed Forces

The Council has retained our Employer Recognition Gold Award (Armed Forces). This recognises the work that we do to ensure that staff who were previously members of the armed forces / reservists are not disadvantaged as part of the recruitment process and are supported as employees.

Elections 2024

The Council's local elections in May 2024 saw the first councillors from minority ethnic backgrounds being elected to the Council in the Hart and Rossmere wards.

Jobs and Skills - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training

The Jobs and Skills Service continues to promote a wide range of learning opportunities covering key themes including Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. Over the last 12 months, training has been delivered to businesses/organisations in key sectors including Early Years, Education, Healthcare and Construction. Jobs & Skills also ensured that these topics are embedded within all of our learning which so that all learners are aware who have enrolled with the Service.

Activity planned for 2025/26

From 2025/26 onwards the Council has agreed that it will be beneficial to make our Equality Objectives more specific and for them to sit within the Council Plan underpinning the agreed priorities. New equality objectives have been developed by the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Group using the findings from the Big Conversation and recent scrutiny investigations into accessibility and poverty. It is intended that this approach will provide more specific focus on areas of the most significant disparity where there are identified gaps and areas of concern or under-representation in our activities.

In April 2025, the Council's Finance and Policy Committee agreed the following Equality Objectives.

- We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.
- We will ensure that our services and information are easily accessible by everyone, including those with additional needs.
- We will develop our knowledge and understanding of our communities.
- We will act as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambassador.
- We will be an equitable employer.

We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.

Activity planned for 2025/26 includes:

- Taking part in National Safeguarding Adults Week with a week of publicity to promote the Anne Craft Trust week of learning.
- Spotlight campaigns linked to adult safeguarding on themes identified from the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board annual survey.

We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.

- Coffee morning to update local safeguarding champions and promote the work of the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board.
- Raising awareness of the 16 safer places in Hartlepool with an article to be published in Hartbeat promoting the most recent safe place and informing public of the other venues registered as safer places.
- Develop a social Justice training programme for staff focused on celebrating inclusion and diversity.
- Health Protection Planning to look at diverse community support in the event of incidents
- Continuing the individual placement support (IPS) service supporting those on their recovery from substance use into work.
- Recovery connections are currently commissioned into Hartlepool to support the integration of those on their recovery journey from using drugs or alcohol into communities.
- Working with Hartlepool Food partnership (HFP) to support communities around food growing, enabling people from diverse backgrounds to be part of food growing projects.
- Working through Hartlepool's Antipoverty Strategy Group to ensure fair access to resources for families with different needs.
- Supporting the development of a Hartlepool Diversity Network, supporting diverse communities to have a voice.
- Delivering ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses in Hartlepool Jobs and Skills service to ensure residents have the language skills to integrate and contribute to the local economy.
- Working with our Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector partners to create a Welcome to Hartlepool resource for anyone new to the town to ensure they have information on all support services and feel welcomed to Hartlepool.
- Celebrating diversity within the Community Hubs through our diverse student celebration events where cultural awareness is shared and food is made and shared.
- Utilising our VCSE partners at Salaam Centre to launch a Hartlepool Jobs and Skills Employment & Training Hub for people from diverse backgrounds, this will be in partnership with Job Centre Plus.
- Continuing to celebrate diversity within the Community Hubs through events, activities, gallery exhibitions and book displays which align to national awareness days/campaigns, through working with local partners

We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.

and through engaging with national partners (such as The Black British Ballet exhibition).

- Ensuring our library stock reflects the diverse population of Hartlepool, including books in other languages and representation within stories.

We will ensure that our services and information are easily accessible by everyone, including those with additional needs.

Activity planned for 2025/26 includes:

- Launching a new Council website with improved accessibility features.
- The Council's Literacy Champions working to ensure the information produced and given to residents is accessible to all residents by auditing the literacy levels of all information and amending it to be accessible.
- Training Council Literacy Champions to ensure their departments also review how they work with residents including verbal communication and how they check understanding of information shared.
- Refreshing the information available to the general public on the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board website. The Council will contribute with a refresh of information linked to our new website and rebranding.
- Full page promotion of the Sensory Loss services and the implementation of SignVideo in partnership with NT&H FT Trust (University of Hartlepool Hospital) in Hartbeat Magazine.
- Updating of our Sensory Loss Register with letters to people on the register (where appropriate) informing them and seeking permission to share information with them / keeping them on the register.
- Hosting a promotional event at the Centre for Independent Living for World Mental Health Day.
- Developing an AI Chatbot on Hartlepool Now for better navigation and accessibility of Hartlepool Now Equipment Finder and Information, Advice and Guidance.
- Monitor the BAME Information and Advice service and monitor outcomes.
- Work with the Citizenship Group, Sensory Loss groups and other seldom heard communities to review accessibility of information and advice, including easy read information on complaints and advocacy.
- Develop an Aspirations and Ambitions programme for young people.

We will ensure that our services and information are easily accessible by everyone, including those with additional needs.

- Relocating the Sexual Health Service to an accessible site, with more bus routes available and suitable parking after listening to user feedback. Also, looking at accessible clinics in community areas
- Health Protection will be looking at how messages are given in the event of incidents of public health as part of future communications plans.
- The Stop Smoking Services across Hartlepool will continue to be situated in 4 areas across the town (Family Hubs and Community Hubs). These buildings are accessible on bus routes and have ramp access to all. Community Navigators and Family Hubs staff members are present to assist with additional needs.
- Ensuring that health literacy is considered with all public health messaging.
- Delivering the work of the literacy task force and ensuring that the information that is shared / used (letters, website etc) is accessible and understandable to residents.
- Deliver 12 monthly health promotion campaigns to targeted populations / communities within Hartlepool, using evidence-based health promotion messages and signposting to support for communities. Delivery is by a range of methods to ensure understanding and accessibility
- Working in partnership with Hartlepool food partnership (HFP) to produce information on the food partnership web page enabling people to access affordable food in Hartlepool. This will include recipe videos for the public, low/no cost food leaflet and details of low/no cost food places in Hartlepool with an online map highlighting locations in Hartlepool where food is available.
- Developing a plan on a page for the Hartlepool Antipoverty Strategy so that information is more accessible. Priorities include ensuring support/information is available to groups who may have less access to information/services e.g. Electively Home Educated children and children with Special Educational Needs, disability or caring responsibility
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy Year One Actions include consideration of inclusion in any changes to information/services
- Deliver accessible Governance arrangements (in partnership with the communications team) including the production of agendas / reports in accessible formats as part of the launch of the new website, redesigning relevant webpages and exploration of committee management packages to improve digital access.

We will ensure that our services and information are easily accessible by everyone, including those with additional needs.

- Continuing to make our buildings and services accessible to everyone including installing a new lift in Community Hub Central to remove the risk of lift access being unavailable.
- Developing and promoting a stepped reading ability offer so that the library can be more accessible to those with varying literacy levels.
- Utilising the Literacy for Life Resident Panels, which will be independently led by Hartlepool Carers, to review all Learning and Skills service information to check user understanding.
- Working with a professional artist to deliver arts projects working with children in care, home educators, Hart Gable and Hartlepool Youth Service.
- Providing flexible options for learning, such as online courses, in-person sessions, and blended learning approaches, to cater to the needs of our communities.

We will develop our knowledge and understanding of our communities.

Activity planned for 2025/26 includes:

- Developing a Hartlepool Community Cohesion Strategy utilising the community engagement work Belong have been commissioned to deliver.
- Launching a new Single Impact Assessment within the Council to help us understand how our actions affect different communities and to inform our decision-making process.
- Completing a Health Impact Assessment following the unrest in July 2024.
- Action for Deafness: New contract in place from 01/07/2025, Provider meeting with the community (including Hartlepool Deaf Centre Members) to seek views on how the new service will be delivered.
- Continuing to look for opportunities in new venues and continue to do 'pop up stalls' within areas such as Middleton Grange for our Stop Smoking Services. This will help us to develop a knowledge and understanding of the communities within Hartlepool. The H&SH bus is also going to offer some out of hours clinics such as weekends and evenings in areas across Hartlepool which may require additional support (such as areas with higher smoking prevalence). The services also do a

We will develop our knowledge and understanding of our communities.

holistic assessment and will refer and signpost to other services as needed, to help reduce health inequalities across Hartlepool

- As part of healthy living pharmacy work, supporting pharmacies in Hartlepool to deliver 12 agreed health promotion campaigns. (6 national and 6 locally agreed) using resources to share key messages and listening to user feedback to change delivery actions.
- Working with Hartlepool Food Partnership to produce a survey for schools about growing food and what schools were doing and what support they would benefit from to enhance children's understanding of food and where it comes from.
- Continuing to work with residents on the Anti-Poverty strategy and Poverty Truth Commission so that they are central to decision making and proposed actions are based on understanding the community. Plans include using local data to understand local need and target action more effectively
- Delivering the year 1 actions of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which include seeking community insights e.g. Barriers to healthy eating in early years that could be overcome with system action. Priorities are based on local data demonstrating need.
- Engaging in regular consultation, in focus groups (such as with our Community Hubs Youth Board) and with wider residents, to ensure our Community Hub services reflect the current and emerging needs of our community.

We will act as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambassador.

Activity planned for 2025/26 includes:

- Holding Citizenship Meetings (Quarterly) to include people with a Learning Disability, promoting Annual health Checks and Health action planning with our health colleagues.
- Supporting those with sensory loss through the publication of new contracts / providers and rolling out of on demand British Sign Language (BSL) support in partnership with University of Hartlepool Hospital.
- Refreshing the Autism Plan on a page, developing an autism user group to inform future service design and ensuring current provision is fit for purpose.

We will act as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambassador.

- Developing support for people with autism including technology to support neuro diverse people to live independently more effectively.
- Providing specialist training and raising awareness around autism.
- Developing the community offer to better meet the needs of autistic people.
- Working with Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB) on the Stay Safe and Warm campaign, to support with readability of literature given to residents when visited by fire officers during stay safe and warm delivery
- Public Health working with the Hartlepool Food Partnership to host open forums.
- Encouraging participation by Hartlepool workplaces in the Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA) to experience the health and well-being benefits participation can bring to all staff in workplaces.
- Taking part in the Hartlepool Anti-Poverty Group and preparing a new poverty strategy for the Borough.
- Delivering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training programmes to improve the knowledge and skills of staff members and individuals within our communities across Hartlepool.
- Developing targeted employment support provision which is tailored to the needs of diverse groups and in partnership with community organisations across Hartlepool
- Continuing to provide volunteering opportunities to residents from all backgrounds which reflect their goals and interests, whilst supporting them throughout their volunteer journey
- Working with START on a project with professional artists for those in drug and alcohol recovery, resulting in a community exhibition.
- Hosting a Pop-Up Pride at Hartlepool Art Gallery in July and work with colleagues to support Hartlepool Pride.
- Implementing a 'sensory corner' at the Art Gallery with ear defenders, fidget toys, visual stories and portable stools free for visitors to use.
- Museum of Hartlepool working with Men's Suicide Prevention Charity Andy's Man Club on a project to explore and tell the story of PSS Wingfield Castle through research and creating a handling box to use with care home residents, community groups, schools and the public.
- Delivering sports sessions in our park over the summer providing the opportunity for inter-generational play.
- Training staff in dementia friends / Making every contact count.

We will act as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambassador.

- Promoting BAME ladies swim session and swim costume relaxation and consult the ladies on the provision at Highlight.
- Hosting a Kabaddi competition and liaising with predominantly Asian men around developing the offer across the town.
- Promoting the disabled access facilities for Highlight with pool pods etc.
- Exploring out-swimming cancer sessions and how they can be implemented.
- Exploring working with the Parkinson charity grant funding available to set up sessions across the leisure service.
- Promoting the all-inclusive gym kit as each site opens the gym with new Technogym equipment.
- Attracting disabled users by promoting relevant classes and highlighting the suitability of each session.

We will be an equitable employer.

Activity planned for 2025/26 includes:

- Improving the recruitment and selection Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data to better understand trends and gaps for all protected groups and identify actions to improve.
- Exploring quality standards for EDI for example Stonewall, the Race Equality Charter and others.
- Reviewing feedback from leavers and agreeing any actions needed to improve equality.
- Reviewing feedback on the Annual Employee Survey and agreeing any actions needed to improve equality.
- Promoting Employee Benefits through Vivup to enable employees to spread the cost of purchasing goods.
- Promoting Apprenticeships to care leavers by working with the Through Care Team as part of the annual apprenticeship recruitment campaign
- Identifying, promoting and delivering EDI campaign programme to all employees to increase awareness and understanding.
- Continuing to identify, promote and deliver EDI Lunch and Learn Sessions to all employees.

We will be an equitable employer.

- Promoting e-learning EDI training to all employees and monitoring compliance with mandatory EDI training.
- Taking part in the Celebration of Social Work Day - to celebrate our newly Qualified workers and those who achieved success in the previous year, educational attainment, best practice, personal development
- Contributing to the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC-WRES) which is a continuous improvement programme designed to support social care organisations achieve anti-racist workplaces.
- Working with North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and Hartlepool College of Further Education to maximise opportunities within the Health and Social Care Academy.
- Promoting social care career pathways linked to national and regional campaigns.
- Ensuring that staff who were previously members of the armed forces / reservists are not disadvantaged as part of the recruitment process and are supported as employees.
- Working with our recognised trade unions to adopt an anti-racism charter.

Data sources

The data used in this report includes:

2024 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2025.

Census 2021, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Data from the annual SSDA903 Children Looked After Return as at 31st March 2025 (reporting year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025).

Local Child Poverty Statistics for 2023/24, published by the Loughborough University Centre for Research in Social Policy and commissioned by the End Child Poverty Coalition in 2025. These statistics are based on calculations that build on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HMRC Children in Low Income Families dataset, published in March 2025.

Hartlepool Borough Council workforce and recruitment data from internal systems.

Data Check (office use only)

Officer responsible for inputting data:	CG
Date completed:	8.8.25
Officer responsible for checking data:	JW
Date completed:	8.8.25

For further information please contact:

Workforce EDI – Rachel Clark

Telephone **01429 523198**

Email **Rachel.clark@hartlepool.gov.uk**

Post **Hartlepool Borough Council,
Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, TS24 8AY**

Strategic EDI - Catherine Grimwood

Telephone **01429 523504**

Email **Catherine.grimwood@hartlepool.gov.uk**

Post **Hartlepool Borough Council,
Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, TS24 8AY**

