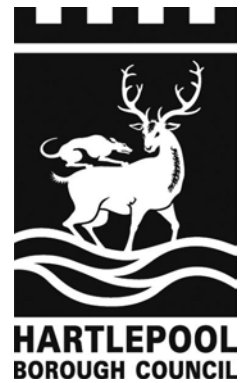


CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE AGENDA



2 July 2013

at 4.00 pm

in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillors Atkinson, Fleet, Griffin, Hill, James, Lauderdale and Simmons

Co-opted Members: Sacha Paul Bedding and Michael Lee

Young People's Representatives

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2013 (*previously circulated*).

4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

4.1 Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2013/14 – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*

5. KEY DECISIONS

5.1 Updated Child Poverty Strategy – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*

5.2 2013/14 Schools' Capital Works Programme – Phase 2 – *Assistant Director, Education*



6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 6.1 Children and Young People's Strategic Framework – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*
- 6.2 Early Intervention and Children's Centres Governance Process – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*
- 6.3 School Term and Holiday Dates 2014-15 – *Assistant Director, Education*
- 6.4 Statement of Purposes for Exmoor Grove Residential Unit – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*
- 6.5 Adoption Reforms – *Assistant Director, Children's Services and Chief Finance Officer*
- 6.6 Adoption Annual Report 2012/13 and Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2013/14 – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*
- 6.7 Fostering Services Annual Report 2012-13 and Statement of Purpose 2013-14 – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 7.1 Free Early Education for Two Year Olds – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*
- 7.2 Short Quality Screening Inspection of Hartlepool Youth Offending Service – *Director of Child and Adult Services*
- 7.3 Safeguarding Children in Hartlepool – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – 30 July 2013 at 4.00pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

2 JULY 2013



Report of: Assistant Director, Children's Services and
Chief Finance Officer

Subject: ADOPTION REFORMS

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

Non Key

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To inform Children's Service Committee of the Department for Education, Adoption Reforms, how the Council proposes to implement the reforms and its financial priorities for the (2013 – 2014) Adoption Reform Grant.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In the last 2 years the government has raised the profile of adoption, highlighting a national crisis in the numbers of children waiting for adoptive placements. Since the report published in March 2012 'Action Plan for Adoption – Tackling Delay,' there has been a range of initiatives announced aimed at improving adoption for children and adoptive parents.
- 3.2 To support the required reform of adoption services, the Department for Education has provided additional monies to Local Authorities through a one year Adoption Reform Grant. The grant is authorised by the Secretary of State for Education under powers conferred by section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and comes in 2 parts; Part A is an allocation of £100m (non ring fenced) of which Hartlepool's allocation is £169,978. The grant allocation is calculated based on a mixture of the under 5's population, deprivation, and a scarcity to allocated money. An area cost adjustment has been applied to account for the differing cost of inputs in different local authorities.

- 3.3 Part B of the Adoption Reform Grant is an allocation of £50m (ring fenced) of which Hartlepool's allocation is £166,420. The allocation of the ring fenced grant is determined by the number of children placed for adoption and the number of children where there has been an adoption decision but the child is still awaiting an adoption placement per local authority.
- 3.4 The splitting of the grant into two parts is an administrative matter for National Government and at a local level the split is not relevant for local authorities. The key issue for the Council is the development and implementation of measures to use this one off grant to bring about improvements in local adoption services to meet the Government's priorities which are:
- Structural reform of adopter recruitment to increase the supply of adopters. This includes the equalisation of the inter-agency and inter-authority fees and other reforms that will increase the use of adopters recruited by the voluntary sector and other local authority adoption agencies;
 - Reducing the backlog of children waiting for adoption, particularly by developing innovative ways of finding adoptive families for children who traditionally wait longer than average to be adopted.
- 3.5 The Government will be using existing data collections to understand the impact of this grant alongside its other adoption reforms. In addition, as a condition of this grant, local authorities are required to write to the Department providing details of what the grant was spent on and the impact that this expenditure has had. Within the context of the adoption reforms detailed later in this report, there is a clear expectation from Government that the funding will be used to significantly improve performance in relation to adoption, for example by increasing the numbers of adopters, increasing the numbers of children placed for adoption and improving the timeliness of adoptions. The Government is closely scrutinising the performance of local authorities in relation to adoption and has made its intentions clear that it will legislate to require local authorities to outsource some adoption functions in those authorities that fail to meet the Government's expectations.

Adoption Score Cards

- 3.6 The Department for Education has published adoption scorecards detailing local authorities' performance in relation to the placement of children for adoption. The scorecards form part of the current approach by the Government to address delay for children within the adoption system. In publishing national adoption score cards, the Department for Education hopes to encourage local authorities to monitor their own performance and compare it with that of others. The performance thresholds will be raised incrementally over the next three years until they reflect the levels set out in statutory guidance.

- 3.7 The adoption scorecard shows, against three key indicators, how swiftly children in need of adoption are placed for adoption in each local authority area. These scorecards allow local authorities and other adoption agencies to monitor their own performance and compare it with that of others. In the future adoption scorecards will also include data on how swiftly local authorities and adoption agencies deal with prospective adopters.
- 3.8 To aid effective comparison between local authority areas and give a more contextualised and rounded picture of a local authority's performance, additional information has been included, such as an indicator of the timeliness of the local family justice system, and the numbers of older children being adopted.

Finding children loving homes without delay

- 3.9 The Government is attempting to reduce the time children wait by;

- **Removing duplication of adoption panel functions.**

Until October 2012, the plans in relation to children being adopted were considered by an independent Fostering and Adoption Panel who then made a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker. Amendments have been made to Regulations to discontinue this arrangement and the decision now lies solely with the Agency Decision Maker.

- **26 week limit on care proceeding**

Historically the timescale for care proceeding to conclude could be up to 18 months and this can cause unnecessary delay for children. As part of the Family Justice Review and to meet its adoption aspirations, the Department for Education (DfE) is seeking to reduce the maximum timescale for care proceedings to 26 weeks. Nationally this is viewed as a very challenging timescale but within the Teesside courts the judiciary is committed to achieving this and has been working towards reducing the length of time taken for care proceedings for some time. Social workers are finding that these timescales are being rigidly held where possible by the Court. This has a significant impact on the capacity of the social workers workload as the timescale for completing necessary reports and assessments have significantly contracted and it is essential to ensure that the quality of the work undertaken with children and their families is not compromised.

- **Searching for perfect or partial ethnic matches**

The DfE found evidence to suggest children were left waiting for adoptive parents for long periods of time as social workers searched for adoptive parents that could meet the children's racial, culture and linguistic needs; it was felt that some children were being deprived of loving adoptive families whilst social workers search for the 'perfect match'.

The Children and Families Bill 2013 has removed the explicit requirement to consider religious persuasion, racial origin, culture and linguistic background when seeking an adoptive placement for a child. The overriding principle in finding a match for a child will remain what is in the child's best interest throughout his or her life.

3.10 **Securing early permanence**

- **Foster to Adopt/ Early Placement**

With the aim of finding loving permanent homes for children as early as possible and to minimise disruption to children moving between placements, DfE advise that where a local authority has decided that adoption is the plan for a child, it should aim to place that child as early as possible with carers who are likely to become their adoptive parents. This can never pre-empt the decision of the Court that a child should be adopted, however, it ensures that whether or not a child is placed for adoption, they should suffer less trauma from disruption.

There is a level of legal uncertainty for adopters in Foster to Adopt arrangements and the support, training and supervision of these adopters will need to be enhanced and carers will have dual approval as foster carers and adopters.

- **Concurrent Planning**

There is a drive to promote concurrent planning which is a concept originally from America and developed in the UK by the Manchester Adoption Society followed by Coram Adoption Agency, to date, the use of this practice in the U.K. has been relatively small. Essentially adoptive parents are also approved as foster carers, a child will be placed with them and they will work with social worker and birth families whilst assessments and reunification plans are being formulated. If the plan becomes adoption then the child would remain with the adopters and it is anticipated he or she would be adopted by the carer.

Whilst this work is complex, challenging and highly emotive, the potential outcomes for the child are extremely positive, in that, it provides consistent parenting and promotes positive attachments. The impact on adopters are significant, in that, they could be the only people to have cared for their adopted child and it is known that children placed from birth or at a very young age are less likely to have suffered damage to their attachments, however there is a chance that children are returned to their birth parents so the emotional risk can be very high for adopters.

Hartlepool are currently leading on sub regional work to produce a policy, procedure, training and support pack in preparation to deliver concurrent/ 'foster to adopt' placements.

- **Adopter led matching**

Adoption Activity Days have been piloted by British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF). Essentially the activity days bring together prospective adopters with children awaiting an adoptive placement; it gives adopters a chance to meet children and share an activity with them as opposed to reading their profile and seeing pictures. The pilot has been successful however very careful planning and preparation needs to be undertaken to ensure safety for all concerned.

Sub regionally, there is a proposal to host an Adoption Activity Day and Middlesbrough Council are leading on this initiative.

- **Changes to Adoption Register**

The Children and Families Bill 2013 proposes to amend legislation to offer approved adopters access the Adoption Register for the purpose of assisting them to find a child for whom they would be appropriate adopters.

- **The National Gateway for Adoption**

First4Adoption has recently been launched and will provide a national service to adopters providing information to prospective adopters in relation to assessment, approval and support.

The DFE are providing 'pump prime' grant to Community and Voluntary Adoption Agencies to increase their numbers of approved adopters and local authorities will be required to seek placement from this sector.

There is currently an inter-agency fee framework for purchasing adoptive placements from another provider with Local Authority Adoption Agency placements costing £13,138 and Voluntary Adoption Agencies costing £27,000. The Government has advised that there will be a leveling of the interagency fee across agencies and current proposals are that all fees will rise to £27,000.

- **Adopter Approval**

The DFE has introduced a new two stage adopter approval process aimed at reducing the timescales for adopters to be approved. For new adopters the first stage (pre-qualification) will be two months and second (full-assessment) will be four months. There will be a fast-track process for people who have adopted before or who are already approved foster carers wishing to adopt a child in their care.

3.11 **Adoption Support**

- **Treating Adopters Fairly**

Statutory adoption pay and leave will be brought in line with maternity pay.

- **Being Clear about Adoptive Parents' Rights**

There will be a responsibility on local authorities to publish an adopter friendly document clarifying their entitlements in terms of support and a legal duty on local authorities to inform adopters of their rights.

Adoptive parent have reported poor access to specialist support when they need it and as a consequence, the Government has asked National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) to produce guidance on attachment disorders with an emphasis on evidence based interventions.

There will be e-learning material available on the new Department of Health, Children and Young People Mental Health e portal by 2014 for use by health professionals and there will also be revised statutory guidance for the NHS aimed at giving better access to specialist services for adopted children and adopters.

The DfE plan to pilot personal budgets for adopters who have been assessed as requiring services to enable them to purchase the support they believe best meet their needs, it is anticipated the pilots will commence by summer 2013.

3.12 **System Reform.**

- **Further Action on Adoption: Finding more loving homes**

The DfE will be looking for fewer adoption agencies operating at a larger scale. This is likely to have a significant impact on Hartlepool as the local authority size is unlikely to fit with the DfE agenda. In response to this, on a sub regional basis, collaborative work is being undertaken which could mitigate any direct DfE intervention.

Within the Children and Families Bill, the Government has included a power requiring local authorities to outsource their adoption functions, potentially paving the way for those functions to be undertaken by a Voluntary Adoption Agency and has provided the Community and Voluntary Adoption Agencies with a £1m grant to support them to increase their adoption provision.

4. PROPOSALS

4.1 The allocation of the Adoption Reform Grant will be used to support the implementation of local adoption reform. The Government's adoption reforms raise considerable challenges to local authorities both in terms of the accelerated rate of change and the wide reaching nature of the reforms that have been introduced. To support local authorities, one year funding has been made available to kick start these changes but currently there is no indication of any future funding to embed and sustain the significant practice changes. This has to be considered against a national shortage of adopters with more than 4,200 children waiting for adoption nationally. The grant allocation to Hartlepool amounts to a total of £336,398.

4.2 It is proposed that the one year grant funding is used to:

- Create a dedicated Family Finder post to strengthen practice in searching for families for children. This role will also support social workers in completing Child Permanence Reports and life story work with children undertake any direct work with the child to prepare him or her for adoption;
- Provide additional social work capacity within the adoption team to meet the reduced timescales for training and approval of adopters and increase recruitment of adopters;
- Create a part time development post to lead on recruitment, foster to adopt, concurrent planning and skill up the wider workforce in relation to life story and placement preparation and develop adopter information;
- Create part time post to lead further development of robust post adoption support for children, birth families and adopters;
- Create an additional newly qualified social worker post within fieldwork teams to strengthen capacity;
- Provide additional funding to the placement budget to reflect the increased interagency fees.

Summary Adoption Reform Grant Expenditure

<u>Social Work Posts</u>	160,000
Family Finder Post	
Strategic Planner/advisor/development Officer	
Post Adoption Support/Training	
Front Line Social Work	
Purchased Placements 6 x £27,000	162,000
Additional project expenditure	14,000
	336,000

- 4.3 Given the short term nature of the grant funding the additional posts will be one year fixed term posts and as a consequence, it maybe difficult to recruit suitably experienced and qualified social workers. To manage this, it is proposed that workers are seconded into the one year posts from within the existing team and wider children's social care workforce.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Children's Services Committee are asked to note the Adoption Reforms taking place at a national level, approve the plans for local implementation and the use of the one-off grant provided by the Government, detailed in paragraph 4.2.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Adoption Reforms will have a significant impact on the statutory work of the Council and outcomes for children looked after and as such it is essential that Childrens Services Committee are aware of the changes taking place and approve local arrangements.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

An action plan for Adoption – Tackling Delay – Department of Education;
Adoption Score Card – Department of Education
Children and Families Bill 2013 – Department of Education

8. CONTACT OFFICER

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

2 July 2013



Report of: Assistant Director, Children's Services

Subject: ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13 AND
ADOPTION AGENCY STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
2013/14

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

Non Key

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to present Children Services Committee the Annual Report of the Adoption Agency 2012/13 and the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose for 2013/14.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The work of the Adoption Services is subject to National Minimum Standards applicable to the provision of adoption services. The National Minimum Standards together with regulations for adoption and the placement of children looked after form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of adoption agencies.
- 3.2 It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards that the service produces a Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide for adoption services and reviews these at least annually. It is also a requirement that the executive side of the local authority receive six monthly reports detailing the management, outcomes and functioning of the Adoption services. This information is provided within the Annual Report, attached as **Appendix 1**. The Statement of Purpose for 2013/14 is attached in **Appendix 2**, and Children's Guide for adoption attached at **Appendix 3**.

- 3.3 The Annual Report provides details of the staffing arrangements in the service, training received by both staff, and adopters, the constitution of the Fostering and Adoption Panel, activity in relation to the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters, the achievements of the service during the year and the priorities for further service development in 2013/14.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Children's Services Committee approve The Annual Report of the Adoption Agency 2012/13 is attached at **Appendix 1**. The Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2013/14 is attached at **Appendix 2**, and Children's Guide for adoption attached at **Appendix 3**.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Children's Services Committee are asked to approve the Adoption Agency Annual Report, Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide in line with the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Adoption Agency is a statutory service of the Council and as such Children's Services Committee, having the responsibility for Children's Services, requires information about how services are delivered and their effectiveness.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Adoption Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011.

8. CONTACT OFFICER

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Foreword


It is my pleasure to introduce the Hartlepool Borough Council Adoption Services Annual Report for 2012-13. In the past year, the Government has laid down the challenge to local authority Adoption Agencies to significantly improve their performance in relation to the recruitment of adopters and the number of children leaving care through adoption. Hartlepool has been recognised nationally as being a high performing authority in relation to the timeliness of adoption for our children and it is from this strong foundation that we continue to build.

Over the past year the service has made sure that children are placed with their adopted families without any unnecessary delay. We have been successful in recruiting prospective adopters from the local area providing them with high quality training which fully prepares them for being adopters leading to successful adoptions for children. Looking forward, we believe that we can rise to the challenges laid down by the Government and can build upon our achievements through further strengthened practice, robust monitoring arrangement to reduce delay and proactive family finding.

Through the Hartlepool Children Looked After Strategy and Permanency Policy we have set out our overarching ambition and aspiration for children:

“Hartlepool Council will provide children and young people with permanence and stability to enable them to thrive, enjoy a happy and secure childhood and become confident adults who achieve their aspirations”.

The Adoption Service has a key role in realising this ambition by delivering a high quality and effective Adoption Agency.



Sally Robinson
Assistant Director Children's Services

The annual Adoption Agency Report provides information about the activity and outcomes achieved by the Hartlepool Borough Council Adoption Service during 2012-13 and outlines the strategic priorities for 2013-14.

The 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance and Adoption National Minimum Standards place a requirement upon Local Authority Adoption Agencies to ensure that the Executive side of the Council receive 6 monthly reports on the management and outcomes of the Agency. The Annual Report provides a full review of the service supported by an interim progress report to the Childrens Services Committee at the end of the second quarter of the financial year.

In March 2012, the Government published a report entitled 'Action Plan for Adoption - Tackling Delay', this report highlights the challenges and difficulties in placing children for adoption and has become the catalyst for Adoption Reform which are legislated within the Children and Families Bill 2012 and likely to gain royal assent by April 2014.

The aim of the Adoption Service is to recruit, train and support adopters to provide high quality adoptive placements for the children. This is achieved through the following objectives:

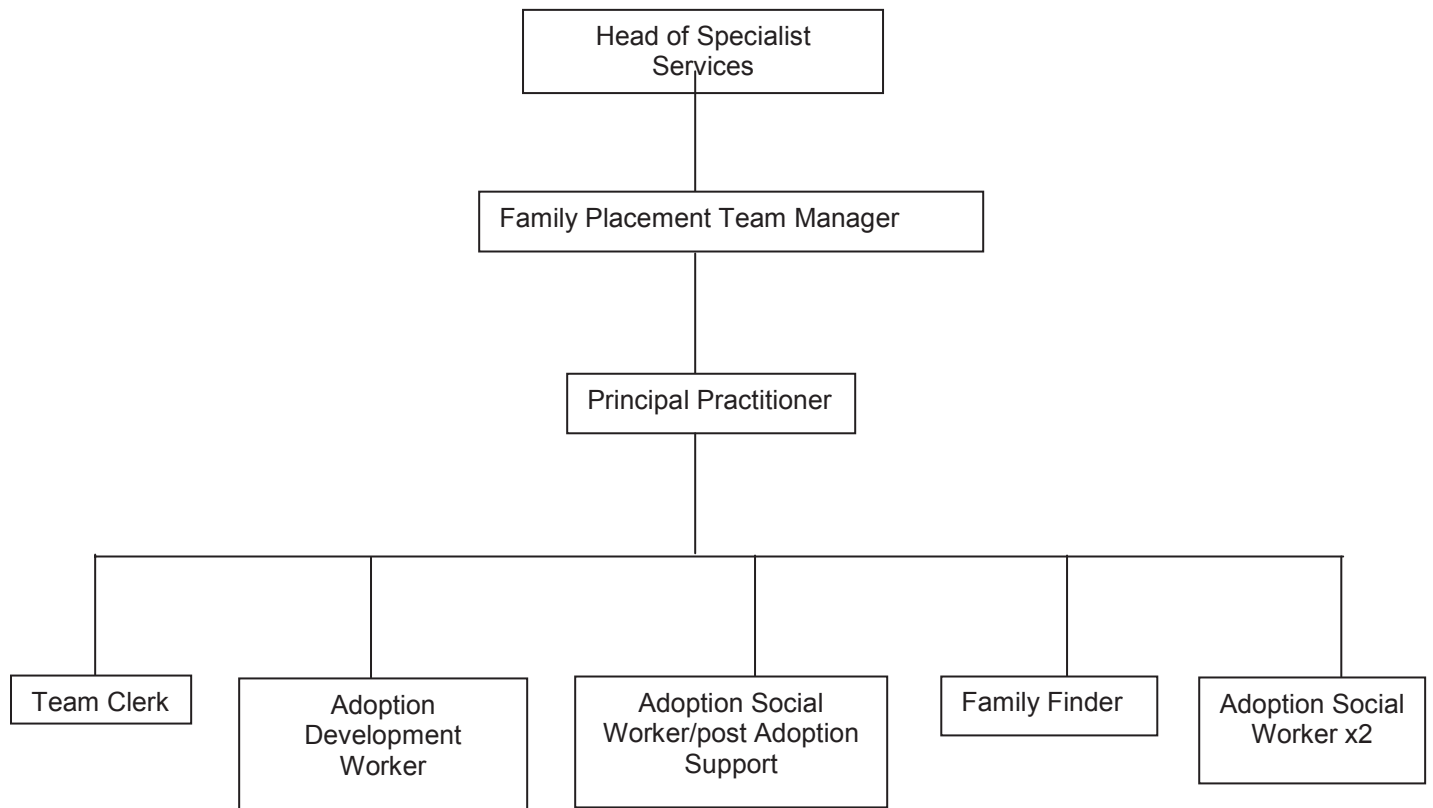
- Ensuring that where children cannot remain in the care of their birth parent/s, they are placed with appropriate adoptive parent/s at the earliest opportunity;
- Providing robust assessment of and support to adoptive carers and children to meet identified needs;
- Providing advice and support to birth families;
- To manage and facilitate contact arrangements including 'Post Box' contact that support the exchange of information which meets the needs of the children, adoptive parent/s and birth parent/s;

- To fulfil statutory requirements in relation to the Adoption and Children Act 2004 for the adoption of a child by a step parent;
- To provide advice, support and guidance in relation to permanence planning and facilitate family finding for children;
- To ensure the Adoption Panel and the Agency Decision Maker are supported to provide robust consideration and recommendations relating to approval of adopters and matching of children and adoptive families;
- To provide support to the Agency Decision Maker in relation to consideration and decision making regarding plans for the adoption of children.



Hartlepool Adoption Service is managed in accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2004. The Adoption National Minimum Standards and the Regulations 2011 form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

Adoption Team Structure



Governance and Oversight of Adoption

The Adoption Team reports twice yearly on the activities and performance of the service to the Children's Service Committee.

The Adoption Score Cards published by the Department for Education provide quarterly update on performance.

Hartlepool Borough Council has established an appropriately constituted Family Placement Panel which, in accordance with the Regulations, is chaired by an Independent Person and has an established 'central list' of persons who have the appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the panel for ratification.

This central list of Panel Members includes the Independent Chair, 2 Vice Chairs, 2 Agency Social Workers, an Elected Member, 6 Independent Members, 2 of whom are foster carers for another authority, a Medical Advisor and a person who was previously looked after.

The Panel also receives advice from the local authority Legal Advisor and Panel Advisor.

The Panel make recommendations on the suitability of prospective adopters and the matching of children with adoptive families to the Agency Decision Maker.

Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, is the Adoption Agency Decision Maker, and as such makes the decision in relation to adoption approval, children's adoption plans and matches. Sally is robust in her quality assurance and decision making ensuring that the best interest of children is always at the heart of what we do.

Recruitment and Assessment of Adopters

Number of Approved Adopters as at 31.03.13	16
Number of Adopters currently being assessed	8
Number of Adopters waiting to complete training	4
Number of Adopters with children in placement but not yet adopted	6
Number of Initial Visits undertaken 2012/13	22
Number of applications received 2012/13	13

The Adoption Service recruitment strategy is updated on an annual basis and a range of methods are used to attract prospective adopters to the Agency. The service is particularly successful in achieving personal recommendations from Hartlepool's approved adopters and their families. There is an advertising campaign for Adoption which is in the process of being updated; advertisements are placed in the Primary Times and regional publications. The service has identified a need to increase the number of placements for siblings groups and older children and this will be the priority of the recruitment strategy for 2013-14.

Adopters attend a 4 day training course aimed at providing detailed information to prepare them for adoption, underpinned by an individual assessment. The training covers the adoption process, legal procedures, child development, attachment and resilience, child abuse, safeguarding and looks at adoption from the perspective of the birth family and the child.

In addition to the training and assessment, support groups are held monthly until approval. Topics include competencies, talking to your child about adoption, understanding difficult behaviour, managing introductions, post adoption support and 'facing up to Facebook.'

Family Finding

The Adoption Team plays a key role in finding adoptive families for children. From the point when adoption is likely to be the permanent plan for a child, the adoption team track the planning for that child to ensure there is no delay in finding an appropriate family.

Number of children awaiting adoptive placement as at 01.04.12	3
Number of children matched and placed in an adoptive placement in 2012-13	12
Number of children waiting for an adoptive placement as at 31.03.13	10
Number of children adopted between in 2012-13	10
Number of children placed with adopters as at 31.03.13	12

A key focus of the Government adoption reforms is to ensure children are placed without the delay. To facilitate this, a series of measures have been introduced which have reduced the timescale of court proceeding to 26 weeks, consequently the condensed time frame for completion of Child Permanence Reports and Care Plans has had an impact on social workers capacity. A new family finder role will support social workers to complete reports and ensure quality and timeliness is maintained.

The Family Finder role ensures the authority is proactive in its search for the right family for a child. This search can be limited to Hartlepool's approved adopters or can escalate to use of the Adoption Register, Be My Parent (a publication which features children in need of an adoptive placement), or individual flyers for children sent to all national Adoption Agencies. The Family Finder and Social Worker will, where necessary, attend adoption activity events in search of the right family.

Preparation for Placement

There is a robust matching process in relation to identifying and preparing for a placement, starting with an exchange of written and verbal information and a meeting between the child's foster carer, social worker and prospective adopters.

Children are prepared for placement in accordance with their assessed needs and depending on their age and understanding.

The Play Therapist and Filial Therapist based within Specialist Service will provide advice and where appropriate direct support in the preparation and placement of children within the adoptive family. The potential



disruption and impact on children when moving placement cannot be underestimated and it is crucial that significant planning and support is provided at this stage of the process.

Life Story work is completed by the Social Worker, this can be with a child if he or she is old enough or for a child if very young. The Adoption Team have completed training in Life Story work and direct work with children for foster carers and social

workers. A resource library has been established and the whole service has attended 'direct work with children' seminars where practitioners shared ideas and resources and advice was available from play therapists.

Post Adoption Support

The Adoption Team manage the 'post box system' this is an exchange of information essentially between adopters and adopted children and birth parent/extended family members. There are approximately 200 different pieces of information exchanged annually. The system is currently managed manually but in light of the confidential and sensitive nature of the information, the council has purchased an electronic system which will update and improve the management of the system.

The post box system is a vital part of the statutory services provided to birth parents, adopters and adoptees; it supports the children's sense of identity, their understanding and knowledge of their birth family and can provide reassurance to both children and birth family of each others welfare.

Local Authorities are responsible for the delivery of post adoption support to adopters and children for 3 years following the making of an Adoption Order. This support is provided by the Adoption Team and we have taken the opportunity provided through the additional funding to establish a part time dedicated Social Work post to this area. The Adoption Team provide regular newsletters to all those who have adopted via Hartlepool Adoption Agency. They offer training events on subjects such as Life Books and behavioural issues for example 'how to develop empathy'. In addition there are social events including the annual Christmas party.

The Council commission a service from After Adoption to provide independent advice and support to birth parent, adopters and adoptees. Referrals can be made by either the person themselves or by a social worker on their behalf where necessary.

Priorities for 2013-2014

- To continue to respond to any adoptive enquiries including those received via the new National Gateway.
- To reconfigure the adoption training to meet the needs of the new adoption process.
- To introduce the new 2 stage assessment process with prescribed timescales.
- To implement plans for early permanence for very young children with a plan for adoption including concurrent planning and 'foster to adopt'
- To support placing social workers in completing factual and informative Child's Permanency Reports
- To utilise the new Family Finding post to identify adoptive placements earlier using our own resources, established links and new research to positively match children with adopters within timescales.
- To recruit additional members to Panel increasing the cohort available for Panel meetings
- To work positively and proactively with children's social worker to improve the quality of Life Story work.
- To provide those who have been adopted with ongoing post adoption support.
- To implement the new electronic post box system.
- To develop Life Appreciation Days for children whose plan is for adoption.



Some quotes from Hartlepool adopters;




"My sister always recommended adoption and introduced me to her friend who had adopted through Hartlepool Adoption Service. This was extremely helpful as she outlined the positives and the difficulties and the process. She was extremely open, honest and helpful regarding the process and spoke very well of Hartlepool".

"We chose Hartlepool after researching information online of a number of local authorities. I looked at Ofsted reports and information in which Hartlepool featured highly. At the first point when I contacted Hartlepool council to ask for information and I was made me feel relaxed and at ease. Some of the other local authorities I contacted didn't respond to my calls at all. We are so pleased that we chose Hartlepool Council and we feel we definitely made the right choice"

"When we spoke to Hartlepool for the first time it was so nice to get a positive response. Hartlepool were much more helpful (than other agencies contacted). We found the initial visit encouraging and very helpful. (They) were very approachable and we felt comfortable talking to them".

"The whole process for us was pleasurable. We have nothing bad to say about Hartlepool Agency. Our social worker was fantastic and we could not have asked more from her."





Hartlepool Borough Council

Child and Adult Services

Adoption Service

Statement of Purpose

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

ADOPTION SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Elected Members of Hartlepool Borough Council approved this Statement of Purpose on 29 September 2003.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated on an annual basis and is submitted for approval to Elected members.

This document was reviewed and updated in May 2013 and is to be submitted for approval by Elected members in June 2013.

This Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and revised as appropriate by the Team Manager of the Adoption Services no later than May 2014.

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Values, Aims and Objective

Value Statements

The value statements listed below underpin the provision of Adoption services in Hartlepool.

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
- It is best for children where possible to be brought up by their own birth family.
- The child's welfare, safety and needs will be at the centre of the adoption process.
- The child's wishes and feelings will be actively sought and fully taken into account at all stages.
- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.
- Children's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language will be fully recognised and positively promoted when decisions are made.
- The particular needs of disabled children will be fully recognised and taken into account when decisions are made.
- The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth family will be valued and respected.
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many different organisations, professions and individuals who have to work together to meet the need for services of those affected by adoption.
- Government will work in partnership with local government, other statutory agencies and voluntary adoption agencies to ensure that these standards are delivered.

Aims and objectives of the adoption service

Adoption means an Adoption Order under the 1976 Act or preceding legislation and vests parental responsibility in the adopters. The Order extinguishes the rights and duties of birth parents including any parental responsibility any person had before the Order (updated in 2002 Act).

Adoption affects the following groups of children;

- Babies whose parents cannot or do not wish to care for them.
- Children who are in the care of the Local Authority.
- Children cared for by relatives.
- Children in a step-parenting family.
- Children brought into the country from abroad.

Hartlepool Borough Council Adoption Service aims to provide a range of adoptive placements for those children requiring permanent substitute families.

The Adoption Service aims to ensure that prospective adopters are provided with the skills, knowledge and support to enable them to meet the assessed needs of children placed and to provide a safe and secure home environment.

The following guiding principles underpin the services provided by the Adoption Service:

- Adoption is a process with life long implications for adopted people, adoptive parents and birth parents.
- There is a commitment to providing adoption services to all sectors of Hartlepool's population and to seek to provide sensitive needs led services to children, parents and adopters.
- There is a duty to establish and maintain services designed to meet the needs of adopted children, adopters and birth parents.
- There is a recognition of the importance of incorporating research and user feedback into the formulation of policies, procedures and practice. Constructive feedback from service users is welcomed and should be directed to the Adoption Service Team Manager.
- The provision of after adoption services to adopted adults, birth relatives, adopted children and their families, intermediary services to birth relatives and support and advice to birth parents where the plan for adoption has been made and the parents are contesting the plan.

Objectives

- To conduct recruitment activities and employ strategies in order to attract the range of adopters identified for children and young people.
- To undertake effective assessments of prospective adopters within timescales specified in National Guidance.
- To establish and support a Permanence Panel to consider assessments and make recommendations for approval to the agency decision maker.
- To provide pre-approval training for prospective adopters equipping them to meet the needs of children referred for adoption and developing their awareness of adoption issues.
- To protect children from abuse and neglect.
- To create stability for children and young people who require permanent substitute families.
- To maintain and promote contact with family members where appropriate.
- To create lifelong attachments with adoptive parents in order that children and young people continue to be supported into adulthood.
- To work in partnership with children and young people, prospective adopters, birth parents and social workers.
- To provide an environment where each child and young person is helped to make the best of his/her abilities emotionally, physically, educationally and socially.
- To provide or contract to provide after adoption services to provide support to people who have been adopted, their birth families and adoptive parents.

Services provided by the adoption agency

The Adoption Service provides the following services and facilities:

- Recruitment, assessment and preparation of prospective adopters.
- Family finding for children awaiting adoptive placements.

- Support to adoptive placements.
- Adoption and Fostering panel training
- Consultation and advice to social workers considering adoption as an option for a child/children.
- Post adoption support service.
- Post Box Service.

More detail on each of these areas of service provision can be found in the departmental Adoption Procedures.

In April 2003, Hartlepool Borough Council entered into a formal contract with “*After Adoption*” an agency specialising in post adoption support to provide services to the following groups in the form of individual work or group support:

- Adopted adults
- Birth Parents and Relatives with children under 18 who have been adopted or where the plan is adoption
- Adopted Children and their families
- Special Guardians
- Birth relatives where the children that were adopted are now adults

Staffing information

Name and Job Title	Date of Appointment	Qualifications	Experience
Jane Young Head of Business unit Resources and Specialist Services	October 2010	CSS PQ1 PQ CCA CMS	Qualified in 1989. Experienced in Children & Families Social Work and Fostering & Adoption including managing a leaving Care Team and Family Placement Team
Christine Croft Placement Team Manager	March 2012	DipSW PQ1 PQCCA DiPILM (Management)	Qualified in 1997. experienced in Children and Families Social Work and in establishing and running a fostering service. Fostering Social Worker since February 2009.
Kathryn Ling Principal Practitioner	February 2009	CQSW PQCCA	Qualified in 1983 Experience in Children and Families, Mental Health, Disability Team and Family Placement work
Clare Frankland – Adoption Social Worker and Post Box Coordinator/Post Adoption Support.	April 1989	CQSW PQCCA DiPSW	Qualified in 1981 Generic social work before specialising in Family Placement since 1988. Vast experience of adoption work
Alison Garbutt – Adoption Social Worker, Development Post.	September 2010	CSS BSc Child Care	Qualified in 1990. Worked in Children and Families team as Social worker and then Principal Practitioner before moving to current post
Emma Howarth	April 2013	BSC Child Care	Experience as a Family Resource Worker and

Name and Job Title	Date of Appointment	Qualifications	Experience
			Safeguarding and Assessment.
Patricia Adams Administrative staff – shared with Fostering Service	11.1.07		C&AS Admin Children and Families
Amanda Cusworth			Part time Administrative staff. Responsible for Post Box support.

Adoption agency - organisation and control of operations

The Placement Team Manager who is ultimately responsible to the Assistant Director within the Children's Services Department manages the Adoption Service. The Agency Decision Maker is currently the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

The Placement Team Manager supervises the Principal Practitioner who in turn takes responsibility for supervising the two full time adoption social workers and one part time (4 days per week). As part of the Government's initiative to improve adoption services the Adoption Team has received 12 months funding to increase recruitment, reduce delay in placing children, to put policies in place in respect of early adoption.

This funding has allowed some change within the structure of the team, the roles and responsibilities of worker.

Alison Garbutt now has a development role focusing upon; improving the quality of Life Story Work, supporting Social Workers in this task providing mentoring, advice and support. This role will also allow Alison to be part of the planning around early adoption and have a scope for developing Life Appreciation Days for children, whilst also taking on some assessment work.

Clare Frankland's roles and responsibilities have also been strengthened. Clare will now focus upon improving the Post Box System electronically and providing improved Post Adoption Support Services whilst still taking on some assessment work.

Emma Howarth has responsibility for Family Finding for both children needing adoptive placements and long term fostering. She is also responsible for supporting and giving advice to the Safeguarding and Assessment Team's in completing Child's Permanency Reports.

The funding has also allowed the Team to increase its capacity. There are plans to recruit two full time workers, on a temporary basis of 12 months, (1 of whom will join the team in June 2013) with another vacancy to be filled later this year.

The roles of these workers will be fundamentally to assist in the recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters and those wishing to consider early adoption.

The Placement Team Manager is also the Agency Panel Advisor.

As with any Adoption Agency, the Adoption and Fostering Panel is critical to the monitoring and quality assurance of the work of the agency and enables the agency to meet its statutory obligations.

The Adoption and Fostering Panel takes place on a fortnightly basis to consider both fostering and adoption matters, reducing any delay in recommending the approval of any matching consideration.

Statutory Requirements

1. Specific requirements govern the composition and terms of reference of Adoption Panels. These are set out in the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and the Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendments) Regulations 2011.
2. The Adoption Panel established by Hartlepool Borough Council performs an important role in assisting the agency to reach the best possible decision in respect of:
 - The suitability of prospective adopters and foster carers
 - Whether a child should be placed with a specific prospective adopter.
 - Foster Carer Review and De-registration.
 - Reviews of adopters where they have waited more than 6 months for a child to be placed.

The Panel can give advice to the agency (but is not required to do so) on:

- Contact arrangements
- The number of children the prospective adopter may be suitable to adopt, their age range, sex likely needs and background.
- Whether a child qualifies for an adoption allowance

The panel is also required to feedback to the agency every six months on the quality of reports presented to panel as part of its quality assurance role.

The Regulations seek to ensure that the Adoption Panel has a separate identity from the agency with an important independent element. The National Minimum Standards (England) 2011, and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 further endorse this level of independence.

Panel Composition

In accordance with amended regulations in force from April, 2011, Hartlepool Borough Council have established a “central list” of persons considered to have the appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the Panel for consideration.

The requirement is that the panel is a multi agency body with a considerable element of independence from the adoption and fostering service. This independence means that they do not make the decisions on behalf of the adoption and fostering service but make recommendations in relation to their statutory functions.

There is no limit to the number of people on the central list and the same people do not have to be appointed to every panel meeting. For the purpose of considering adoption matters the members of the central list will include:

- An Adoption Social Worker
- the Medical Adviser to the agency
- other persons considered suitable including independent persons. These people could include specialists in education, Child and Adolescent mental health and those with personal experience of adoption
- and may include other Social workers

The Panel Chair is required to be independent of the agency and to have the following significant qualities:

- The authority and competence to chair a panel
- The ability to analyse and explain complex situations
- The ability to identify key issues, problems and solutions
- Excellent interpersonal, oral and written communication skills

Panel business can only be conducted if there are at least five members which for the purposes of considering adoption matters must include

- The Independent Chair or Vice Chair – the guidance now indicates that more than one Vice Chair can be appointed
- Adoption Social worker
- At least one other “independent person”- who is not a member or employee of the Adoption Agency.

In addition to the members of the Panel, the Adoption Panel should also include:

Panel Adviser: This is the Placement Team Manager who attends the Panel in an advisory capacity. They advise the Chairperson and panel members on matters of agency policy, practice and procedure. The Adviser takes back any issues raised by Panel members to the Adoption Social Workers or the agency as a whole.

The professional adviser is not a panel member and does not take part in reaching a recommendation.

Legal Adviser: This person advises the Panel on any relevant legal issues. The Legal Adviser is not a Panel Member and does not take part in reaching a recommendation. The Legal Advisor is not expected to attend panel in person, unless specifically asked and required to do so. They are however expected to provide legal advice and guidance in writing to be considered by panel members for each panel meeting.

Membership of Hartlepool Adoption Panel

- Chairperson – Independent Person
- Vice Chairperson Team Manager, Principle Resources Manager
- Vice Chairperson – agency worker
- Agency Social Worker – Social Worker, Through Care Team/Adopter
- Agency Social Worker – Social Worker, Disability Team
- Elected Member
- Adoption Social Worker /Adopter
- Independent member/Adopter
- Independent member/Adopted Person
- Independent member/Foster carer/Adopter
- Independent members – Foster carers x3
- Medical Advisor
- Previously Looked After Child.

Advisors to Panel

- Panel Adviser
- Legal Adviser
- Medical Adviser

Formal voting is not a requirement of the Adoption & Fostering Panel and the Chairperson must try to encourage a consensus view amongst Panel Members. The Panel Chairperson can ask for further information to be made available for Panel Members where a clear consensus is not possible. Any serious reservations expressed by Panel Members must be minuted for consideration by the Agency Decision Maker. The Agency Decision Maker in Hartlepool is Sally Robinson the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

All Panel members are required to have a current Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Check and new members are also asked to provide two references which are verified by telephone, an employment history and verification of their identity. New members of the Panel attend a Panel as an observer prior to attending as a full member. They will also receive an induction programme relevant to their needs as part of this process.

Panel members are required to participate in annual reviews. Reviews of the panel members are conducted by the Panel Chair and the Panel Adviser. The annual review of the Panel Chair is conducted by the Agency Decision maker.

The agency is required to arrange panel training at least one day a year but the intention is to extend this to provide additional half day sessions to update on developments throughout the year.

The Adoption & Fostering Panel meets twice monthly and is instrumental in monitoring and evaluating the provision of services to ensure that the quality and effectiveness of the adoption service are of an appropriate standard.

On occasion additional panels may need to be arranged to meet the needs of the service.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints can be made about any aspect of service provided by the Children's Services Department. Complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days. There are up to three stages to the complaints system but the aim is to resolve complaints quickly and informally at Stage One wherever possible.

The complaints system can be used by; users of services, carers of those using services, potential service users, foster carers or adopters. The system can also be used to appeal about a decision made about a service provided by the department.

Complaints are dealt with in three stages:

- Stage One: The informal resolution stage. A complaint will be acknowledged and a Social Work Team Manager will look in to the complaint and try to resolve it. The complainant will be notified of the outcome within 10 working days or 20 working days if the complaint is complex.
- Stage Two: The complaint will be considered by an Independent Person who will check that the investigation is fair and complete
- Stage Three: The Review Panel Stage. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with any part of the written response at Stage 2 it is possible for the complainant to go to a review panel.

As well as the corporate complaints system detailed above, prospective adopters who have not been approved by Panel have two main options:

Prospective adopters who have not been approved by Panel are entitled to make further representations to Hartlepool Borough Council, as the Adoption Agency;

OR

From 30 April 2004, prospective adopters have the right to refer their case to an Independent Review panel for a review of the agency's determination. The independent panel do not have the power to overturn the original decision but will make a recommendation to the agency on the suitability of the applicants to be adoptive parents.

These options cannot be run simultaneously; prospective adopters who have not been approved by panel must decide whether to make further representations to the agency or seek an independent review of the decision.

Useful Contact Numbers and Addresses

Placement Team
8-9 Church Street
Hartlepool
TS24 7DJ

Tel: 01429 405588
E-mail – fosterandadopt@hartlepool.gov.uk

After Adoption
Unit 112
The Design Works
William Street
Felling
Gateshead
NE10 OJP

Tel: 0191 4788396
Action Line: 0800 056 8578
Website: www.afteradoption.org.uk
E-mail – helpline@talkadoption.org.uk

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)
Head Office
Saffron House
6-10 Kirby Street
London
EC1N 8TS

Tel: 0207 7421 2601

BAAF Northern England Tel: 0113 289 1101

Website: www.baaf.org.uk
E-mail: mail@baaf.org.uk

Dr Roger Morgan
Children's Rights Director
Ofsted
Aviation house
125, Kingsway
LONDON WC23 6SE

Tel: 0800 528 0731
Website : www.rights4me.org

APPENDIX 1

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL – ADOPTION SERVICE

Vacancy currently covered by the Assistant Director of Children Services and the Assistant Director of Adult Services

Director of Child and Adult Services

Cllr Chris Simmons
Lead Member for Children's Services

Sally Robinson
Assistant Director of Specialist and Safeguarding Services

Jane Young
Head of Business Unit Resources and Specialist Services

Christine Croft
Placement Team Manager

Kath Ling
Principal Practitioner

Alison Garbutt
Adoption Social Worker/Development Worker

Clare Frankland
Adoption Social Worker/Post Box Coordinator/Post Adoption Support

Emma Howarth
Adoption Social Worker Family Finder

X2 12 monthly temporary vacancies



Adoption And You

The Adoption Service in Hartlepool

This booklet is to help you understand a bit more about what 'adoption' means.



Hello, this book has been written by Hartlepool's Adoption Team to answer some questions you might have about 'adoption'.

Who are we?

Our Team Manager is Christine Croft. Then there are 3 full time adoption social workers, Kath Ling, Clare Frankland, Kath Bishop and Alison Garbutt.

What do we do?

We find families who want to adopt a child and make sure they can look after you, keep you safe and help you to be happy.

We also help your social worker find the best family for you.

Clare is also the person who makes sure that letters which are sent between you and your birth family arrive safely.

What is adoption?

If you can't live at home with your own family, you may be adopted.

Adoption means you go to live in a new family where you will be safe, loved and cared for.

Adoption is agreed in Court so it is 'legal'.



How is adoption different from fostering?

If you are fostered you stay with a family while problems at your home are being sorted out, or plans are agreed for where you are going to live.

Adoption means that your adopted family will be your family for the rest of your life.

Why are children adopted?

There are lots of reasons why children sometimes can't live with their birth families. Maybe your parents found it hard to look after you properly – or to keep you safe. This does not mean that they don't love you.



What is it like being adopted?



You live in a new home with your new family. You may have new brothers and sisters. Maybe new grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles.

Who decides I am going to be adopted?

The Judge at Court decides whether or not you should be adopted after listening to your birth parents, your social worker and your Children's Guardian.

What is a Children's Guardian?

A Children's Guardian is someone who listens to your feelings about what is going on and makes sure that everyone at court knows how you feel.

You can trust them and talk to them.

They will make sure your thoughts and feelings are listened to.

What if I don't want to be adopted?

You should talk to your Children's Guardian and to your social worker. They will listen to your reasons and explain the way you feel to the Judge.

The Judge may not always make the decision you want, but what they decide will always be in your best interest.



What will my new family be like?

There are people who really want to be parents and for various reasons, they may not have children of their own. They get in touch with us to ask if they can be parents to children like you.

Families come in all shapes and sizes. All kinds of people adopt children.

There may be just one parent or there may be two. Some have other children of their own. Some live in the town, others live in the country. Adoption social workers check that everyone who wants to adopt children knows how to look after them and that they will give them a caring and loving home where they will be safe. Those families then have to wait until a child like you needs parents like them.



Who chooses my new family?

Your social worker will talk to you about the type of family you want and take great care choosing a family that is just right for you. Your social worker will go to meet the families who want to adopt you to choose the best family for you. They will then tell a group of people called an Adoption Panel about the family, and about you. If they agree that the family is the right one for you, you will meet your new family and have the chance to get to know them. You should tell your social worker if you feel worried about going to live with them.

If the meetings go well and you like your new family, you will go to live with them in their home. Your social worker will visit you regularly to see how you are getting on.

How will your adoptive family become your 'forever' family?

When you have lived with your adoptive family for at least ten weeks, your new family will ask a Judge to decide if they can adopt you.

If the Judge says yes, you will legally become a member of your new family. You can keep your first name but will usually use your new family's surname.

What about my birth family?

Adoption doesn't mean forgetting about the people you know and love. If it is safe and good for you to stay in touch with your birth family it can be arranged. Most children who are adopted keep in touch with their birth families by sending a letter every year. This letter lets them know how you are and tells them about what you have been doing. Often, someone in your birth family will write back so you know that they are well and pleased that you are happy.



Contact arrangements can change as you grow older.



Who will help if I am not happy?

If you are unhappy then it is important to talk to someone who can help you sort things out. Talk to someone you feel you can trust such as;

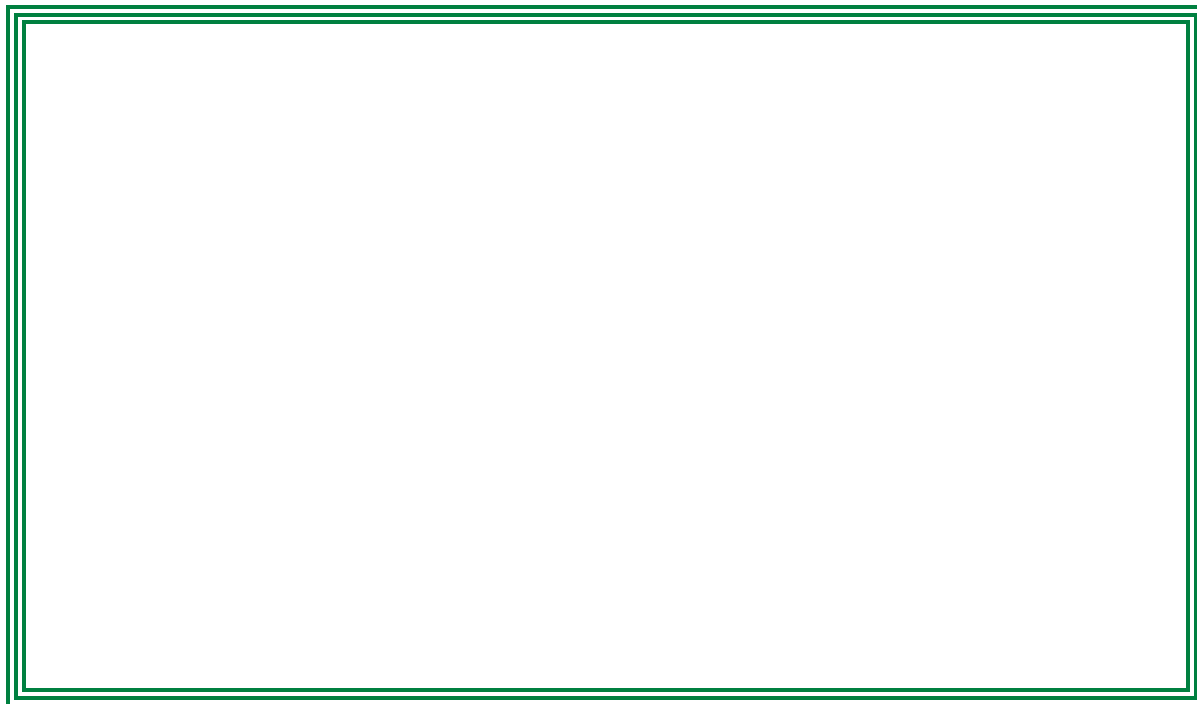
- ❖ Your foster carers
- ❖ Your adopters
- ❖ Your social worker
- ❖ Your family's adoption social worker
- ❖ Your teacher

Alternatively you could contact, the National Youth Advocacy Service on 0800 616 101 or one of the services listed below.

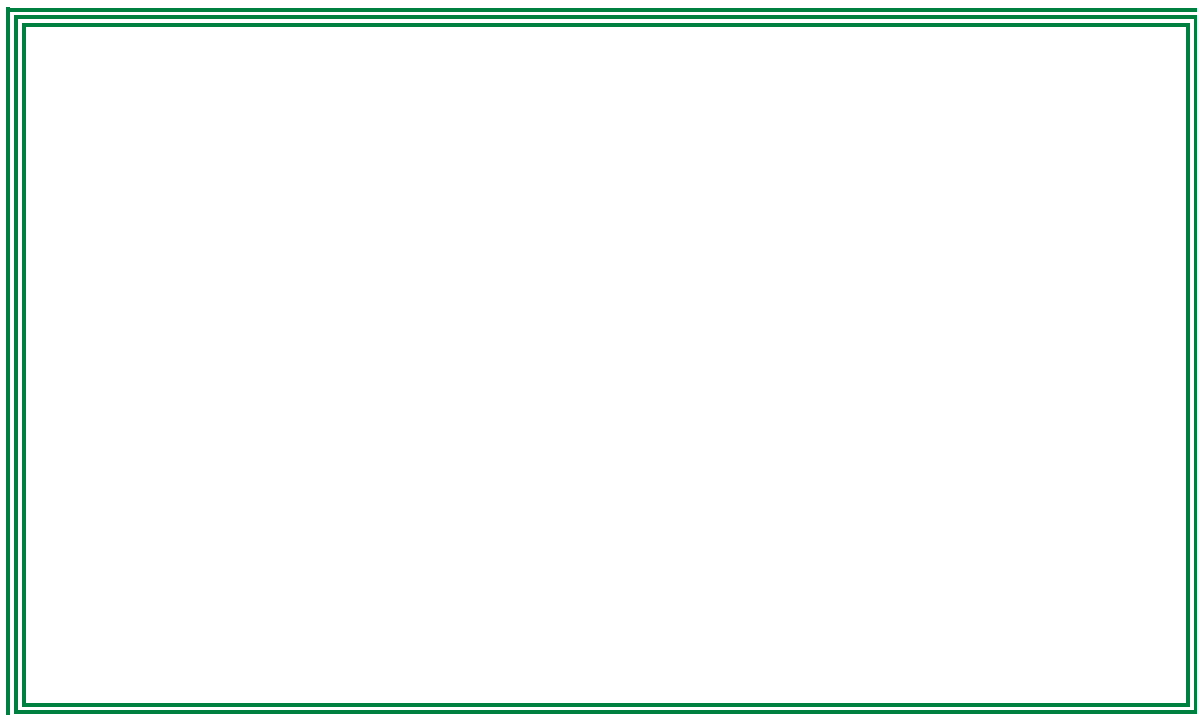


The social workers involved with you try very hard to do a good job and there are other people who check to make sure we are doing our best for you.

**Use this space to write about what you think you
would want your adoptive family to be like?**



**What would you want them to know about you?
What do you like? What don't you like?**



Important Phone Numbers

Your Social Worker is
Telephone.....

Your Independent Reviewing Officer is.
.....
Telephone

Hartlepool Adoption Team **01429 405700**

Childline **0800111**

Adoption UK Helpline **0844 848 7900**
www.adoptionuk.org

NORCAP **01865 875000**
(Counselling service) **www.norcap.org.uk**

NSPCC **0808 800 5000**
www.nspcc.org.uk

NYAS **0800 616 101**
National Youth Advocacy Service **www.nyas.net**

Ofsted **0300 123 1231**
www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Children's Rights Alliance **020 7278 8222**
www.crae.org.uk

Office of the Children's Rights Director **0800 528 0731**
www.rights4me.org

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

2 July 2013



Report of: Assistant Director, Children's Services

Subject: FOSTERING SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13
AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2013/14

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

Non Key

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to present Children Services Committee the Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2012/13, the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose for 2013/14 and Young Person's Fostering Guide.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The work of the Fostering Services is subject to National Minimum Standards applicable to the provision of foster care for children looked after. The National Minimum Standards together with regulations for fostering and the placement of children looked after form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering agencies.
- 2.2 It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards that the service produces a Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide for fostering services and reviews these at least annually. It is also a requirement that the executive side of the local authority receive three monthly reports detailing the management, outcomes and functioning of the Fostering Services. This information is provided within the annual report attached at **Appendix 1**. The Statement of Purpose for 2013/14 is attached at **Appendix 2**, and Children's Guide and Young Person's Fostering Guide is attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 2.3 The Annual Report provides details of the staffing arrangements in the service, training received by both staff and foster carers, the constitution of the Fostering and Adoption Panel, activity in relation to the recruitment,

preparation and assessment of prospective foster carers, and the priorities for further service development in 2012/13.

- 2.4 The Fostering Services Minimum Standard 25.7 requires fostering services to ensure the executive side of the local authority:
- Receives a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency once every 3 months;
 - Monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for children;
 - Satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of the registration.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Children's Services Committee approve The Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2012/13 is attached at **Appendix 1**. The Fostering Services Statement of Purpose 2013/14 is attached at **Appendix 2** and Children's Guide and Young Person's Fostering Guide is attached at **Appendix 3**.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Children's Services Committee are asked to approve the Fostering Annual Report, Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide in line with the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Fostering Service is a statutory service of the Council and as such Children's Services Committee requires information about how services are delivered and their effectiveness.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011.

8. CONTACT OFFICER

Jane Young
Head of Business Unit
Specialist Services
01429 405584
Jane.young@hartlepool.gov.uk

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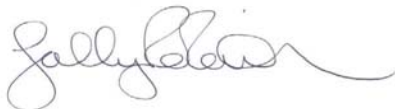
Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the Annual Report of the Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering Service. Fostering children is the cornerstone of our services for children and young people looked after and the Council and our children looked after could not achieve what we do without the dedication, commitment and support of our foster carers. Fostering in Hartlepool is a real success story; we provide high quality foster care placements that enable children and young people to remain within their home town, have continuity of education, health care and social networks and maintain strong links with their birth families. With 86% of all our children and young people in foster care within the provision of the local authority, the service leads the way in ensuring we achieve the vision and aspirations for looked after children detailed in the Children Looked After Strategy:

- To ensure that every looked after child in Hartlepool experiences high quality care and stable relationships, is nurtured and grows up with a sense of identity and belonging;
- When a child becomes looked after, there must be sufficient range of accommodation options available to be able to match the child to a placement that will meet his/her needs.

The stability of care placements is key to children and young people achieving positive outcomes and over the past 5 years the performance of the local authority has improved year on year ensuing that our children have stable foster homes from which to achieve their dreams, aspirations and goals. For Hartlepool and our foster carers, care does not end at 18; our foster carers continue to support children whom they have previously looked after into adulthood providing them with a home and support and guidance until they are ready to make their way in the world.

In June 2012 OFSTED judged the overall fostering service to be 'Good.' The service received a 'Good' judgement for Outcomes for Children, Overall Effectiveness and Safeguarding and an 'Outstanding' judgement for Quality of Service, a fitting endorsement of the quality of services provided by the Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering Service and its Foster Carers.



Sally Robinson

Introduction

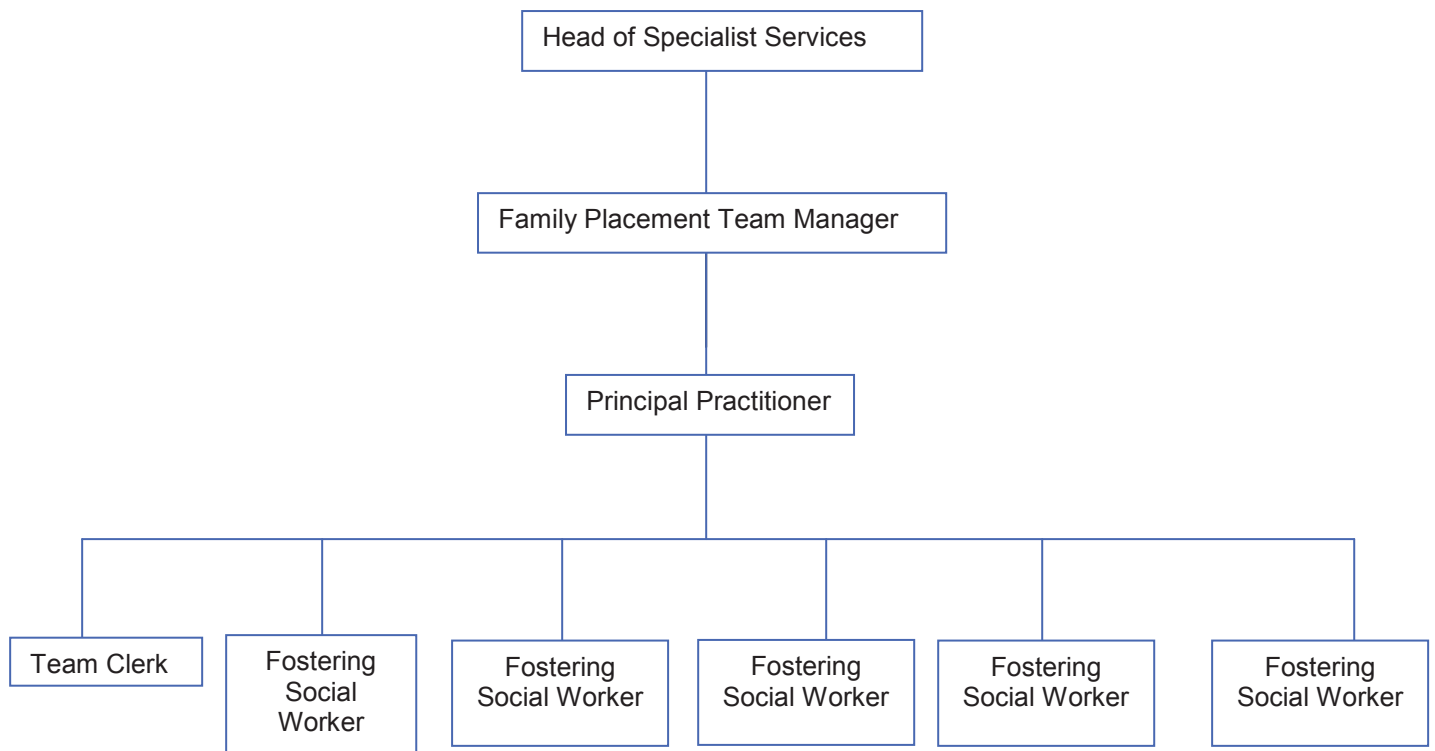
The annual report of the Fostering Service for Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) provides information about the activity of and outcomes achieved by the service during 2012/13. The report will reflect on the work of the team and service provided, identify changes that have taken place within the service and detail the statistical information in respect of the Fostering Service from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. Finally the report will set out priorities for service development during 2013/14.

The Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 places a requirement upon Local Authority Fostering Services to ensure that the Executive side of the Council receive 3 monthly reports on the management and outcomes of the service. The Annual Report provides a full review of the service and interim progress reports will be made to Children's Services Committee on a quarterly basis throughout the financial year.

The aim of the fostering service is to recruit, train and support foster carers to provide high quality placements for the children of Hartlepool. This is achieved through the following objectives:

- The Fostering team actively works in partnership with children, young people, their families and other stakeholders involved in promoting positive outcomes for children and young people looked after by Hartlepool Borough Council in order to deliver a high quality foster care service;
- The Fostering team actively seeks to involve foster carers, children and young people looked after and children of foster carers in the development and continuous improvement of the service;
- The Fostering team recruit, assess, train and support a suitable and diverse range of foster carers to provide quality care and placement choice for children and young people;
- The Fostering team promotes stable placements and continuity of care for children to ensure carers, children and young people receive appropriate support and minimum disruption leading to good outcomes;
- To ensure that wherever possible and appropriate siblings will be accommodated together;
- The individual child's needs/wishes and feelings are paramount and taken into consideration in relation to placements.

Fostering Team Structure



Governance and Oversight

OFSTED carry out 3 yearly inspections of Fostering Services, the Council's Service were most recently inspected in June 2012 and judged as Good.

The Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011 set out the expectations in relation to the management, performance and governance of a fostering service.

The Fostering team are required to provide a quarterly report to Children's Services Committee detailing performance in relation to fostering.

Hartlepool Borough Council has established an appropriately constituted Family Placement Panel which, in accordance with the Regulations, is chaired by an Independent Person and has established a 'central list' of persons who have the appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the Panel for ratification.

This central list includes the Independent Chair, 2 Vice Chairs, 2 Agency Social Workers, an Elected Member, 6 Independent Members, 2 of whom are foster carers for another authority, a Medical Advisor and a person who was previously looked after.

The Panel also receives advice from the local authority Legal Advisor and Panel Advisor.

The Panel make recommendations on the suitability of prospective foster carers, long term foster care plans for children, foster carer reviews and the matching of children with permanent foster families. The table to the left highlights the Fostering Panel activity for 2012/13.

With regards to plans for children considered by the Fostering Panel, the plan for long term fostering was recommended for approval	17
Matches considered by the Panel	17
Number of matches involving foster carers from Independent Fostering Agencies.	1
The Fostering Panel considered and endorsed the recommendations of Foster Carer Reviews	24
The Fostering Panel met in the last year	18 times

Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, is the Fostering Agency Decision Maker, and as such makes the final decision in relation to foster carer approval, children's permanence plans and matches. Sally is robust in her quality assurance and decision making ensuring that the best interest of children is always at the heart of what we do.

Preparation for Placement

The Fostering Service operates a duty system for responding to placement requests. Supervising Social Workers will liaise with the Social Worker to ensure that there is a thorough understanding of the child's needs so that they are able to match him/her to the most appropriate carer. For permanent fostering placements, a Child Appreciation Day is held and approval for the match is sought through the Family Placement Panel and Agency Decision Maker.

Here is an example of a foster carer profile

All of our approved foster carers have a foster carer profile which is shared with children as part of preparation for placement.

A thorough matching process is undertaken prior to placements being made and where time allows, a planning meeting is held prior to the child being placed, involving foster carers and the child's parent/s.

Our names are Gillian and Gary we are foster carers. We live in a four bed-room house in Hartlepool. It is near to the town centre, Ward Jackson Park and Summerhill.



The foods we like are Chinese, Pasta and Indian.

In some instances it is necessary for a child to be placed at short notice to safeguard and promote their welfare. On these occasions a planning meeting is held as soon as is practically possible following the placement.

The team take into account the assessed needs of the child and the child and his/her family's wishes, and wherever possible maintain siblings together in the same placement.

Recruitment and Retention

The service has a recruitment strategy using a range of mediums to market the service and attract new foster carers. This activity takes place locally within Hartlepool and through collaboration regionally on longer, more extensive campaigns.

Members of the fostering team take part quarterly in a regional Recruitment and Marketing Forum and as part of this were involved in a joint radio campaign to recruit foster carers. The aim of Forum is to look at regional trends for recruitment, maximise resources and opportunities for collaboration.

The recruitment activity within the last 12 months has consisted of regular adverts in Hartlepool Mail, Hartbeat, the Evening Gazette and each term within the Primary Times publication which is distributed to every primary age school pupil in the Tees Valley Area.

The team have held a series of 'drop in' sessions for council employees and have actively encouraged fostering enquiries from council employees through the use of the council e-mail systems.

There have been a series of articles within local press in relation to the positive experiences of young people who are care leavers in Hartlepool and also current foster carers sharing their positive experience through editorials in the press.

The table below details the foster care capacity as at the 31 March 2013.

Number of foster carers	96
Number of placements available	166
How many children in placement?	153
How many vacancies?	13
How many not able to use/on hold?	3

Recruitment and Retention

The table below details the recruitment activity for 2012/13.

Initial enquiries - where did people hear about the service?	82 initial enquires Where stipulated: 5 Council E-mail 1 TV advert (by another authority) 6 Hartlepool Mail 4 Internet 10 Recommendation from current carers 3 Evening Gazette 1 Primary Times
Information pack sent out between 1.4.12 – 31.3.13	82 packs sent out
Initial visits - How many proceeded	34 20
Preparation Group Nov 2012	7
How prospective carers many waiting for a group?	6 Preparation Group planned for July 2013

Training

All the Council's approved foster carers have completed the Children Workforce Development Council – Standards for Foster Carers and new carers are working on the standards and on target for completion within required timescales.

Prior to approval, all prospective carers undertake a 4 day preparation course ran by the team following the BAAF Skills to foster programme. The Preparation Training is regularly reviewed to ensure that the material remains up to date, is relevant and reflects recent research. All foster carers undergo a full home study assessment which also assists them in preparing to become foster carers and care for other people's children.

Post approval training includes access to all courses available to the children's workforce in Hartlepool and 4 discrete training day for foster carers. In 2012/13 the bespoke training days covered:

- Life story work;
- Preparation for adulthood;
- Preparing children to move to permanent carers;
- Fostering standards;
- Attachment.

The fostering team facilitate monthly support groups for foster carers, these groups consists of informal discussion and support as well as the provision of information and an opportunity to offer peer support.

Foster carers now have access to the Council Children's Services Practice Manual that provides information of policy, procedures and regulations and training and support materials.

Over the last year foster carers have all been given a Hartlepool Borough Council e mail address and have received appropriate training on information governance. All foster carers are now successfully using this as a means of secure communication with fostering social workers, children's social workers, independent reviewing officers and the training department.

A Survey was completed with all foster carers to identify their training needs for 2013/14. This survey will inform this year's annual training programme.

Post Approval Support and Participation

The fostering service is part of the Specialist Services Division and is located at Church Street where the following support and participation activities are available:

- All foster carers have an allocated Supervising Social Worker and receive a minimum monthly supervision and support visit. Supervising Social Workers also make two unannounced visits a year to foster carers, this undertaken by a different member of staff to the foster carers allocated social worker.
- Funding is provided directly to the Hartlepool Foster Carer Association which provides regular communication with carers, a newsletter and activities for all foster carers and their families to participate in. A Supervising Social Worker from the Fostering team acts as a contact point and supports these activities. The Foster Carer Association hold regular coffee mornings for carers.
- The Placement Support Team provides individual support to carers, children and young people. This support can range from practical and emotional advice and guidance to respite support and will be identified as part of an assessment of need in partnership with the children's social worker and fostering Supervising Social Worker.
- The Department commissions services for looked after children and foster carers from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Carers have access to support in relation to individual young people for whom they are caring and psychologists have attended support groups to discuss general issues and challenges relating to caring for children looked after.
- The Placement Support Team facilitates the Foster Carer Sons and Daughters group, meeting on a monthly basis and providing activities and advice for children and young people.



Post Approval Support and Participation

- A support group for male foster carers has recently been established and is facilitated by a Supervising Social Worker.
- The Fostering Team has a duty worker throughout the working week who is available to respond to any calls from carers. In addition to this, foster carers have access to the Emergency Duty Team, the commissioned out of hours service and an out of hours telephone support service provided by Jane Young Head of Business Unit (Specialist Services), Wendy Rudd, Head of Business Unit (Safeguarding, Assessment & Support and Maureen McEnaney, (Safeguarding and Review Manager) on a rota basis. Foster carers can contact the support phone line at any time.
- Foster carers are represented on the Council's Corporate Parent Forum and participate fully in these meetings.
- Foster carers are represented on the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership which takes the lead in the implementation and delivery of the Children Looked After Strategy.
- A newsletter which is written by the Foster Carer Association and supported by a Social Worker within the fostering team is distributed to all carers.
- All foster carers have access to the Departments web based Practice Manual which contains the Foster Carer handbook, Departmental Policies and Procedures and research information. The manual also provides a vehicle of communication and participation.
- There have been several drop in events held at Church Street throughout the year including sessions with health visitors, providing advice on weaning babies and a health promotion moving covering topics including healthy eating, smoking cessations and dental health.



Celebrating Success

The Fostering service holds an annual Celebration Evening to celebrate the efforts of the longest serving foster carers namely those that have been approved for ten years or more and also to demonstrate our gratitude to all our carers for the care that they provide to the looked after children of Hartlepool. There is also Celebration Evening and Summer Barbeque for children and young people who are looked after. Foster carers are very supportive ensuring attendance and participation of children and young people.



Priorities for 2013-2014

- To forge ahead in delivering the Edge of Care Support Carers Scheme.
- Target recruitment to attract foster carers for older children and sibling groups and those with more challenging behaviours.
- To continue to offer and deliver an extensive training programme to our carers to ensure that all of our fostering households have achieved the CWDC qualification within the allocated timescales and can demonstrate continued professional development as foster carers.
- To embed the foster carer support group for male carers.
- To develop the new family finding post enabling children and young people to have 'permanency' in their lives as early as possible.
- To continue to demonstrate our appreciation of the commitment provided by our foster carers.
- To continue to strive to support our carers to engender stability within placements for our looked after children.
- To consult foster carers in relation to the performance of the Local Authority in relation to support, training and retention of foster carers and to use this information to develop future priorities.
- Continue to facilitate sons and daughters group for children of foster carers.
- To further improve the quality of the care provided to children and young people to ensure better outcomes are achieved for children and young people in all aspects of their lives.

Some quotes from Foster Carers, Social Workers and Young People

"We heard very positive comments about the support from Hartlepool's fostering team and this greatly influenced our decision to apply to the local authority"

Prospective Foster Carer

"Keep on doing a great job, thank you for making my job a little easier by providing the care you did"

Social Worker about a foster carer

"The couple are adaptable and are genuine caring people with a desire to help and support young people to have improved lives"

Social Worker about a foster carer

"4 years ago it was very scary going into care and now it feels like home"

Looked after Child

"I feel really nice and happy about sharing my family with different children and seeing other kids improve"

Foster carers own child aged 10.



HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILD AND ADULT SERVICES

FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

**HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL
FOSTERING SERVICE**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This Statement of Purpose was initially approved by the Elected Members of Hartlepool Borough Council on 29th September 2003.

It was signed on behalf of the Elected Members by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

This Statement of Purpose was reviewed and up dated in May 2013 and is to be approved by the Elected Members of Hartlepool Borough Council.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and revised as appropriate by the Team Manager of the Fostering Service no later than April 2014.

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Introduction

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services England Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, that each fostering agency produces a statement of purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that are provided. This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements and also how the services is managed and its fitness to provide fostering services. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and shows how the welfare of children will be met and good outcomes achieved for all children in its care. It also demonstrates the systems which we have set in place to recruit, train, supervise and support foster carers.

This statement is available to all members of staff, foster carers, children and birth parents and is available on our Practice Guidance site fostering microsite. A copy of this statement is also to be lodged with Ofsted. The information contained is regularly updated, and will be amended annually.

A separate Children's Guide to the Fostering Service is given to all young people who are to be placed with foster carers. This is also available on the micro site.

Children's Guide

Subject to the child's age and understanding, the fostering service ensures the child received the Children's guide at the point of placement and that the foster carer explains the contents of the Children's Guide in a way that is accessible. The Children's Guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern. The fostering service will update this guide as required on an annual basis to ensure that information is current and reflects developments in the service. The service would seek to ensure that the guide was available in a format appropriate to the communication needs of the child concerned and would access council resources such as language translation to achieve this.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR STANDARDS OF CARE

AIMS

The main aim of Hartlepool Fostering Service is to provide safe, high quality foster care placements for children and young people that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals. As well as promoting their health and general well-being the service is committed to ensuring that foster carers and family friends or Connected Persons carers are encouraged to help children and young people to reach their maximum educational ability.

Foster carers will provide good parenting for all children who are looked after and children will be consulted and encouraged to actively participate in their care and family life.

The Fostering Service will ensure that foster carers are provided with the skills, knowledge and support to enable them to meet the assessed needs of children placed.

Our service is committed to multi-agency working and develops partnerships and protocols with organisations which can progress the needs of our looked after children. We work at all levels in partnership with Education and Health to promote the well being of children in public care in Hartlepool.

To ensure foster carers make children and young people aware of their rights and the comments, complaints and advocacy process by passing on the relevant information.

Ensure that all practice promotes equal opportunities for all and value diversity of both foster children and carers regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, religious beliefs, disability or marital status.

To ensure that any decisions are transparent and fair and that any concerns are addressed and information about the complaints procedure is made available to all.

The service will consult regularly and learn from those that are in receipt of services through comments, compliments or complaints and have regular meetings with foster carers, senior managers and elected members.

The service will consult regularly with children who are fostered, using a variety of methods to ensure their voice is heard.

The service will also undertake the assessment and support to family and friends or Connected Persons carers to ensure they are equipped to provide the high quality of care aspired to for all children who are looked after. The process including timescales and responsibilities for undertaking a Connected

Person assessment are detailed within the Hartlepool Borough Council Connected Persons Policy and Procedure document.

OBJECTIVES

- To plan and implement effective recruitment campaigns and strategies in order to attract the number and range of carers identified to meet the complex and diverse needs of the looked after population of Hartlepool and to ensure a choice of high quality foster placements.
- To ensure that wherever possible and appropriate siblings will be accommodated together.
- The individual child's needs/wishes and feelings are paramount and taken into consideration in relation to placements.
- To undertake effective timely assessments of prospective carers including Connected Persons carers within specified timescales to ensure that children are afforded safe and effective placements.
- To maintain and support an Adoption and Fostering Panel to consider Foster Carer and Connected Persons assessments and make recommendations for approval of prospective Foster Carers, children's plans for long term foster care, plans for Special Guardianship and approval of the match of Named Children with Foster Carers. The panel also considers the first reviews of Foster carers and subsequent reviews where category changes are being agreed or there have been issues regarding placements
- To provide pre and post approval training for applicants and carers, equipping them to meet the diverse needs of this group of children and young people.
- To provide regular recorded supervision and support contacts with carers by suitably qualified and experienced staff.
- To ensure that additional and flexible support is available to carers to underpin placement stability and improve outcomes for children in placement.
- To protect children and young people from abuse and neglect through safer recruitment practices and adherence to safeguarding policy and procedures in all areas of the service including for staff, carers and panel members.
- To create stability for children and young people in foster care through robust matching processes and a good standard of consistent and effective support.

- To achieve better life chances for looked after children particularly in relation to health, education and employment and leisure activities through promoting the development of skills and expertise within the fostering community and engendering and supporting a culture of aspiration for our looked after children.
- To maintain and promote contact with family members where appropriate.
- To prepare young people adequately for when they eventually leave their foster placement.
- To create lifelong attachments with carers in order that children and young people continue to be supported into adulthood.
- To work in partnership with children and young people, their parents and carers and social workers.
- Provide an environment where each child and young person is helped to make the best of his or her abilities emotionally, physically, educationally and socially.

PRINCIPLES

The work of Hartlepool Fostering Service is based on the following principles:

1. **Child focussed** – the child's welfare and needs are at the centre of the fostering process and their wishes and feelings are sought and taken into account in all aspects of their care.
2. **Partnership** – the Fostering Service will work in partnership with children and their parents, foster carers and their families, and social work staff and other professionals when delivering the service.
3. **Anti-discriminatory practice** – the Fostering Service will respect human rights and will ensure that there is fair and equal access to all its services. The services it provides will be free from discrimination, prejudice and racism. The service will value diversity and promote equality.

THE STANDARDS OF CARE

The Fostering Service will in its delivery support Hartlepool Child and Adult Services in meeting the child focussed standards which set out what children in foster care need as detailed in the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011:

Standard 1: The child's wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them

- Children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases; and know how to obtain support and make a complaint.
- The views of others with an important relationship to the child are gathered and taken into account.

Standard 2: Promoting a positive identity, potential and valuing diversity through individualised care

- Children have a positive self view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.

Standard 3: Promoting positive behaviour and relationships

- Children enjoy sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately.

Standard 4: Safeguarding Children

- Children feel safe and are safe. Children understand how to protect themselves and are protected from significant harm, including neglect, abuse and accident.

Standard 5: Children Missing from Care

- Children rarely go missing and if they do, they return quickly
- Children who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return

Standard 6: Promoting good health and wellbeing

- Children live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs.

Standard 7: Education, employment and leisure activities

- Children are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities
- Children are able to make a positive contributing to the foster home and their wider community

Standard 8: Promoting educational achievement

- The education and achievement of children is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children are supported to achieve their educational potential.

Standard 9: Promoting and supporting contact

- Children have, where appropriate, constructive contact with their parents, grandparents, siblings, half-siblings, wider family, friends and people who play a significant role in their lives.

Standard 10: Providing a suitable physical environment for the foster child

- Children live in foster homes which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development.

Standard 11: Preparation for a placement

- Children are welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued.
- Children feel part of the family. They are not treated differently to the foster carer's own children living in the household. The child's needs are met and they benefit from a stable placement.

Standard 12: Promoting independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care

- Children are prepared for, and supported into, adulthood so that they can reach their full potential and achieve economic well-being.

Children Looked After Strategy

In addition to the national standards, Hartlepool Fostering Service has adopted the visions or aspirations for Looked after children detailed in the Children Looked After Strategy which underpin its approach to service delivery. These include:

- The vision is to ensure that every looked after child in Hartlepool experiences high quality care and stable relationships, is nurtured and grows up with a sense of identity and belonging.
- When a child becomes looked after, there must be sufficient range of accommodation options available to be able to match the child to a placement that will meet his/her needs.

THE SERVICES PROVIDED

The services provided specifically by the Fostering service fall into two main areas:

- 1) those provided to registered foster carers and potential foster carers including Connected persons carers
 - initial visits to people expressing an interest in becoming foster carers
 - preparation training for applicants
 - competency based assessments of applicants
 - support systems for approved foster carers and Connected Persons carers including allocated Supervising Social Worker and regular supervisions
 - post-approval training and development for foster carers and Connected Persons carers
 - consultation with carers over the development of the service
- 2) those provided to children requiring a foster placement
 - a duty social worker available during office hours Monday to Friday
 - provision of a range of foster care placements for children looked after by Hartlepool Borough Council
 - the provision of carers for use by the Emergency Duty Team for placements at evenings, weekends and bank holidays.
 - Consultation with looked after children on all aspects of the service.

The Fostering service also works in conjunction with a number of other agencies and professionals to ensure a cohesive and effective package of support is available to children who become looked after. The Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership provides a valuable forum for the review of progress and service effectiveness and to plan the implementation of work projects. The agencies and partners involved with looked after children and young people including carers and young people are represented on this forum and are fully involved in its activities. The Child in Care Council plays a critical role in service development and has a valuable contribution to make in terms of feedback. The authority is committed to learning from the experiences of its children in care and to seek improvements.

Provision of Therapeutic Services

The Fostering Service has a discreet service the Therapeutic Social Work team (ACORN) and commission a discreet service from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), who provide therapeutic input to children and young people in foster placement, consultation to carers and other professionals. CAMHS comprises of clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, child and adolescent mental health practitioners and social workers with expertise in children's mental health. A worker from CAMHS is now co-located with the team in the church street premises.

In addition the members of the Therapeutic Social Work Team (ACORN) work closely with carers and often work directly with them in conjunction with the child in placement. The key objectives of the work is to provide a regular, easy to use guidance and support service to all foster carers and to improve placement stability for children in care. They also provide training to foster carers, Connected Persons carers, social workers and other professionals.

Provision of Health Promotion Support Services

There is a Designated Nurse for Looked after Children and Young People who oversees Children's Annual Health Assessments and has a proactive input into the health promotion of Young People. She will provide support to foster carers in addressing the range of health issues which may present with looked after children. She also provides advice and support to young people on an individual basis on issues such as contraception and sexual health matters.

A dedicated consultant paediatrician advises the Adoption and Fostering panel on medical issues for applications to foster and children with a plan for long term fostering.

Provision of Educational Support Services

The Fostering service has strong links to the educational support services for Looked after children and in particular works closely with the Inclusion Co-ordinator (Looked After children/young offenders), the Head of Social and Education Inclusion – Children's services who have a strong commitment to the looked after population.

Provision of Leisure, Sport, Cultural and Religious Activity

Foster carer training and supervision promotes the importance of leisure provision for looked after children and young people, and the expectation that carers will seek out and support new experiences and activities to enhance children's self-worth, social development and independence.

We aim to support all young people in their religious and cultural beliefs and customs. We ensure that information is available to provide understanding of different cultures and religions. We provide resources that may be needed to ensure young people are able to practice their beliefs and customs.

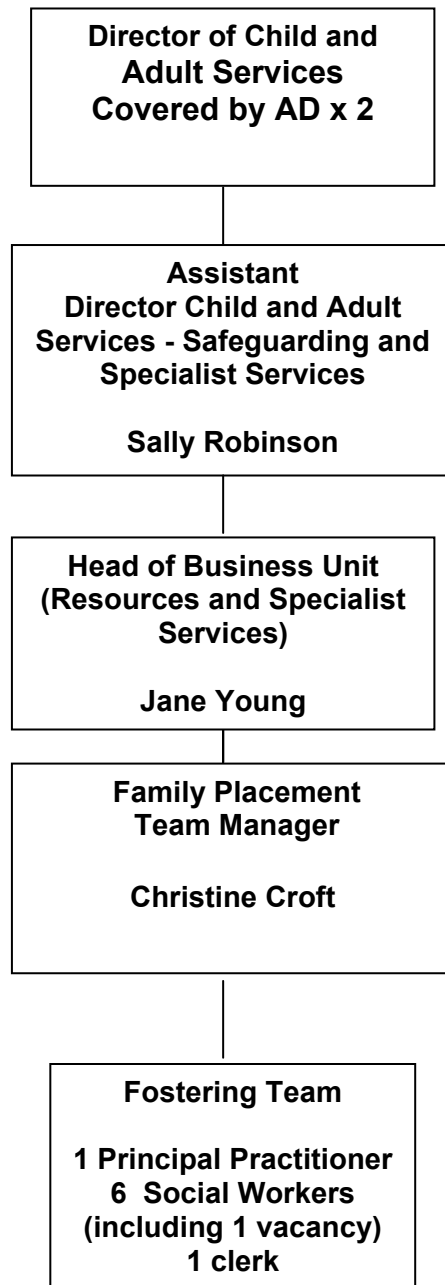
We are committed to directly challenging racism and ensure that all young people who access our services are aware of our policies in relation to anti-oppressive practice and anti-racism. We will ensure that all people are treated equally, regardless of age, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or religion. We have supervising fostering social workers to help carers with issues with trans-racial placements.

Preparation for Adulthood/Pathway Planning

The Through Care Team and the Fostering Service work closely with other professionals to provide a holistic approach to meeting young peoples needs. Hartlepool is committed to supporting care leavers and ensuring that they are able to build the skills and ability to eventually live independently. The service is committed to the ethos of 'Staying Put'. We acknowledge that young people mature at different rates and we will support where possible young people to remain in their foster placement beyond 18 years of age in order to experience normal family life if this supports them more effectively.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Fostering Service of Hartlepool Borough Council is provided by designated workers from the Family Placement Team who are based within the Resources and Specialist Services section of the Child and Adult Services Department.



SPECIFIC SERVICE INFORMATION

NUMBERS OF FOSTER CARERS

The number of Foster Carer approvals achieved 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013 comprised 12 approvals of mainstream carers, 3 approvals of support carers and 0 approvals of Connected Person carers. In the period 2012 - 2013 the fostering service accepted the resignation of 4 mainstream carers, and 1 Connected Persons carers and 1 short break carer.

The total number of Foster Carers approved by Hartlepool Borough Council on 31st March 2013 was 91.

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN PLACED

The total number of Looked After children at 31 March 2013 was 190 (prev. 181). The number of children placed in foster care placements provided by Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering Service on 31st March 2013 was 169 (prev. 141).

DESIGNATION OF CARERS

The majority of carers are mainstream offering either short or longer term care to children and young people up to the age of 18 years.

A banded payment scheme is in place ranging from band 1 to band 4. Progression is based on experience, competencies and training. This scheme also includes the potential to make the payment of a Specialist fee for placements for children with more complex needs.

Of the 9 carers approved, the Fostering Service had, as of 31 March 2013, 15 foster carers who were designated Specialist Carers due to the complex needs of the children placed.

2 Carers approved are designated as a 'Short Break Carer' (previously Sharing the Caring). They provide short break care for children and young people with disabilities to provide them and their carers with some respite. However one carer is currently on hold while she gives consideration to her personal circumstances.

It is proposed that the remit of one Specialist carers will include remand provision although the demand for such a provision has not been evident over the past 12 months. Additional training is to be provided to ensure that this service is available.

Hartlepool currently has one carer whose remit is to specifically provide 'parent and child' placements but also have carers who have the capacity to provide such placements in very specific circumstances. This is an area which continues to require attention so that our resources are able to meet the demand for these placements in the most effective manner.

SAFEGUARDING, COMPLAINTS & ALLEGATIONS

Protecting Children from Harm

Hartlepool Fostering Services operates a safe recruitment process for all staff employed by the agency and panel members. In addition, there is a rigorous vetting and assessment process undertaken with all potential carers. Enhanced Disclosure and Barring checks (previously CRB) are repeated every 3 years for all carers, staff and panel members.

Hartlepool Fostering Service has policy and guidance underpinning our service on safe caring, health and safety, bullying, management of behaviour and foster carer agreements.

Our processes and procedures will ensure that any concern is addressed and monitored by the management team and will inform service developments, for example:

Poor quality of care/breach of foster care agreement, child protection procedures which deal with allegations of abuse against foster carers and through the complaints procedures.

Children will know about these procedures through their social worker and the Children's Guide. They also have had access to a children's rights and advocacy service independent of the service currently provided by Barnadoes.

Complaints Procedure

Hartlepool Borough Council Child and Adult Services operates a complaints service which is independent of the Fostering Service.

Foster Carers are given a Complaints and Compliments Leaflet at the outset of the assessment, detailing the process if they wish to make a complaint, and also when they sign the Foster Carer Agreement.

NUMBERS OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

In the year 1 April 2012 to 31ST March 2013 there were no complaints made against a foster Carer in respect of the standard of care provided.

Allegations

All allegations in relation to foster carers are investigated and actioned through Hartlepool Child Protection Service reporting to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on behalf of the Hartlepool Safeguarding

Children's Board under the procedures for Managing Allegations against people who work with children or who are in a position of trust. Foster carers are offered independent support during this process which can be accessed via their fostering Social worker.

NUMBERS OF ALLEGATIONS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

There were no child protection referrals made in respect of allegations by looked after children against their carers.

THE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES FOR RECRUITING, APPROVING, TRAINING, SUPPORTING AND REVIEWING CARERS.

1. RECRUITMENT:

Publicity

- 1.1 Hartlepool's recruitment strategy is reviewed annually. All enquirers are asked where they obtained the contact details of the service and this information is analysed in order to target specific campaigns. From information regarding the previous years' enquiries there again appears to be greatest response to adverts in the local press and from people known to current carers.
- 1.2 Methods currently used include leaflets being displayed in council and public buildings in the town, local advertising and editorials in the Hartlepool Mail including the Mail website and related guides such as the Parenting Guide. Advertisements are also regularly placed in Stockton and Sunderland within the Primary Times. The publicity materials reflect the brand which we hope will assist in our efforts to attract new carers.
- 1.3 There are also regional efforts orchestrated through the Regional Marketing Forum to attract new foster carers such as a regional radio advertising campaign. Advertisements for carers for specific children can be placed in the local media.
- 1.4 We also have access to the Hartlepool Borough Council Press Office who are able to help us promote the service to the press through editorials and we have a page on Hartlepool Borough Council website and a micro-site for fostering and adoption information where potential carers can register interest in becoming a foster carer. There are plans in place for this to be updated. Features within, newspaper articles, community meetings and briefings are all undertaken regularly.

Response to Enquiries

- 1.5 Enquiries regarding fostering are responded to quickly. An Information pack is normally sent out within one day of the enquiry being received. Once the return slip is received from the enquirer a joint home visit is normally made within five working days. Information about the assessment process is given and information about the family is gathered, including their motivation to foster. They are asked to consider and indicate if they wish to proceed by returning the form provided. If no response is received within 8 weeks then a further contact is made to ascertain their wishes and reason for delaying or withdrawing. If the potential applicants do not respond in a further 4 weeks then the file will be closed.

2. ASSESSMENT:

- 2.1 The process for assessment leading to presentation to the Adoption and Fostering Panel for approval is clearly explained and keeping applicants informed of the progress of statutory checks etc, is considered important.
- 2.2 All applicants are normally required to attend a 4 day preparation course. The preparation training undertaken uses the Fostering Networks Skills to Foster programme including, Skills to Foster, Child Development, Separation and Loss, Attachment, Working Together, Safer Care, Moving On, Life Work. There is an evaluation at the end of the course and applicants are requested to feedback.
- 2.3 Medical examinations are carried out by the applicant's doctor using the BAAF medical form and returned to the Hartlepool Medical Adviser for comments and a recommendation regarding suitability to foster. The applicants are required to undergo a number of statutory checks including an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, local authority checks, current employer and NSPCC checks. The purpose of these checks is to safeguard the children to be placed.
- 2.4 The allocated workers undertaking the home study make an agreement with the applicants for the completion of the assessment including agreeing dates and times of visits and the target for completion of the home study. The applicants are required to view the assessment report and give written feedback prior to the Panel consideration of their application.

3 APPROVAL:

- 3.1 The applicants will be invited to attend the Adoption and Fostering Panel that is held every second and fourth Thursday in the month. They will be given the opportunity to answer questions put by the Panel members and to make any additional comments they may wish to make. Applicants are to be informed verbally of the Agency Decision

Maker's decision within two working days and are to receive confirmation in writing five working days of the Agency Decision Maker's confirming or otherwise the Panel recommendation. The Applicant will be asked for their comments regarding the process and evaluation forms are to be used to achieve this.

- 3.2 Applicants who are not deemed suitable to foster may access the review procedure or seek an independent review through the Independent Review Mechanism.

4. SUPPORT:

- 4.1 Once a foster carer has been approved by Panel they complete a foster carer agreement and are provided either with the paper copy of or information to access the Foster Carer Handbook electronically. All foster carers are allocated a supervising social worker from the Fostering Service. This person will visit the foster carers, provide formal supervision on a monthly basis or at an agreed level dependent upon current placement and carer capability. They will also provide directly, or facilitate access to, any practical, emotional or professional support required.
- 4.2 Foster carers are provided with equipment to enable them to care for a child in placement.
- 4.3 Foster carers will be invited to attend a monthly support group that is facilitated by two members of staff from the team. The group is an opportunity to build networks of support amongst other carers, exchange ideas about fostering and to have the opportunity to hear guest speakers on a variety of relevant subjects. This provides a valuable forum for carers to be updated regarding service developments and to network with other professionals.
- 4.4 The Fostering Service operates a duty system within office hours which is staffed by a fostering service worker. Foster carers can access support and advice from this worker if their allocated worker is not available. An out of hours telephone support service is also provided additional to the Emergency Duty Team arrangements which are in place. This telephone support is provided by the Heads of Business Unit within Children's Services.
- 4.5 All foster carers receive full membership of Fostering Network and access to an independent advice and mediation service should an allegation be made against them.
- 4.6 The agency also provides financial support to the Hartlepool Foster Carers Association which arranges a number of social events throughout the year. Members of the team also meet with

representatives of the Foster Carers Association to be kept informed of any issues they wish to raise

- 4.7 The Fostering Service arrange a yearly Celebration evening event to commemorate the efforts of the longest serving foster carers initially those that have been approved for ten years or more and more importantly to demonstrate our gratitude to all our carers for the care that they provide to the looked after children of Hartlepool.
- 4.8 The fostering service has a Foster carer Charter and this sets out the local authority's role detailing what the department will provide for its carers including in terms of support and information. It also sets out the Foster Carers' role detailing their commitment to such concepts as working in partnership and their learning and development.

5. TRAINING:

- 5.1 A training plan details and supports the provision of sufficient and regular training opportunities for foster carers through the approval process and throughout their career in fostering.
- 5.2 All foster carers will attend a preparation training course incorporating the Skills to Foster materials during their preparation and assessment.
- 5.3 An Induction programme involving the completion of the Children's Workforce Development Council workbook has been developed and all new foster carers will be required to undertake this piece of work within the first twelve months. Foster carers will have the opportunity to be supported on an individual basis to complete the workbooks by their Link Workers or dependent upon numbers will be able to access group sessions which have taken place over a seven week period. There is also the opportunity for carers to be mentored by more experienced carers if they wish.
- 5.4 Foster Carers are required to complete a training portfolio and their Supervising Social Workers are to support each carer to ensure they have a Personal Development Plan which is reviewed as part of the Foster Carers annual review.
- 5.5 Foster carers are given support and encouragement to attend all training events that are relevant to their role. Any places available on relevant staff training events are offered to foster carers to increase their sense of working in partnership with the professional team and to ensure the best care is offered to children and young people. Carers are provided with information regarding training provided corporately, through Child and Adult Services and through the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All carers are provided with a training portfolio to

record their training and development activity which in turn is used to inform and create their personal development plan.

- 5.6 Where possible Foster Carer representatives are supported to attend specialist training events by external providers such as BAAF and the expectation is that they will then cascade the information to the other carers.

6 REVIEW:

- 6.1 The registration of all foster carers is reviewed on a regular basis. The views of the foster carer are sought, together with the views of children and placing Social workers via end of placement reports and within the review documentation. The supervising social worker is responsible for collating the information and adding their own views based on the placements that have taken place and their observations of the carer during visits and supervision
- 6.2 The first review is held after six months and then annually thereafter. Reviews are chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers who are independent of the Fostering Service. The review report is presented to the Fostering Panel by the supervising social worker for consideration after the first review and if there is a proposal to change the approval category or recommend de-registration. Foster carers have the option to attend panel if they wish.
- 6.3 The registration of foster carers may be reviewed by Panel at any time if there are changes of circumstances or events indicate that foster carers are no longer suitable to care for children.

Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

Foster carers are provided with full information about the children placed with them and are expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As an agency we maintain records on carers and looked after children, who are subject to National Standards and Data Protection legislation. Staff and foster carers are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest, as are panel members.

7. DE-REGISTRATION:

- 7.1 Most foster carers voluntarily withdraw from the fostering task. The details of their resignation are placed before the Fostering Panel and their de-registration is formally recorded.
- 7.2 There are occasions when the registration of a foster carer is reviewed with a view to considering the options available, i.e. changes to approval or de- registration. Foster carers are offered the opportunity to

submit a response attend the Fostering Panel in these circumstances. Also if unhappy with the decision reached they are also able to request a review of the decision or to have their case addressed by the Independent Review Mechanism.

8. THE ADOPTION AND FOSTERING PANEL:

- 8.1 The fostering agency is required by the Fostering Services Regulations to establish a Fostering Panel. The membership, role and functions of the panel are prescribed within the Regulations. Hartlepool have moved away from separate panels for Adoption and Fostering matters and have now amalgamated the panel and hold a joint 'Adoption and Fostering panel. This is in order to ensure quoracy and to allow for flexibility regarding the presentation of cases. Panel membership is now drawn from a central list of members and quoracy dictates that at least five members are present. These members must comprise the chair or vice chair, a social worker representative and an independent member. Panels must have access to medical and legal advice as required.
- 8.2 Hartlepool's Adoption and Fostering Panel currently meets every second and fourth Thursday in the month and considers assessments of prospective foster carers, annual reviews of carers, de-registrations and issues in relation to foster carers. Although not a requirement within the regulations the Adoption and Fostering Panel also considers the plan for a child for long term fostering and Special Guardianship. The business of the Panel is formally recorded.
- 8.3 The Adoption and Fostering Panel makes recommendations that are presented to the Agency Decision Maker for consideration. These decisions are recorded and notified in writing to the prospective/existing foster carers.
- 8.4 Foster carers who disagree with the Panel decision regarding their approval, de-registration or changes to category of approval will have the opportunity to request a review of the decision made by the Fostering Panel either through the agency or through the Independent Review Mechanism which is provided by BAAF.
- 8.5 The Hartlepool Borough Council Adoption and Fostering Panel policy and procedures document provides additional information regarding the constitution and running of the panel.

APPENDIX 1 Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Standards:

The work of Hartlepool Fostering Service is delivered within the following legal framework and in accordance with the following standards:

- Fostering Service Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 from section 23 of the Care Standards Act 2000
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for local authorities 2010.

This Statement of Purpose is produced in accordance with the following standards and regulations

NMS 2011 Standard 16

- 16.1** The fostering service has a clear statement of purpose which is available to and understood by foster carers, staff and children and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility.
- 16.2** The aims and objectives of the statement of purpose are child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)

- 4.1** The Fostering service provider must compile a Statement of Purpose , which sets out the aims and objectives of the service as a whole, and the services and facilities which are provided (including the provision of any 'parent and child arrangements'). The statement must be reviewed and updated as necessary , but at least annually and published on the provider's website(if they have one), with a copy provided to Ofsted. Copies must also be available upon request to anyone working for the purposes of the fostering service , any foster carer or potential foster carer of the service, and to any child placed with one of the service's foster carers and their parents.
- 4.2** The Statement of purpose is a key document which sets a framework for all of the business of the fostering service . it must be consistent with relevant legislation, Regulations, NMS and statutory guidance, be child focused and show how the fostering service will help children achieve positive outcomes. The manager of the fostering service must ensure that the service is at all times conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose.

APPENDIX 2

NUMBERS, RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF STAFF as at 1st April 2013

The staff of Hartlepool Borough Council's Fostering Service consists of:

NAME & STATUS	DATE OF APPOINTMENT			QUALIFICATIONS	RELEVANT EXPERIENCE
Jane Young Head of Business Unit Resources and Specialist Services	01	10	10	CSS 1989 PQ 1 PQ Child Care Award 2004 CMS 2006 HCPC registered	Children & Families LAC Team Manager Fostering & Adoption Team Manager. Fostering & Adoption Panel member
Christine Croft Team Manager	02	02	09	Dip SW 1997 PQ1 CCA HCPC Registered	Children & Families Independent Fostering Agency
Jacqui Dixon Principal Practitioner	01	10	09	Dip Sw 2003 PQ1 HCPC Registered	Children & Families Resource Team manager Nominated Worker
Glynis Howe Social Worker	04	11	02	CQSW 1984 PQ1 CCA HCPC Registered	Children & Families Family Placement Training
Julie Levitt Social Worker	02	02	07	BSc Childhood Studies Dip SW 1997 HCPC Registered	Children & Families Leaving Care Family Placement
Janet McGreevy Social Worker	10	01	05	Dip SW 1992 BA (Hons) Social Work Studies PQ1 HCPC Registered	Residential Social Work Family Support Child Protection Nominated Worker
Keith Munro Social Worker	01	04	12	BA Hons Social Studies Dip SW work 1992 HCPC registered	Children & Families Connexions Children's Society Research and Policy

Lesley Turnbull Agency Social Worker	02	12	12	Dip SW 1997 CMS Practice Teacher Award HCPC Registered	Experience with adults with learning difficulties Management experience Independent Fostering Agency
Patricia Adams Administrative Staff – shared with Adoption Services	01	11	07		Child & Adult Services Admin Children & Families

What is fostering?

Fostering is going to stay with a new family when you are not able to live at home with your own family.



The new family you stay with is your “foster family”

Your foster family will:

- Look after you when you are with them
- Keep you safe
- Help you when you are sad
- Try to make you happy



My Foster carers are:

.....

.....

My new foster home is at:

.....

.....

.....



Other people in my foster family are:

.....

.....

**There are pets in my foster home.
They are called:**

.....

.....



The Fostering Service

This is a special team of people who will:

- Find a foster home for you
- Help your foster carers to keep you safe and make you happy
- Help you to stay healthy
- Help you with school
- Come and visit you and your foster carers

In Hartlepool there are 6 social workers in the fostering team.

They are Glynis Howe, Janet McGreevy, Julie Levitt, Emma Howarth, Jacqui Dixon and Keith Miller.

The team manager is Christine Croft

Your Social Worker

Your social worker is a special person who will come and see you in your foster home.

Your social worker will:

- Get to know you
- Listen to you
- Make sure you are safe and happy
- Help you to keep in touch with your family and friends

My social worker's name is:

.....

Family and friends

When you are living in your foster home you can keep in touch with your family and friends by:

Visits to see your family and friends at the Star Centre which is a family centre in Hartlepool. There are toys and games that you can play together with your family.

Or your family and friends come to see you in your foster home



You can speak to your family on the telephone

You can write letters to your family



What can you expect

When you are in foster care you will:

Be
safe

Have
your own
bedroom

Have
someone
to talk too

Do fun
activities

Get
Healthy
Food

Have toys
to play
with

See your
social
worker every
4 weeks

To be
cared for



Pocket Money

When you are in foster care you will get pocket money for you to spend on treats and things you like.



Your foster carer and social worker will tell you how much pocket money you will get.

Birthday and Christmas

You will get a present on your birthday and at Christmas from your foster carers.



Who will help if I am not happy?

If you are unhappy then it is important to talk to someone who can help you sort things out. Talk to someone you feel you can trust such as;

- Your foster carers
- Your social worker
- Your teacher
- Your reviewing officer



In Hartlepool every child has an Independent reviewing officer who visits you and holds a meeting with your family, foster family and social worker to see if your foster placement is meeting your needs.

Hartlepool has 5 reviewing officers, they are Carmel Jackson, Danny Dunleavy, Jenny Riley, Colin Wilson and Ann Russell.

If you are worried about anything at all and can't talk to your foster carers or social worker you can ring your reviewing officer on:

01429 523878

Use this space to write about what you would want to know about your foster family.

A large rectangular area with a double green border, intended for writing. The area is empty, providing space for the user to write about what they would want to know about their foster family.

What would you want your foster carers to know about you? What do you like? What don't you like?



Important Phone Numbers

Your Social Worker is
Telephone.....

Your Independent Reviewing Officer is.
.....
Telephone

Hartlepool Family placement Team **01429 405700**

Childline **0800111**

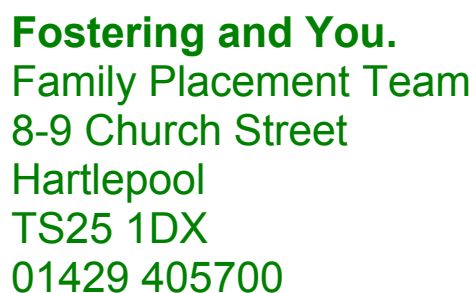
NORCAP **01865 875000**
(Counselling service) **www.norcap.org.uk**

NSPCC **0808 800 5000**
www.nspcc.org.uk

NYAS **0800 616 101**
National Youth Advocacy Service **www.nyas.net**

Ofsted **0300 123 1231**
www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Children's Rights Alliance **020 7278 8222**
www.crae.org.uk
Office of the Children's Rights Director **0800 528 0731**
www.rights4me.org



[illegible]

What it is and what it means for you

The fostering service aims to provide families to care for children and young people who are not able to live with their own parents for any length of time. Going to live with a foster family is sometimes called “going into care” or “being looked after”.

This booklet will give you some more information about what to expect. We will always try to listen to your wishes and feelings, and there are more details at the back of this booklet about what to do if you are unhappy.

Why are children and young people fostered?

There are lots of different reasons why children and young people are fostered. Sometimes parents ask for help because they feel they are struggling to look after their children in the best way and sometimes a court decides that a young person would be safer if they were not living at home.

What is a foster family?

Children and young people who cannot live with their own family for any reason may go and live with a foster family. You may live with your foster family for a short time or it may become your permanent home. Some children and young people may move into their foster family with their brothers and sisters and others may live with relatives or friends of the family.

All foster families are different. Some have one adult and some have two. They may have their own children or be looking after other children. Your foster family will look after you and take good care of you. Along with your social worker, your foster family will make sure you are healthy and safe and will help you go to school.

Your foster family has had special training so you receive the best possible care.

What is a social worker?

All children and young people living in a foster family have their own social worker. Your social worker works for Hartlepool Borough Council and is specially trained to support you and your family.

How will you find the right foster family for me?

Your social worker will do their best to place you in a family where they think you will fit in and settle down well. We do our best to find a family that's right for you. You may be placed with a family for a few days until a more suitable home is found.

We understand that your culture and religion are important and will always try and place you with a family that understands your background and beliefs.

Going to live with a foster family

Your social worker will take you to meet your new foster family. You will be shown around the house. It may feel all a bit strange and different to start with, but your foster family will help you settle in. Like any house there will be rules about things such as doing your schoolwork, watching TV, staying up late, times for you to be in by, what time dinner is and many other things. It may take a little while to get used to the rules but slowly you will adapt and become more comfortable. You will be able to talk to your foster carer and share your day, they will make sure that you have nice food and clean clothes to wear.

In your foster home you will have

- A bedroom either on your own or with your own brothers or sisters
- Space to put your things
- Toiletries such as shampoo, creams, soap, body lotion and wash kit
- Space to be able to meet your Social Worker, Children's Rights Officer or Solicitor
- Pocket money
- A chance to celebrate your birthday and religious festivals, e.g. Christmas, Diwali, Eid.
- Fair and respectful parenting
- Someone to listen to your feelings and hopes and be interested in you
- Support to stay in touch with friends and family
- Help if needed with your education or training

Personal Belongings

You can bring your own clothes and other personal belongings with you when you come into care and your social worker will make sure you have a proper bag or suitcase to move things. If you're not sure about bringing something, then please ask!

It is a good idea to let your foster carer know if you have anything that is valuable or really special, so they can help you look after it.

Your Life Story

Your foster carer or social worker will encourage you to understand your own life story. This could be your own special book, about you, your family, what has happened to you and all the important things about you. You can put in photographs, drawings, and write about anyone and anything that you want to remember. This book is your keepsake because it is about you and will help you understand why things happened.

Talking about how you feel and what you want

- Remember that you are very important
- You will be part of the decision making so you can always ask your social worker if you feel your views are not being listened to.
- This might be a difficult time. You may feel scared, upset or angry about everything that has happened.
- Many children or young people will feel like this. Just try to talk through your feelings. You can ask questions about what is happening as many times as you need. Your foster carer, social worker or someone else you trust will do their best to answer you.

If there are things that have happened to you in your family that you want to talk to someone about, remember there are people there to listen. If you say that someone has harmed you or hurt you, your foster carer or social worker will want to make sure that this does not happen again. At the end of this booklet, there is a list of telephone numbers that you can ring to talk to somebody who will listen to you and give you help over the telephone. Sometimes the meeting decides that you will not be able to go back to your family, your social worker may start looking for a permanent family for you, with whom you can stay until you are grown up.

What happens if you are not happy with the foster family?

If you are unhappy living with your foster family, you should tell your social worker or another adult you can trust. It can take a while to feel settled in a new home, particularly if you have a lot of other things going on. Your social worker is there to help you sort out your feelings and help work out any difficulties. If you don't want to meet in your foster home, ask to meet somewhere else, like a café or park.

What is a Care Plan?

Your care plan i.e. written information that says how you should be cared for and describes your future plans. The plan may be that you will live with your family, or it may be for you to live temporarily or permanently with a foster family. Your social worker will give you a copy of your care plan.

You will have a placement meeting before you go to placement or within 3 days of you going to live with your foster family. At the placement meeting, many things about you will be shared, for example the food you like, any medicines you have to take or information about your school. This information will all be included in the care plan to try and make sure you are looked after as well as possible.

Your care plan is updated at review meetings. At review meetings, you, your parents, foster carers and social workers all get together to look at the plans for while you are living with your foster carers. It is important to share how you feel about all the plans being made for you.

The first review meeting will take place when you have been living in foster care for four weeks. Three months later there will be another meeting and if everything is going well, they will then take place every six months. The person running the meeting is called the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and they will make sure that everyone, especially you, has a chance to say what you think. You can ask someone else to give your views.

What is an Independent Reviewing Officer?

An Independent Reviewing Officer is the person with responsibility for chairing and being in charge of reviews. It is their job to make sure that your views are heard, and that the Care Plan is in your best interest.

At the end of the review meeting, the independent reviewing officer will make a number of decisions, which are aimed at supporting a young person and planning for the future.

Young people can contact the Independent Reviewing Officer who has responsibility for chairing their review meeting by calling 01429 523844

Will I see my family again?

Living with a foster family does not usually mean that you won't see your family. Social workers call the times when children visit their family "contact". You may have contact with your parents and also with grandparents, your extended family and friends. Visits, phone calls, emails and letters are all different ways you will be able to keep in touch and your foster family will help you do this.

It may not always be the best thing for you to visit your family frequently or you may not want to see certain people. Your social worker will discuss with you what is happening and will always listen to your wishes and feelings.

What about school?

If it's the best thing for you, we will try and make sure you can stay at the same school. Your social worker, foster carer and one teacher from your school will work with you and develop a "personal Education Plan" (or PEP for short). Your PEP will show what you are doing well at school, and if there are any areas where you need extra help. Your PEP also gives you a great opportunity to say what sports, music and drama or other after-school clubs you would like to be involved in.

Staying healthy

When you move in with your foster family, you will be offered a health assessment, with a doctor, to make sure you are healthy and well. You will then be offered a health assessment once a year with a nurse or doctor if you prefer. You will also regularly go to the dentist and optician.

Going home

If your care plan says that you are going home, you will have the chance to talk about how this makes you feel and work out any concerns you have. You will be able to take home your things, including any new stuff you have been given and your life story book. Your social worker will visit you at home to make sure everything is going well and will be able to help you if not.

Complaints and representations

Sometimes we make mistakes or things go wrong. Our aim is to discuss any concerns or worries you may have and, by working together, resolve any problems. There may be times when this does not work and you remain unhappy about the situation. All carers, children and young people have the right to complain and parents can also complain on behalf of children and young people. If you would like to make a complaint ask your social worker to help you or you can contact the Complaints Officer on 01429 266522.

Independent visitors, advocates and children's rights

All children and young people who are not in regular contact with a parent, or anyone with parental responsibility, should be given the opportunity to obtain support of an independent visitor.

An independent visitor is someone who does not work for the council and will get to know you by visiting you. It will give you the opportunity to spend time with someone outside of the council, who you can speak to and share achievements, as well as concerns.

OFSTED

This is the organisation responsible for inspecting fostering services and making sure we are doing what we should do in running our fostering service.

As part of their inspection process they will interview some foster carers and children and young people. Carer and children and young people can also contact Ofsted at any time at:

Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester M2 7LA

Rights4me

Rights4me is part of Ofsted especially designed for children and young people. They can be contacted free on: **0800 528 0731** or write to:

Office of the Children's Rights Director
Ofsted, 125 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6SE
or at www.rights4me.org

If you are not happy with the way the social worker or anyone else has been handling your foster placement, you can make a complaint to the Children's Rights Director.

NYAS

NYAS provides independent advice and information.

Freephone 0800 616 101

Telephone 0151 649 8700

Website: www.nyas.net

Children's Commissioner For England

Children's Commissioner for England

Maggie Atkinson is the Children's Commissioner for England. The role of the Children's Commissioner is to promote the views of children and young people from birth to 18 (up to 21 for young people in care or with mental health problems).

General enquiries: 0844 800 9113

Email:

[http://
www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/)

Or write to:

Office of the Children's Commissioner 33
Greycoat Street, London SW1P 2QF

Children in Care Council

The children in care council meets regularly to talk about what matters to them. The young people also have designed the Pledge stating what you can expect from Hartlepool Borough Council.

Want to know more?

Tel: 01429 405588

My Notes

Social worker name: _____

Social worker telephone no: _____

Foster carer name: _____

Foster carer telephone no: _____

My Independent Reviewing Officer is: _____

IRO Telephone Number: _____

Other important people: _____

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

2nd July 2013



Report of: Assistant Director, Children's Services

Subject: FREE EARLY EDUCATION FOR TWO YEAR OLDS

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 For information only

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To outline the Local Authority's duties to deliver free early education for two year olds.
- 2.2 To outline the demand for two year old childcare.
- 2.3 To outline current availability of two year old childcare.
- 2.4 To outline the work in progress to develop further two year old childcare places.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Currently every three and four year old child in England is eligible for 570 hours per year 'Free Nursery Entitlement'. Some parents use this entitlement as 15 hours per week term time only. Eligibility begins the term after the child's third birthday. Provision is based in nursery classes in schools, in nursery schools, in approved private day nurseries and with approved childminders.
- 3.2 The Government has extended this entitlement to target the 20 per cent most disadvantaged two-year-olds in the country. This equates to around 150,000 eligible children from 1st September 2013. The criteria for 2013/14 is two year olds who live in households which meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals (i.e. a household income of less than £16,190 per year/ reliant on a key out of work benefit) along with children who are looked after by the state. In line with three and four year old entitlement, funding begins the term *after* the child's second birthday.

- 3.3 The process is set within the Local Authority (Duty to Secure Early Years Provision Free of Charge) Regulations 2012, which sets out the eligibility criteria for the first phase of the two-year-old entitlement to free early education from September 2013.
- 3.4 From September 2014 the number of children who will be entitled to a place will rise to around 40 per cent of two-year-olds. The Government proposes to build on the eligibility criteria for the first phase – so children who meet the free school meals criteria or who are looked after would continue to be eligible - and to extend free places to more low-income families, two year olds with special educational needs or disabilities, and those who have left care but are unable to return home. The Government has finished consulting on the proposed eligibility criteria for the second phase and is currently considering responses.
- 3.5 Hartlepool has been an early pathfinder for two year old childcare and has developed experience of this over the past three years. Pathfinder status has enabled officers to identify children that would benefit from a place, put in place a package of support for the whole family (based on Common Assessment) and work with a suitable provider to offer a place that meets the child/ family's needs.
- 3.6 Hartlepool has revenue funding for the period April 2013 to March 2014 of £946,348 to place around 400 children; in addition DfE has awarded £371,511 to prepare for the additional eligible children that will come on board in 2014/15 (around 130 children). Revenue funding is ringfenced with the Dedicated Schools Grant budget.
- 3.7 A capital grant has been awarded totaling £237,071. This is ringfenced to the creation of new / additional two year old childcare places. Allocation of the capital money is based on new places created in identified areas of need as highlighted in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2012/13. Capital funding is based on a price per head per new place created formula - £2370.71 per new place created. To date West View (£18,965.68), Owton Manor (£37,931.36) and Stranton (£37,931.36) Primary Schools have been allocated grant funding subject to the creation of new two year old places.
- 3.8 The Department for Work and Pensions has agreed to release a list of potentially eligible families (based on Child Benefit and out of work benefit data) to enable the Local Authority to proactively identify children eligible for the two year old entitlement. The first data release is awaited. In the mean time, Hartlepool has successfully placed approximately 160 eligible children to date and enquiries continue to come through to the First Contact and Support Hub (FCSH - formerly FISH) every day. Word of mouth together with marketing information from Children's Centres and Health Visitors is getting the message out to families to check their eligibility.
- 3.9 It is also worth noting that the Local Authority has a duty to produce a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every three years (with an annual update in between) and the information acquired as part of the assessment process illustrates the availability of two year old childcare provision in the town and steps required in order to develop the market further.

4. SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT TWO YEAR OLD CHILDCARE MARKET

- 4.1 The number of registered / approved childcare providers in Hartlepool changes on a daily basis. According to the recently published Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in October 2012 there was the following early years (i.e. under fives) provision:
- 59 childminders offering 315 places
 - 15 day nurseries offering 809 places
 - 1 playgroup offering 10 places
 - 1 maintained nursery and 30 nursery classes in the town offering more than 1100 places.

In May 2013 this position remains largely the same.

- 4.2 Research for the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has shown that there is sufficient early years provision in every ward in the town to meet *current demand* however some wards have higher concentrations of provision than others. The reasons for this include the location of private day nurseries in the town centre area and the location of schools. It is also worth noting at this point that overall there has been a decline in the number of registered childminders over the past five years (due to lack of demand) though a fairly static day nursery market.
- 4.3 Given the majority of parents use childcare in order to work (or train) it is perhaps no surprise to learn that many childcare providers have reported a steady drop in numbers of children accessing a place as the economic situation becomes more challenging. With this in mind, providers have been eager to begin to take two year old children for their new free entitlement as this fills a currently empty place.
- 4.4 Current availability and proposed availability of two year old provision by ward is summarised below. (NB not all registered childminders want to/ or have been approved to deliver funded two year old places). Whilst some parents want to access a two year old place within their local community, many want a place in one of the well-established private nurseries that have historically operated within the town and are prepared to travel to do so.

Ward	Current careschemes able to offer two year old places (May 2013)	Proposed careschemes able to offer two year old places (due to come on board between June and September 2013)	No of registered two year old places currently available (May 2013)	No of actual places available (spare places)
Hart	Childminder x 2		9	9
De Bruce	Rainbow / Starfish / West View Primary School	West View Primary School (8 extra places)	94	80
Jesmond	Clever Clogs / Cheeky Monkeys / Childminder x 1		39	24
Victoria	Playmates / Footprints / Lonsdale Grange Road / Childminder x 3		118	87
Burn Valley	Ready Steady Grow	Stranton Primary School (16 new places)	35	12
Rural West	Aldersyde / Childminder x 2	Greatham Primary School (number of new places TBC)/	24	23
Foggy Furze	Childminder x 2		15	11
Manor House	Cherry Tree / Sallywags / Childminder x 1 /	Grange Primary School (16 new places) / Owton Manor Primary School (16 new places)	27	4
Fens and Rossmere	Rossmere Primary School / Childminder x 2	Rossmere Primary School (8 extra places) /	18	6
Headland and Harbour	Leapfrogs / Kiddikins / Childminder x 1	Ward Jackson Primary School (16 new places) /	22	9
Seaton	Sallywags /	Golden Flatts Primary School (16 new places) /	36	30
Totals	30 carescheme providers	8 additional carescheme providers	439	297

N.B. – Ofsted registers childcare provision for under 8s. Once registered a provider has scope to adjust their registration to suit the demands of the market. So for example a private nursery could be registered for 50 children aged five and under and the only stipulation that Ofsted may place upon them is that no more than 16 children can be aged under 2. After that the provider can alter their age range to suit the market. In other words, a nursery that has a lot of spare capacity in a range of different ages could fill all their vacant places with two year olds.

- 4.5 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment reported that at the end of 2012, 30% of private day nurseries had up to 80% of their places unoccupied; 38% had up to 60% of their places unoccupied and 23% had up to 40% of their places unoccupied.
- 4.6 Given the prescribed criteria for two year old childcare we can only estimate how many children are likely to be eligible and from which areas of the town they will most likely come. A summary of this is outlined below. However, these estimates will not be required when DWP begins to share their data on eligible families to the authority as we will have actual eligibility numbers.

Ward	Estimated number of two year old children	Estimated number of eligible two year old children	Number of available unoccupied two year old places (May 2013)	Number of new places due to come on board by September 2013
Hart	120	5	9	
De Bruce	109	55	80	8
Jesmond	122	61	24	
Victoria	93	47	87	
Burn Valley	133	67	12	16
Rural West	76	5	23	
Foggy Furze	113	40	11	
Manor House	152	76	4	32
Fens and Rossmere	68	34	6	8
Headland and Harbour	96	39	9	16
Seaton	73	5	30	16
Totals	1155	434*	291	96

***NB c.160 eligible two year old children are already placed and are accessing their new entitlement leaving c.274 to place.**

5. DEVELOPMENT OF THE TWO YEAR OLD CHILDCARE MARKET

- 5.1 We know that some areas of the town – namely De Bruce, Jesmond, Victoria, Burn Valley, Manor House, Fens and Rossmere and Headland and Harbour have the highest prevalence of potentially eligible children.
- 5.2 We know that there are significant vacancies in some of our private nurseries in the town.
- 5.3 We know (because parents tell us) that they prefer to access provision within their local community *but* are prepared to travel in order to access a high quality place.
- 5.4 We know (based on the findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment) that we need to develop additional places in the Belle Vue, Oxford Road, Stranton, Manor House, Foggy Furze, De Bruce, Headland and Harbour, Fens and Rossmere areas.
- 5.5 We also know that parents are keen to place their children in schools so they have an easy transition to their three and four year old place.
- 5.6 Contact has been made with all schools to discuss their interest in delivering two year old places. A focus has been made on those in the areas highlighted above.
 - St John Vianney RC Primary School has been delivering 0-5 childcare for several years now.
 - Rossmere and West View Primary Schools have trialed two year old childcare and plan to double their places ready for September
 - Stranton, Owton Manor, Golden Flatts, Brougham and Grange Primary Schools are working to deliver places from September
 - A number of other schools are keen to learn from their colleagues with a view to delivery from 2014-15.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 For information only

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None

8. CONTACT OFFICER

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

2nd of July 2013



Report of: Assistant Director, Children's Services

Subject: SHORT QUALITY SCREENING INSPECTION OF
HARTLEPOOL YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 For information

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Children's Services Committee the outcome of the recent Short Quality Screening Inspection of Hartlepool Youth Offending Service which was undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) on Monday the 13th to Wednesday 15th of May 2013.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Short Quality Screening inspection is a short inspection of the initial assessment, planning, effective management and partnership working undertaken by a Youth Offending Service in response to young people who are subject to a court order.

3.2 The primary functions of Youth Offending Services are to prevent offending and re-offending by Children & Young People and reduce the use of custody.

3.3 The inspection focuses upon the timelines and quality of the work undertaken to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes relating to:

- Reducing the likelihood of reoffending
- Protecting the public
- Protecting the child or young person

- Ensuring that the sentence is served
- 3.4 The Short Quality Screening Inspection for Hartlepool Youth Offending Service commenced on Monday the 13th of May and the HMI Probation Report is attached at **Appendix 1** to this document.
- 3.5 Fourteen recent cases were reviewed by the inspectors consisting of a mix of first tier, community and custodial sentence cases.
- 4. SHORT QUALITY SCREENING INSPECTION OF HARTLEPOOL YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE**
- 4.1 Overall, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation found a 'very positive picture' in Hartlepool. The Inspectors reported that Hartlepool Youth Offending Service can be 'rightly proud of the substantial progress it has made since our previous inspection in 2011'. The inspectors highlighted that staff were well supported, committed and were delivering high quality services. They produced good quality assessments and plans and had ready access to an appropriate range of services.
- 4.2 The Inspectors found that Hartlepool Youth Offending Service had responded to its previous inspection by implementing a range of measures aimed at improving the quality of their work. This included co-locating the team with relevant partner services and developing practice guidance for work that tackled risk of harm to others, vulnerability and compliance.
- 4.3 The Short Quality Screening inspection determined that staff had welcomed these developments and had incorporated them into their practice. The inspectors found that the Hartlepool Youth Offending Service staff were well trained and supported in their work and that they were clear about what was required of them. The inspectors reported that staff were aware of the principles of effective practice and of the local policies and procedures that related to addressing risk of harm, vulnerability and compliance in their work with children and young people.
- 4.4 The best aspects of work that the inspectors found in Hartlepool included:
- 'There was routine engagement with children and young people and with their parents/carers in carrying out initial assessments and in case planning. This was often in the face of challenging circumstances and we noted the determination and persistence shown by staff in this respect.'
 - 'The assessments of risk of harm and vulnerability issues were of good quality and reflected the skills and experience of staff and the organisational support that underpinned their work.'

4.5 The most significant areas for improvement were:

- 'In all cases, assessments, plans and reviews of work to tackle risk of harm and vulnerability should be timely.'
- 'There was scope for further improving the quality of the work by ensuring that plans fully reflected the breadth of the issues that had been identified in the assessments undertaken in the cases.'

4.6 It is anticipated that these areas for improvement will be addressed through the development of an action plan that will complement the work already underway to bring about further reductions in youth offending; improve the way the service responds to victims of youth crime and further develop the services contribution to the broader community safety agenda.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 That the Children's Services Committee notes the findings of the recent Short Quality Screening Inspection of Hartlepool Youth Offending Service undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and the substantial progress the service has made since its previous inspection in 2011.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Short Quality Screening Inspections undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation provides assurance to Ministers and the public on the effectiveness of work with those who have offended or are likely to offend, promotes continuous improvement by and contributes to the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None

7. CONTACT OFFICER

7.1 Mark Smith, Head of Youth Support Services, Child and Adult Services, Hartlepool Borough Council, level 4, Civic Centre, TS24 8AY.
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<i>To:</i>	Stephen Jermy, Chair of Youth Offending Service Strategic Board
<i>Copy to:</i>	See copy list at end
<i>From:</i>	Julie Fox, Assistant Chief Inspector
<i>Publication date:</i>	12th June 2013

Report of Short Quality Screening (SQS) of youth offending work in Hartlepool

This report outlines the findings of the recent SQS inspection, conducted during 13th-15th May 2013. We carried this out as part of our programme of inspection of youth offending work. This report will be published on the HMI Probation website. A copy will be provided to partner inspectorates to inform their inspections, and to the Youth Justice Board (YJB).

Context

As an independent inspectorate, HMI Probation provides assurance to Ministers and the public on the effectiveness of work with those who have offended or are likely to offend, promotes continuous improvement by the organisations that we inspect and contributes to the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

Good quality assessment and planning at the start of a sentence is critical to increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes. The purpose of the SQS inspection is to assess the quality and effectiveness of casework with children and young people who have offended, at the start of a sample of 14 recent cases supervised by the Hartlepool Youth Offending Service. Wherever possible this is undertaken in conjunction with the allocated case manager, thereby increasing the effectiveness as a learning opportunity for staff.

We gather evidence against the SQS criteria, which are available on the HMI Probation website - <http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/hmi-probation>.

Summary

Overall, we found a very positive picture in Hartlepool. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) can be rightly proud of the substantial progress it has made since our previous inspection in 2011. Staff were well supported, committed and were delivering high quality services. They produced good quality assessments and plans and had ready access to an appropriate range of services. There was scope for further improving the quality of the work by ensuring that plans fully reflected the breadth of the issues that had been identified in the assessments undertaken in the cases.

Commentary on the inspection in Hartlepool:

1. Reducing the likelihood of reoffending

- 1.1. There was a timely and sufficient initial assessment of the likelihood of reoffending in 13 out of the 14 cases.

- 1.2. Pre-sentence reports were requested and provided to the court in 7 out of the 14 cases. All of these were of good quality. Information in other forms, such as verbal updates provided by case managers, offered enough information for the purposes of sentencing. An inspector noted in one case that: *"This was a high profile case involving a serious offence. As part of the PSR process, to help inform sentencing, the case manager was instrumental in ensuring that an assessment of the young person's mental health was undertaken. This assessment was subsequently used to inform decisions on the management of the young person during the custodial phase of his sentence. It also helped to establish, at an early stage, priorities for work to address ongoing risk of harm issues"*.
- 1.3. Planning to reduce the likelihood of reoffending was sufficient in 11 out of the 13 relevant cases; this included both of the cases that had a custodial element.
- 1.4. In 11 out of the 12 relevant cases, adequate reviews of the assessment of likelihood of reoffending had been undertaken. Reviews of plans to address reoffending issues were adequate in almost all of the cases.

2. Protecting the public

- 2.1. There was a clear and thorough assessment of the risk of harm to others in all seven of the cases where there had been a pre-sentence report. A good quality assessment of risk of harm to others was seen in 11 out of the 13 relevant cases. Assessments of risk of harm were adequately reviewed in all but one of the cases.
- 2.2. In two out of the ten relevant cases, there had not been enough attention given to planning to address the potential risk of harm posed to others. The issue that detracted from the quality of those plans was that they were not timely. There was appropriate engagement with Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements in the single case where this was required. In all but one of the relevant cases, reviews of the risk of harm had been done to an acceptable standard. In one example we noted: *"In this case the young person presented with a range of complex risk of harm and vulnerability factors. These included; substance misuse, fractious family relationships, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, negative peer influences, self harm and she was seen as being vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The case manager undertook a comprehensive assessment of these issues and produced an effective intervention plan. There was evidence of a multi-agency response to this young woman's needs and the case manager coordinated the work. The case manager and the YOS nurse worked closely together and involved other workers, e.g. YOS engagement officers and police officers. The case manager secured funding for the young person to attend an activities programme. There was clear evidence of positive engagement with the young person and her family and progress was being made in tackling the issues that were linked to the risk of harm that she posed to others"*.
- 2.3. Where there was an identifiable victim, or potential victim, the risk of harm they faced had been effectively managed in all of the relevant cases.
- 2.4. Management oversight of risk of harm work was effective in over three-quarters of the relevant cases.

3. Protecting the child or young person

- 3.1. Six of the seven pre-sentence reports had adequately assessed vulnerability issues. For the sample overall, all but two had sufficiently assessed the safeguarding and vulnerability needs of the children and young people. The factors that had detracted from the quality for these two cases were that either the screening or the assessment had not been timely. Planning to address vulnerability and safeguarding issues was sufficient in just

over three-quarters of the relevant cases. Reviews of safeguarding and vulnerability planning were required in 12 cases; this had happened to an acceptable standard in ten. In one case we noted: *"This plan clearly and accurately reflects the circumstances of the case, the actions that are to be taken, why and by whom. It is also clear that the case manager is working effectively with several different agencies to ensure that the risk of harm posed by the young person is being reduced and that she is being safeguarded from the factors that make her vulnerable. These include measures to address housing needs, substance misuse, possible sexual exploitation and employment. Factors which might trigger an increase in the risk of harm, or of vulnerability, have been identified along with clear contingency plans to tackle them should they arise"*.

- 3.2. Management oversight and quality assurance of safeguarding and vulnerability assessments and plans were effective in more than three-quarters of the cases. In Hartlepool, staff had ready access to managers to discuss case issues. We noted that there was evidence of regular management oversight and quality assurance input into cases and this had had a positive impact on the work being done. Staff also made good use of the 'Risk and Vulnerability' planning forum, to help them to identify priorities along side partner agencies and to review progress.
- 3.3. In our view, staff members had sufficient experience, knowledge and support to enable them to effectively address vulnerability issues in their work with children and young people.

4. Ensuring that the sentence is served

- 4.1. At the pre-sentence stage and at the commencement of supervision, attention was routinely being paid to assessing the child or young person's diverse needs and identifying barriers to engagement. There was evidence of high levels of involvement of the children and young people, and their parents/carers, in assessments and in planning for interventions. Whilst we found that attention was being paid to including diversity issues in case planning, we noted that many of the plans did not fully reflect the depth of work that had been done on those issues. On that basis there is the potential to further improve the quality of the work done by case managers by ensuring their plans convey the full scope of the work they are doing.
- 4.2. In all of the cases we reviewed, sufficient attention had been given to the health and well-being of the child or young person.
- 4.3. Eight of the children and young people had complied with the requirements of their sentence. This was to the credit of practitioners, as many of the children and young people presented with complex issues and demonstrated challenging behaviour. Many required regular input to secure their engagement in supervision. Case managers showed persistence in dealing with compliance issues and were innovative in their approaches to securing the engagement of children and young people under their supervision. For those children and young people who had not complied with the requirements of the sentence, even after steps had been taken to address non-engagement, the response of the YOS was sufficient in all cases.

Operational management

We found that Hartlepool YOS had responded to their previous inspection by implementing a range of measures aimed at improving the quality of their work. This included co-locating the team with relevant partner services and developing practice guidance for work that tackled risk of harm to others, vulnerability and compliance. Case managers had welcomed these developments and had incorporated them into their practice. Staff reported that they were well trained and supported in

their work and that they were clear about what was required of them. We found that staff were aware of the principles of effective practice and of the local policies and procedures that related to addressing risk of harm, vulnerability and compliance in their work with children and young people.

Case managers also valued the improved arrangements for management oversight of practice and, in particular, the development of the forum for practitioners to collectively review risk of harm and vulnerability issues. We saw evidence of these arrangements in use and noted the positive contribution they had made to the quality of work being undertaken by staff.

Key strengths

The best aspects of work that we found in Hartlepool included:

- There was routine engagement with children and young people and their parents/carers in carrying out initial assessments and in case planning. This was often in the face of challenging circumstances and we noted the determination and persistence shown by staff in this respect.
- The assessments of risk of harm and vulnerability issues were of good quality and reflected the skills and experience of staff and the organisational support that underpinned their work.

Area requiring improvement

The most significant area for improvement was:

- i. In all cases, assessments, plans and reviews of work to tackle risk of harm and vulnerability should be timely.

We strongly recommend that you focus your post-inspection improvement work on these particular aspects of practice.

We are grateful for the support that we received from staff in the YOS to facilitate and engage with this inspection. Please pass on our thanks, and ensure that they are made fully aware of these inspection findings.

If you have any further questions about the inspection please contact the lead inspector, who was Joseph Simpson. He can be contacted on 07917 084764 or by email at joe.simpson@hmiprobation.gsi.gov.uk.

Copy to:

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Malcolm Potter, Business Area Manager YJB

YJB link staff with HMI Probation

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HMI Constabulary

Care Quality Commission

Barry Coppinger, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

2 July 2013



Report of: Assistant Director, Children's Services

Subject: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN HARTLEPOOL

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

For information

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To present to Children's Services Committee information on the workload of children's social work teams in providing service to children in need in Hartlepool including those in need of protection and children looked after.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There is a clear expectation from Government that Elected Members are routinely and regularly informed of the workload of children's social care services. Children's Services Committee has highlighted it would wish to receive this information on a quarterly basis to ensure the Council is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities.
- 3.2 This report relates to the fourth quarter of 2012/13 but reflects performance and activity across the whole year to provide the Committee with a full year of data for consideration. Therefore, the data included in this report is taken from the activity in children's social care throughout the period from April 2012 to March 2013. Information provided in this report is taken from the Integrated Children's System (ICS), the electronic social care record, and is presented in graphical form at **Appendix 1**.

4. REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 Throughout 2012 / 13 there were 5187 contacts into Children's Services and 1280 progressed to referral, which equates to 25%. This compares with a conversion rate of 11% in 2010/11 and 17% in 2011/2012 representing a steady increase in the conversion of contacts to referrals year on year. Graph 1 provides data broken down on a monthly basis relating to the numbers of contacts progressing to referral. The First Contact and Support Hub, which is the 'front door' to children's services, receive contacts and carefully sorts through a large volume of information much of which requires no further action or signposting to other services.
- 4.2 Re-referral rates can be used as one of the measures as to the effectiveness of services provided to a family. The current re-referral rate in Hartlepool has averaged out over the year at 21%. Whilst there has been some variation in this rate throughout the year it peaked at 29% in September 2012. In response to this, a review was undertaken and this identified some common factors associated with re-referrals and that these should be addressed if the service is to effectively deal with presenting needs and ensure that families are not re-referred for further services following a case being closed by a social worker. The review highlighted the need to ensure that a robust service criteria and quality assurance processes are in place but equally recognised the challenge of this against a backdrop of increasing demand for services and consequent workloads. In response to these pressures, Corporate Management Team agreed a proposal to create an additional team manager post within the Initial Response Team and an additional social work post. This has provided the service with the appropriate level of resource to meet the demands of the increasing workload pressures and it is pleasing to report that the re-referral rate since February 2013 has been 17%.
- 4.3 In addition, the additional manager role has created more resilience within the service supporting more robust quality assurance of work within the Initial Response Team.
- 4.4 Graph 2 shows the number of referrals each month from April 2012 through to March 2013 coded to the Child in Need category. As can be seen from the graph the abuse or neglect category accounts for 75.7% of presenting need.
- 4.5 Throughout 2012 /2013 the service has completed 1,095 initial assessments, 201 of these were not completed within the stipulated timescale of 10 working days, 894 were, which equates to 81.6% within timescales.
- 4.6 Throughout 2012/ 2013, 341 core assessments were completed with 68% being completed within timescales. This compares to 237 completed in 2011/2012 and 66.7% of them being completed in timescales. This demonstrates that against a backdrop of increasing workloads we are managing not only to meet the challenge but also improve our performance in relation to timescales.

- 4.7 The revised statutory guidance on *Working Together to Safeguard Children* was published in March 2013. This will have an impact on the way assessments are carried out as the guidance permits the removal of the 10 day initial assessment and the 35 day core assessment timescales; instead promoting the practice of proportionate assessments. The aim of the guidance is to highlight that assessments are a continuous process and support professional judgement as the underpinning principle for the completion of assessments. This change provides professionals with the flexibility they need to carry out assessments designed around individual children and their families albeit the guidance still stipulates that all assessments should be completed within 45 working days.
- 4.8 The service completed 283 Section 47 enquiries throughout 2012/ 2013 and 94% were completed within a 10 day timescale. A Section 47 enquiry is initiated when there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. In all of these cases there is an immediate response and the child, who is deemed at risk, is seen and spoken to without delay. The enquiry will involve an assessment of the child's needs and the ability of those caring for the child to meet his or her needs. The purpose of this investigation is to decide whether Children's Services should take any action under the statutory powers available to them to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.
- 4.9 There were no unallocated cases in the service over the course of the year. Once a referral is received by the Initial Response Team, it is always allocated promptly within 24 to 48 hours. Similarly when a child is assessed as requiring services and is transferred to the Safeguarding, Assessment and Support Teams, a social worker is identified and the case is allocated without delay. Prompt allocation of cases is an important test of the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements.

5. CHILD PROTECTION

- 5.1 The total number of children who were subject to a child protection plan at 31 March 2013 is 136. Graph 3 details the numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plan across the year broken down by age.
- 5.2 Neglect continues to account for the highest proportion of child protection plans in Hartlepool. At 31 March 2013 the risk of physical abuse accounted for 19 children, whilst emotional abuse accounted for 12 children and the remaining 4 children were subject to a child protection plan due to risk of sexual abuse.
- 5.3 Over the course of the year, 24 children became subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time which equates to 17% of the total number of children becoming subject to a child protection plan. An audit was undertaken of cases where a child became subject to a second plan to identify whether there were any emerging themes. The findings of the audit were discussed in the departmental management meeting, with team managers

and with the multi agency 'safeguarding users group' to ensure that learning is taken forward in practice. In addition, new arrangements have now been put in place for the Conference Chair to complete an audit following each conference they chair where a child has become subject to a repeat plan. This will ensure that there is close scrutiny and challenge and performance is closely monitored.

6. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- 6.1 At the end of March 2013 there were 190 looked after children within Hartlepool. The Edge of Care Team continues to work with a small number of young people at risk of family breakdown and therefore becoming looked after. In essence the Edge of Care service is best described as a solution focused intensive support for families in crisis for children over 10 years of age. It provides families with a tailored individual support package designed around their needs, hopes, goals and aspirations and works intensively with the family to assist them to achieve these together. An evaluation of the Edge of Care service has been undertaken and the project is proving successful not only in terms of meeting its desired outcomes but also by a reduction in the number of young people entering the care system. Over all this means that young people not entering the care system unnecessarily and the service has been able to maximise its resources more effectively.
- 6.2 Graph 4 demonstrates the age range of children in care in Hartlepool as can be seen the highest age range of those young people aged 10 to 15 years. This is due to the fact that younger children will come into care but many will leave either through adoption or returning to the care of their families. There are a number of children who are looked after on a long term basis and live in foster care, the majority of these children are in the 10 to 15 age group.
- 6.3 Of the children looked after, as at 31 March 2013, 160 are placed in foster care, 11 are in residential care or residential school, and 7 children are living with a relative or friend. The remaining number are placed with parents or another person with parental responsibility, placed for adoption or living independently.
- 6.4 Thirteen children received family support via short break care where they receive care as part of a plan; this support is usually provided to disabled children who receive short break care at Exmoor Grove.
- 6.5 One of the key drivers influencing social work with children at present is the reforms to the Family Court processes following a Review of the Family Justice System (November 2011). The challenge of the Public Law Outline is to simplify the family court system by streamline processes and tackling delay. In essence this means that the local authority must think through its processes and ensure that all preparation work and assessments of extended family members are almost complete prior to making an application to the court for court proceedings. This means that local authorities are generally managing

risk outside the court arena and are complying with the ambitious 26 week timescales to complete care proceeding and keep children safe.

- 6.6 Throughout 2012 and 2013 27 sets of care proceedings were issued relating to 52 children. During this period there were 2 applications for emergency protection orders to immediately safeguard a child's welfare. In addition there were 9 applications for revocations of placements orders for children where the plan has changed from adoption to long term fostering.

7. CHILDREN IN NEED

- 7.1 As of the 31st March there were 1091 children in Hartlepool receiving support either through Child in Need, Children in Need of Protection or Looked After.

8. WORKFORCE/WORKLOAD

- 8.1 All children receiving services from children's social care are allocated to a qualified social worker. Three quarters of the social workers in the service are experienced having worked two or more years since qualifying. The demand for services continues to increase and as a consequence social workers' caseloads have risen and on average is now approximately 28 per social worker. Notwithstanding this does fluctuate between workers dependent upon their experience and the complexity of the issues within the case. Despite increasing case loads we continue to strive to maintain the protection of the newly qualified social worker case load and ensure that this support is accompanied by an appropriate level of management oversight.
- 8.3 Two members of the social care workforce are on long term sickness. Consecutive periods of short term absence are identified by Human Resources and managed Attendance Management Policy. by the team manager in accordance with the Council's
- 8.4 There is one social worker who took maternity leave in December 2012 and is due to return in September 2013.

9. COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

- 9.1 *Compliments* - During 2012/13, 14 compliments have been received relating to children's social care.
- 9.2 *Complaints* - A total of 21 complaints were received. One complaint was withdrawn by the complainant and the Council decided not to accept a complaint where nearly 6 years had elapsed since the grounds for making the complaint arose making a total of 19 complaints investigated. The number of complaints received has increased by 5 from 2011/12.

- Of the 19 complaints investigated, 17 of these have been concluded and 2 remain ongoing;
- All 19 complaints investigated were responded to at Stage 1 in the first instance. Of these, 17 complaints (89%) were concluded at Stage 1;
- The 2 complaints (11%) that were first considered at and unresolved at Stage 1, remain ongoing at Stage 2;
- There were no Stage 3 Complaint Review Panels held in 2012/13;
- Complaints were received from 4 males (19%), 16 females (76%) and 1 complaint (5%) were made jointly by couples (male and female).

9.3 *Advocacy Services* - One of the 19 complainants were assisted and supported by an Advocate during the complaints process.

9.4 *Complaints considered by the Local Government Ombudsman in 2012/13* - There were no complaints in relation to children's social care that progressed to the Local Government Ombudsman in 2012/13.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the Children's Services Committee notes the contents of this report of activity within children's social care.

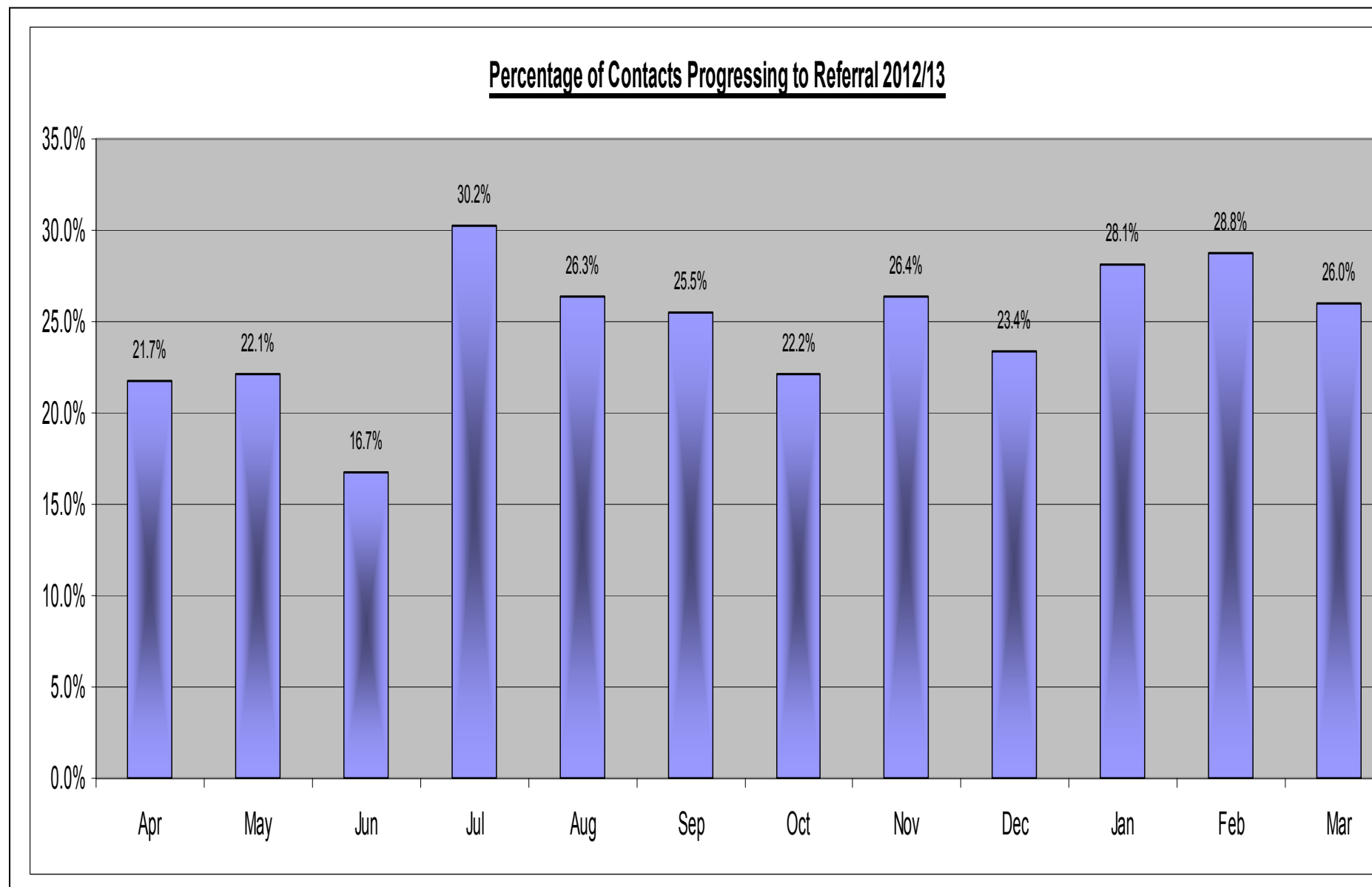
11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 It is part of the Children's Services Committee's role to ensure the effective discharge of the Authority's statutory children's services functions. The Children's Services Committee has a responsibility to ensure there is a clear focus on safeguarding and that coordinated action is in place to safeguard vulnerable children.

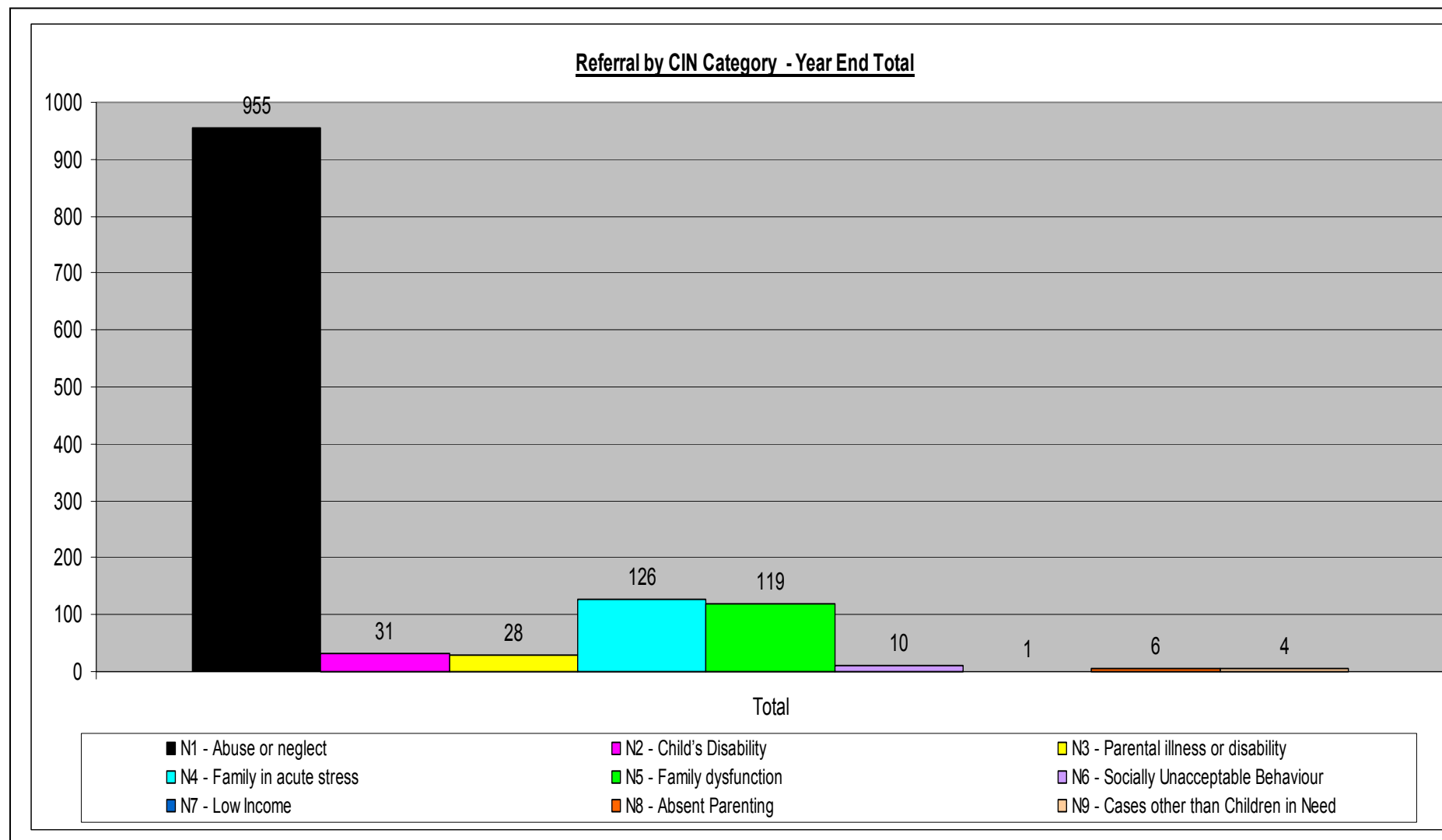
12. CONTACT OFFICER

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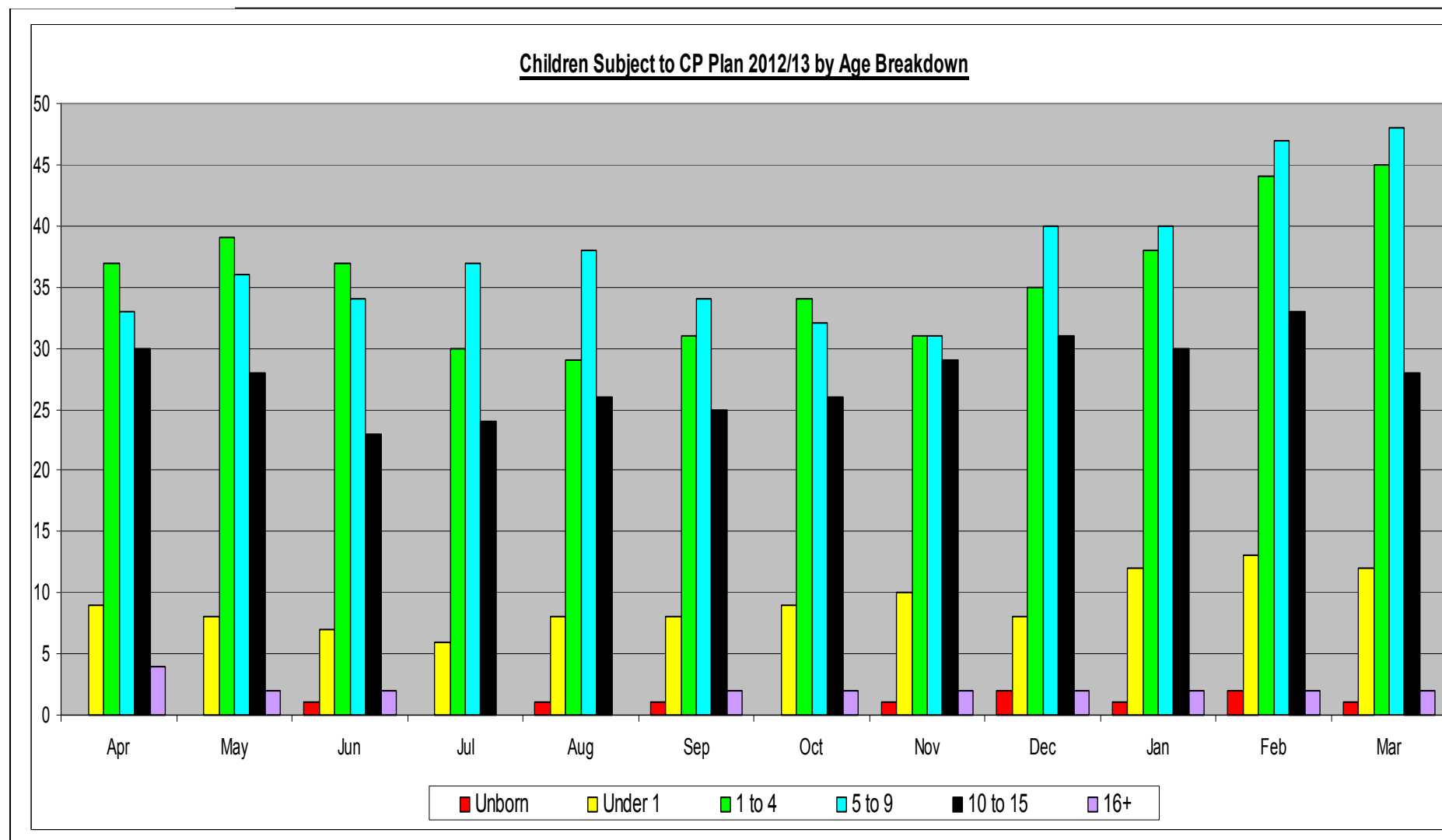
Graph 1



Graph 2



Graph 3



Graph 4

