

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

11 November 2025

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Melanie Morley (In the Chair)

Councillors: Moss Boddy, Martin Dunbar, Brenda Harrison, Philip Holbrook and Sue Little

Co-opted members:

Zoe Westley, Special Schools Head Representative

Also Present: Councillor Amanda Napper

Officers: Alison Sutherland, Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
Rebecca Stephenson, Assistant Director, Early Intervention, Performance and Commissioning
Amanda Whitehead, Assistant Director, Education
Emma Rutherford, Executive Head Teacher – Vulnerable Pupils
Jackie Webb, Inclusion Co-Ordinator
Fiona Stobbs, Senior Advisor Inclusive Learning and SEND
Jo Stubbs, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

21. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted by Councillor Bob Buchan, Joanne Wilson (RC Diocesan Representative) and Martin Pout (Parent Governor Representative)

22. Declarations of Interest

None

23. Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2025

Received.

24. Elective Home Education *(Executive Head Teacher, Vulnerable Pupils)*

Type of decision

Non-key – for information

Purpose of report

To provide updated information in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE).

Issue(s) for consideration

The Executive Head Teacher for Vulnerable Pupils advised that there continued to be rising numbers of children being removed from school to receive Elective Home Education. There had been an increase from 55 receiving EHE in October 2019 to 280 at the time of the meeting. EHE information by year group was also provided. At present 75 children receiving EHE had identified special educational needs and 9 children receiving EHE have social care involvement. The report provided details of the reasons for removal, the schools children ceased to attend due to EHE as well as dates EHE commenced. There were currently 7 children who were not accessing suitable provision and 56 children where parents had no other communication with the team other than in writing. 30 children attend alternative education provision at settings including East Durham and Houghall College and Hartlepool Sixth Form College.

The Executive Head Teacher for Vulnerable Pupils responded to a number of queries arising from the report. These included concerns around a lack of engagement from some parents and the impact of academisation on the provision of education as a whole. It was noted that funding provided to schools per pupil did not move to the parent should they choose to home educate, resulting in lost funding of approximately £1.5 million based on the current numbers being home educated.

The Chair stressed the importance of early intervention, advising that further work in this area would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Decision

That the contents of the report be noted

25. Children Missing Education – Annual Report (Executive Director of Children's Services)

Type of decision

Non-key – For information

Purpose of report

To provide an up-to-date report about number of children identified and tracked as a child missing education.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Inclusion Co-Ordinator provided information relating to the statutory guidance in place for tracking and identifying children who are missing from or not receiving a suitable education.

The Committee was advised that in the last academic year 2024-2025 there were 178 referrals with 156 traced. In relation to numbers missing from education, these continued to be investigated and procedures followed, details of which were provided.

The Committee praised the team for the thoroughness of their processes in following up on children missing education. The Chair asked that the positive comments of the Committee be passed on to the team.

Decision

That the report and the work of the School Attendance Team to deliver the Local Authority statutory functions in relation to Children Missing Education be noted

26. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chair ruled that the following items of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

27. Complex Trauma Team

The Executive Director for Children's and Joint Commissioning Services referred to a recent press report detailing £1 million funding for a Complex Trauma Team to help children with complex developmental trauma difficulties in the Tees Valley. Tees Valley has been allocated phase 1 of a two phase roll out and is primarily funded through the Integrated Care Board funding with contributions from the 5 Tees Valley

local authorities. Hartlepool would be contributing £69 thousand. The intended outcomes and impact of the team will focus on placement breakdown, prevention of out of area placements and improved relationships. Members welcomed the £1 million investment but noted that £1.5 million was being lost through elective home education. The Chair indicated she would speak to the MP regards this issue and bring an update back to the Committee.

The meeting concluded at 5.55pm.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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