

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE AGENDA



**Tuesday 4 August 2015**

**at 4.00 pm**

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

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

Co-opted Members: Julie Cordiner and 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 date 16 June 2015 (*previously circulated and published*).

**4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS**

No items.

**5. KEY DECISIONS**

No items.



**6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**

- 6.1 Adoption Annual Report 2014/15 and Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2015/16 – *Director of Child and Adult Services*
- 6.2 Fostering Services Annual Report 2014/15 and Statement of Purpose 2015/16 – *Director of Child and Adult Services*
- 6.3 Reconstitution of the Governing Body of St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School – *Director of Child and Adult Services*

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- 7.1 Youth Employment Initiative – *Assistant Director (Regeneration)*

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

FOR INFORMATION: -

Date of next meeting – 15 September, 2015 at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Members are reminded that the diared meeting scheduled for 18 August, 2015 at 4.00 pm is no longer required and therefore the Chair has agreed that the meeting be cancelled.



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

4 August 2015



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

**Subject:** ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15 AND  
ADOPTION AGENCY STATEMENT OF PURPOSE  
2015/16

## 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 2014/15 and the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose for 2015/16.

## 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 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 and the Statement of Purpose, attached as **Appendices 1 and 2**.
- 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 2015/16.

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 Children's Services Committee approve The Annual Report of the Adoption Agency 2014/15 and the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2015/16 are attached at **Appendices 1 and 2**.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to note of the Adoption Agency Annual Report and approve the 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**

Jane Young  
Head of Business Unit  
Specialist Services  
01429 405584

# Adoption Annual Report 2014/15

*Together we will build better futures*



<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
Foreword	3
Introduction	4-5
Adoption Team Structure	6
Governance and Oversight of Adoption	7-8
Recruitment and Assessment of Adopters	9-10
Family Finding	11
Preparation for Placement	12
Post Adoption Support	13
Achievements in the past year	14
Priorities for 2015-2016	15-16
Some quotes from Hartlepool adopters	17-18

## Foreword

Welcome to the Adoption Services Annual Report of 2014-15. In Hartlepool we have set out our overarching ambition and aspiration in our Children Looked After Strategy and Permanence Policy:

*“Hartlepool Borough 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 contributing to this by delivering a high quality and effective Adoption Service.

The service has been successful in recruiting prospective adopters and over the course of the year, we have recruited, trained and assessed 13 new families for children. We are embracing the challenges laid down by the Government to think wider than our own needs for adopters in Hartlepool and have successfully placed children needing adoption from other areas with Hartlepool adopters.

Our priority remains ensuring children are placed with their adopted parents without delay and we have used additional funding from the Government to create a ‘family finder’ post. This officer works with social workers in adoption teams and placing social workers to make sure that we find the right families for our children as quickly as possible and there is no avoidable delay. As a result our children are benefiting from timely placements with well matched adopters and thriving in their new homes.

Sally Robinson  
Director of Child and Adult Services

# Introduction

The annual Adoption Agency report provides information about the activity of and outcomes achieved by the service during 2014-15 and outlines plans and strategic priorities for 2015-16.

The 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance and Adoption National Minimum Standards places a requirement upon Local Authority adoption services 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 and an interim progress report is made to the Children's Services Committee at the end of the second quarter of the financial year.

Following the Government report published in March 2012 'Action Plan for Adoption - Tackling Delay', this report highlights the challenges faced when placing children for adoption. These challenges have been the catalyst for Adoption Reform which is legislated within the Children and Families Act 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;
- Managing and facilitating Post Box contact arrangements that support the exchange of information which meets the needs of the children, adoptive parent/s and birth parent/s;

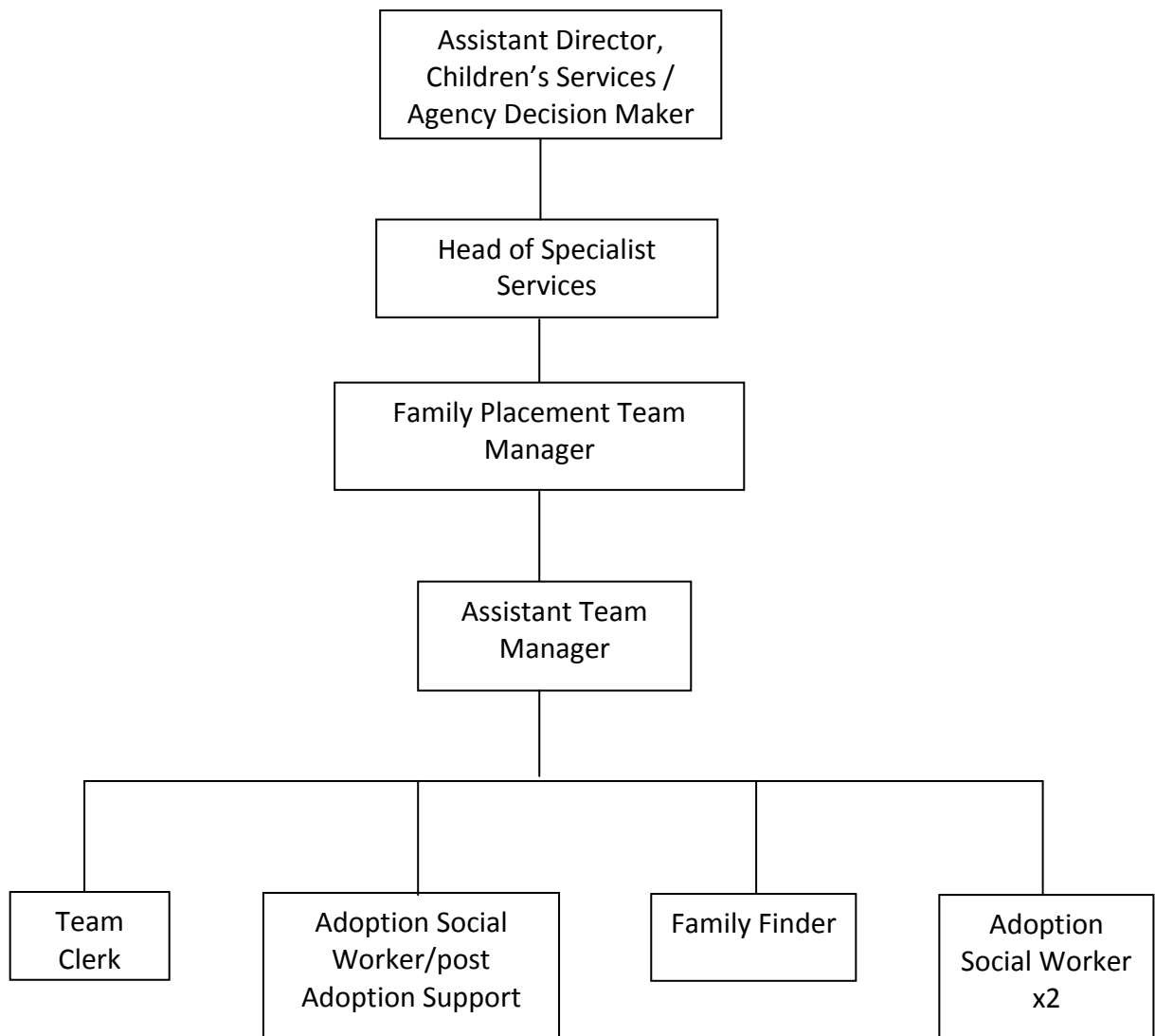


- Fulfil statutory requirements in relation to the Adoption & Children Act 2004 for the adoption of a child by a step parent;
- Providing advice, support and guidance in relation to permanence planning and facilitate family finding for children;
- Ensure the Adoption Panel is supported to provide robust consideration and recommendations relating to approval of adopters, and matching of children and adoptive families;
- Providing 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 Service prepares an Annual Report and a six monthly progress report on its activities and performance which are presented to Children's Service Committee.

Hartlepool Borough Council was one of the first local authorities to be inspected under a new single inspection framework in November / December 2013. The overall judgement was that the local authority leads effective services that meet the requirements for Good. A separate judgement is made on the effectiveness of adoption performance and this was also judged to be Good. Many strengths of the adoption service are reflected in the inspection report and no areas for improvement were identified.

The Adoption Score Cards are published annually by the Department for Education and measure the effectiveness of the local authority against key targets for adoption performance. The Hartlepool Adoption Scorecard demonstrates that the local authority is performing well and achieving government targets. Information from the Scorecards indicates that :

- For children who are placed for adoption in Hartlepool, the length of time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family is shorter than the national average. (483 days in Hartlepool compared with 628 days nationally.)
- For children in Hartlepool the timescale between the local authority being granted a placement order and the local authority deciding on a match with an adoptive family is significantly lower than the national average. (171 days in Hartlepool compared with 217 days nationally).
- In Hartlepool 64% of children wait less than 18 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family compared to 51% nationally.

Hartlepool Borough Council's Family Placement Panel is appropriately constituted with an Independent Chair Person and a number of Panel Members with the appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the Panel for consideration.

Panel Members are fully trained and join a central list of people who can be called on to attend Panel, this includes an Independent Chair, one Vice Chair, seven Agency Social Workers, an Elected Member (currently vacant), four Independent Members, three of whom are foster carers for another authority, and a Medical Advisor.

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

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

The Director, Child and Adult Services is the Adoption Agency Decision Maker and as such makes the final decision in relation to approval of prospective adopters, children's adoption plans and adoption matches. The Agency Decision Maker 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

	2013/14	2014/15
Number of Approved Adopters as at 31.03.15	14	13
Number of Adopters currently being assessed	12	3
Number of Adopters waiting to complete training	4	2
Number of Adopters with children in placement but not yet adopted	12	7
Number of Initial Visits undertaken 2014/15	22	22
Number of applications received 2014/15	13	12

The Adoption Service recruitment strategy is updated on an annual basis and a range of methods are used to attract prospective adopters to Hartlepool Borough Council Adoption Agency. We are particularly successful in achieving personal recommendations from Hartlepool's approved adopters and their families. The numbers of applications received and initial visits undertaken has remained static, however those who go on to express an interest in attending the preparation group and go on to assessment has dropped. This appears to be a national trend with less adopters being approved and we are on par with our statistical neighbours in this. We continue to revise our recruitment strategy and we have recently held a local recruitment drive delivering leaflets to homes in areas which have previously provided an interest in adoption, following this up with open events to attend. There is also an advertising campaign for adoption which we are currently updating, advertisements are placed in the Primary Times and regional publications.

Alongside our neighbouring local authorities we currently have a need for placements for siblings groups and older children and this will be the priority of the recruitment strategy for 2015-16.

Adopters attend four days of modularised training which has been updated to meet the requirements of the two stage assessment process.

This training aims to providing prospective adopters with information and covers the adoption process, legal procedures, child development, attachment and resilience, child abuse and safeguarding and looks at adoption from the perspective of the birth family and the child.

In addition to the training, support groups are held monthly through to approval aimed at supporting adopters and continuing their learning. Topics include 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 of where 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.

	2013/14	2014/15
Number of children awaiting adoptive placement as at 01.04.15	8	9
Number of children matched and placed in an adoptive placement from 2014-15	15	11
Number of children adopted between April 2014 – March 2015	12	15
Number of children placed with adopters on 31.03.15	12	11

A key focus of the adoption reform agenda is to ensure children are placed without any delay. To facilitate this we have a dedicated family finder post whose remit is to become involved with children needing permanence via adoption at the earliest stage.

The Family Finder role ensures the authority is proactive in its search for the right family for a child. This search includes Hartlepool's approved adopters and can be widened to consider prospective adopters available via the Northern Consortium (where members meet regionally to share any adopters approved either by neighbouring authorities or voluntary adoption agencies), the Adoption Register, Adoption Link and occasionally advertisements in Be My Parent (a publication which features children in need of an adoptive placement), or individual flyers for children sent to all adoption agencies. The Family Finder and Social Worker will, where necessary, attend adoption activity events in search of the right family for a child.

There is a robust matching process which is undertaken in order to identify and prepare a child and prospective adopters for placement. This starts with an exchange of written and verbal information followed by a meeting between foster carer, social worker and adopters.

## Preparation for Placement

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

The service has the support of a Play Therapist and Filial Therapist based within the Children's Services Division who 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 time.

Life Story Work is completed by the Social Worker, this should be with a child if he or she is old enough or on behalf of the child if they are very young. The Adoption Team has 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, 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 and this continues to grow annually. The authority has an electronic system which has updated and improved the management of these arrangements.

The transfer from the manual to the electronic system is now complete and this is seen as a crucial development in light of the confidential and sensitive nature of the information exchanged. 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 other's 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 currently provided by the Adoption Team and we have taken a part time dedicated social worker post to this area of practice. The Adoption Team provide regular newsletters to all those who have adopted children via Hartlepool Adoption Agency. They offer training events on subjects such as Life Story Books and behavioural issues such as 'how to develop empathy'. In addition there are social events including the annual Christmas party. Our adopters are also invited to any regional events offered by After Adoption.

The Council commission a service from After Adoption to provide independent advice and support to birth parents, adopters and adoptees. To increase the numbers of people accessing this valuable service we are (with their permission) currently referring all birth parents to this service. However referrals can still be made by either the person themselves or by a social worker on their behalf where necessary if there is a need beyond the point of social work involvement.

2013 OFSTED's new approach to inspection is a single inspection of the whole of Children's Services and this includes the Adoption Service. Hartlepool Borough Council was one of the first of the Local Authorities to be inspected by OFSTED under this framework with the inspection taking place in November/December 2013.

Overall the Authority was judged as GOOD with a sub judgement of GOOD for adoption. The inspection report highlights a number of strengths of the services and there were no recommended areas for improvement in relation to adoption.

The adoption team have now firmly embedded the new BAAF Two Stage assessment process. One worker within the team is dedicated to monitoring recruitment activity up until the point of allocation to a worker for assessment. This sharing of tasks and responsibilities enables us ensure that assessments are completed within the required timescale.

The adoption team benefits from having a named Family Finder who attends Permanency Planning Meetings and, where there is a need, initiates the Family Finding process for those children requiring permanency via adoption. Her dedicated role allows us to family find from the earliest stages and has reduced delay in the adoption process.

Hartlepool Borough Council continues to be an active member of the Northern Consortium and has been involved in the BAAF North East Activity day which took place in November 2014. This event brought together adopters from the area and allowed authorities including Hartlepool to profile the more difficult to place children for example siblings groups and older children. Hartlepool's involvement in this activity has proven to be extremely successful in identifying permanent adoptive families for 2 siblings groups of 2 and 3 children respectively.

We envisage that this will become an annual event in the future organised by the North East Consortium.

Following a successful year of performance in 2014/15, the service strives to deliver continuous improvement and has identified the following priorities for the coming year:

- To respond promptly to any adoptive enquiries including those received via the National Gateway (First 4 Adoption);
- To continue to improve recruitment timescales using the now fully embedded BAAF two stage assessment process;
- To deliver the Department's plans for early permanence for very young children with a plan for adoption through foster to adopt and concurrent planning
- To support placing social workers in completing factual, comprehensive and informative Child Permanence Reports;
- 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;
- To work collaboratively with the regional consortium, Adoption Link, Activity Days, and opening minds events to identify placements for children with complex needs and sibling groups;
- To work positively and proactively with the child's social worker to improve the quality of Life Story work;
- To provide those who have adopted with post adoption support;
- To raise awareness of the newly introduced adoption support fund and to utilise the funds available to provide therapeutic support to those living in the Hartlepool area who have adopted;
- To utilise and develop the electronic post box system;
- To develop Life Appreciation Days for children whose plan is for adoption;
- To target our current advertising campaign to look specifically at recruiting adopters for older children and siblings group;



- To monitor adoption timescales at least quarterly via Performance Managements Clinics and regular briefings to the Business Unit Managers Meetings identifying trends at the earliest opportunity;
- To look at the feasibility of being part of a regional adoption agency, pooling resources with neighbouring local authorities to recruit, train and assess prospective adopters ultimately increasing choice for social workers when considering permanency via adoption for children.

## Some quotes from Hartlepool adopters;

*Our journey through the adoption process has not been straight forward but it has been made easier as a result of the fantastic support we received from both our Fostering Social Worker and Adoption Social Worker.*

*After having a baby placed with us in Foster Care, as a family we came to the decision that this little girl was meant to be part of our family and enquired about the possibility of her remaining with us. From that moment all of our questions were answered promptly by all members of the adoption team and they worked hard throughout the legal processes to ensure that we were involved and reduced any worry or stress to us as potential adopters and our birth children.*

*Attending panel was another hurdle to cross and whilst this was an anxious time for us the end result took away the uncomfortable 'few minutes' that determine your future with your little person.*

*It has now been 15 months since we first brought up the idea of adoption and we are finally reaching the final hurdle, our celebration hearing will be held within the next few weeks and I know that our dedicated team of Social workers will be there to celebrate the moment our "little monkey" becomes legally ours as I know that it means as much to them as it does to us!*

*Foster Carer who adopted*

*My journey to adoption with Hartlepool LA began with an extremely positive meeting with two social workers in my home. They were highly professional and personable and answered any queries I had as well as helping me to confirm in my mind that adoption was the right route and that Hartlepool was the authority to work with.*

*The group training was a very positive experience. The group was well lead and it was very interesting to hear about adopters, adoptees and birth parents personal stories as well as having the opportunity to work and discuss with others in the group.*

*The process of collating my information then took from March to November with panel taking place in December. It was at this time that Hartlepool introduced the 2 stage assessment process which has reduced timescales to 6 months. For me, this would have been better as I come from a family with adoption as part of it's story already.*

*Panel was a positive experience and over the next few months my social worker kept in touch in a positive way. My eventual match couldn't be better however now having worked with social workers from a different authority, it made me appreciate Hartlepool's even more!*

*Single Adopter*

*The decision to adopt was not something we did without a great deal of consideration. The visits from social workers can be very in depth as they need to know you inside and out but that's the only way they can help you achieve your ultimate goal of becoming a happy family. Our experience of adoption has been very positive and we are now a 'very happy family.'*

*Adopter*

*We have found our experience very positive but not without its challenges. We found the assessment very reflective both on a personal level and as a couple (but we understand why that's the way it has to be!) We felt very supported during the process of assessment and matching by our Social Worker and we are grateful for her ability to be intuitive as to what was the right things for us.*

*Nobody could have prepared for how difficult things could have been in the early days of placement however the support and guidance of our Social Worker has been invaluable and we have known that we can call on her when needed and that we will be given her honest opinion as appropriate.*

*We are thoroughly enjoying being parents. It is the most difficult and best thing we have ever done but also the most rewarding.*

*Adopters of a sibling group*



**Hartlepool Borough Council**

**Child and Adult Services**

**Adoption Service**

**Statement of Purpose**

April 2015

# **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 April 2015 and is to be submitted for approval by Elected members in April 2015.

This Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and revised as appropriate by the Team Manager of the Adoption Services no later than April 2016.



## **CONTENTS**

<b>Page 4</b>	<b>VALUES, AIMS, and OBJECTIVES</b>
<b>Page 6</b>	<b>SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE ADOPTION AGENCY</b>
<b>Page 7</b>	<b>STAFFING INFORMATION</b>
<b>Page 9</b>	<b>ADOPTION AGENCY - ORGANISATION AND CONTROL OF OPERATIONS</b>
<b>Page 13</b>	<b>COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE</b>
<b>Page 14</b>	<b>USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES</b>
<b>Page 15</b>	<b>APPENDIX 1</b>

## **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 the surrounding areas 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 continue to regularly hold Permanence Panels 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.
- Upon assessment, access to the Adoption Support Fund.
- An electronic, secure, 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. This contract has been reviewed and renewed annually and offers support to the following individuals and families:

- 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**

<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date of Appointment</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Experience</b>
Jane Young  Head of Business unit Resources and Specialist Services	October 2010	CSS PQ1 PQCCA 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 DiP ILM (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.
Jacqui Dixon Assistant Manager	01.10.09 01.01.14	Dip Sw 2003 PQ1 HCPC Registered	Children & Families Resource Team Manager Nominated Worker
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
Kath Bishop Adoption Social Worker,	March 2013 – temporary contract March 2014 – permanent contract	BA (Hons) Social Work	Qualified 2009, 3 years experience in Children & Families. Adoption Social Worker since June 2013.
Angi Simmonds Adoption Social Worker	August 2014	NNEB City and Guilds Adult Teaching cert. NVQ L4 Health and Social Care NCFE Counselling BSC Social Work	Qualified in 2011, Previous experience as a Nursery Nurse 1991 Domestic Violence Children Support worker 1996, Domestic Violence Outreach worker 2001, Family Support Worker 2005 Safeguarding Social worker 2011 First Contact Social Worker 2012

Name and Job Title	Date of Appointment	Qualifications	Experience
			Adoption Social Worker since 2014
Emma Howarth Family Finder	April 2013	BSC Child Care	Experience as a Family Resource Worker and Safeguarding and Assessment.
Amanda Cunliffe Administrative Support	Feb 2010	NVQ level 2 and 3 in Business Administration	Child & Adult Services Admin Children and Families Post Box support.
Anne Waites Administrative Support	09.09.13	NVQ level 2 and 3 in Business Administration	Child & Adult Services Admin Children & Families

### **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 Director of Children's Services.

The Placement Team Manager supervises the Assistant Team Manager who in turn takes responsibility for supervising two full time adoption social workers and the Family Finder.

Clare Frankland's role as Adoption Social Worker and Post Box Coordinator/Post Adoption Support has been strengthened. Clare will continue to focus upon improving the electronic Post Box System and providing improved Post Adoption Support Services whilst still taking on some assessment work. In her capacity as the Post Adoption Support worker, Clare will be responsible for assessing the needs of any adoptive parent/child who has been adopted and if deemed necessary will make the relevant application to the Adoption Support Fund where there is a demonstrated need that therapeutic intervention and support would be beneficial to the child or the family.

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. This role also allows Emma to be part of the planning around early adoption and to have some scope for developing Life Appreciation Days for children.

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 Reviews and De-registration/Resignation.
  - Reviews of adopters where they have waited more than 12 months for a child to be placed.
  - Whether a child/ren should be placed with specific foster carers
  - To reach decisions on whether a child's long term interests can be best met via permanency in long term foster care

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.
- 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 Agency 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 or fostering
- 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
- An Agency Social worker
- At least two other “independent persons”- 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 Advice:**

Panel are able to call upon the Local Authorities Legal Advisor.

**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 Principal Practitioner – Through Care Team
- Vice Chairperson – vacant
- Head of Business Unit – Safeguarding and Assessment
- Agency Social Worker – Team Managers, Safeguarding and Assessment Team x1, Team Manager Disabilities Team x 1, Team Manager Through Care Team
- Agency Social Worker – Principal Practitioner, Disability Team
- Elected Member
- Independent member/Adopted Person – to commence shortly
- Independent member/IRO
- Independent member/Education
- Independent members – Foster carers x 3
- Medical Advisor
- Independent member Education/adopter
- Independent member – retired Social Worker

### 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 currently Sally Robinson the Director of Children's Services.

All Panel members are required to have confirmed that they have had sight of and will adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998 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 into 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 Mechanism, (IRM) 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](mailto: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](http://www.afteradoption.org.uk)  
E-mail – [helpline@talkadoption.org.uk](mailto: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**

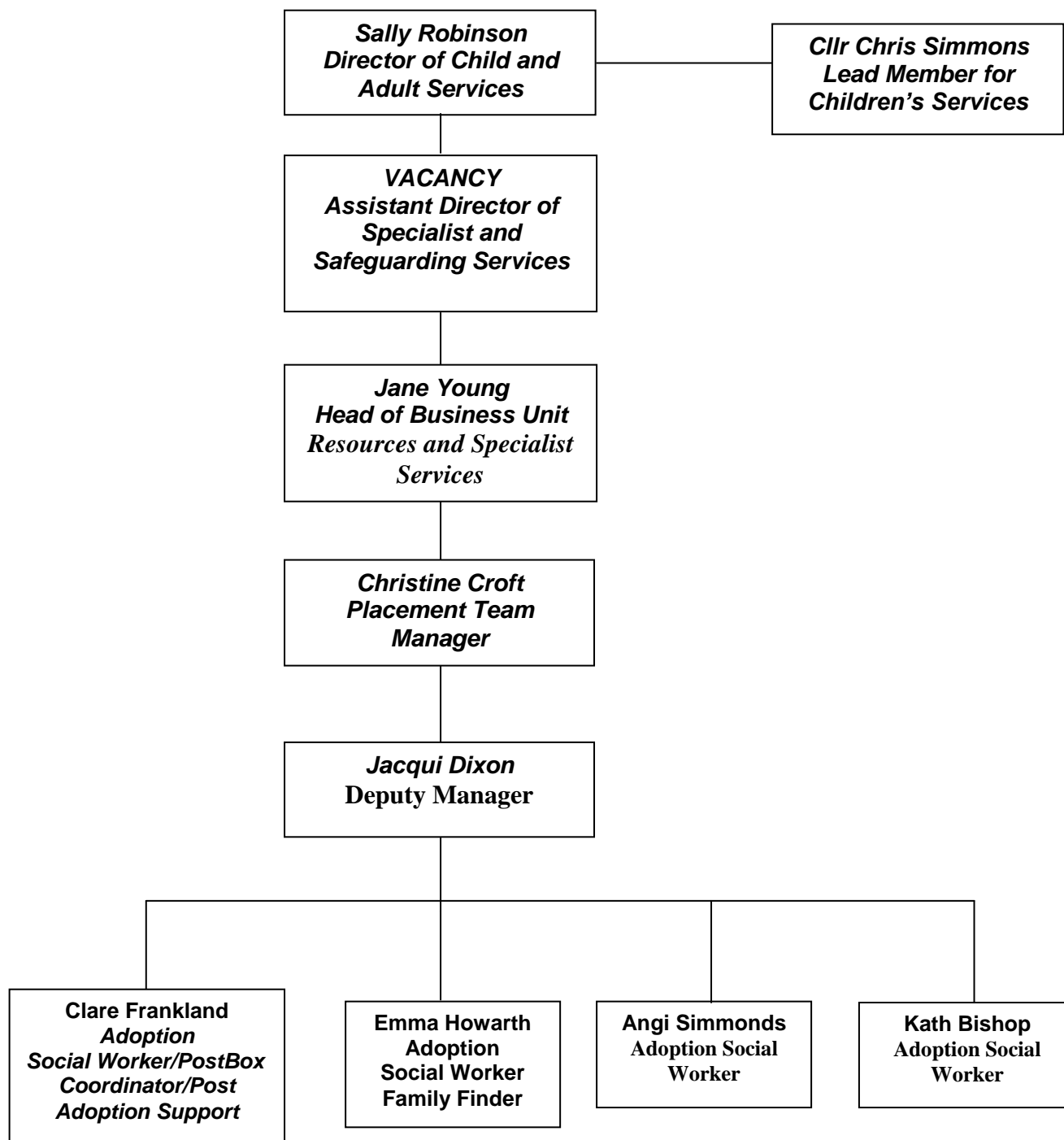
Website: [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk)  
E-mail: [mail@baaf.org.uk](mailto:mail@baaf.org.uk)

### **Dr Roger Morgan**

Children's Rights Director  
Ofsted  
Aviation house  
125, Kingsway  
LONDON WC23 6SE  
Tel: 0800 528 0731  
Website : [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)

### **Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)**

Pavilion Business Park  
Royds Hall Road  
Wortley  
Leeds  
LS12 6 AJ  
Tel: 0845 450 3956  
Email : [irm@baaf.org.uk](mailto:irm@baaf.org.uk)

*APPENDIX 1***HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL – ADOPTION SERVICE**

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

4 August 2015



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

**Subject:** FOSTERING SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15  
AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2015/16

## 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 2014/15 and the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose for 2015/16.

## 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.
- 3.2 It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards that the service produces a Statement of Purpose 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** and the Fostering Statement of Purpose for 2015/16 attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 3.3 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 2015/16.

3.4 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 2014/15 is attached at **Appendix 1**. The Fostering Services Statement of Purpose 2015/16 is attached at **Appendix 2**

#### 5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 Children's Services Committee are asked to approve the Fostering Annual Report for publication and approve the Statement of Purpose 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

# Fostering Service Annual Report 2014/15



# Contents

<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Team Structure	5
Governance and Oversight of Fostering	6-7
Preparation for Placement	8-9
Recruitment and Retention	10-11
Training	12
Post Approval Support and Participation	13-14
Celebrating Success	15
Priorities for 2013-2014	16
Some quotes from Foster Carers, Social Workers And Young People	17



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; our approaches to recruitment, both locally and as part of a sub-regional collaboration, has resulted in us expanding the number and range of placements. This provides placement choice for placing Social Workers and also enabling us to continue to provide high quality foster care placements that enable children and young people to remain within their home town. With the vast majority of 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 as detailed in the Children Looked After Strategy 2014 -17:

Hartlepool has now fully implemented its Staying Put Policy and for our young people, 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 live independently.

We continue to strive 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. This is our absolute priority and one which underpins all our work with children.

The stability of care placements is key to children and young people achieving positive outcomes and over the past seven years the performance of the local authority has improved year on year ensuring that our children have stable foster homes from which to achieve their dreams, aspirations and goals. In the last year we have focused on securing permanence for our children looked after with long term foster carers providing children with the security, care and support they require through to and into adulthood.

I look forward to another successful year and would like to thank all our foster carers for the support, commitment and high quality of care they offer to our children and young people.



Sally Robinson  
Director of Child and Adult Services

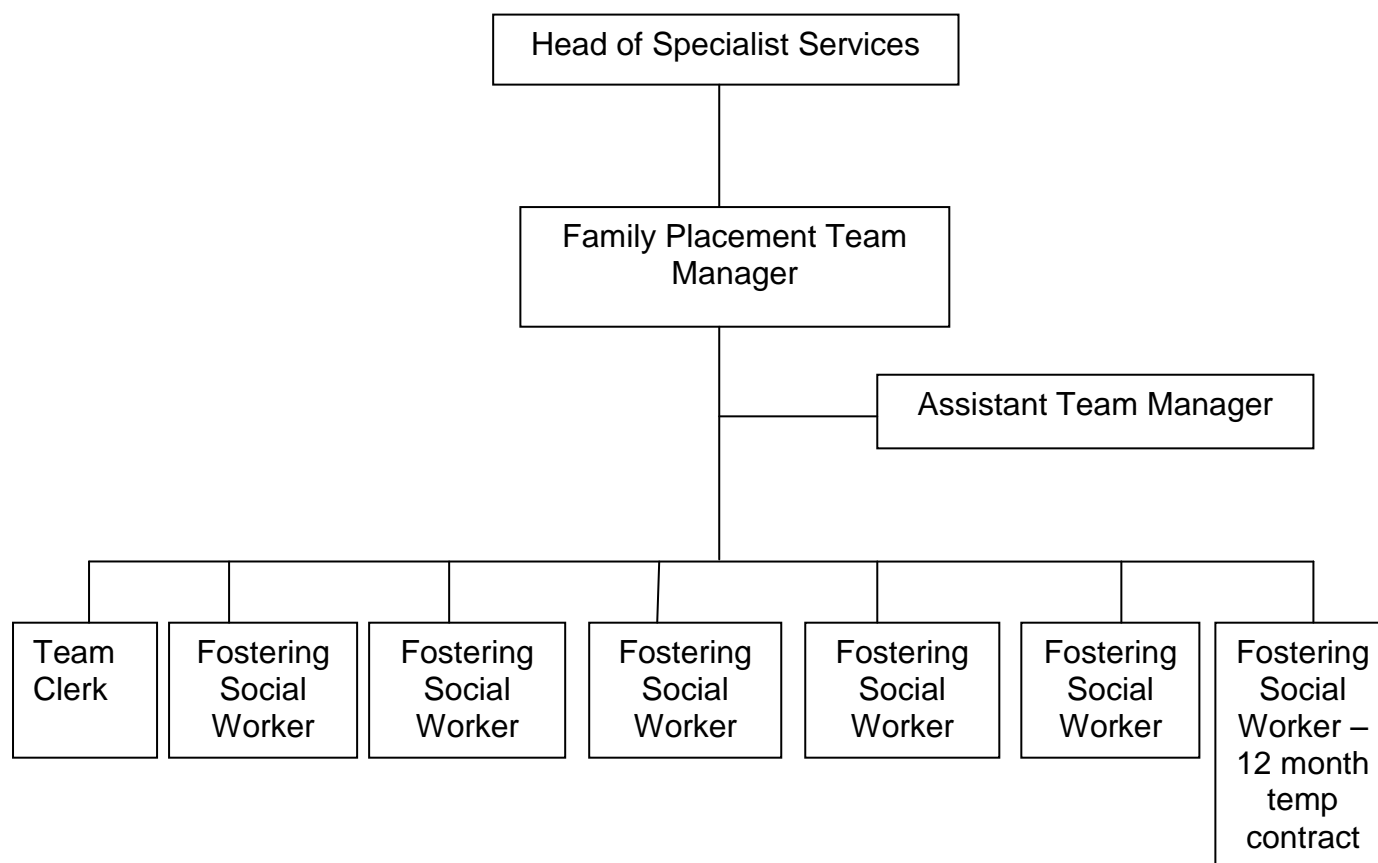
The annual report of the Fostering Service for Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) provides information about the activity of and outcomes achieved by the service during 2014/15. The report will reflect on the work of the team and service provided, identify changes that have taken place within the service and detail the statistical information in respect of the Fostering Service from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. Finally the report will set out priorities for service development during 2015/16.

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. This Annual Report provides a full review of the service and interim progress reports will be presented 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.

The following table provides information relating to the staffing structure of the Fostering Service



## Governance and Oversight

OFSTED's new approach to inspection is a single inspection of the whole of Children's Services and this includes the Fostering Service. Hartlepool Borough Council's Children's Service was one of the first of the Local Authorities to be inspected by OFSTED using this framework and our most recent inspection took place in November/December 2013. Overall the authority was judged as good and this included the Fostering Service where specific mention was given to some exemplarily features.

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, Vice Chair, seven Agency Social Workers, an Elected Member (currently vacant), four Independent Members, three of whom are foster carers for another authority and a Medical Advisor.

The Panel also receives advice from the Local Authority Legal Advisor and Panel Advisor.

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

## Governance and Oversight

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. This also includes recommendations of the suitability of Connected Person's Foster Carers.

The table to the right highlights the Fostering Panel activity for 2014/15.

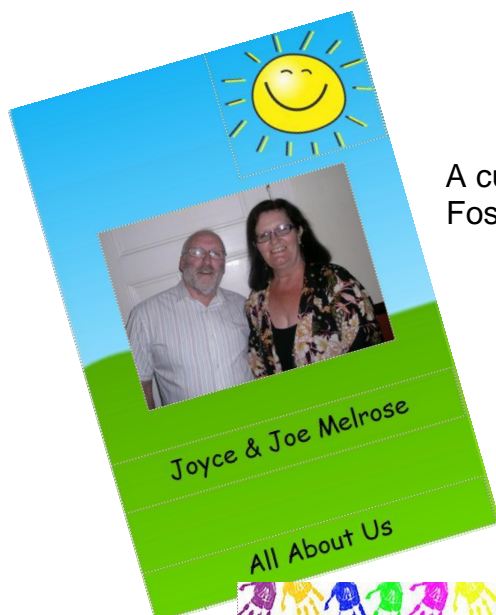
Recommendation to agree a plan for long term fostering for a child looked after	16
Matches considered by the Panel	12
Number of matches involving foster carers from Independent Fostering Agencies.	1
Recommendations for approval of prospective foster carers	13
Resignation of foster carers	6
The Fostering Panel considered and endorsed the recommendations of Foster Carer Reviews	26
The Fostering Panel met in the last year	22 times

# Preparation for Placement

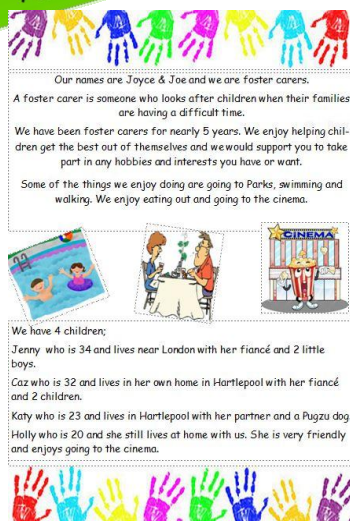
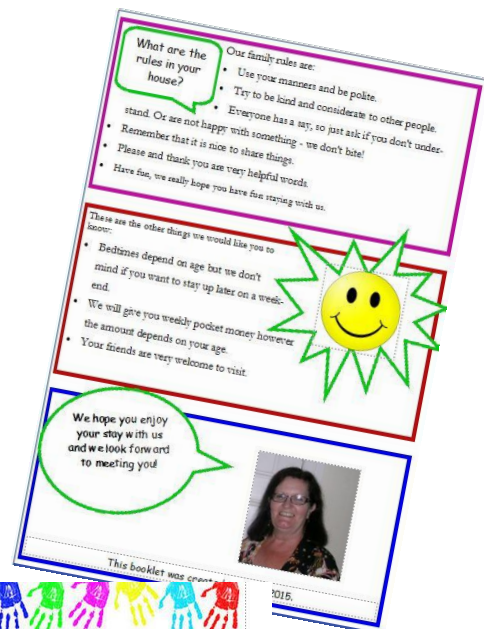
The Fostering Service operates a duty system for responding to placement requests. Supervising Social Workers will liaise with the Social Worker to ensure that there is a thorough understanding of the child's needs so that they are able to match him/her to the most appropriate carer.

For permanent fostering placements we have a Guide to Permanence via Long term Fostering and Adoption. This guidance clarifies the process and outlines what information is required to be presented at Panel.

All of our approved foster carers have a foster carer profile which is shared with children as part of preparation for placement, as is the Children and Young People's guide to Fostering. The foster carer profiles have recently been updated to make them more relevant to young people.



A current  
Foster carer profile



## Preparation for Placement

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

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.

The service benefits from a dedicated family finder role who becomes involved with children who have a plan for permanence through long term fostering at the earliest opportunity. The family finder identifies appropriate matches for the children, looking firstly at internal provision before exploring matches with the independent fostering providers. Hartlepool continues to provide good placement choice and stability with our foster carers, with 11 of the 12 young people matched with foster carers being matched with in-house foster carers.



# Recruitment and Retention

The Fostering 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 and within the Tees Valley on longer, more extensive campaigns.

Members of the Fostering team attend a quarterly regional Recruitment and Marketing Forum. The aim of Forum is to look at regional trends for recruitment and maximise resources and opportunities for collaboration.

Fostering recruitment has focused on the continuing need to recruit foster carers who can care for older children and sibling groups, which is both a local and regional recruitment target.

Local recruitment activity within the last 12 months has consisted of regular adverts in Hartlepool Mail, Hartbeat magazine, and a Local at your door publication. The Fostering service has taken advantage of the current social media trend and has launched a Facebook page which is used for advertising and recruitment. This has proved to be a successful medium for communication and there has been a lot of engagement with the page, resulting in two direct new fostering enquiries in the first two months.



A significant focus of local fostering recruitment has been digital advertising on the Hartlepool Mail website, as recruitment statistics have found that more people are making fostering enquiries after seeing an advert online rather than in print.



# Recruitment and Retention

The fostering team have joined with the four neighbouring authorities to form 'Tees Valley Fostering'. This collaboration shares resources and skills to enable larger recruitment and awareness activities to take place within the sub region. The team have been involved in holding information stands at the regional summer shows, a joint radio campaign, a bus advert campaign and also sponsorship of a charity Christmas toy appeal, where staff and foster carers took part helping to pack and distribute toys to disadvantaged children in the Tees Valley. As part of the Christmas toy appeal, the fostering team, supported by the Mayor of Hartlepool, organised a council wide 'Christmas jumper day' to raise money for the appeal whilst raising awareness of Fostering.



Tees Valley Fostering Bus advertising campaign.

Fostering information stand at Stockton Summer Show



Foster Carers helping to sort toy donations from the Christmas Toy appeal.

## Recruitment and Retention

A significant challenge this year for the fostering team has been the reduction in the number of children becoming Looked After, on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, there were 163 children in foster placement, on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 this figure has decreased to 114. Whilst Foster Carers recognise the benefits of this reduction to the children, in that they are not becoming looked after, a challenge for the fostering team has been to keep foster carers without placements engaged with the service. This has been achieved through participation activities, a celebration evening and regular engagement with foster carers.

The table below details the foster care capacity as at 31 March 2015

Number of foster carers	96 (of which 10 are connected carers, 2 are short break carers)
Number of placements available	219
How many children in placement?	114
How many vacancies?	105
How many not able to use/on hold?	11 carers, 15 placements

The table below details the recruitment activity for 2013/14.

Initial enquiries - where did people hear about the service?	58 Initial enquiries  Where stipulated: 1 TV advert (by another authority) 3 Hartlepool Mail 3 Internet 6 Recommendation from current carers 1 Tees Valley fostering collaboration 2 Radio advertising 1 Hartbeat 4 Facebook 38 Own Volition
Information pack sent out between 1.4.13 – 31.3.14	56 packs sent out
Initial visits - How many proceeded	31 6

Preparation Group held:	April 2014      6 Fostering households attended, 3 proceeded July 2014        3 Fostering households attended, 3 proceeded February 2015   4 Fostering households attended, 3 proceeded
How prospective carers many waiting for a group?	1

## 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 are 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 (British Association of Adoption and Fostering) Skills to Foster Programme, a young person from the Children in Care Council also assists with the training. 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 three mandatory training days for foster carers. In 2014/15 the bespoke training days covered:

- Attachment;
- Caring for a child who has been abused;
- Education for Looked After Children;

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

## 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 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 Carers Association which provides regular communication to carers, a newsletter and sets out activities for all foster carers and their families to participate. A Supervising Social Worker from the Fostering team acts as a contact point and supports these activities. The Foster Carers Association provides regular activities for the children and run annual trips in the summer holidays.
- 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 Children Looked After 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 who foster.



# Post Approval Support and Participation

- 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 Head of Business Unit (Specialist Services), Head of Business Unit (Safeguarding, Assessment & Support and 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 a Social Worker within the fostering team is distributed to all carers on a quarterly basis.



- All foster carers have access to the Departmental 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.



# Celebrating Success

The Fostering Service holds an annual Celebration Evening to celebrate the achievements 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. This year, 2 Foster Carers were awarded 25 years service awards and 1 Foster carer was awarded a 30 year service award. 14 Foster Carers were presented with Special Recognition Awards for the care and dedication shown to the children in their care; these awards were nominated by children's Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

Foster Carers really enjoyed the evening and left the following comments on the Fostering facebook page:



*"Fab night thanks"*

*"fab night, see you next year"*

*"must say was a really great night"*

*"Was fab first one and won't be the last a great bunch of people"*

*"Was a lovely night"*

*"We all had a great night, well done to all of our wonderful foster carers"*



## Celebrating Success

There is also a 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 2015-2016

- To 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 qualification within the allocated timescales and can demonstrate continued professional development as foster carers.
- To continue with family finding post enabling children and young people to have 'permanency' in their lives as early as possible
- To hold life appreciation events for all children where permanency is the option.
- 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.
- To review the approval ages and status of the more experienced carers with a view to encouraging them to provide placements for older children with more complex needs.
- To continue to work within the the BAAF 2 stage assessment process providing timely assessments, recruitment and training.
- To continue to work collaboratively with the neighbouring authorities to share resources and expertise in foster carer recruitment.

## Some quotes from Foster Carers, Social Workers and Young People

### Comments from Social Workers:

*“These Foster carers worked exceptionally well with the adopters in an innovative way and always put the needs of the child first. Although they had developed a close bond with this child they put their own emotions to one side to make sure the adopters felt welcome, the child was prepared and the whole process was successful”.*

*“They provide a high level of care to foster children and they have demonstrated perseverance through some very difficult times”.*

*“The carer fully embraced both children into her family and has gone above and beyond in teaching and modeling how to be a mother, which has promoted this teenage mother’s skills and sense of self worth. The carer opened her home to the teenager, the baby and also their family members and due to the nature of the placement has had to work with a large multi agency team and has done so with professionalism despite sometimes feeling frustrated. The carer has given both children love and a sense of belonging”.*

### Comments from Children who foster:

*“She is my sister, she’s caring, funny and helpful”.*

*“I am happy that me and my family can look after a young person and keep them safe”.*

### Comments from children who are fostered:

*“My foster carers are kind, happy, adventurous, funny and joyful”.*

*“She arranges contact for me, they are loving and caring, they keep us safe, they look after us, they are funny and they help me with my homework”.*

*“I feel loved and respected, I also feel like i have someone to go to when I’m sad”.*



**HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CHILD AND ADULT SERVICES**

**FOSTERING SERVICE**

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

March 2015

**HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL  
FOSTERING SERVICE**

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

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

This Statement of Purpose was reviewed and up dated in March 2015 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 2016.

## **CONTENTS**

Page 4	INTRODUCTION
Page 5	AIMS, OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES & LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR STANDARDS OF CARE
Page 10	THE SERVICES PROVIDED
Page 12	MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE
Page 13	SPECIFIC SERVICE INFORMATION
Page 14	SAFEGUARDING, COMPLAINTS & ALLEGATIONS
Page 16	PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES FOR RECRUITING, APPROVING, TRAINING, SUPPORTING AND REVIEWING CARERS
Page 21	Appendix 1 Relevant legislation, regulation and standard
Page 22	Appendix 2 Numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of staff

## **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 service 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 micro site. 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 children looked after. 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.
- To ensure that 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 children looked after 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 children looked after.
- 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.
- To 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 support Hartlepool Child and Adult Services in meeting the child focussed standards which set out what children in foster care need. These are 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 any others who have 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 contribution 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 children looked after 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 children looked after 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 children looked after 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 Children and Young People Looked After 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 children looked after. 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 children looked after and in particular works closely with the Inclusion Co-ordinator (children looked after/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 children and young people looked after, 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.

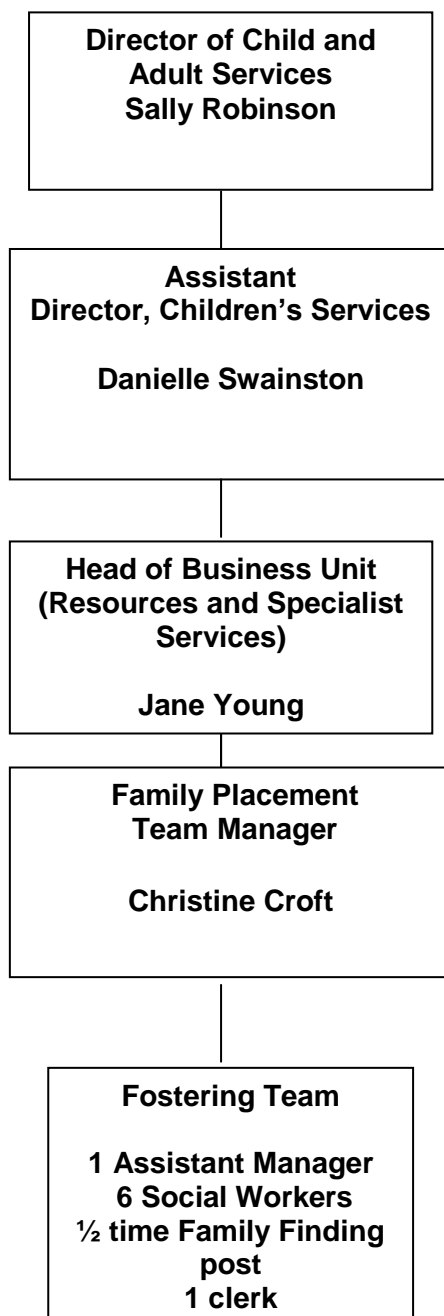
We are committed to directly challenging racism and ensure that all young people who access our services are aware of our policies in relation to anti-oppressive practice and anti-racism. We will ensure that all people are treated equally, regardless of age, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or religion. 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 people's 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 2014 – 31 March 2015 comprised 11 approvals of mainstream carers, and 1 approval of Connected Person carers. In the period 2014 - 2015 the fostering service accepted the resignation of 6 mainstream carers.

The total number of Foster Carers approved by Hartlepool Borough Council on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 was 96. This number includes 10 connected Foster Carers.

### **NUMBERS OF CHILDREN PLACED**

The total number of children looked after in foster placements at 31 March 2015 was 114 (prev. 169).

### **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 96 carers approved, the Fostering Service had, as of 31 March 2015, 12 Foster Carers who were designated Specialist Carers due to the complex needs of the children placed.

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 and all staff panel members are required to confirm that they have had sight of and will adhere to the Data Protection Act



which regulates the use and sharing of any personal and confidential information.

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 Barnados.

### **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 2014 to 31<sup>ST</sup> March 2015 there was 1 complaint 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**

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 there was 1 child protection referrals made in respect of allegations by children looked after against their carers. The child was referred to the LADO and managed via the Managing Allegation against people who work with children or who are in a position of trust. Where necessary Independent assessments have been commissioned and the recommendation of this has been included within the foster carers subscript review and panel for consideration.

**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 year's 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.

## 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 make a formal registration of interest to proceed. 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 give feedback.
- 2.3 Medical examinations are carried out by the applicant's doctor using the BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) 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. Personal references are also undertaken.
- 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 of the ADM meeting taking place 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 children looked after in 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 An annual 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. 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 children looked after, 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, 2 social work representatives and 2 independent members. Panels must also 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 and connected persons Foster Carers, annual reviews of carers and where necessary connected persons Foster 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. 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015**

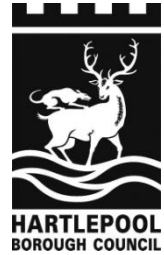
The staff of Hartlepool Borough Council's Fostering Service consists of:

<b>NAME &amp; STATUS</b>	<b>DATE OF APPOINTMENT</b>			<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>	<b>RELEVANT EXPERIENCE</b>
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 ILM Diploma in Management	Nominated Worker Children & Families Independent Fostering Agency Team Manager
Jacqui Dixon Assistant Team Manager	01 01	10 01	09 14	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 1992 HCPC registered	Children & Families Connexions Children's Society Research and Policy

Leanne Harris Social Worker	02	09	13	BA (Hons) in Social Worker July 2011	Children's Safeguarding Drug and alcohol practitioner Family Placement Social Worker
Alison Wallace Social Worker	09	09	13	BA (Hons) in Social Work July 2013	Family Placement Social Worker
Anne Waites Administrative Staff					Child & Adult Services Admin Children & Families

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

4<sup>th</sup> August 2015



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

**Subject:** RECONSTITUTION OF THE GOVERNING BODY  
OF ST HILD'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOL

## 1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

Non Key

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval of the Children's Services Committee to the reconstitution of the Governing Body of St Hild'S CE VA School and the Instrument of Government in accordance with the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended by the School Governance (Constitution and Federation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

## 3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Reports were presented to the Children's Services Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> February and 9<sup>th</sup> July 2014 which outlined an initial consultation and subsequent approval by the Department for Education (DfE) of new legislation relating to school governance. Under the new legislation all governing bodies of maintained schools and federations of maintained schools in England are required to re-constitute under the 2012 School Governance Regulations by September 2015. Under the Constitution Regulations a number of changes relating to the make-up of Governing Bodies and the process of appointment of Governors have been introduced. These include:

- A change in the minimum number of Governors from 9 to 7
- Community Governors are replaced by a new category of Co-opted Governor
- There must be at least 2 Parent Governors

- Only 1 Staff Governor in addition to the Head Teacher (although additional staff can be appointed as Co-opted Governors but when counted with one staff Governor and the Head Teacher must not exceed one-third of the total Membership of the Governing Body
- Only 1 Local Authority Governor nominated by the Local Authority but appointed by the Governing Body, whereas previously they were appointed by the Local Authority. In nominating Governors, account should be taken of the skills required by the Governing Body.

3.3 Since the introduction of the new legislation schools and colleges have been giving consideration to the re-constitution of their Governing Bodies taking account of these changes and restrictions around Governor categories and the skills required to deliver effective governance.

#### 4. PROPOSALS

4.1 The revised constitution for St Hild's CE VA School has been received following approval by the Governing Body and approval by the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle Joint Education Team. A copy of the Instrument of Government is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATION

To formally approve the reconstitution of the Governing Body of St Hild's CE VA School, under the School Governance (Constitution and Federation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations and the revised Instrument of Government in accordance with the details set out in the attached **Appendix 1**.

#### 6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The reconstitution proposals will improve the effectiveness of the Governing Body and is in line with the requirements for all Governing Bodies to be reconstituted under the revised legislation before 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015.

#### 7. CONTACT OFFICERS

Ann Turner/Derek Gouldburn  
Governor Support Officers  
Child & Adult Services

Telephone 01429 523766  
Email: [ann.turner@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:ann.turner@hartlepool.gov.uk)  
[derek.gouldburn@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:derek.gouldburn@hartlepool.gov.uk)



# **INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNMENT GOVERNING BODY OF ST HILD'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY AIDED SECONDARY SCHOOL**



1. The name of the school is St. Hild's Church of England (Aided) School.
2. The school is a voluntary aided comprehensive school where the foundation is the Parochial Church Council of the Parish of St Hilda's, Hartlepool and the Parochial Church Council of the Parish of Holy Trinity West View, Hartlepool.
3. The name of the Governing Body is "The Governing Body of St. Hild's Church of England (Aided) School".
4. The governing body shall consist of:
  - a) 2 Parent Governors
  - b) 1 Head Teacher
  - c) 1 Staff Governor
  - d) 1 Local Authority Governor
  - e) 3 Co-opted Governors
  - f) 10 Foundation Governors
5. Total number of governors 18.
6. Foundation governors shall be appointed and removed by the following bodies:-
  - a) Two Foundation Governors shall be ex officio as set out in paragraph 7a.
  - b) Two Foundation governors shall be appointed by the Durham Diocesan Board of Education after consultation with the Parochial Church Councils of St. Hilda's and Holy Trinity West View, Hartlepool.
  - c) Two appointed by Hartlepool Deanery Synod in consultation with the Parochial Church Councils of St Hilda's and Holy Trinity West View Hartlepool
  - d) Two Foundation governors shall be appointed by the Parochial Church Council of St. Hilda's, Hartlepool.
  - e) Two Foundation Governors shall be appointed by the Parochial Church Council of Holy Trinity West View Hartlepool
7.
  - a) the holders of the following offices shall be foundation governors ex officio.
 

The Incumbent or Priest in Charge of the Parish of St. Hilda's Hartlepool, and  
The Incumbent or Priest in Charge of the Parish of Holy Trinity West View Hartlepool.
  - b) The Durham Diocesan Board of Education, in consultation with the Archdeacon of the Archdeaconry within which the school is situated, shall appoint Foundation Governors, to act in the place of the ex officio Foundation Governors whose governorship derives from the office named in (a) above, in the event that the ex-officio Foundation Governor is unable or unwilling to act as a Foundation Governor, or has been removed from office under regulation 21(1) of the Regulations or there is a vacancy in the office by virtue of which his governorship exists.
8. The Director of Education for the Diocese of Durham shall be entitled to request the removal of any ex-officio Foundation Governor and to appoint any substitute governor.
9. The Foundation Governors are the Trustees of the School.
10. "Recognising the historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.

The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils."

11. This instrument of government comes into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015.
12. This instrument was made by order of Hartlepool Local Authority on
13. A copy of the instrument must be supplied to every member of the Governing Body (and the Headteacher if not a governor) any trustees and to the religious body.

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

4<sup>th</sup> August 2015



Report of: Assistant Director (Regeneration)

Subject: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

## 1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 For information only.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Committee that an application has been submitted to the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) to deliver the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

## 3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In January 2013, the European Commission created the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) in order to tackle the high levels of youth unemployment across member states. The initiative is worth €6 billion in total and is directed at young people who are unemployed or inactive. The YEI will particularly support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in regions with a youth unemployment rate of 25% or above.

3.2 The operations under YEI will be expected to achieve the following Programme Deliverables:

- Participants completing a supported intervention
- Participants receiving an offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving
- Participants in education/training, gaining a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment upon leaving
- Participants in continued education, training programmes leading to a qualification, apprenticeship, traineeship, employment, self-employment six months after leaving

3.3 The Tees Valley qualifies for additional funding under the YEI and has a notional allocation of £10.9m which has been equally matched by £10.9m from

the Tees Valley ESF allocation. The ESF element of the funding needs to be locally matched and, due to the Tees Valley's Transition Region Status, Tees Valley is required to match the ESF element at 40% which equates to £7.2m. This means that the total programme amount for the Tees Valley will be around £29m.

- 3.4 All of the activities delivered through the YEI have to respond to the priorities of the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Tees Valley European Structural & Investment Funds Strategy (ESIFS) for 2014 – 2020 which outlines the high level activity areas required for the YEI.

#### 4. OPEN CALLS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

- 4.1 On Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), as the Managing Authority for YEI, issued three Open Calls to commission ESF/YEI projects which will support Priority Axis 1 of the Operational Plan: Inclusive Labour Markets and Investment Priority: 1.3 Sustainable Integration into the Labour Market of Young People (YEI).
- 4.2 A brief description on each of the Open Calls aswell as the indicative budgetary allocations are shown in the table below: -

Open Call	Project Description	YEI Amount	ESF Amount	Local Match	Total Allocation
1	<b>Transition Education and Employment Mentoring and Support:</b> This will provide wrap-around support to all young people who are not in education, employment or training aged 15 to 29 years old to remove any identified barriers and progress them into a positive destination.	£2,597,299	£2,597,299	£1,731,533	£6,926,132
2	<b>Personalised Education, Employment and Enterprise Pathways:</b> This will deliver innovative solutions for young people who are struggling to achieve or progress into a positive destination. It will also support young people furthest away from the labour market by providing them with the skills they need to get into work aswell as offering a flexible learning and skills fund.	£7,436,934	£7,436,934	£4,957,956	£19,831,824



<b>3</b>	<b>Tailored routeways for young people not in employment, education or training:</b> This will provide tailored routeways for young people to enter into priority growth sectors including Advanced Manufacturing, Digital, Logistics, Low Carbon and Health & Social Care through a range of activities such as volunteering, internships, traineeships and apprenticeships.	£865,766	£865,766	£577,178	£2,308,711
<b>TOTAL</b>		£10,900,000	£10,900,000	£7,266,667	£29,066,667

4.3 Across all three Open Calls, DWP invited applications from suitable organisations that can deliver provision across the whole of the Tees Valley area and provide locally based activities particularly within identified marginalised communities. The organisation also needs to focus on delivering intensive support services for 15 to 29 year olds who are NEET.

4.4 There is a two stage application process for the YEI with applications being assessed by DWP.

- Stage 1 – Outline Application, which will assess: -
  - Applicant eligibility;
  - Activity and expenditure eligibility, and;
  - The fit with the ESF Operational Plan and Call Specification.
- Stage 2 – Full Application, which will assess: -
  - Strategic fit;
  - Value for money;
  - Management and control;
  - Deliverability;
  - Procurement / tendering, and;
  - State Aid compliance.

4.5 DWP has stated that it wishes to award contracts to more than one Accountable Body. Projects will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 with all delivery needing to be complete by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018.

## 5. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE PROJECT PROPOSAL

5.1 Following the announcement of the Open Calls, the Council was approached by a number of partners and agreed in principle to act as the Accountable Body to submit bids for all three Calls as part of a Tees Valley Consortium.

5.2 To ensure the applications were submitted by the required deadlines the Council: -

- Set up an interim YEI Steering Group consisting of the five Local Authorities and Tees Valley FE Plus representatives.
- Developed an Expressions of Interest (EOI) Form for potential delivery partners to complete to become part of the Tees Valley Consortium.
- Encouraged organisations from the public, private and voluntary sector to submit an EOI which identifies: -
  - Which Open Call/s they wish to deliver?
  - What activities they could deliver as part of the partnership?
  - How the proposed activities contribute to the Tees Valley ESIF?
  - Previous track record of delivery to the client groups.
  - How much match funding they can contribute to the overall project?
- Presented all of the EOIs to the YEI Steering Group who decided which organisations would be named in the bid based on the above criteria.

5.3 The full consortium consists of 61 partners including the four other Local Authorities in the Tees Valley, five Tees Valley FE Plus providers, Cleveland College of Art and Design, Voluntary Development Agencies, voluntary and community groups and Private Sector Organisations. It is worth noting that the Council has secured the full match funding requirements of £7.2m through this partnership approach.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The YEI is not a payment-on-results programme but instead a 'payment on actual expenditure incurred', with the Managing Authority providing funding in arrears on a quarterly basis. This payment method will be mirrored to delivery partners within their Service Level Agreement (SLA) which reduces the financial risk to the Council.
- 6.2 All of the delivery partners have confirmed that they have the financial capability in which to deliver their activities prior to being paid in arrears and have outlined their match contribution to support this. DWP, as the Managing Authority will also retain 10% of the grant funding until the project closes and all evidence is verified which will reduce the risk of future claw-back. The Council will undertake due diligence checks on all of the delivery partners as part of the SLA negotiation process.

## 7. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 If successful, the Council will recruit a dedicated YEI Project Team who will be based within the Economic Regeneration Team (ERT) and will be responsible for the contract management of the programme. Whilst there are already dedicated Project Officers employed within ERT who will form part of the YEI Project Team, the size and scale of this project will require additional staff to be employed.

7.2 If the full allocation of funding is secured, the proposed structure will be (all full-time equivalent (FTE) Posts): -

- 1 x YEI Programme Manager
- 1 X YEI Project Manager
- 5 X Lead Delivery Officers based within each LA who will be responsible for:
  - Co-ordinating and monitoring the performance of delivery partners in their geographical location;
  - Undertaking financial and auditable checks of partners;
  - Quality assurance, and;
  - Organising bespoke programmes of activity.
- 5 X Admin Apprentices who will support the Lead Delivery Officers
- 4 X Finance/Admin Officers based in Hartlepool to process claims, monitor finance and data entry.

7.3 This staffing structure will need to be re-visited when confirmation is received on the level of funding offered. All of the posts will be externally funded through the YEI Programme.

7.4 In addition, within the Council, there will be dedicated staff within sections such as Adult Education, Youth Support Services and ERT who will deliver activities as part of the YEI and their time will be matched against the project. The amount of FTE Council staff involved will be dependent on the size of the contract.

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The full legal implications will not be known until the successful applicant receives the contract. It will be at this stage that Legal will become involved in reviewing this document and supporting with the development of SLAs for each of the delivery partners. The Council will ensure that any contractual documents are reviewed and endorsed by Legal prior to the commencement of any delivery.

8.2 The Corporate Procurement Team has been fully consulted and all procurement processes will be executed in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules which are compliant with procurement law. If gaps in provision are identified following the commencement of the project the Council will follow the policies and principles of Public Procurement Law to procure suitable sub-contractors to deliver elements of the project. This process will be undertaken in an open and transparent manner with all opportunities subject to: -

- Open marketing to potential organisations;
- Suitable guidance, application and selection processes;
- Assessment of applications by suitable qualified and experienced staff, and;
- The selection of the successful application based on merit.

**9. IMPACT ON CHILD / FAMILY POVERTY**

- 9.1 This funding will positively contribute to tackling the longer term causes and consequences of child and family poverty by preventing young people from becoming long term NEET by supporting them into a positive destination of education, employment or training.

**10. SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 CONSIDERATIONS**

- 10.1 This funding will positively contribute to Section 17 by providing education, employment and training routeways for young people. It will also provide routeways for individuals who may have been identified as high risk of offending.

**11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 11.1 This funding will provide opportunities for young people, particularly amongst vulnerable groups such as the seven priority groups shown below: -

- Looked after children and care leavers;
- Young offenders (including those leaving the secure estate);
- Teenage parents;
- Young carers;
- Young people with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD);
- Young people with mental health issues, and;
- Young people with drug and alcohol misuse issues.

- 11.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be produced if the funding is secured.

**12. CONTRIBUTION TO OTHER COUNCIL PROJECTS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

- 12.1 This funding will benefit other Council employment initiatives, such as the Hartlepool Youth Investment Project and Think Families, Think Communities.

- 12.2 The project will also positively contribute to the following indicators: -

- Improving the Overall Employment Rate;
- Improving the Overall Youth Employment Rate;
- Reducing the Youth Unemployment Rate, and;
- Reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

### **13. CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 Significant work has already been undertaken by the Council to bring together an extremely strong consortium of partners from across the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- 13.2 The Council and its partners are confident that they can deliver the YEI Programme but as stated, there will be more than one Accountable Body awarded a contract. By the time of the Regeneration Services Committee, the Council will know if they have been invited to submit applications for the final stage.

### **14. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 14.1 Members are recommended to note the contents of this report and further update reports will be submitted to Members.

### **15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 15.1 [Tees Valley European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy 2014 – 2020](#)

### **16. CONTACT OFFICER**

Damien Wilson  
Assistant Director (Regeneration)  
Level 3  
Civic Centre  
Hartlepool  
TS24 8AY

Tel: (01429) 523400  
E-mail: [damien.wilson@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:damien.wilson@hartlepool.gov.uk)

Mark Smith  
Head of Integrated Youth Support Services  
Civic Centre  
Hartlepool  
TS24 8AY

Tel: (01429) 523405  
E-mail: [mark.smith@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:mark.smith@hartlepool.gov.uk)