

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE AGENDA



**Tuesday 11 November 2014**

**at 4.00 pm**

**in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillors Fleet, Griffin, Hall, Lauderdale, Lilley, Loynes, Simmons

Co-opted Members: Michael Lee

Six Young People's Representatives

Observer: Councillor Richardson, Chair of Adult Services Committee

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

**3. MINUTES**

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2014 (*previously circulated and published*).

**4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS**

No items.



**5. KEY DECISIONS**

No items.

**6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**

No items.

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- 7.1 Adoption Service – 6 Month Interim Report – April - September 2014 –  
*Director of Child and Adult Services*
- 7.2 Fostering Service Interim Report – 1 April - 30 September 2014 – *Director of  
Child and Adult Services*
- 7.3 Safeguarding Children in Hartlepool – *Assistant Director, Children's Services*
- 7.4 Pupil Achievement Summary 2014 (Provisional) – *Director of Child and Adult  
Services*

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**Date of next meeting – 9 December 2014 at 4.00pm in the Civic Centre,  
Hartlepool**



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

11 November 2014



**Report of:** Director of Child and Adult Services

**Subject:** ADOPTION SERVICE – 6 MONTH INTERIM  
REPORT APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2014

## 1. TYPE OF DECISION / APPLICABLE CATEGORY

For information.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Children Services Committee with information relating to the work of the Adoption Service from 1 April to 30 September 2014. The adoption service is a regulated service and as such is required to provide the executive side of the Council with regular performance information.

## 3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Hartlepool Adoption Service is managed in accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The National Minimum Standards for Adoption and the Adoption Regulations form the basis of the regulatory framework for the conduct of adoption and adoption support agencies.

3.2 In order to comply with the National Minimum Standards (2011) the Local Authority is required to produce progress reports on the adoption service which is considered by the executive side of the Council every 6 months.

3.2 This Interim Report provides details of the staffing arrangements in the service, the constitution of the Fostering and Adoption Panel and activity in relation to the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters.

#### 4. ADOPTION ACTIVITY

- 4.1 Over the last six months, the Adoption Service has continued to benefit from the funding allocated through the Adoption Reform Grant. The grant, although reduced in amount, was extended to include the financial year 2014/15 and is intended to support adoption agencies to meet the targets set by the Government in relation to increasing the numbers of children being adopted and reducing the length of time a child wait for a placement.
- 4.2 Hartlepool Adoption Service has invested the grant in a number of initiatives designed to strengthen local performance and practice namely:
- Improving publicity and marketing information and activity with the aim of recruiting an increased number of adopters;
  - Increasing staff capacity to manage the recruitment, training and assessment of prospective adopters ensuring the new timescales for assessment are achieved;
  - Continuing the Family Finder Post dedicated to finding adopters for children who are waiting for adoption and ensuring best practice in planning placements and introductions;
  - Strengthening the role of the Post Box Coordinator and the delivery of post adoption support services;
  - Implementing and managing the transition from the current Post Box Contact paper based system to the Integrated Children's System post box contact modules making the process more efficient and the arrangements more manageable;
  - To continue delivering the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) two stage assessment process for adopters focusing on reducing the timescales for training and assessment;
  - To be involved in the regional Adoption Activity Day;
  - Using funding available to procure adoptive placements for the more difficult to placement children, those who are part of siblings groups and older children.

#### Staffing

- 4.3 In the last 6 months there have been some significant changes to the staffing complement of the adoption service. The previous roles of Principal Practitioners within the team, one focusing on fostering and one on adoption, have now been amalgamated into the post of an Assistant Team Manager giving the post holder additional responsibilities to manage in the absence of the Team Manager and to provide the team with an additional support and quality assurance.
- 4.4 The adoption team now consists of a Team Manager who has responsibility for the fostering and adoption service, an Assistant Team Manager also covering both services, three Social Workers, a Family Finding Post and a Team Clerk.

### **Marketing & Publicity Activity**

- 4.5 In the last six months there has been a renewed focus on marketing and publicity to attract prospective adopters to Hartlepool. This has included adverts in local press and Primary Times magazine; information distributed to schools and G.P. services and the inclusion of Hartlepool's details on the newly introduced National Gateway for Adoption 'First4Adoption' website and a distribution of marketing materials in selected key areas.

### **Recruitment**

- 4.7 Between 1 April and 30 September the service has received 12 enquiries from prospective adopters, six of whom have been invited to attend a preparation group.

N.B. In the previous six months the service received 10 enquires with 9 enquires progressing to attend the preparation group. It is felt that the explanation for this is related to the changes in monitoring arrangements for recruitment. We are now recording all enquires as opposed to previously when only those who progressed to initial visit were included in the figures.

- 4.8 In addition the service has trained and assessed two existing foster carers who have made an application to adopt a child placed with them.

### **Preparation Training**

- 4.9 In 1 November 2013, Hartlepool Adoption service commenced using the two stage preparation and assessment process intended to reduce the timescale for the approval of adopters to a maximum of six months inclusive of consideration at Panel and Agency Decision. It is pleasing to report that the adoption service has implemented this process confidently and all assessments undertaken have been completed within this timescale.
- 4.10 Adopters now attend four days of modularised training which has been reconfigured to meet the needs of the two stage assessment process. An initial one day training event takes place with a further three days taking place at a later stage. This allows adopters to join the training at either stage and maintain the timescale of assessments of less than six months.
- 4.11 Between 1 April and 30 September 2014 there have been two one day preparation events which took place in May and June with a further three days of training taking place in September. This has resulted in five prospective adopter assessments commencing.

Further one day training events will take place in October 2014 and January 2015 with this training being concluded in February 2015. It is expected that this training will result in a further six adopter assessments commencing.

### **Post Approval Support Groups**

- 4.11 All adopters who have been approved or are currently being assessed are invited to attend regular support groups. From April to September 2014 four sessions have been held. Topics delivered include managing children's behaviour, talking to your child about adoption, and introductions, post adoption support, and facing up to Facebook. Whilst these sessions are not mandatory there is an expectation for adopters who are going through the assessment process and those who are approved are to attend and this is encouraged.

### **Panel activity**

- 4.12 Panel has continued to meet on a fortnightly basis and agenda items include both fostering and adoption matters. Between 1 April and 30 September 2014, 12 Panel Meetings have taken place.
- 4.13 Panel membership has remained relatively stable and during the course of the second six months of the year, only one panel member (our Elected Member) has resigned.
- 4.14 In the last six months, Panel members have received training in relation to changes to case law arising from the judgment re 'B.S.' This case law has significant implications for adoption practice and it is important that Panel are aware of the implications.
- 4.15 Plans are also in place for panel members to complete training on the importance of placing sibling together.
- 4.16 Matters considered and recommended by Panel in relation to adoption include:
- The approval of adopters;
  - The match of approved carers with children whose plan is for adoption;
  - Reviews of adopters who have been approved for more than 6 months.
- 4.17 Between 1 April and 30 September 2014, Panel has considered the following business:
- Seven adoptive couples have been approved;
  - The matches of seven children (including 2 sibling groups of two children) with adopters;
  - One review of an adopter who has been approved for more than 6 months without a child being placed has taken place.
- 4.18 There are effective processes in place for the recommendations made by panel to be considered by the Agency Decision Maker and the timescale for this is within 10 working days of the Panel meeting taking place.

### **Family Finding Good Practice**

- 4.19 The Adoption Team is realising the significant benefits of the Family Finding post. The worker has timetabled monthly Family Finding Meetings for those children waiting for adoptive placements. These meetings build upon the current planning for permanence arrangements and focus on identifying and matching children with potential adopters, reducing any delay or drift and ensuring that children are placed more swiftly in their adoptive placements.
- 4.20 The Family Finding social worker has also been intensively involved in identifying adoptive placements for those children who have been difficult to place. Effective and positive working relationships have been established with the voluntary sector and other local authority adoption agencies, both regionally and nationally, resulting in the placement of six children comprising of three sibling groups of two children.
- 4.21 The Family Finding social worker has been instrumental in working positively with placing Social Workers to improve the quality of Child Permanence Reports and has been able to assist in the completion of pieces of work to support their preparation again strengthening timeliness of the reports being prepared and considered by Panel.
- 4.22 Hartlepool Adoption Service is working alongside 10 other regional local authorities to be involved in an Adoption Activity Day. The event is planned to take place on 22 November 2014. Up to 50 children (five from each local authority) will attend the day. The event will focus on profiling those children who have proven more difficult to place, those who are part of siblings groups and older children.

## **5. SUMMARY**

- 5.1 The period 1 April to 30 September 2014 has been a challenging one for the Adoption Team managing changes within the workforce, which has at times resulted in a reduction in the staffing complement whilst recruitment was undertaken. There has, however, been an increased level of positive and productive team work undertaken ensuring that adopters continue to be supported to a high level. This has been achieved through the duty system which is staffed during working hours to ensure that any enquires from potential adopters are responded to swiftly and that any requests for support from adopters are given a prompt response. The team is now functioning at full capacity.
- 5.2 The Family Finding post has ensured that there has been timely and appropriate matches identified for children and reduced the level of drift and delay for children being placed with adopters.
- 5.3 The service is on target to have the Post Box system transferred to an electronic system leading to this being managed more effectively.

- 5.4 There is a worker who has an identified role to offer Post Adoption Support to any adopters needing this service and this ensures that any arising needs are responded to promptly with the aim of preventing these from escalating.
- 5.6 The Adoption Team is in a strong position, there is the capacity within the team to meet the timescales for all assessments that are in process and the service has reorganised its adoption preparation training modules to fit in with the new two stage assessment process. Over the last six months there has been a decrease in the number of children needing adoptive placements however we are aware that this situation can change quickly and as a service we need to be in a position to respond swiftly to any need for adoptive placements. We are targeting our recruitment on finding adoptive families for sibling groups and children with more complex needs, however we recognise that there is a need to search nationally for the right family for some children.
- 5.8 The Adoption Reform Grant has provided significant resources to deliver improved performance in relation to adoption. Within Hartlepool, this has been utilised exclusively for transforming adoption practice and the service is seeing real results from the investment. It has also allowed us to procure placements for more difficult to place children where as a result of their complex needs there has also been a need for ongoing post adoption support.
- 5.9 The service remains eager and enthusiastic to recruit new adopters to meet the needs of children needing adoption.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to note the Adoption Agency Interim Report and action plan (**Appendix 1**) update for April to September 2014.

## 7. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The Adoption Agency is a Regulatory Service of the Council and as such Children's Services Committee require information about how services are delivered and their effectiveness.

## 14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Adoption Regulations and National Minimum Standard 2011.



## 15. CONTACT OFFICER

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**INTERIM ACTION PLAN**

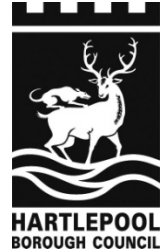
ACTION:	
a) To continue to respond to any adoptive enquiries including those received via the new National Gateway.	a) The Adoption Service has a duty worker who is available to respond promptly to any enquiries made. An initial visit by 2 Adoption Social Workers takes place within 5 – 10 working days, dependent upon the availability of the enquirer.
b) To continue with the new BAAF 2 stage assessment process.	b) The Adoption Service has fully implemented the two stage assessment process. Changes have been made to the delivery of the preparation training, the completion of statutory checks and the assessment of adopters. To date all assessments have been completed within the maximum assessment period of 6 months as dictated by BAAF.
c) To proceed with the Departments plans for early permanency for very young children with a plan for adoption.	c) The Family finder is invited to attend permanency planning meetings for all children with a plan for adoption. Her involvement allows us to begin provisional family finding at the earliest opportunity reducing any delay and ensuring that children are placed more swiftly in their adoptive placements.
d) To support placing Social Workers in completing factual and informative Child's Permanency Reports.	d) Part of the Family Finder's post is to assist in supporting Social Workers in completing Child's Permanency Reports, improving the quality of these reports and strengthening the timeliness of reports being prepared and considered by panel.
e) To utilise the existing Family Finding post to identify children needing adoptive placements earlier and using our own resources, established links and new research to positively match with adopters within timescales.	e) The Family Finder has established positive links with other Local Authorities and voluntary organisations. The Adoption Service is part of the Regional Consortium meetings, where children's profiles are shared.

**7.1**  
**Appendix 1**

<p>f) To work positively and proactively with the child's Social Worker to improve the quality of Life Story work.</p>	<p>f) The Family Finder has responsibility for attending Steering Group meetings, the Regional Adoption Activity Day and identifies children most suitable to attend and has completed profiles for the event.</p> <p>The Family Finder offers support to Social Workers in completing life story work and there are plans to deliver further training aimed specifically at Social Workers who are recently qualified.</p>
<p>g) To provide those who have adopted with ongoing post adoptive support.</p>	<p>g) The Adoption Service has a dedicated, experienced Social Worker who is able to offer post adoptive support upon completion of an assessment.</p> <p>This worker is also responsible for supporting adults who have been adopted in tracing birth family records.</p>
<p>h) To continue to develop and utilise the new electronic post box system.</p>	<p>h) The Fostering Service has a contractual arrangement with 'After Adoption' and following assessment can refer individuals for more specialised and individual support where needed.</p> <p>The transfer of the manual post box system to an electronic database is almost complete. This will allow the system to be managed more effectively and securely.</p>
<p>i) We will also be targeting our current advertising campaign to look specifically at recruiting adopters for older children and siblings group.</p>	<p>i) Part of the Assistant Team Manages post is dedicated to attending regional recruitment forums and liaising with marketing agencies.</p> <p>In 2015 we will focus our energies and resources on recruiting adopters for sibling groups and older children, recognising the changing needs of children needing adoptive placements.</p>

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

11 November 2014



**Report of:** Director, Child and Adult Services

**Subject:** FOSTERING SERVICE INTERIM REPORT  
1 April 2014 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2014

## 1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

For information.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Children Service's Committee with information relating to the activity of the Fostering Service for the first and second quarter of 2014/15. The Fostering Service is a regulated service and as such there is a requirement to provide the executive side of the Council with performance information on a quarterly basis.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The work of the Fostering Service 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.
- 3.2 The 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 progress in relation to the priorities set out in the Fostering Annual Report.
- 3.3 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;
- Monitors the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for children;
- Satisfies themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of the registration.

#### **4. FOSTERING ACTIVITY**

##### **Staffing**

- 4.1 The Fostering Team consists of a Team Manager who has management responsibility for the Fostering and Adoption Service, an Assistant Team Manager and six social work posts. There have been significant changes within the team in relation to staffing. An experienced member of the team has retired and this permanent vacancy was filled by a member of the team who previously held a fixed term contract. A second social worker has recently left the team to explore new opportunities. This has created a permanent full time post and a fixed term contract which it is hoped will be appointed to in the near future.
- 4.2 The Fostering Team continues to benefit greatly from the support of a team clerk. The role of this worker is to continue to offer admin support to the Fostering Team and she is responsible for the planning, preparation and smooth running of Fostering and Adoption Panel.

#### **5. RECRUITMENT & RETENTION AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2014**

- 5.1 There are currently 107 foster carers providing placements for 134 children, this represents an increase of three foster carers since the previous quarter. In addition to this the service continues to assess and support Connected Persons Carers.
- 5.2 Of the 107 approved fostering households, there are two foster carers who are currently unavailable or on hold due to the individual circumstances of the carer.
- 5.3 The fostering team has recently joined with the four neighbouring local authorities within the Tees Valley to form Tees Valley Fostering, a recruitment and marketing initiative which shares resources and strategies to enable increased recruitment activities to take place across the sub region. To date the group has launched an advertising campaign through the mediums of local radio, local buses and attended outdoor shows throughout the summer months to raise the awareness of fostering. Going forward the group is focusing on producing a television advert which it is hoped will be aired in 2015. This activity has produced a small increase in fostering enquiries to the team.

- 5.4 The table below provides details of the recruitment activity which has taken place in the first two quarters of 2014/15.

Initial Enquiries – including survey of where did people hear about the service	Initial Enquiries 27  <b>Source</b> Council E mail 0 Hartlepool Mail 2 Internet 1 Recommendation from current carers 3 Own volition 17 Tees Valley bus campaign 1 Tees Valley radio campaign 2 Hartbeat 1
Information packs sent out between 1/04/14 and 30/09/14	27
Initial Visits How many proceeded	12 8
Preparation Group	A preparation group was held in July 2014, 7 fostering households attended the training.
How many prospective Carers are waiting for a group?	There are 3 potential Fostering households waiting for a group (which is planned to take place in October 2014)

## 6. TRAINING & POST APPROVAL SUPPORT

### Training

- 6.1 As part of their development and progression, all new carers are encouraged to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council Standards for Foster Carers Portfolio within a 12 months post approval timescale. All approved Connected Person's Carers have an increased timescale of two years to complete the portfolio. Support in completing the portfolio is available from both supervising Social Workers and existing approved carers wishing to reach progression level Band 4 where there is a requirement to provide mentoring and support.
- 6.2 All foster carers are required to complete training a programme of training each year of their approval. The mandatory courses are child protection, first aid and attachment and there is a requirement that these courses are completed within one year of approval and updated every three years.

- 6.3 Foster carers are provided with bespoke training specific to their needs whilst caring for looked after children. The bespoke training available for carers during this reporting period has been caring for a child who has been sexually abused, attachment, and managing disclosures.
- 6.4 Foster carers have also had access to the Hartlepool Safeguarding Children Board and Child and Adult's Service Learning and Development Plan and have participated in training and development opportunities alongside practitioners.

### **Support**

- 6.5 Foster carer support groups have continued to take place monthly. Groups are usually attended by 20+ foster carers and offer an element of training, usually provided by a guest speaker delivering information which is of interest to carers and an informal Support Group Session towards the end of the evening.
- 6.6 The Support Groups are arranged and facilitated by at least two members of the Fostering Team who are available to discuss any issues raised by individual carers or the group as a whole.
- 6.7 The Foster Carer Support Group for male carers continues to be held on a monthly basis. Attendance at the group is variable, however those in attendance feel that the group is beneficial and would wish for this to continue.
- 6.8 Current band 4 foster carers are running a monthly coffee morning supported by social workers from the fostering team. The focus of this meeting is to provide support and encouragement to newly approved foster carers.
- 6.9 The Authority continues to provide financial support to the Hartlepool Foster Carer Association, which arranges events and activities for foster carers and children looked after. In August 2014 the Foster Carer Association took a number of foster carers and looked after children to Disneyland Paris, which was greatly enjoyed.
- 6.10 The Foster Carer Association continues to meet monthly to plan a programme of activities over the course of the year. A member of the fostering team attends these meetings to offer support and advice.
- 6.11 In August 2014 the fostering team facilitated a foster carers picnic which was well attended by foster carers, their families and looked after children. It is anticipated that this will become an annual event.

## **7. PANEL ACTIVITY**

- 7.1 The Family Placement Panel has continued to be held on a twice monthly basis and agenda items include both fostering and adoption matters.

Between 1 April and 30 September 2014, twelve panel meetings have taken place. The panel has successfully recruited and now has a full cohort of members available to attend. Those appointed have attended induction training and will continue to receive ongoing training.

7.2 From 1 April to 30 September 2014 the Panel has made recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker on the following fostering matters:

- Eight Foster Carer approvals;
- Six children have been considered and approved as needing a long term foster placement;
- The matches of six children with long term Foster Carers;
- Seven foster care reviews.

7.3 There are effective processes in place for the recommendations made by Panel to be considered by the Agency Decision Maker and the timescale for this is within 10 working days of the Panel meeting taking place.

## 8.0 FAMILY FINDING GOOD PRACTICE

8.1 The Family Finding Post created as part of the Adoption Reform Grant has been extended for a second year. The Family Finder has been instrumental in developing links with independent agencies and ensuring processes work efficiently between the local authority and the independent agencies.

8.2 The Family Finding worker has ensured that plans for permanence are identified as early as possible and that a Permanency Planning meeting is closely followed by a process meeting to minimize delay and ensure that social workers are supported in producing quality timely matching reports.

8.3 The Family Finder and Team Manager have visited each of the social work teams and delivered training to ensure all staff are fully conversant in the arrangements and procedures to be followed in relation to long term fostering.

## 9. PROGRESS AGAINST PRIORITIES 2013 – 2014

9.1 Attached at **Appendix 1** to this report is a table detailing the priorities for the year 2014/15 and the progress achieved during the first and second quarters.

## 10 SUMMARY

10.1 The number of children becoming looked after in the last six months has decreased and recruitment has continued to approve new carers consistently so we have seen a surplus of carers for babies and younger children. However, despite the increase in the number of fostering households, we continued to need placements for sibling groups of 3 or more and older teenagers which will be the focus of targeted recruitment campaigns.



- 10.2 The service continues to recruit and assess prospective Foster Carers. There are three prospective fostering households attending preparatory training in October 2014. The fostering service will continue to work in collaboration with the Tees Valley local authorities in respect of fostering recruitment. In addition to this the team will continue to respond to requests for Connected Person's assessments.

## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The Children's Service Committee is asked to note the report in relation to the work of the Fostering Service in the first and second quarter of 2014 / 15.

## 12 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 12.1 The Fostering Service is required to fulfill its statutory responsibilities to children looked after by the local authority and provide regular reports to the Children Services Committee to enable the Committee to satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of the registration.
- 12.2 Children's Services Committee has an important role in scrutinising the activities of the fostering services to ensure that performance in this area is robust.

## 13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Fostering National Minimum Standards Services 2011;
- Fostering Regulations 2011;
- Fostering Annual Report 2013/2014

## 14. CONTACT OFFICER

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Telephone – 01429 287216

## 7.2 Appendix 1

Priority	Progress Achieved	Lead Officer	Target Date
To continue to offer families support from the Edge of Care Scheme and to look at further recruitment to expand this project.	Information has been included in relation to the scheme in preparation training	Chris Croft	April 2015
	Information has been provided to all carers relating to support care scheme	Julie Levitt	
Target recruitment to attract foster carers for older children and sibling groups and those with more challenging behaviours.	Recruitment strategy in place	Jacqui Dixon	April 2015
	Specific adverts relating to teenagers are planned.	Jacqui Dixon	April 2015
	A joint radio advertising campaign has taken place with the four neighbouring Local Authorities, further collaboration is planned	Jacqui Dixon	Sept 2014
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.	85% of carers completed Standards	Chris Croft	April 2015
	Support groups and mentoring in place for those yet to complete	Supervising Social Workers	
To continue the pilot foster carer support group for male carers and extend this to all male carers.	Support group established held on a monthly basis	Chris Croft	
	Pilot scheme to be extended to incorporate all male foster cares	Keith Munro	Sept 2014
To continue with the Family Finding post enabling children and young people to have 'permanency' in their lives as early as possible. To achieve life appreciation events for all children where permanency is the option.	Family Finding post has been extended until October 2015 New processes established	Chris Croft	April 2015

## 7.2 Appendix 1

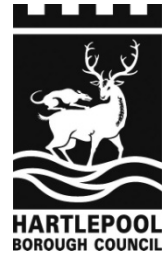
	New process and procedures regarding long term match have been shared with teams	Emma Howarth	April 2015
To continue to demonstrate our appreciation of the commitment provided by our foster carers.	Annual celebration event planned  Continue to provide social work support to the Foster Care Support Group  Funding provided to the Foster Carer Association	Julie Levitt  Supervising Social Worker	Feb 2015  April 2015
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.	Annual survey of training priorities for Foster Carers completed.	Chris Croft	April 2015
Continue to facilitate sons and daughters group for children of foster carers.	Regular meetings and activities have taken place  Specific training planned for children and young people  Young people have spoken at the foster carer preparation training and will continue with this.	Placement Support Workers  Placement Support Workers  Jacqui Dixon	April 2015  April 2015  April 2015
To continue to strive to support our carers to engender stability within placements for our Looked After children.	Regular support groups have taken place.  Foster carers are encouraged and supported to support less experienced carers	Chris Croft  Supervising Social Workers	April 2015  April 2015
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.	Consultation document has been circulated amongst current foster carers.	Chris Croft Jacqui Dixon	Nov 2014

**7.2  
Appendix 1**

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.	All Foster Carers to receive attachment and child development training	Christine Croft Therapeutic Services	April 2015
	Family Finding role ensuring appropriate matches of carers to children	Emma Howarth	April 2015
	Child Appreciation days have been undertaken for permanent placements	Jacqui Dixon	April 2015
Annual Training Programme to be delivered	A Training event has been planned to encourage carers and look at the support needs for carers caring for older children.	Chris Croft Jacqui Dixon	October 2014
	Funding has been secured and interviews will take place to secure an Intern to focus on Recruitment and Marketing.	Chris Croft	Sept 2014
	Meetings with teams have taken place and assessments are now being undertaken jointly.	Chris Croft Emma Howarth	April 2015
To introduce and establish the BAAF 2 stage assessment process with more prescriptive timescales for assessments, recruitment, training and assessment.	Supervising Social Workers now have new timescales for assessments.	Supervising Social Workers	April 2015
	A year long plan is in place for preparation training with dates booked in advance.	Jacqui Dixon	April 2015

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

11 November 2014



**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 a half yearly activity report on the workload of children's social work teams in providing services to children in need in Hartlepool including those in need of protection and children looked after.

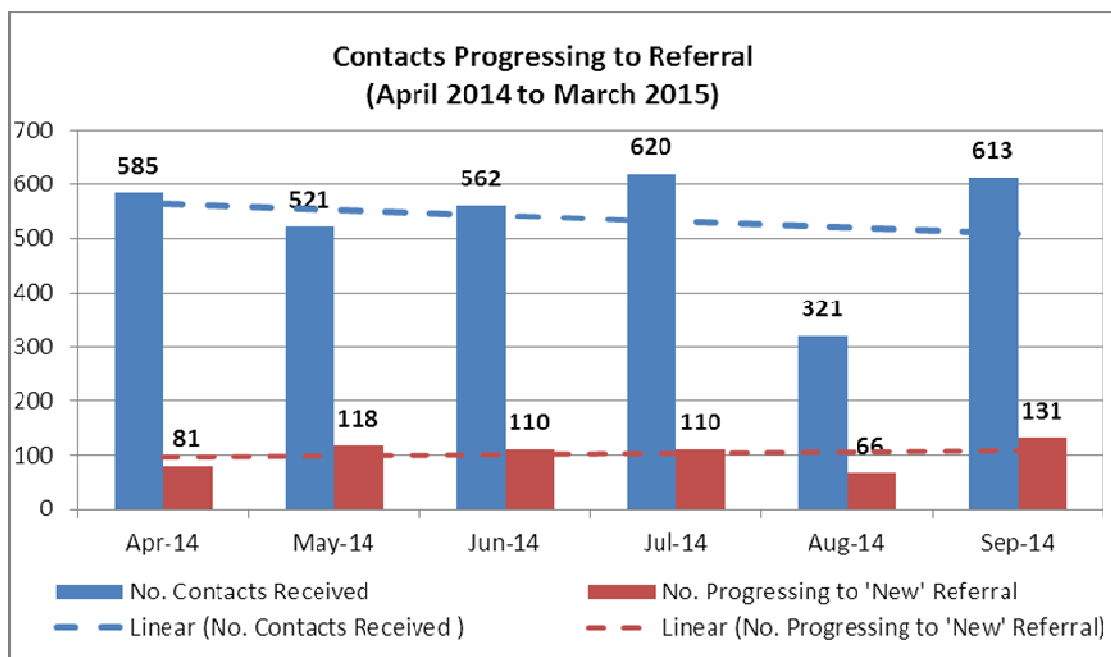
## 3. BACKGROUND

- 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 to ensure the Council is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities.
- 3.2 This report covers the activity from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014. *"The graphs displayed within the report have been re-produced on a powerpoint presentation to provide visual aid for Members"*. Information provided in this report is taken from the Integrated Children's System (ICS) the electronic social care record, children's services legal section, the complaints officer, attendance management system and also through direct discussion with the head of service for all areas providing a social care service.

**4. REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT**

4.1 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014 there were 3222 contacts made to the First Contact and Support Hub from either members of the public or other professionals. From that number, 616 contacts progressed to a referral to the Safeguarding, Assessment and Support Unit for a Child in Need Assessment or a Child Protection Enquiry pursuant to Section 47 of the 1989 Children Act.

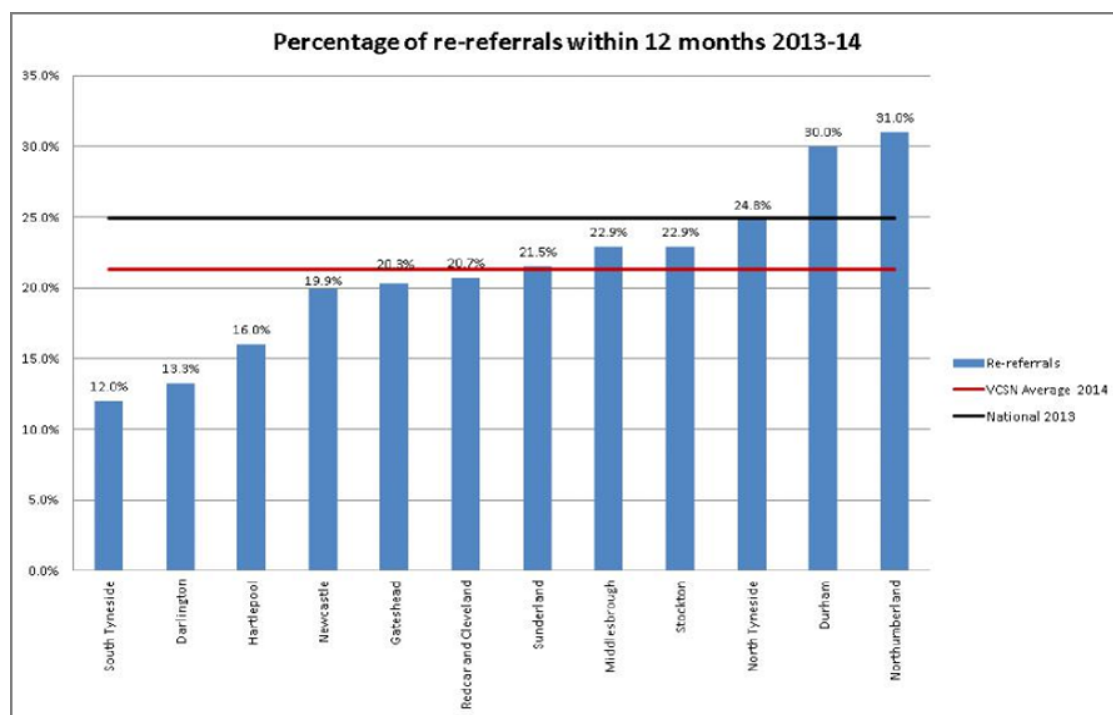
4.2



4.3 The First Contact and Support Hub provide information, advice and guidance on services and support for children, young people and families. The aim is to ensure that we have robust and timely mechanisms in place to respond to all contacts with the department. As can be seen from the conversion rate of contact to referral (19.1%), the majority of contacts result in either a signposting to targeted or universal services or advice and guidance being provided. The First Contact and Support Hub provide an effective interface between children's services and the public or other professionals. The workers are specially trained and have good customer care skills to enable them to deal with queries proficiently and effectively process the information they receive.

4.4 Re-referral rates can be used as one of the measures of the effectiveness of services provided to a family. Re-referrals may occur because at the time of the original referral the need may not have been satisfactorily met or may have changed. The service closely monitors the numbers of all referrals where an assessment has previously been undertaken. We are particularly interested in learning from those situations that have come back into services within twelve months with the presenting concern similar or identical to the issues identified in the previous referral. The re-referral rate for the

reporting period is 16.6% and as can be seen from the regional re-referral data for 2013/14, we are performing well when compared with regional authorities.



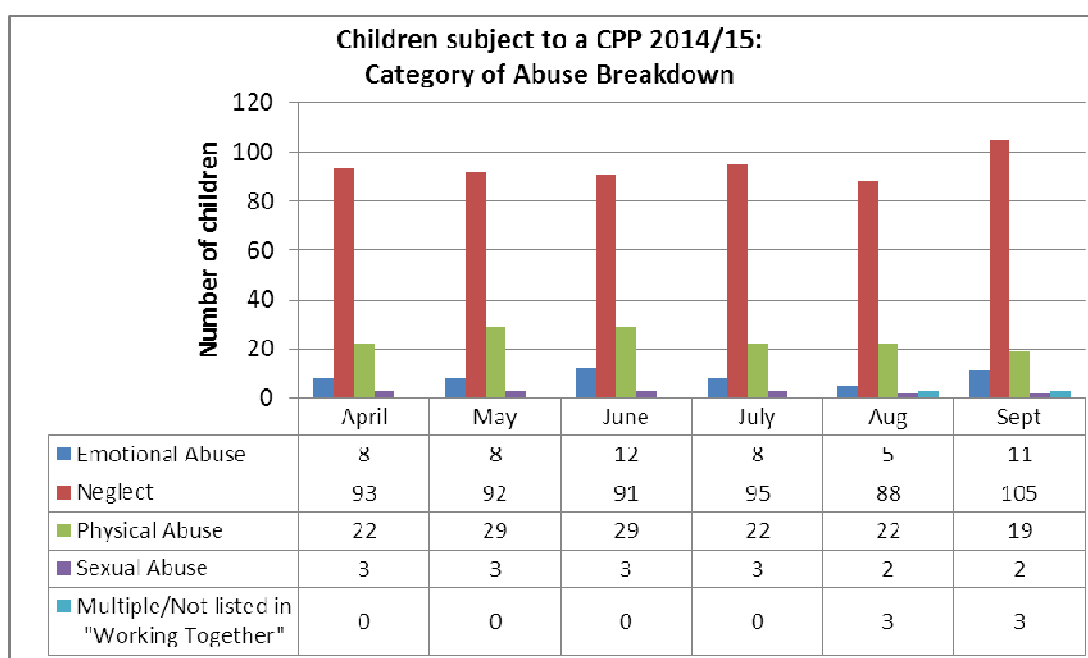
4.5 At the point of referral, it is difficult to accurately identify the issues that are impacting on the family as these can be multi-faceted and often the precipitating incident leading to the referral may just be the tip of the iceberg. Nevertheless this information is used as part of the data analysed in the annual matching needs and services analysis to enable officers to shape services for children and families. The category of abuse and neglect continues to account for the largest numbers of referrals into children's social care accounting for 51% of referrals followed by family dysfunction which accounts for 31% the remaining 18 % of referrals relate to families in acute distress, a child with a disability, a parent with a disability or illness or unacceptable behavior or low income or absent parent. The issue of neglect remains a priority for Hartlepool Safeguarding Children's Board to work together to support agencies to improve outcomes for children who are negatively affected by neglectful care.

4.6 The Children's and Families Assessment was implemented in Hartlepool on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014 and replaces the previous arrangements of initial and core assessments. To ensure we had the best possible structure to support the new assessment the teams were reconfigured within the safeguarding assessment and support unit into six generic social work teams that provide services to children and their families from birth to eighteen. It is pleasing to report that we have seen an improvement in the timeliness of assessment since the implementation of the Children and Families assessment. We are currently achieving 91% of all assessments within the prescribed timescale.

In comparison to the first half of 2013 when 55% were completed within timescales.

**5. CHILD PROTECTION**

- 5.1 Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm there should be a strategy discussion involving local authority children's social care, the police, health, education and other bodies such as the referring agency. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting or phone calls and more than one discussion may be necessary. A strategy discussion can take place following a referral or at any time, including during the assessment process.
- 5.2 If the outcome of strategy discussions is to initiate Section 47 enquiries under the Children Act 1989, the social worker will lead the assessment with contributions from the involved professionals.
- 5.3 The service completed 145 Section 47 enquiries from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014. In all of these cases there was an immediate response and the child, who was deemed at risk, was seen and spoken to without delay. The enquiry involves 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 was 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.
- 5.4 As at the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014 there were 140 children subject to a protection plan within Hartlepool. This continues to be a relatively high figure but it has remained at this level for a consistent period of time.
- 5.5 *Graph shows the breakdown of children subject to a protection plan under the risk category*

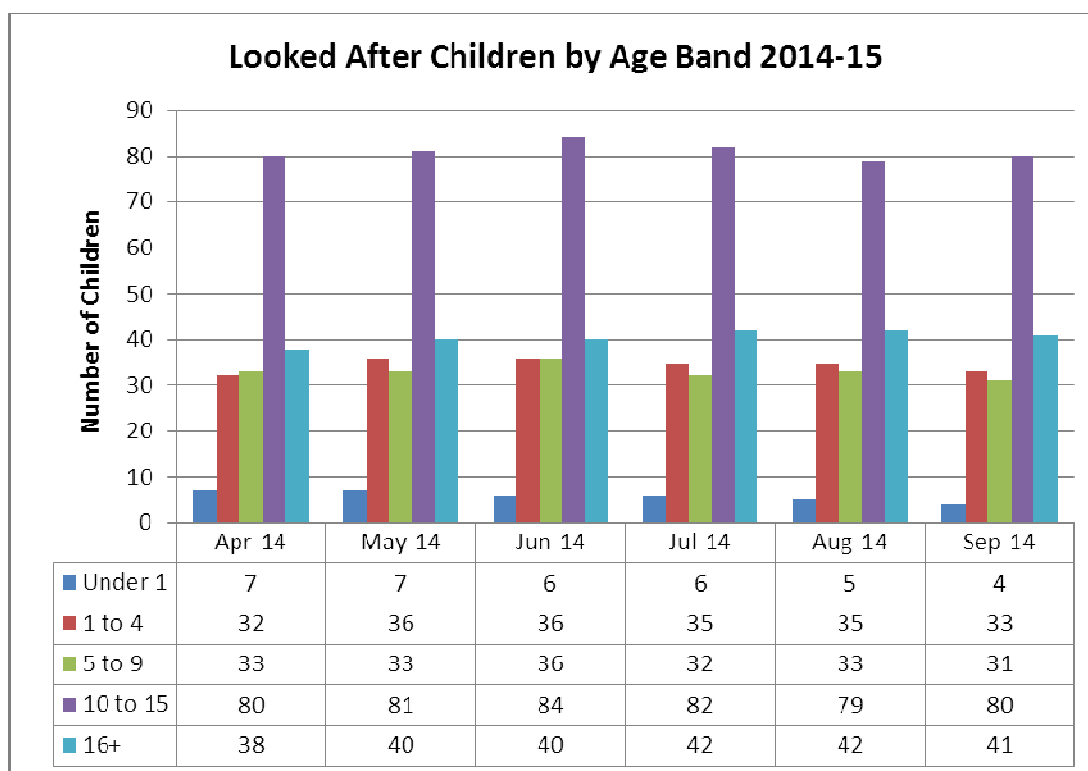




- 5.6 As can be seen from the above graph, neglect continues to be the main category under which children become subject to a child protection plan. As already discussed the Local Safeguarding Board has, for the past three years, identified neglect as a priority area for oversight and scrutiny and work has been undertaken to develop initiatives to address the prevalence of neglect in Hartlepool. In the 2013/14 year Hartlepool Safeguarding Children's Board implemented the Graded Care Profile as a tool to support the assessment of families where neglect is a feature. To date, there has been little evidence of its use to inform assessment and intervention and the Board is seeking feedback from agencies regarding implementation within individual organisations.
- 5.7 The Safeguarding and Review Unit carry the responsibility for the organisation and chairing of child protection conferences, children's looked after reviews and the review of foster carers. These meetings are chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) who carry key responsibility for ensuring high standards of practice are upheld and that plans for vulnerable children are being progressed in a timely manner.
- 5.8 In Hartlepool there are five IRO's covering 4.3 posts and their work is overseen by the Head of Safeguarding and Review. The work of the IRO's is underpinned by the statutory guidance detailed in the IRO handbook and Care Planning Regulations.
- 5.9 Following the unannounced Ofsted inspection in November 2013, the service development plan for the Safeguarding and Review Unit has been updated and priority areas identified within the updated service delivery plan are as follows:
- Introduction of an advocacy service in child protection conferences for children aged 11 and over to promote their attendance and participation;
  - Ensuring the IRO's provide an effective challenge to practice and record when this has happened;
  - Direct observation of practice by the IRO manager;
  - Improved liaison with representation from CAFCASS for children subject of legal proceedings;
  - Increased insight of court care plans by IRO's;
  - Work to improve the quality of care plans for looked after children.

## 6. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- 6.1 There has been a 16% decrease in the number of children who are Looked After in Hartlepool. In December 2013 the figure peaked at 225 children looked after but as of September 2014 the number is 189. The reduction in the number of children looked after is as a result of robust gate keeping and review mechanisms in place for children who are looked after, alongside an increase in the use of Special Guardianship Orders.



6.2 The highest number of children who are looked after, 80 children and young people, are those in the age bracket of 10 to 15 years, this age bracket also continues to represent the highest proportion of children who become looked after. There are also a high number of children aged under one years old who become looked after, however these children quickly leave the looked after system through permanence planning, i.e. reunification with family or adoption.

6.3 There are a number of research articles that suggest how best to build resilience defined as ‘normal development under difficult circumstances’ for looked after children. The overwhelming evidence suggests that foster care is the preferred option, although there is a continuing role for residential care which is more appropriate for some children. From the 189 children who are currently looked after in Hartlepool, 81% of the children are cared for in a foster placement, which also includes connected carers, (a child who is looked after under Section 20 of the 1989 Childrens Act and placed with a close family member or friend under regulation 24 of the Care Planning Regulations). In January 2014 the children’s home in Stockton Road was opened and currently provides care for 4 young people. The abundance of research into the best outcomes for looked after children highlights the importance of supporting the continuation of a positive relationship between children looked after and the social worker. Given this, the recent reconfiguration of the Through Care Team into two separate teams and the appointment of an additional team manager is designed to build capacity so we can continue to improve our services for looked after children..

- 6.4 Ten children received family support via short break care where they are looked after as part of a care plan; this support is usually provided to disabled children who receive short break care at Exmoor Grove

### **Legal Framework**

- 6.5 The family justice reforms implemented in April 2014 reinforced the statutory obligation of the local authorities to thoroughly assess and plan for children pre proceedings, albeit subject to immediate risk applications. There is now an obligatory 26 week time limit within which to concluded care proceedings. The courts rely on good quality assessments from social workers and for the most part are no longer asking for reports from external experts. It is now more than ever incumbent on social workers to provide the detailed factual evidence, analysis and recommendation that drive care cases forward. Whilst these changes are challenging we continue to meet the statutory obligations. During April 2014 to September 2014 we had 22 cases involving 47 children. This was made up of 18 sets of care proceedings involving 38 children and other cases seeking to revoke orders relating to nine children. Eight of the cases have concluded during the aforementioned reporting period.

### **OFSTED Survey**

- 6.6 During this reporting period we received notification from OFSED that we had been selected for a thematic audit regarding Leadership in Children's Social Care. The Findings from the survey will be used to inform a themed report collating the findings from visits to 9 authorities about what strong leadership looks like. The feedback from OFSED was positive and acknowledged the good leadership and strong child centered vision throughout the service.

## **7. CHILDREN IN NEED**

- 7.1 As of the 30 September 2014 there were 1,175 children and young people in Hartlepool receiving support from social care either as children in need including those in need of protection or as children looked after by the authority.

## **8. WORKFORCE/WORKLOAD**

- 8.1 All children receiving services from children's social care are allocated to a qualified social worker. We have continued to have some staff movement within children's services and some of the more experienced front line social workers have moved into the more targeted areas of practice. The vacancies have mostly been filled by newly qualified Social Workers in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) who have protected case loads. To ensure case loads for the more experienced social workers are at a

manageable level we have recruited a over establishment social worker and an agency worker. This has meant that the average social worker caseload is 25 children.

8.2 Whilst there continues to be no unallocated cases within the service long and short term sickness continues to impact on workloads. We have robust and supportive mechanisms in place to help us deal with long term and short term sickness and assist staff to return to work following a period of sickness.

8.3

Service Area	Structure Unit	No. of FTE	Sickness FTE	YTD AVE	PROJECTED ANNUAL
<b>Prevention, Safeguarding &amp; Spec Services</b>		<b>88.23</b>	<b>501.73</b>	<b>5.69</b>	<b>11.37</b>
	Children and Families Children with Disabilities Team	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Exmoor Grove Short Break Care Centre	10.00	35.00	3.50	7.00
	Placements	11.46	19.46	1.70	3.40
	Resources & Specialist Services	12.57	13.41	1.07	2.13
	Safeguarding & Review Unit	9.58	0.00	0.00	0.00
	SAS Team 1	5.81	191.86	33.02	66.04
	SAS Team 2	6.00	84.00	14.00	28.00
	SAS Team 3	6.00	2.00	0.33	0.67
	SAS Team 4	7.00	16.00	2.29	4.57
	SAS Team 5	6.81	94.00	13.80	27.60
	SAS Team 6	5.00	24.00	4.80	9.60
		7.00	22.00	3.14	6.29

**9. COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS**

9.1 In order to improve the quality of the services and meet the needs of local people we gather feedback in the form of user feedback interviews and through the complaints and compliments process. From April to September we received eight complaints, we resolved four at stage one, 2 were withdraw, one was not eligible and signposted to the correct route and one complaint is being considered under the Child Protection Complaints Procedure.

9.2 We received three compliments during the period.

## **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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# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

11 November 2014



**Report of:** Director Child and Adult Services

**Subject:** PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY 2014  
(PROVISIONAL)

## 1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

For information.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To provide summary of pupil achievement outcomes from public examinations 2013-14, and to indicate any significant trends.

## 3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Children and young people in Hartlepool undertake formal assessments of their attainment and progress throughout each academic year. These assessments are a mixture of teacher assessments, which are moderated and standardised, and tests or examinations that are set nationally. Formal national testing and examinations usually happen in the summer term each year, although some 'early entry' public examinations are taken by Year 10 and Year 11 students at other times throughout Key Stage 4.

3.2 There are nationally benchmarked outcomes for children and young people at the end of:

- **Reception** – children are now (from the summer of 2013) expected to reach a 'good level of development' (GLD);
- **Year 1** – children undergo a Phonics Screening Check and either achieve the required standard or not;
- **Year 2** – on average, children are expected to attain Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics at this age;
- **Year 6** – on average, children are expected to attain Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics at this age, and to have made two Levels of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. There are national

Floor Standards of attainment and progress for maintained schools to reach at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6).

- **Year 11** – young people are expected to make 3 Levels of progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4. The key measure of attainment for young people at the end of Key Stage 4 continues to be 5 GCSE passes at grades A\*-C, including English and mathematics. There are national Floor standards of attainment and progress for maintained schools to reach at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11).
- **Post 16** – there are national minimum standards for the attainment of 16- to 18-year-olds in academic and vocational qualifications.

3.3 National figures presented in this report are very early figures, taken from a (large) sub-set of all schools, and should be considered as indicative only at this stage. Firmer figures will be published by the Department for Education in late October/early November. For some measures there is no early national figure at all at the time of writing. Where this is the case, the confirmed national baseline for 2013 has been used as a comparison.

#### 4. OUTCOMES SUMMARY

##### 4.1 Early Years Foundation Stage

This summer marked the second year that the new Foundation Stage Profile was assessed. Girls outperformed boys in every area of learning of the Profile again this year. A good level of development (GLD) was achieved by 71% of girls, but only 50% of boys achieved this standard. This gender gap was narrower in 2013 at a 17% point difference. The overall figure for the achievement of GLD in Hartlepool this year was 61% compared with 48% last year. The indicative national average for 2014 is 60%

##### 4.2 Key Stage 1

Children in Year 1 complete the national Phonics Screening Check. In 2014, 80% achieved the required standard. This is an increase from 75% in 2013. The indicative national benchmark in 2014 is 74%. Girls outperformed boys again in 2014 but the gender gap narrowed from 10% in 2013 to 4% in 2014. Those children entitled to free school meals (FSM) did not perform as well as their non-FSM peers. This gap widened in 2014 from a gap of 9% points in 2013 to 12% points in 2014.

Children in Year 2 who did not achieve the required standard in the Phonics Screening Check in Year 1 have the opportunity to do so again. In 2014, 74% of those eligible to take the Screening Check again achieved the required standard compared with a national average of 66%. Children that had not achieved the standard by the end of Year 2 were not tested again in Year 3.

Standards at Level 2+ in reading, writing and mathematics were very similar in 2014 compared to 2013. Provisional national data indicate that Hartlepool children are just below national benchmarks by 3% points in reading, 1% point in writing and 2% points in mathematics in this measure. Girls

outperformed boys once again this year, with the gender gaps being 5% points in reading, 4% points in writing and 3% in mathematics. These gaps all widened slightly in 2014. FSM children continue to underachieve relative to their non-FSM peers in Hartlepool: in reading this gap is 11%; in writing it is 10%; and in mathematics it is 8%.

Overall standards in the more challenging Level 3+ indicator for reading, writing and mathematics fell slightly in 2014 compared to 2013. The largest fall of 3% points was in reading. No national benchmarks for 2014 are available yet for this more challenging standard.

#### 4.3 **Key Stage 2 (2014 national figures are very early, indicative ones)**

Standards at Level 4+ all remain above national benchmarks. Reading rose by 2% points to 90% in 2014 which is above the national average of 89%. Standards in writing increased by 1% this year to 86% against a national figure of 85%. Mathematics fell slightly by 1% point to 88% in 2014 compared with a national average of 86%. Girls outperformed boys once again this year: in reading by 4% (national gap 4%); in writing by 8% (national gap 9%); in mathematics by 3% (national gap 0%). FSM children continue to underachieve relative to their non-FSM peers in this key measure.

Standards in the more challenging Level 5+ indicator for reading rose by 5% point to 49% this year (national average 50%), whilst writing improved by 2% points to 33% (national average 33%). In mathematics standards remained static at 41% (national average 42%). Girls outperformed boys in reading by 7% (national gap 5%), and in writing by 17% (national gap 15%). In mathematics boys outperformed girls by 3% in Hartlepool, whereas boys outperformed girls by 4% points nationally.

Children took an examination in Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG). In Hartlepool, 78% attained at Level 4+, an increase of 2% points on 2013, (indicative national average 2014 is 76%), whilst 54% attained at the more challenging Level 5+, an increase of 10% points on 2013 (indicative national average 2014 is 52%). Girls performed better than boys in this examination by 12% (national gap 9%), and FSM performed less well than their non-FSM peers.

The proportion of children making the expected progress in reading from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 rose slightly this year to 94%, above last year's national average. For writing, the proportion of children making expected progress rose to 96%. It is anticipated that this will be above the national average once again this year. The proportion of children making the expected progress in mathematics remained static at 93%. It is anticipated that this will be above the national average once again this year.

The proportions of children making more than the expected progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 increased in all subjects in 2014. The proportions were 39% in reading, 36% in writing and 38% in mathematics. These compare very favourably with last year's national averages.



Early indications are that two Hartlepool primary schools may fall below the Floor Standard.

#### 4.4 **Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5**

At the time of writing this report there is still a great deal of uncertainty nationally and in Hartlepool about final outcomes for individual students as a result of many appeals across a wide range of GCSE subject areas. In addition, there were some errors in the first national data release. This means that summative indicators for individual schools are still changing almost on a weekly basis, and that national benchmarks are still not secure. A further report will be presented to Committee following the release of the updated data sets.

### 5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Committee to note the contents of this summary report and that a further update of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 outcomes will be reported once DfE checking and individual school appeals have been completed.

### 6. **CONTACT OFFICER**

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