

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

AGENDA



Tuesday 19 October 2021

at 4.00pm

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

A limited number of members of the public will be able to attend the meeting with spaces being available on a first come, first served basis. Those wishing to attend the meeting should phone (01429) 523568 or (01429) 523019 by midday on Monday 18 October and name and address details will be taken for NHS Test and Trace purposes.

You should not attend the meeting if you are required to self-isolate or are displaying any COVID-19 symptoms such as (a high temperature, new and persistent cough, or a loss of/change in sense of taste or smell), even if these symptoms are mild. If you, or anyone you live with, have one or more of these symptoms you should follow the NHS guidance on testing.

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillors, Boddy, Fleming, Groves, Harrison, Lindridge, Moore and vacancy.

Co-opted Members: Jo Heaton, C of E Diocese and Joanne Wilson, RC Diocese representatives.

School Heads Representatives: Mark Tilling (Secondary), David Turner (Primary), Zoe Westley (Special).

Six Young Peoples Representatives

Observer: Councillor Fleming, Chair of Adult and Community Based 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 7 September 2021 (*previously circulated and published*).



4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS

- 4.1 Youth Justice Strategic Plan – *Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 4.2 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25 – Issues Referred from Finance and Policy Committee – *Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*

5. KEY DECISIONS

No items

6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 6.1 Short Breaks Services Statement – *Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 7.1 2020/21 Annual Report of Adoption Tees Valley – *Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – Tuesday 16 November 2021 at 4.00pm



CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 October 2021



Report of: Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: YOUTH JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 Budget and Policy Framework.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To gain approval of the draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-2023 (**Appendix 1**) and agreement to present to Full Council on the 4th November 2021 to approve the planning prior to sending the plan to the Youth Justice Board.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The national Youth Justice System primarily exists to ensure that children and young people between the age of 10 and 17 do not engage in offending or re-offending behaviour and to ensure that where a young person is arrested and charged with a criminal offence, they are dealt with differently to adult offenders to reflect their particular welfare needs as children.
- 3.2 Local Youth Offending Services were established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to develop, deliver, commission and coordinate the provision of youth justice services within each Local Authority.
- 3.3 Hartlepool Youth Justice Service was established in April 2000 and is responsible for youth justice services locally. It is a multi-agency service and is made up of representatives from the Council's Children's Services, Police, Probation, Health and Education.
- 3.4 The primary objectives of Youth Justice Services are to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people and reduce the use of custody.

- 3.5 There is a statutory requirement for all Youth Justice Services to annually prepare, a local Youth Justice Plan for submission to the national Youth Justice Board.
- 3.6 The annual Youth Justice Plan provides an overview of how the Youth Justice Service, the Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board and wider partnership will ensure that the service has sufficient resources and infrastructure to deliver youth justice services in its area in line with the requirements of the *National Standards for Youth Justice Services* to:
- promote performance improvement;
 - shape youth justice system improvement;
 - improve outcomes for young people, victims and the broader community.
- 3.7 The Youth Justice Service were inspected by HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in October 2020. This inspection is part of a four-year programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. HMIP inspected and rated Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) across three broad areas of its work, referred to as 'domains': the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. HMIP inspect against 12 'standards', shared between the domains. Overall, Hartlepool YJS was rated as 'Good' which is a very positive outcome and provides the authority with a level of assurance, the recommendations for improvement identified in this report have been address in YJS plan 2021/23.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Youth Offending Service and broader youth justice Partnership focus on the following key strategic objectives during 2021/23;
- **Early Intervention and Prevention** - sustain the reduction of first time entrants to the youth justice system by ensuring that there remain strategies and services in place locally to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour
 - **Re-offending** - Reducing further offending by young people who have committed crime with a particular emphasis on the development of activities to address the offending behaviour of young women
 - **Remand and Custody** – Demonstrate that there are robust alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands to custody whilst awaiting trial/sentencing

- **Voice of the Young Person** – ensure that all young people are actively involved in developing their own plans and interventions and have the opportunity to develop and inform current and future service delivery
- **Effective Governance** – ensure that the Youth Offending Strategic Management Board is a well constituted, committed and knowledgeable Board which scrutinises Youth Offending Service performance
- **Risk and Safety & Wellbeing (Asset Plus)** – ensure all children and young people entering or at risk of entering the youth justice system benefit from a structured needs assessment to identify risk of harm, safety and wellbeing concerns and desistance factors, to inform effective intervention and risk management
- **'Child First'** – ensure that the Child First principles are embedded within the Youth Justice Service and that every child has the opportunity to live a safe and crime free life, and makes a positive contribution to society.
- **Education, Training, Employment** – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Schools, Virtual School, One Stop Shop etc to ensure all Young People open to the YJS are actively engaging in some form of suitable ETE, thus reducing NEET numbers and increasing attendance.
- **Substance Misuse** – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Horizons/START to improve and sustain the engagement of young people open to the YJS within substance misuse services.

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The strategic plan identifies key risk to future delivery as detailed in Section 8. of the plan these are:
- The unpredictability associate with secure remand episodes and secure remand length has the potential to place significant financial pressure on the Youth Justice Service and the broader Local Authority
 - Managing the potential for reduction in YJB grant and partnership financial and 'in-kind' contributions for post-2021/23
 - Performance on reoffending outcomes and impact to children
 - Emerging concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines.

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 A local authority must submit a youth justice plan annually to the Youth Justice Board setting out (a) how youth justice services are to be provided and funded in their area and (b) how the YOTs established by them are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate and what functions they are to carry out. The plan must be published in such manner and by such date as the Secretary of State may direct.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 This plan has been presented and had the approval of The Youth Justice Management Board, Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Audit and Governance Committee.

9. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE.)

- 9.1 Not applicable

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE.)

- 10.1 Not applicable

11. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

11.1 There are no staffing consideration within this report

12. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

12.1 There are no asset management consideration within this report

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 Children's Services is requested to note the consultation process and ratify the plan prior to approval at Full Council.

14. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 The development of the Youth Justice plan for 2021/2023 will provide the Youth Justice Service with a clear steer to bring about further reductions in youth offending and contribute to improving outcomes for children, young people and their families alongside the broader community.

14.2 The local Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2021/2023 will establish responsibility across the Youth Justice Service and the Youth Justice Strategic Board for taking each improvement activity forward within agreed timescales.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Director of Finance and Policy ☒

Chief Solicitor ☒



HARTLEPOOL
YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021/2023

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1. FOREWORD

Welcome to the 2021 - 2023 Hartlepool Youth Justice Strategic Plan. This plan sets out our ambitions and priorities for Hartlepool Youth Justice Service and the broader local Youth Justice Partnership for the next 2 years.

The Safer Hartlepool Partnership, Community Safety Plan 2020-21 establishes a vision for the town:

“To make Hartlepool a safe, prosperous and enjoyable place to live, work and visit”

The Youth Justice Service and broader partnership has a key role in contributing to this vision, by continuing to deliver a high quality, effective and safe youth justice service that prevents crime and the fear of crime, whilst ensuring that young people who do offend are identified, managed and supported appropriately, without delay.

In recent years Hartlepool has witnessed a significant reduction in youth crime. The local youth justice partnership has been particularly effective in reducing the numbers of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time, but there still remains a need to drive down incidents of re-offending by young people who have previously offended. This will be achieved through a combination of robust interventions designed to manage and reduce risk of harm, support safety & wellbeing, restore interpersonal relationships, promote whole family engagement and achieve positive outcomes. Encouragingly, Hartlepool Youth Justice Service has implemented a strong health offer for all young people and continues to develop its restorative offer whilst ensuring that victims of youth crime also have a voice.

The recent HMIP inspection was a positive experience resulting in a strong GOOD result overall for the service. It highlighted many positives to be maintained and built upon and also areas requiring improvement, the YJS and partners continue to work hard to improve in all in areas. The HMIP inspection framework, ‘Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019’ and the ‘Child First’ ethos will be integral to the way the service builds upon progress to date. However, it must be acknowledged that the ongoing difficulties with the COVID 19 pandemic, current economic climate, and the continuing introduction of new reforms relating to how we respond to children, young people, families and communities, will inevitably present new challenges in the coming year and beyond.

Despite these challenges I am very confident that Hartlepool Youth Justice Service and the broader Youth Justice Partnership will continue to help make Hartlepool a safe, prosperous and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.

In 2021-23 we will strive to continuously improve by:

- Maintaining and building upon the current Health offer and Enhanced Case Management model, with trauma informed practice at its core.
- Continuing to work with partners to develop a clear and consistent approach to all forms of child exploitation.
- Building on the improving YJS offer of a 'whole family approach'
- Ensuring the Service maintains a 'child first' ethos.
- Continuing to develop and embed a creative Early Intervention & Prevention offer

None of the above will be possible without the continued support and close working relationships of our partners and Children's Social Care. In addition, these relationships allow us to mitigate the impact of ever reducing partnership budgets whilst maintaining the quality and effectiveness of the Service.

2020-21 has been a difficult and frustrating year for everyone, especially in light of the COVID 19 pandemic, an initial radical overhaul of service delivery and ever changing Business Continuity and Recovery Plans added to the ongoing pressures. It needs to be highlighted that all staff have coped admirably and very professionally throughout this period ensuring the service continued to reach out and deliver interventions to all young people in very difficult circumstances.

In light of the above, as always, the local authority and Strategic Management Board is extremely grateful for the skill and dedication of our employees in continuing to support young people who offend, or are at risk of becoming involved in offending.

On behalf of Hartlepool Borough Council Children's Services and Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board I am pleased to pledge my support to and endorse the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-23



Sally Robinson, Director, Children and Joint Commissioning Services

2. INTRODUCTION

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) covers the local authority area of Hartlepool which is impacted upon by a range of social, economic and environmental factors. Using the 2019 average score of the Index of Multiple Deprivation Hartlepool is the 10th most deprived Local Authority in the country with high levels of unemployment, the initial impact of Universal Credit, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and substance misuse. All of these factors provide significant challenges to the young people we work with impacting on their behaviours and influencing outcomes.

Hartlepool is served by 5 Secondary Schools, 1 Pupil Referral Unit and Catcote Academy which caters for secondary and post-16 students with special educational needs. There are 4 Sixth Form providers two of which are located within Secondary Schools.

The current population of Hartlepool is in the region of 93,000 with approx.10,000 being between the ages of 10-17.

The BAME population in Hartlepool remains somewhat low in comparison to other areas locally, 2011 is the last official data release. There are some estimates available for 2019 which are as follows:

BAME population – 2.7%
10-17 BAME population – 4.6%

** (These are not official statistics or experimental statistics so they have not been quality assured by ONS. They were produced by ONS in response to a Freedom of Information request)

The National Youth Justice System primarily exists to ensure that children and young people between the age of 10 and 17 (who are arrested and charged with a criminal offence) are dealt with differently to adult offenders, to reflect their particular welfare needs.

In summary, young people who offend are:

- Dealt with by youth courts;
- Given different sentences in comparison to adults and
- When necessary, detained in special secure centres for young people.

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority and statutory partners to secure and coordinate local youth justice services for young people in our area who come into contact with the Youth Justice System as a result of their offending behaviour. This is achieved through the established Youth Justice Service.

The primary functions of Youth Justice Services are to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people, reduce the use of custody and ensure all of the above are delivered with a “Child First” ethos embedded across the service.

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service was established in April 2000 and is a multi-agency service made up of representatives from Children’s Services, Police, Probation, Public Health, Education and Community Safety. Hartlepool Youth Justice Service seeks to ensure that:

- All young people entering the youth justice system benefit from a structured needs assessment to identify risk and protective factors associated with their offending behaviour in order to inform effective interventions.
- Courts and Referral Order panels are provided with high quality reports that enable them to make informed decisions.
- Orders of the Court are managed in such a way that they support the primary aim of the youth justice system, alongside managing risk of harm and ensuring there is due regard to the welfare of the young person.
- Services provided to courts are of a high quality and ensure that magistrates and the judiciary have confidence in the supervision of young people.
- Comprehensive bail and remand management services are in place locally for young people remanded or committed to custody, or on bail while awaiting trial or sentence.
- The needs and risks of young people sentenced to custodial sentences (including long-term custodial sentences) are assessed to ensure effective resettlement and management of risk.
- Those receiving youth justice services are treated fairly regardless of race, language, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability or any other factor, and actions are put in place to address discrimination if identified

In addition to the above, the remit of the service has widened significantly in recent years due to both national and local developments relating to prevention, diversion and restorative justice and there is a now requirement to ensure that:

- Creative strategies and services are in place locally to prevent young people from becoming involved in crime or anti-social behaviour;
- Out-of-court disposals deliver targeted and bespoke interventions for those at risk of entering the Youth Justice System
- Assistance is provided to the Police when determining whether Youth Cautions should be issued and

Restorative approaches are used, where appropriate, with victims of crime and ensures that restorative justice is central to work undertaken with young people who offend.

The Hartlepool Youth Justice Plan for 2021-2023 sets out how youth justice services will be delivered, funded and governed in response to both local need and national policy changes and in line with the Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019, the recent HMIP inspection findings and the ongoing Business Continuity and Recovery plan. It also highlights how Hartlepool Youth Justice Service will work in partnership to prevent offending and re-offending by young people and reduce the use of custody.

3. STRATEGIC VISION AND PRIORITIES

Hartlepool's Children's Strategic Partnership has set out its vision for children and young people within the town as follows:

Vision:

Our ambition as a children's partnership is to enable all children and families in Hartlepool to have opportunities to make the most of their life chances and be supported to be safe in their homes and communities.

Obsessions:

- Children and young people have opportunities to make the most of their life chances and are safe
- Improving family relationships, strengths, skills and ability to cope
- Reducing the impact of domestic violence, mental health, drugs and alcohol misuse on children and families
- Helping parents, carers and young people to gain skills and get jobs

The Youth Justice Service, as part of the wider services for children, seeks to deliver on the vision and obsessions through a number of identified Youth Justice Service Strategic Priorities for 2021 - 2023.

In addition, these priorities align and overlap with the strategic priorities set by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership for 2020-21:

- Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour
- Reduce the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse
- Reduce Domestic Violence

To enable Hartlepool Youth Justice Service to contribute to the vision above, it will focus on the following strategic objectives and priorities:

Strategic Objectives and Priorities – 2021-2023

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (and the broader Youth Justice Partnership) will be utilising the YJB grant to help achieve the following key strategic objectives during 2021-23:

Youth Justice Strategic Priorities
<p>Re-offending - reduce further offending by young people who have committed crime with a particular emphasis continuing on the development of Service interventions that are structured, responsive and tailored to meet identified individual need and evaluated. (Both within Youth Justice Services and provided by external agencies).</p> <p>Key Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake quality assessments of young people at risk of re-offending, ensuring risks, desistance factors and needs are identified which inform effective intervention planning • Improve interventions delivered, through innovation and collaboration where appropriate • Improve intelligence and timely information sharing relating to those young people who are at risk of offending, to inform service-wide improvement activity or targeted work • Continue to improve the 'whole family' approach and Health offer within the service and with partners • Continue to undertake scoping activities in relation to retaining both the Speech & Language Therapist, Trauma Informed Care Pathway and Emotional Wellbeing therapists presence within the YJS beyond March 2021

Early Intervention and Prevention – sustain the reduction of first time entrants to the youth justice system by ensuring that creative strategies and services remain in place locally to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Key Actions

- Embedding of the YJS Early Intervention and Prevention offer across Children's Services and the partnership
- Operate a targeted approach to supporting individuals and groups of young people at risk of offending - based on intelligence and collaborative working with key partners (Police, ASB, Early Help, Voluntary Community Sector, Schools, etc)
- Work with Partners to reduce and respond to the Child exploitation
- Ongoing trend analysis of past and current FTE's to identify key themes and responses
- Ongoing briefings to key partners (such as Police and Social Care) to emphasise and promote the Prevention and Diversion agenda
- Ensure point of arrest diversion is evident as a distinct and substantially different response to formal out of court disposals

Remand and Custody – demonstrate that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands and custody.

Key Actions

- Monitor and maintain the use of Compliance Panels to ensure continued effectiveness
- Ensure the Service provides intensive packages of supervision and support to high intensity orders and bail arrangements
- Ensure that the needs of young people in custody and the factors relating to their offending behaviour are addressed in the secure estate to prevent further offending upon release
- Ensure that robust and timely Resettlement Planning is in place for young people upon release to reduce the risk of further reoffending (HMIP Youth Justice inspection framework, standard 4.1 Resettlement, May 2021)
- Review capacity to deliver ISS, and resource appropriately, through a multi-agency approach

Risk and Safety & Wellbeing (Asset Plus) – ensure all children and young people entering or at risk of entering the youth justice system benefit from a structured needs assessment to identify risk of harm, safety and wellbeing concerns and desistance factors, to inform effective intervention and risk management.

Key Actions

- Continued Asset Plus refresher training, ensuring robust assessment of a young person's needs
- Work in partnership with other agencies to ensure there is a co-ordinated assessment and plan relating to a young person's risk and safety & wellbeing
- Implement an audit cycle/performance clinic to ensure assessment and plans are meeting the appropriate quality standards through robust and transparent quality assurance and feedback.
- Ensure that desistance factors are identified and analysed in all assessments of every young person subject to YJS supervision through quality assurance and staff supervision.
- Attendance and contribution to YJB Regional Effective Practice groups and peer collaboration with Tees Valley and North East YJS colleagues
- Ongoing internal staff training and workshops to benchmark quality standards in the management of risk and safety & wellbeing
- Continue to work alongside the partnership to identify suitable interventions and pathways for children and young people criminally exploited and potentially being drawn into County Lines activity
- Undertake 'Practice Week', this consists of a team of independent auditors to carry out case work audits, undertake practice observations and gain feedback from young people and their families. The evaluation of practice week will inform the service development plan.

Restorative Justice – ensure all victims of youth crime have the opportunity to participate in restorative justice approaches and restorative justice is incorporated in to the work undertaken with young people who offend.

Key Actions

- Ensure that victims of youth crime have the opportunity to participate in restorative justice approaches leading to improved outcomes for victims
- Continue to use restorative practice across all aspects of the Youth Justice Service
- Regularly re-visit, review and develop practice and process around Referral Order panels to ensure increased involvement from victims, panel members, young people and their families
- Continue to develop the in-house RJ 'offer' to consolidate and embed current and better integrated working practices – including the victim's evaluation

Effective Governance – ensure that the Youth Justice Strategic Management Board is a well constituted, committed and knowledgeable Board which scrutinises Youth Justice Service performance.

Key Actions

- The Youth Justice Management Board will provide oversight and scrutiny of the service action plan and performance
- Ensure Management Board members attend regular development and shadowing opportunities as provided by the YJS Team Manager.
- Continue to review the Terms of Reference for the YJS board to ensure it is fit for purpose and includes appropriate representation and contribution of all statutory partners.
- Attendance and representation at YJB Regional executive meetings with colleague YJS Managers from the North East – to share learning and Governance issues to improve wider regional service delivery

Voice of the Young People – ensure that all young people are actively involved in developing their own plans having the opportunity to develop and inform current and future service delivery

Key Actions

- Ensure young people's involvement in relation to their assessment and plans is clearly evidenced within the records.
- Young people to be actively involved in developing their own plans and their comments are captured at implementation, review and closure of all plans
- The service will ensure young people are provided with opportunities to influence and shape service delivery – through access to, and completion of, Survey Monkey feedback
- YJS leadership team to hold regular evaluation/feedback meetings to ensure all comments are seen and actioned where required

'Child First' – ensure that the Child First principles are embedded within the Youth Justice Service and that every child has the opportunity to live a safe and crime free life, and make a positive contribution to society.

Key Actions

- Prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their needs, capacities, rights and potential.
- Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion.
- Ensure that all work carried out by the service is a meaningful collaboration with children and their parents/carers.
- The YJS will promote a childhood that is removed from the Justice System, using prevention, diversion and minimal intervention and that all work minimises stigma.

Education, Training, Employment – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Schools, Virtual School, One Stop Shop etc to ensure all Young People open to the YJS are actively engaging in some form of suitable ETE, thus reducing NEET numbers and increasing attendance.

Key Actions

- Ensure Education is suitably represented on the Strategic Management Board
- Education reports submitted by partners for each Strategic Management Board meeting
- Encourage children's active engagement with their respective education provider
- The YJS leadership team to hold monthly Education meetings with all education partners
- Working in collaboration regarding children with EHCP/SEN

Substance Misuse – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Horizons/START to improve and sustain the engagement of young people open to the YJS within substance misuse services.

Key Actions

- Ensure Substance Misuse providers are suitably represented on the Strategic Management Board
- Regular reports/updates submitted to the Strategic Management Board by Substance Misuse providers
- Ensure the co-location and continued working arrangements/pathways are embedded between the YJS and Substance Misuse partners
- All children and young people identified as needing support are actively encouraged to engage with appropriate Substance Misuse services

4. STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

Service Structure:

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service employs a staff team of 27 people, which includes three seconded staff, and 5 sessional workers (**see Appendix 1**). The service also benefits from a team of 6 active volunteers who are Referral Order Panel members. All staff and volunteers are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks which are renewed every three years.

The YJS delivery model has been reconfigured and restructured during the last year to ensure the service remains sufficiently flexible to address future challenges. This will continue to be achieved through a generic case management and intervention delivery model, across pre and post court functions. This will ensure maximum resilience, capacity and flexibility to meet the needs of children and young people and the service as a whole.

The current YJS structure aims to consolidate areas of strong performance and effective practice, whilst also providing a dynamic framework to respond to emerging priorities, recognised both by the Local Authority and key partners.

This model (alongside the YJS strategic plan) allows the organisation and the wider YJS partnership to action the priorities for service delivery and to achieve best outcomes for children and young people across the range of statutory and preventative services.

Governance:

The Youth Justice Service is located within the Children & Joint Commissioning Services Department. The Management Board is chaired by the local Neighbourhood Policing Chief Inspector and is made up of representatives from Children's Social Care, Police, Probation, Public Health, Courts, Education, Youth Support Services and Community Safety.

Effective integrated strategic partnership working and clear oversight by the Management Board are critical to the success and effective delivery of youth justice services in Hartlepool. The board is directly responsible for:

- Determining how appropriate youth justice services are to be provided and funded;
- Overseeing the formulation each year of the youth justice plan;
- Agreeing measurable objectives linked to key performance indicators as part of the youth justice plan;
- Ensuring delivery of the statutory aim to prevent offending by children and young people;
- Giving strategic direction to Youth Justice Service Manager and Youth Justice Service Team;
- Providing performance management of the prevention of youth crime and periodically report this to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership;
- Ensuring that Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019 are embedded across the whole service and audits are completed within required timescales;
- Promoting the key role played by the Youth Justice Service within local integrated offender management arrangements;

- Advocate on behalf of the YJS within their own service areas and beyond, specifically supporting the YJS to overcome barriers to effective multi agency working;
- Oversight of all data submissions to the YJB ensuring timeliness, especially conditions set out in the YJB grant;
- Ensuring the recommendations outlined in the HMIP inspection report are addressed and monitored at board meetings

The Management Board is clear about the priority areas for improvement, and monitors the delivery of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan, performance and prevention work. It is well attended and receives comprehensive reports relating to performance, finance and specific areas of service delivery.

Members of the Board are knowledgeable, participate well in discussions and are members of other related boards, such as the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the Safer Hartlepool Partnership, which contribute to effective partnership working at a strategic level. Board meetings are well structured and members are held accountable. The current membership of the Board is as follows:

Mark Haworth (Chair)	Chief Inspector – Neighbourhood Policing (Cleveland Police)
Jane Young (Deputy Chair)	Assistant Director – Children and Families' (HBC)
Roni Checksfield	Hartlepool YJS Manager (HBC)
Emma Rutherford	Virtual School Headteacher (HBC)
Ann Powell	Head of Cleveland NPS – National Probation Service (NE)
Rachel Parker	Community Safety Team Leader (HBC)

Zoe McKenna	One Stop Shop Manager (HBC)
Deborah Clark	Public Health Improvement Practitioner (HBC)
Jo Heaney	Clinical Commissioning Group (Tees Valley) (CCG)
Kate Stockdale	Head of Service, Substance Misuse (HBC)
Heather Moreton	Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS)
David Ward	Head of Finance (Children's & adults) (HBC)
Lisa Oldroyd	Office for Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
Helen Marriott	Health & Justice Services (TEWV)
Linda Bush	Head of Innovation and Engagement (North East & Cumbria) Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

5. PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service is a statutory partnership which includes, but also extends beyond, the direct delivery of youth justice services. In order to deliver youth justice outcomes it must be able to function effectively in both of the two key sectors within which it operates, namely:

- Criminal justice services.
- Services for children, young people and their families.

The Youth Justice Service contributes both to improving community safety and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and in particular protecting them from significant harm.

Many of the young people involved with the Youth Justice Service are amongst the most vulnerable children in the borough and are at greatest risk of social exclusion. The Youth Justice Service's multi-agency approach ensures that it plays a significant role in meeting the safeguarding needs of these young people. This is achieved through the effective assessment and management of safety & wellbeing and risk, through working in partnership with other services, for example Children's Services, Health, Education, Secure Estate and Police to ensure young people's wellbeing is promoted and they are protected from harm. Regular ongoing communication, meetings, joint training opportunities and speedy information/intelligence sharing ensure ongoing strong links and relationships.

All high risk cases can be escalated to either one or both of the Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked group (VEMT) or the Strategic Risk Management Group, the Youth Justice Service has representation on both groups which meet monthly. Discussions around serious youth violence, criminal exploitation and county lines are conducted within these forums ensuring tight plans are implemented and strategic management oversight is afforded

6. RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The Youth Justice Service budget is mainly funded by a combination of Local Authority funding and Youth Justice Board grant, although historically there have been financial contributions from the Police and Health (CCG and Public Health). The Local Authority's contribution to the service has remained protected; however over time there have been reductions in the other areas of funding.

In April 2021 the YJB announced their grant allocations which is an 8.8% increase for Hartlepool (£411k compared to £378k in 20/21) equating to an additional £33,000. It is unclear whether this increased grant will apply in future years as the grant award letter does state:- *“This one-off uplift is by exception and is not guaranteed for future years. The YJB has sought for this additional funding to support local authorities to address some of the pressures in the system as you move into recovery following the impact of COVID-19 and to support the delivery of our strategic plan.”*

The National Probation Service continue to provide funding (£5k) as well as their staffing contribution which is 0.5 FTE, and the CCG contribution is a non-cash contribution via the commissioning of the Trauma Informed Care Pathway.

Cleveland Police ceased their cash contribution in 2013/14, however still provide the seconded Police Officer. Funding secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2015 towards the delivery of Triage continues, there has however been a slight reduction in the amount of this funding which is secured for the next 12 months.

2021/2022 Youth Justice Service Budget

Agency	Staffing Costs	Payments in kind	Other delegated funds	Total
Police		45,000		45,000
Police and Crime Commissioner			32,000	32,000
Probation		18,500	5,000	23,500
Health				0
Local Authority	150,000	120,000	105,000	375,000
Welsh Government				0
YJB	256,000		130,000	411,000
Other				0
Total	406,000	183,500	272,000	886,500

Planned/Proposed Expenditure 2021/22

Direct Costs	2021/22 Budget
	£'000
Employees	585
Premises	40
Transport	15
Other Non-Pay Costs	141
Indirect Costs – HBC #	42
Indirect Costs - Police	45
Indirect Costs - Probation	19
Total	887

- Inc recharges for premises, management, payroll, HR, finance, legal etc

The minimum staffing requirements set out in the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 requires that the service has a nominated person from each of the following statutory partners; Police Service, Children's Social Services, National Probation Service, Education and Health. Hartlepool YJS does not have an education rep sitting within the team, however there is a designated Education Officer who deals solely with YJS children as well as a designated One Stop Shop (OSS) worker who leads on all YJS post 16 education. Monthly Education meetings, attended by Education representatives, OSS worker and YJS staff are held where each child in the current cohort is discussed in depth, barriers to education, current circumstances and plans moving forward are also agreed. All staff have direct access to the Education Officer, wider Virtual School staff who provide support, advice and guidance and OSS worker to discuss ongoing daily education issues as and when they arise and gather any information/data as required.

7. PERFORMANCE & PRIORITIES

A review of progress made against last year's plan highlights that the service has made progress across the majority of the strategic priorities; but there remains key areas for improvement that will need to be driven forward in the coming year:

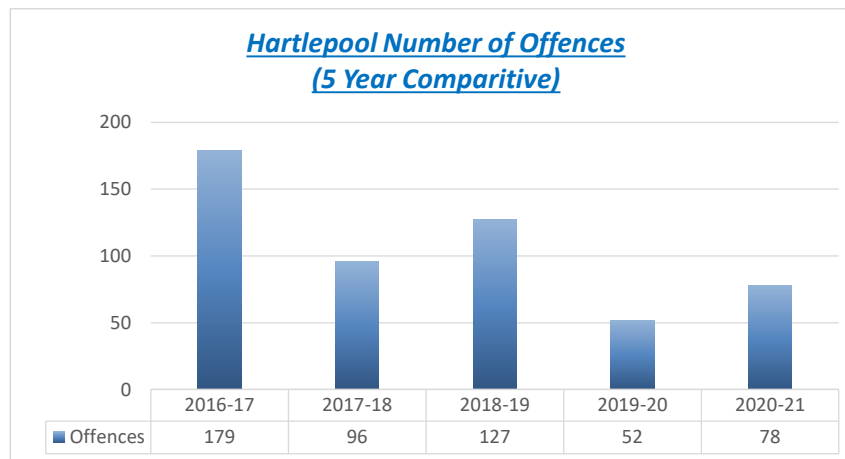
1. HARTLEPOOL YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	COMMENTS/UPDATES
Re-offending - reduce further offending by young people who have committed crime with a particular emphasis in the development of Service interventions that are structured, responsive and tailored to meet identified individual need and evaluated. (Both within Youth Justice Service and provided by external agencies).	Hartlepool YJS are in the process of embedding a clearer more robust process of identification and intervening much earlier with YP regarding reoffending. This needs to be a multi-agency approach across the LA with regular communication and buy in from all service areas. Recently received updated data from the YDS indicates a reduction in reoffending over the last year, however this remains a key priority as we are all too aware of how these figures can fluctuate very quickly. The YJS and partners continue to work hard in this area, to ensure the reduction is built upon and improved over the next 2 years.
Risk and Safety & Wellbeing (Asset Plus) – ensure all children and young people entering or at risk of entering the youth justice system benefit from a structured needs assessment to identify risk of harm, safety and wellbeing concerns and desistance factors, to inform effective intervention and risk management.	All pre and post court cases within Hartlepool YJS benefit from an AssetPlus assessment. Quality Assurance frameworks have been implemented and aligned with HMIP Best Practice guidance, with all AssetPlus assessments countersigned by YJS managers. Risk management meetings are held for all High and V High and referrals to VEMT/Strategic Risk Management are made as required. The YJS Internal training programme 2021/22 (Attached at Appendix 2) covers the above as well as desistance etc.
Remand and Custody – demonstrate that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands and custody.	Hartlepool YJS have a clear process for alternatives to custody through the offer of ISS bail packages and utilisation of pre-breach meetings for those at risk of custody via non-compliance. There has been a significant reduction in remands, 1 in 2019/20, 0 in 2020/21 and also 0 to date in 2021/22.

	Custody figures – 1 in 2019/20, 2 in 2020/21 and 0 to date in 2021/22. The YJS and partners continue to work hard in reducing these figures.
Early Intervention and Prevention – <i>sustain the reduction of first time entrants to the youth justice system by ensuring that strategies and services remain in place locally to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.</i>	Hartlepool YJS have a robust embedded diversionary offer and OoCD disposal process. To enhance this offer and widen Early Intervention/Prevention the YJS will be working directly 1:1 with referrals received from the wider Children's Services for those YP at risk of offending. A bigger onus is now being placed on Prevention/early Intervention and the service is working very hard on bespoke creative individual packages of support for all children/YP being identified and referred.
Child First – <i>ensure that the Child First principles are embedded within the Youth Justice Service and that every child has the opportunity to live a safe and crime free life, and makes a positive contribution to society.</i>	We continue to embed the "Child First, Offender second" principles across the service, our aim is to deliver a non-stigmatising approach to interventions where all children/YP have a voice and are active in planning their own pathways and plans. Alongside this there are ongoing discussions/meetings being held with Cleveland Police and partners regarding Criminal exploitation and LAC (the criminalisation of these young people) and the various forums these issues are discussed.
Restorative Justice – <i>ensure all victims of youth crime have the opportunity to participate in restorative justice approaches and restorative justice is incorporated in to the work undertaken with young people who offend.</i>	RJ and victim work continues to be delivered in house. We are now reviewing our own processes/monthly audit etc to improve our practice and the offer/outcomes to victims? This is being carried out at Leadership meetings, we have introduced an RJ database where this info is stored and monitored. We are seeing an increased improvement across the service with all areas of RJ.
Voice of the Young People – <i>ensure that all young people are actively involved in developing their own plans and interventions and have the opportunity to develop and inform current and future service delivery</i>	Hartlepool YJS continue to have an established in-house evaluation tool via 'survey monkey' – which is based on questions asked by HMIPs 'Viewpoint' survey before it was decommissioned in March 2017. We have now implemented Survey Monkey evaluations for young people, Parents/carers and Victims. AssetPlus self-assessments are completed at all initial, review and closure stages (across pre and post court cases). Children, YP and Parents/Carers are actively engaged in the creation of their plans and reviews with comments requested at all stages, as well as in depth Closure Summaries. This information is shared with the Management Board at board meetings for further discussion and to help shape future delivery and services.
Effective Governance – <i>ensure that the Youth Justice Strategic Management Board is a well constituted, committed and knowledgeable Board which scrutinises Youth Justice Service performance.</i>	As a result of various national and local drivers, it is important to emphasise that the YJS partnership should reflect the most appropriate local arrangement for maximum effectiveness. The Board's membership and activity was reviewed in May 2021 and will be reviewed again in 2022, this will be undertaken with all board members. There is a need to ensure development days and shadowing days are prioritised. Board members attended the bite size sessions delivered by the YJB in early 2021 and activity from board members is and continues to improve.

Education, Training, Employment – <i>Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Virtual School, OSS etc ensure all Young People open to the YJS are actively engaging in some form of suitable ETE, thus reducing NEET numbers and increasing attendance.</i>	Identified during the recent HMIP as an area needing improvement. There is a need for the YJS to work closely with all relevant partners and work towards reducing NEET figures and improving engagement/attendance for all YP and their education provision. Up to date education reports are now presented at each board meeting by the relevant representatives, monthly education meetings are held and a database of all YP updated. Support with EHCP, SEN, alternate provision, PEX, PRU and Post 16 education is available via the Education reps. All YJS staff have direct access to the Education reps on a day to day basis.
Substance Misuse – <i>Working with partners i.e. Horizons/START to improve and sustain the engagement of young people open to the YJS with substance misuse services.</i>	Identified during the recent HMIP as an area needing improvement. There is a need for the YJS to work closely with all relevant partners to understand the low engagement and work towards sustaining the engagement of all YJS YP with Substance Misuse services. HOS Substance misuse now sits on the board and will be producing up to data/reports for future board meetings. Co-location of staff, joint working, joint training and daily communication is ongoing.

Young People Who Offend

In spite of the challenges that young people, families and communities contend with in Hartlepool, the local Youth Justice Partnership has had significant success in recent years in terms of preventing and reducing youth offending behaviour.



The number of offences committed by the YJS cohort has reduced from 179 (2016/17) to 78 in 2020/21, there have been slight fluctuations during this period, however this represents a significant reduction of 57% across the last 5 years and a 38% reduction in the last 3 years.

Prevention and Diversion

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service, and the broader youth justice partnership, continue to place a significant emphasis on the prevention of young people's involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour. This continues to positively impact on the reduction of young people entering the Youth Justice System.

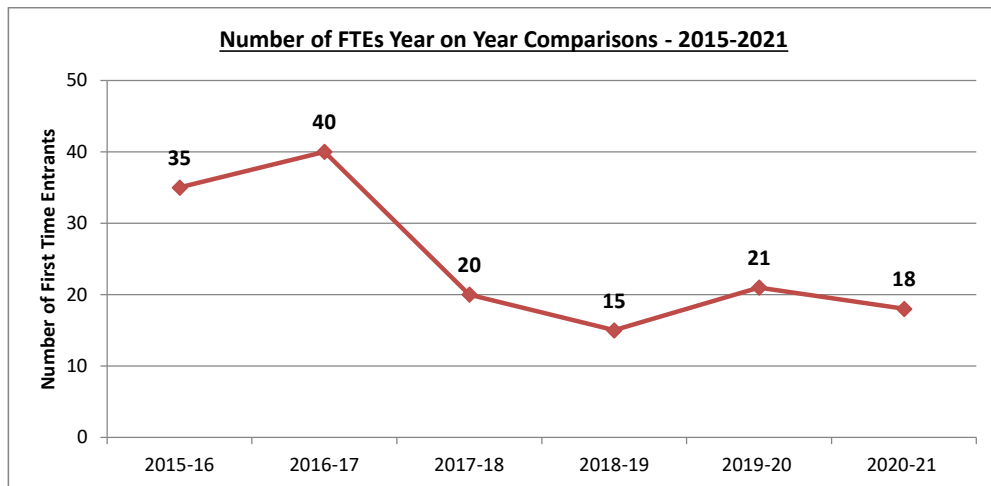
Youth crime prevention and diversion is based on the premise that it is possible to change the direction of young people by reducing risk factors that may lead to offending behaviour and enhancing protective factors that might help prevent offending.

It marks a concerted shift away from reactive spending, towards early action and intervention, through a range of programmes for young people who are at risk of offending, which can result in better outcomes and greater value for money.

For young people whose behaviour has become more problematic, robust out of court interventions have proven to be highly successful in diverting young people away from further involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour. The use of out of court interventions are able to impress upon the young people the seriousness, and potentially damaging effect, of their actions however they do not criminalise the young people in the way that statutory court orders inevitably do.

Hartlepool YJS partnership arrangements with Cleveland Police are established and effective in relation to the diversion of young people from the Youth Justice System. This remains primarily through the delivery of Out Of Court Disposals (OOCd), with longer term data trend evidencing significant success in this area. Indeed, Hartlepool YJS will continue to monitor the number of FTEs and for those young people subject to an OOCd, ensuring interventions are robust and sufficient to address the offence committed, alongside other areas of need identified in the assessment, in order to help prevent any further offending.

Cleveland PCC continues to fund the diversionary Triage programme which has made a considerable contribution to the continuing reduction of FTEs. There was a recorded 40 FTEs in 2016/17 compared to 18 in 2020/21 a reduction of 55%, although figures have fluctuated over the last 3 years we are confident as a partnership that we can continue to reduce these figures.



Discussions are currently ongoing between the 3 Cleveland YJSs, Cleveland Police, CPS and the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner to discuss implementation of a “Divert from Charge” process, if and when implemented this will add another strand to the Prevention/Early Intervention/Diversion offer

Our Prevention and Early Intervention Offer has been overhauled and redesigned continuing the focus of a Child First Youth Justice Service. This will be delivered by ensuring that we:

- Prioritise the interests and needs of all children/YP
- Promote their individual strengths and capacities
- Build trusting supportive relationships
- Empower Children/YP to make positive contributions
- Encourage participation
- Ensure a non-stigmatised contact with the service

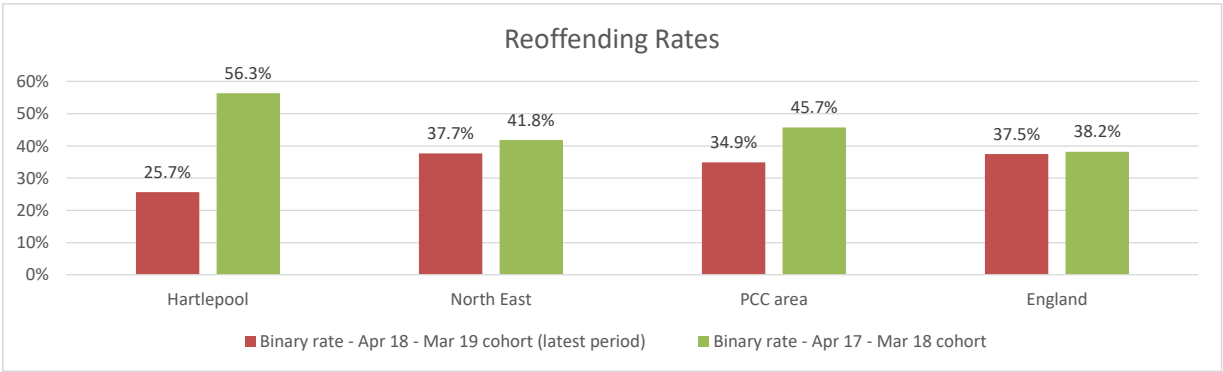
Referrals and numbers via this route will continue to increase into the service, this will be recorded and highlighted within all Management Board reports to indicate the ongoing importance of this work and the effect this is hoped to have on the reduction of children/YP entering the service via statutory means.

Continued multi agency partnership work is ongoing to implement suitable interventions and processes to work intensively with those young people identified as potentially being criminally exploited. Hartlepool YJS will be providing a leading role in this process alongside the Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT) local board. Discussions and plans are in the advanced stages within Children's Services with the implementation of a Contextualised Safeguarding Hub which will bring the other forums together under one roof.

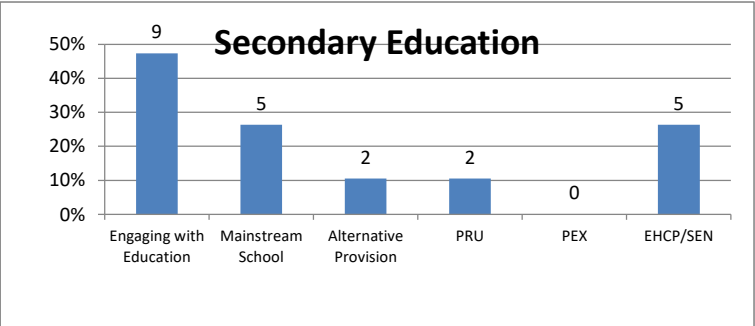
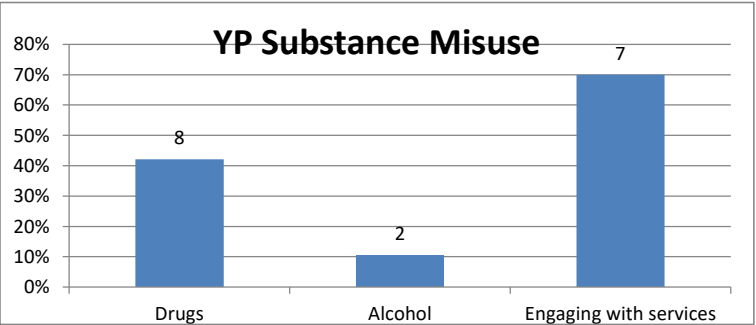
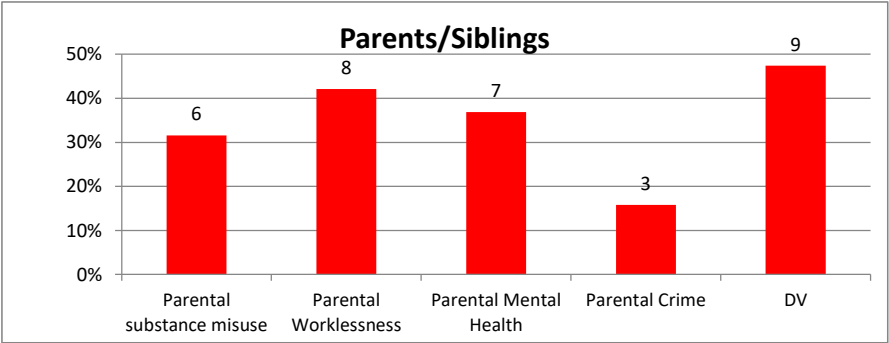
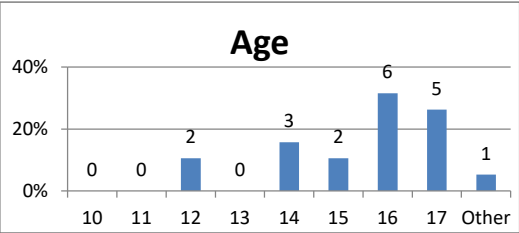
Reoffending

The rate of youth reoffending within Hartlepool has reduced significantly over the last year, it is currently below the national and regional average, however, it will continue to be a key priority in the coming year. Numbers can and will no doubt fluctuate in the future, we need to continue to work together as a service and partnership to aim to drive these figures down.

Each of the cohorts are tracked for a period of 12 months, plus a further waiting period of 6 months to allow for any offences which may not have yet been dealt with by the Criminal Justice System – therefore the most recent reoffending data always has an 18 month time lag.



The service is dealing with smaller caseloads consisting of complex individuals with multiple risks and vulnerabilities. Hartlepool YJS carry out a quarterly Needs Analysis of all YP open to the service and place a big onus on this. The Needs Analysis enables the service and partnership via Management Board meetings to have a good snap shot of the current cohort's complexities and potential gaps within delivery, services and areas of concern. Recent analysis reveals a cohort which display broader lifestyle choices relating to substance misuse and the need to generate income to maintain this. This also reflects the national and regional picture in terms of caseload composition.



**These graphs highlight a small snap shot of the Needs Analysis
**There are numerous graphs created depicting a multitude of up to date data

Furthermore, this cohort of young people who continue to offend are predominantly young males aged between 15 and 17, many of whom reside within Hartlepool's most deprived neighbourhoods. Although not mutually exclusive, the common criminogenic need and welfare issues prevalent amongst this cohort as identified within quarterly Needs Analysis as:

- higher than average mental health/emotional wellbeing needs
- higher levels of drug and alcohol use than for the general population and in particular 'heavy cannabis use'
- low educational attachment, attendance and attainment
- having family members or friends who offend
- higher than average levels of loss, bereavement, abuse and violence experienced within the family
- a history of family disruption
- chaotic and unstructured lifestyles

Alongside this cohort of young males, there is another cohort of young females aged 14 -17 whom, although perhaps not as prolific in terms of reoffending, are of significant concern due to multiple complex issues which are predominately welfare-orientated. These include:

- Substance misuse
- Chaotic lifestyles
- Sexual exploitation
- Missing from home
- Family breakdown

Again, as with the male cohort, young females who are offending are noted to have a higher prevalence of poor emotional well-being. Analysis shows that this arises from loss, bereavement and domestic or sexual abuse.

Working in partnership is key to supporting a greater understanding of these underlying issues, alongside addressing them in a holistic and co-ordinated way to provide "pathways out of offending", with the intention of trying to reduce crime and break the cycle of offending behaviour across generations. This collaborative work is achieved through the following partnerships:



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It is also important to adopt an 'intelligence-led' targeted approach, particularly in relation to prevention, and build on service-wide staff training to respond to Speech, Language, & Communication, alongside the emotional health and wellbeing needs of the young people. An important element to the reduction of reoffending and the number of those entering the youth justice system is the development of the YJS interventions. Interventions are bespoke, based on high quality, integrated assessments and plans, delivered by YJS staff and partner agencies. Progress has been made in this area, however further work is needed in the forthcoming year. Innovative interventions have been developed and a more evident 'Whole Family' approach is being further developed with the recent inclusion of Psychological Therapists and the re commission of the Speech and Language Therapist alongside the Trauma Informed Care Pathway within the service. This will continue to be monitored through established quality assurance and performance measures, such as the monthly YJS performance clinics and the Hartlepool Community Safety Partnership meetings between Police, Social Care, ASBU, YJS, Fire and Rescue Services and Adult Services.

Hartlepool YJS Health Offer is attached at Appendix 3

Victims of Youth Crime

Whilst crime rates in Hartlepool have fallen, the likelihood of being a victim of crime still remains a reality, especially in our most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. The YJS and broader Youth Justice Partnership are working hard to reduce the numbers of victims of crime, by incorporating the use of restorative justice practices. Restorative Justice (RJ) provides opportunities for those directly affected by an offence (victim, offender and members of the community) to communicate and ensure victims of youth crime have a voice.

In addition victims of youth crime are helped to access appropriate support pathways that enable them to move on from the impact of crime. A personalised approach is taken to ensure that victims of crime in Hartlepool are placed at the centre. This includes ensuring that individual needs and wishes are fully taken into account. As a result we aim to visit all victims of crime so they are able to access pathways to support, including the option to participate in restorative justice. Across 2019/20 and 2020/21 there were **79** contacts with direct victims of crime and where consented a Victim Impact Statement carried out.

RJ is an important underlying principle of all disposals for young people on YJS caseload, from Triage to Detention & Training Orders. Whilst restorative processes typically result in practical reparation, for example participating in a task that benefits the community, the communication between victim and offender, as part of this process, can also produce powerful emotional responses leading to mutual satisfaction and socially inclusive outcomes.

The decision was made to in-source the RJ and Victim provision as of 1/4/17. These statutory duties have been re-aligned within the existing staffing of Hartlepool YJS – all of whom have undertaken service-wide RJ training, many to level 3.

This decision has enabled Hartlepool YJS to have direct control and influence in shaping the direction and quality of RJ work, including the establishment of updated working policies, practices and procedures. In turn, this has already begun to result in better outcomes for both victims and young people and is much more responsive to local need.

There is considerable evidence that RJ practice is much more integrated across all areas of the service. In particular, there is a closer link between those workers with additional RJ responsibility and case managers in relation to the needs and wishes of victims.

During the last year direct and indirect reparative projects were difficult to deliver, as part of the ongoing recovery plan we are now introducing suitably risk assessed 1:1 reparation projects, these are individual bespoke projects and are planned to take place involving furniture restoration, bird boxes for distribution to local groups and Christmas hampers for those in need. This will build over the year and hopefully allow us to get back into the position we were in prior to the COVID 19 pandemic.



Quality of Services

Throughout 2019/20 & 2020/21 the YJS continued preparation for the much anticipated HMIP inspection, considerable time was put in by all staff. All Policies & Procedures were re written and regular case audits were carried out to ensure assessment, planning, intervention and delivery were off a good standard.

The service was inspected in Oct 2020 virtually over a 4 day period, and was rated as GOOD, 4 areas were Outstanding, 6 Good and 2 Requiring Improvement. The service, board and wider partnership were very pleased with the outcome and agreed with the findings of the report. Work hasn't stood still and everyone continues to drive forward to ensure the recommendations are addressed and actioned.

Performance management and data analysis has continued to be a priority with significant work undertaken in conjunction with the Local Authority's Data information and IT teams. This has enabled various processes and documents (including the YJS Board Report) to be aligned with cleansed data, which not only makes performance management data more accessible and understandable, but also allows such data to inform service improvement activity, comparative analysis and the directing of resource to areas of organisational need.

Hartlepool YJS continue to commission South Tees YOS, to provide duty cover of Youth Court work in Teesside. Whilst allowing the service to maintain excellent working relationships within the Court arena, this continues to create some necessary and critical capacity within the team to manage the volume of post-court work and utilise staffing time more effectively. Given the success of this arrangement (strategically, operationally and financially) this was re commissioned in March 2021 for a further 12 month period.

A continued key strength of Hartlepool YJS and identified within the HMIP inspection is the ability of all staff to engage complex and challenging young people, through outstanding assessments and response to individual need. This builds positive relationships and leads to better outcomes – both for the young person as an individual and their families and the community as a whole. There continues to be a considerable service-wide training programme (attached at Appendix 2), which complements staff members' professional development on an individual level and alongside the training from the Local Authority and other statutory and voluntary partners. Alongside internal training around Risk of Harm, Safety & Wellbeing, and Asset Plus refreshers. Hartlepool YJS has received Talking Mats training which is a specialist Speech Language and Communication Need (SLCN) intervention and some staff attended Kids for Law training. Our extensive health offer (attached at Appendix 3) is now embedded within the service which has allowed the implementation of an Enhanced Case Management model, The HMIP Lead Inspector did comment "There is excellent health provision that meets the physical, emotional and mental health needs of Hartlepool children".

Staff development continues throughout and remains a key focus in working towards a quality service. This will be supported by regular supervision and appraisal, alongside reflective supervision sessions which encourage staff to analyse their practice within a supportive learning environment.

Service User Feedback

The voice of the young person continues to be a key strategic objective and completion of Asset Plus self-assessments remains critical in capturing the voice and perceived needs of those young people with whom the YJS work. Hartlepool YJS completed some internal work to develop an evaluative Survey Monkey (based on the original Viewpoint questions) to measure Young People's perceptions of: Quality of Service, Likelihood of Offending, and Fairness of treatment by YJS staff and Quality of interventions.

59 surveys were completed by young people across the last 2 years:

- Just under 90% of YP indicated they know what kind of things make them more likely to offend;
- Just under 90% of YP indicated work with the YJS made them realise change is possible;
- 90% of YP indicated they are a lot less likely to offend;
- Over 90% of YP felt they were treated fairly;
- Over 80% of YP felt the service they were given was 'very good';
- 100% of YP felt listened to by the people who worked with them
- Just under 80% of YP indicated the sessions helped change their behaviour

Alongside this Children/YP and Parents/Carers comments are captured within the assessment SAQ, individual personalised plans and reviews as well as Closure Summaries. All of this information is produced in report format for quarterly management board meetings and used to improve service delivery and identify gaps within the service as well as areas of good practice which can be shared and maintained.

8. RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC AND RECOVERY FROM COVID 19

Hartlepool Borough Council responded to the COVID 19 pandemic by ensuring all staff were WFH from 23rd March 2020 – below is a snap shot of the last year and ongoing recovery.

Response and Challenges:

- The first few weeks as with most services were of confusion and frustration, the not knowing. After coming to terms with the situation and starting to receive guidance from the local authority the YJS quickly settled into a process of virtual contact with all YP. All cases were RAG rated in terms of risk levels which identified the volume of calls needed for each YP. This process continued for a considerable period of time, it allowed staff to become creative with methods of virtual contact and delivering interventions.
- It was decided in June 20 after guidance and following the national protocol that the service would start face to face contact again, initially this was via doorstep visits and walks and once again this was prioritised by our RAG rated risk process. The Courts also opened again in June and began to start moving YP through the process. Virtual Court processes were set up and suitable training given, however Cleveland didn't carry out virtual hearings for any YP.
- Prior to any planned face to face visits staff would phone the YP/Parent/Carer to ascertain the situation in the home, i.e. did anyone have the symptoms. This proved problematic at times as we were not in a position initially to confirm responses.
- Following restrictions easing, the service were in a position to quickly implement direct 1:1 interventions from our offices which were suitably cleaned, risk assessed and allowed suitable social distancing. At the same time our Referral Order Panels were reintroduced from a virtual to face to face process and continues as such to date.
- All staff have remained WFH with suitable IT, they were and are in a position to utilise the team offices, off site provision and other suitable local authority buildings for 1:1 face to face interventions. These sessions were centrally booked allowing the monitoring of the footfall into these buildings. PPE was available at all times in all buildings.
- Anxiety has been a challenge throughout the pandemic, the not knowing and at times not understanding, the multitude of differing guidance received from various sources added to the confusion and at times the anxiety.
- Initially there was the considerable challenge of preparing for and delivering the service virtually, positive lines of communication were opened across the local authority and regular updates and discussions via regional YJB HOS meetings eased the pressure and ensured the service and staff had the relevant support and guidance available to move forward. IT was also initially frustrating and a challenge, however with perseverance and regular support the service is now fully functional with all staff having suitable access and support as required.

Recovery:

Recovery was an ongoing process from the outset, below are the salient points and recovery/learning to date.

- In March 2020 the YJB requested Business Continuity Plans from each YJS for analysis and fortnightly YJB virtual meetings were established.
- All open cases were RAG rated in line with order/risk levels and engagement identified.
- Procuring suitable IT to allow staff to WFH
- Ensuring all YJS meetings and business could be delivered virtually and face to face where feasible
- Courts opening in June 2020
- Face to face interventions starting in June 2020
- Local Authority organises lap tops for all vulnerable pupils without one, including YJS cohort.
- Organisation of Referral Order panels and Risk Management Meetings into a hybrid model with face to face and a virtual option
- In July 2020 the YJB published the guidance for COVID recovery plans for all YJSs
- YP back in the majority of schools in Sept 2020
- YJS cohort identified as Vulnerable Pupils and encouraged to attend their education provision
- YP access to suitable IT now implemented within assessment process (Identified in the HMIP COVID 19 Thematic Inspection)

Learning Points:

- The YJS is flexible and dynamic in its response and able to react quickly to situations
- A lot of virtual meetings do work better, attendance has improved at these meetings and they need to continue (Identified in the HMIP COVID 19 Thematic Inspection)
- The service can be delivered virtually as and when required
- Walk and talk interventions have been positive and will remain
- Ensuring all YP have access to suitable IT to ensure engagement is positive with the YJS and Schools, this is now captured and identified as part of the initial AssetPlus assessment (Identified in the HMIP COVID 19 Thematic Inspection)
- The constant discussions locally, regionally and nationally ref the YJS cohort being classed as a “vulnerable pupil” took too long before the right decisions were made (Identified in the HMIP COVID 19 Thematic Inspection)
- Staff, children, young people and families emotional wellbeing needs to be monitored very closely and taken into account with all engagement at all times.

Hartlepool Borough Council will be implementing a Hybrid Model of working, this is due to be revisited and potentially implemented from 19th July 2021 and following Government guidance. Staff will split their working week WFH and being office based. This has been tested over the last 15 months and the YJS are in a strong position to implement and maintain this model without any impact on service delivery.

9. RISKS TO FUTURE DELIVERY

The key risks that have the capacity to have an adverse impact on the Youth Justice Service in the coming twelve months and potentially beyond are detailed below:

Risks	Potential Impact	Control Measures
Secure Remand Costs	The continued unpredictability associated with remand episodes and remand length has the potential to place significant financial pressure on the YJS and broader Local Authority.	It remains essential that the service can demonstrate to magistrates that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands and custody. Coordinated multi-agency responses to young people at risk of remand where safe and secure accommodation is the precipitating factor to be further developed. Remand budget is incorporated within Wider Children's Services placement costs.
Managing the potential for reduction in YJB grant and partnership financial and 'in-kind' contributions post-2021/22	Consequential negative impact on performance. Reduced capacity to meet strategic and operational obligations and statutory requirements. Reduced capacity to continue to focus on early intervention and identification	Targeted resources to address need. Continue to administer and embed the current structure and practice. Regional collaboration with neighbouring YOS' such as coverage of Teesside Youth Court. Robust financial management and oversight from strategic board.
Continued concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines	The rise in FTE, reoffending rates and exploitation of vulnerable children. Ultimately leading to criminalisation and wider service	Continued regular communication, intelligence and information sharing across all services. Ensuring a multi-agency approach is adopted with senior strategic oversight.

	involvement having an adverse impact on Looked After Children (LAC) figures	Ongoing joint training and regular updates on the national and local picture enabling timely and relevant interventions. Ensure clear processes and pathways (known to all staff) are implemented to work with identified children.
COVID Risk The risk of further waves and further national/local lockdown imposed	Negative impact on staff/YP/families leading to a rise in anxieties/EWB, adding to engagement/contact difficulties. Disengagement from education and the added problems of reintroduction	Carefully monitoring of the local, regional and national picture regarding further waves and risks of national and local lockdowns. The YJS is in a position to revert to initial "lockdown" delivery of the service as required.
COVID Risk Staff emotional wellbeing/Safety	Negative impact on staff anxieties/EWB Risk of increased staff sickness levels Negative impact on workload and output	The YJS Leadership team continue to carry out face to face and virtual supervisions, Skype/TEAMS team meetings are in place and continued communication across all staff is very good. PPE is readily available to all staff and regular updated LA guidance is shared with everyone regarding HV, Transportation etc etc. **All staff have received 2 Vaccinations**

10. SERVICE BUSINESS & IMPROVEMENT PLAN

As a result of the recent HMIP inspection findings, five recommendations were made that HMIP believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in Hartlepool and will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service has identified actions already taken and planned to ensure these recommendations are implemented and remain key priorities in the future. This Improvement Plan is added to future quarterly Management Board reports produced by the YJS Manager and discussed/monitored to ensure the relevant senior strategic oversight is in place and direction of travel remains positive.

Added to the Improvement Plan below is the YJS internal training programme (attached at Appendix 2) which targets operational improvements and refreshers throughout the year.

No	Recommendation	Action taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date
1	Ensure that the identified priorities for the service correspond to the needs of the children supervised by the Hartlepool YJS to ensure these needs are met.	Strategic Priorities have been amended following the findings of the inspection. These will continue to be amended and discussed at all future Management Board meetings to correspond with the needs of children supervised by the YJS and in line with the up to date Needs Analysis/Data presented at all board meetings. Individual meetings have also been undertaken with the Virtual School, OSS and Substance Misuse Services to strengthen this process – all are members of the YJS Management Board and will submit updates at board meetings.	YJS Management Team Management Board Chair/Members	Completed and monitored at all future Management Board meetings
2	Work with the relevant partner agencies (virtual school and one-stop shop) to maximise the education, training and employment opportunities for children	Work is underway with the Virtual School Headteacher and OSS Manager. Education Reports with relevant data will be produced at all future Management Board meetings allowing for discussion and more strategic oversight/challenge as required. The YJS Management team are in the process of identifying and forming closer links with the relevant staff at all Academies/Schools to build better communication on a direct level. YJS attendance at Vulnerable Pupils group and Team around the secondary school meetings to build positive links with schools across Hartlepool	YJS Management Team Virtual School Headteacher OSS Manager Management Board Chair/Members	Initial Reports presented at May Management Board meeting and then subsequent board meetings

3	Develop an effective escalation and challenge process with children's social care	Discussions are ongoing between the YJS Manager and the Safeguarding and Assessment/Through Care Teams to ensure any issues/requests are addressed ASAP and recorded appropriately on all systems. All challenges/differences of opinion will be discussed between the YJS Manager and relevant Social Care Head of Service/AD and will be recorded appropriately and discussed at future Management Board meetings. The YJS will follow the "Professional Challenge and Resolution of Professional Disagreement" process which can be found in the Tees Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Procedures at https://www.teescpp.org.uk/	YJS Management Team Management Board Chair/Members	Process in place and any unresolved issues/challenges to be shared and discussed at future Management Board meetings
4	Confirm a start date for the new Chair of the Board	A start date was confirmed and the Chair of the Board took over at the Board meeting 25 Nov 2020 and also chaired the meeting on the 16 Feb 2021. The Chair also signed up and attended the YJB "Bite Size" session for YOS Board Chairs on 23 Feb 2021.	Management Board Chair	Completed and to be continually monitored
5	Use the existing process to get feedback from children and their families to develop services.	The YJS Leadership team have slightly re worded the current Survey Monkey questions which will be implemented and used for YP, Parents/Carers and Victims. Data will be produced at all future board meetings where discussions will be held regarding the development of services. As an addition ongoing quarterly feedback will also be gathered direct from the Children/YP and families by the	YJS Management Team YJS Management Board Chair/Members	Process in place and all feedback/evaluation to be presented at Management Board meetings for discussion

		YJS Management Team and fed back into the system above.		
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11. STRATEGIC SUMMARY

In spite of the ongoing adversities that families and communities contend with in Hartlepool and the added difficulties everyone continues to face with the COVID 19 pandemic the local Youth Justice Partnership has had significant success in recent years in preventing and reducing youth offending behaviour.

A continued emphasis on a creative prevention, early intervention and diversion model needs to be maintained, however this presents significant challenge in light of the continued economic climate and potential impact on staffing and resources. In spite of the continued reductions in offences, FTE and the recent reductions in reoffending, these will all remain areas of priority, the Youth Justice Service will continue to work with partners to identify and support children and young people at risk of offending and ensure all children and families in Hartlepool have opportunities to make the most of their life chances and be supported to be safe in their homes and communities.

Evidence highlights that it is often the complex interplay of multiple deprivation factors and difficulties that makes problems in some households insurmountable and places these vulnerable children at significant risk of criminal exploitation, involvement in anti-social and offending behaviour and in some instances links to County Lines. As a result there is now a greater emphasis on “Contextualised Safeguarding” and the soon to be creation of a Contextualised Safeguarding Hub with all partners should help identify “pathways out of offending” and ultimately help reduce crime and break the cycle of offending behaviour across generations.

Whilst youth crime rates in Hartlepool have fallen, the likelihood of being a victim of crime still remains a reality, especially in our most disadvantaged communities and there remains a need to continue to invest in the delivery of restorative approaches to give victims of crime a voice, choice, control and satisfaction in the criminal justice system.

As identified in the recent HMIP inspection Hartlepool Youth Justice Service is a good service, staff are motivated and engaged, and there is an excellent health provision to meet the requirements of children. Assessments for all cases were outstanding. Staff analysed information well and were skilled at engaging with children and their families. Staff make good use of the outstanding health offer to ensure that the delivery of interventions meets the needs of all children and all staff worked well in sequencing and coordinating these interventions. There are areas to improve and the YJS are fully aware of these with a current improvement plan in place.

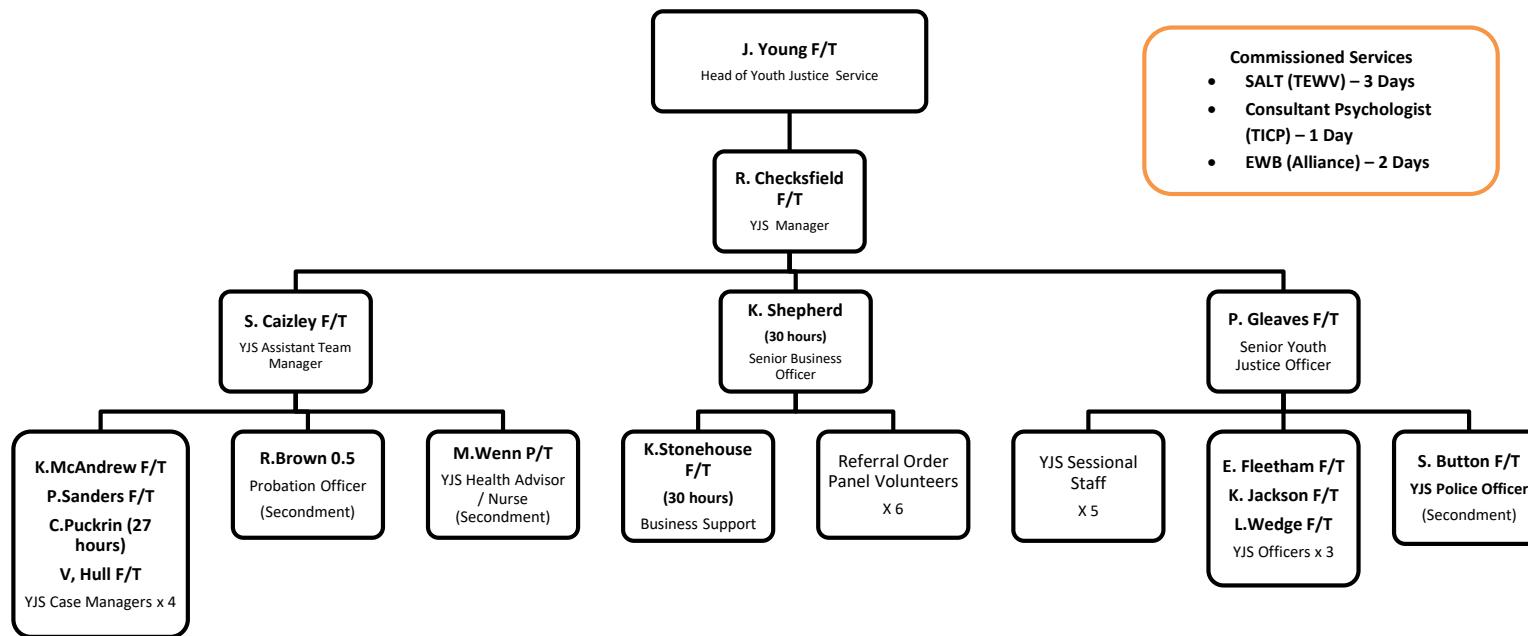
All of the above has the child and the child's voice prioritised and running throughout, as identified in the YJB Business Plan 2021-2022 we will continue to help, support and create a "Child First Youth Justice System" across Hartlepool.

Hartlepool Youth Justice Partnership



Appendix 1

Youth Justice Service Structure



Appendix 2

Youth Justice Service Internal Training Programme

Month	Date	Briefing/Training	Delivery	Comments
	16th & 22nd April 1000-1130 TEAMS dial in	Health Offer Briefings –	Health Team Update on respective areas of the Health Offer	All available staff to dial in to at least one of the sessions
	21st April 1100-1200 TEAMS dial in	Distinction between Mental wellbeing & Mental illness (Screening and Signposting)	Clinical Psychologist	All available staff to dial in
May				
	12th May 1000-1130 TEAMS dial in	Start of an Order – The front end process – getting it right	Leadership Team	All available staff to dial in
	19th May 1100 – 1200 TEAMS dial in	Neurodevelopmental Presentation (ASD & ADHD)	Clinical Psychologist	All available staff to dial in
June				
	9th June 1000-1130 TEAMS dial in	ROSH/Safety & Wellbeing	Leadership Team	All available staff to dial in
	16th June 1000 – 1100 TEAMS dial in	Suicide & Self Harm	Clinical Physiologist	All available staff to dial in
	23rd June 1000 – 1130 TEAMS dial in	SLT and communication needs awareness training (refresher)	SALT	All available staff to dial in
July				
	Date & Time TBC	Education – Role of the YJS and Case Manager/Officer	Virtual School Headteacher	All available staff to dial in
	21st July 1000 – 1130	Accessible Information training	SALT	All available staff to dial in
August				
	4th August 1400 – 1530	Team Choice Topic	Clinical Psychologist	All available staff to dial in

September				
	23rd September 1000-1130	Desistence Refresher	Leadership Team	All available staff to dial in
	15th September 1400-1530	Team Choice Topic	Clinical Psychologist	All available staff to dial in

Appendix 2 Youth Justice Service Health Offer

Alliance Psychological Services

Jemma Westwood-Horner

Jemma can help with **mental health difficulties** such as anxiety, low mood and depression.

- Jemma can **work with you** and **your family**
- Jemma can help you with issues such as bereavement (coping after the death of a loved one), relationship difficulties and behaviour. You can find out more on this website: <https://www.alliancepsychology.com/young-people/>
- You can be seen face to face, at home, at school or online (Skype and Zoom). Whatever works for you!

Speech and Language Therapy

Katie Hughes



Speech and Language Therapy can **look at** and **help** with your **communication skills**.

- Katie's job is to work with you to find out what you are **good at** and what can be **difficult for you**.
- Katie will look at what your **talking** and **understanding** are like in everyday situations, like school or college.
- Katie can help other people to understand your communication and tell them how they can help.



Youth Justice Nurse Specialist

Melanie Wenn

The Nurse can help with your **health needs**. Mel sees every young person who comes into the Youth Justice Service.

- Mel can do a **full health assessment** – this looks at any medical problems, your behaviour, your sexual health, skin problems, issues with your eyes or hearing, dental health, relationships and anything else that might affect your health and wellbeing.
- Mel can do some **work with you** around your health and wellbeing. She can make sure you are working with the right people to meet any health or learning needs you might have
- Mel offers **one to one appointments**, usually face to face.



Trauma Informed Care Pathway / Adolescent Forensic Outpatients Service

Dr Kay Anne Rooney

- **Trauma informed care pathway**→ aims to better understand your needs and behaviours. Kay does this by getting to know you and looking at your life and your experiences as a whole. You can be offered *Direct Work* (where you work with Dr Kay) or *Indirect Work* (where Dr Kay works with the professionals involved in your care).
- **Outpatients Service**→ Dr Kay or someone she works with from the Adolescent Forensic Outpatients Service can help and support you with any mental health difficulties.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

19th October 2021



Report of: Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2022/23 TO 2024/25 – ISSUES REFERRED FROM FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 Budget and Policy Framework.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purposes of this report are to enable Members to consider the savings proposals referred from Finance and Policy Committee and to determine the feedback they wish to refer back to Finance and Policy Committee.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 MTFS reports to Finance and Policy Committee (13.09.21 and 11.10.21) and Council (30.09.21) highlighted the scale of previous reductions in Government funding and the resulting cuts in services, including a reduction in the workforce of 20%. These measures cannot be repeated and the financial deficit now facing the Council means further service cuts will have to be made.

3.2 This is increasingly difficult to explain to the public, particularly as cuts will continue at the same time as reliance on Council Tax and the Adult Social Care precept continues to increase. This is not unique to Hartlepool – most councils face this challenge. Council Tax funds 53% (£42.7m) of the budget in 2021/22 - compared to 32% (£30.8m) in 2013/14. It is increasingly challenging to explain to the public how their Council tax is used – particularly when this funds Social Care Services for adults and children, which not all residents use or appreciate councils provide.

3.3 The recent national debate may have helped people understand the challenges facing Adult Social Care. There has not been a similar national

debate regarding the challenges facing Children's Social Care and the financial impact.

- 3.4 The MTFs report detailed the forecast budget deficits for the next three years, including the impact of reducing the total deficit from **£11.435m** to **£7.523m** by increasing Council Tax up to the level of the forecast national Referendum Limit, including the 3% deferred Adult Social Care precept. The precept could either have been implemented in 2021/22 or deferred to 2022/23.
- 3.5 The report advised Members that increasing Council Tax reflects national policy for funding local services. Therefore, against this national policy these increases provide the most robust basis for the budget and protecting services. The report also provided details of the Budget Support Fund which can be used to phase the deficit over three years and to support implementation of a Transformation Plan.
- 3.6 Finance and Policy Committee considered the issues detailed in the MTFs report and made detailed recommendation to Council, which will be considered on 30th September 2021. On the basis these recommendations are approved a savings plan now needs to be developed to deliver total savings of **£7.523m**. The majority of this deficit is front loaded in 2022/23. To support the plan it was recommended that reserves are used to phase the deficit over the next three years, as follows:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total 22/23 to 24/25 £'m
	£'m	£'m	£'m	£'m
Deficit <u>AFTER</u> Council Tax increase and forecast Tax Base Growth	5.154	1.212	1.157	7.523
Deficit deferred from 22/23 to 23/24 by using Reserves	(2.500)	2.500	0.000	0.000
Deficit deferred from 23/24 to 24/25 by using Reserves	0.000	(1.300)	1.300	0.000
Revised Deficit <u>AFTER</u> Council Tax increase and forecast Tax Base Growth and use of reserves	2.654	2.412	2.457	7.523

- 3.7 Achieving the savings plan will be challenging and will need to be managed carefully to ensure planned savings are delivered and reliance on reserves is phased out – as this is not sustainable.

4. TRANSFORMATION AND SAVING PLAN

- 4.1 The MTFs report to Finance and Policy Committee (11.10.21) advised Members that the ideal situation would be to have a three year plan to address the forecast budget deficit and include some additional proposals in the event that identified financial risks materialise over the next three year, for example grants cuts resume, national pay awards/inflation exceed the

modest MTFS forecasts, or additional grant funding is not provided for the 1.25% National Insurance increase in April 2022. A three year plan was recommended by the Local Government Association when they reviewed the Council's financial position and approach to managing the budget deficit.

- 4.2 However, the scale of the budget deficit means this plan needs to be in two phases:

- **Phase 1 - to address the deficit for 2022/23.**

This stage needs to be completed by December 2021 to enable savings to be implemented from 1st April 2022;

In developing the 2022/23 plan it is recommended we aim to exceed the minimum savings required to balance the budget of **£2.654m**. This will provide a more robust basis for future years and reduce reliance on using reserves in 2022/23. Detailed proposals are provided in the next section.

- **Phase 2 – to address the deficits for 2023/24 and 2024/25.**

This stage needs to be completed and approved by September 2022 as it is envisaged many issues will have longer implementation periods.

Once a robust plan has been approved for 2022/23 the Corporate Management Team will work on proposals for 2023/24 and 2024/25. This work will commence in January/February 2022 and provide proposals for Members to consider after the May 2022 elections.

To assist the development of phase 2 savings a number of proposal which require a longer lead time to implement are identified in the next section. .

5. **PROPOSED SAVINGS**

- 5.1 Finance and Policy Committee were advised:

- That the savings proposals have been identified by the Corporate Management Team against the background of the significant savings made in previous years, whilst seeking to minimise the impact on services. However, owing to the scale of the cuts required it is impossible to identify proposals which will not impact on services.
- That if the total proposed savings are all approved this is only **65%** of the total three year deficit of **£7.523m**. If some of these proposals are not approved this percentage will reduce and alternative savings will need to be identified. This will be particularly challenging for 2022/23.

- If all the proposals are approved and implemented this will address the 2022/23 budget deficit, but will require further significant savings to be identified in 2023/24 and 2024/25, as summarised below:

	A	B	C = A less B
	Cumulative deficit £m	Cumulative savings proposal (details Appendix A) £m	Cumulative shortfall still be addressed / (saving achieved in advance – i.e. reduced use of Budget Support Fund) £m
2022/23	2.654	2.824 to 2.999	(0.170 to 0.345)
2023/24	5.066	4.268 to 4.693	0.373 to 0.798
2024/25	7.523	4.503 to 4.883	2.640 to 3.020

- If these proposals are not supported Members will need to propose viable alternative proposals that they are prepared to implement. This strategic direction is needed to enable the Corporate Management Team to develop a detailed implementation plan, which will include all necessary consultation, to ensure savings can be implemented from 1st April 2022 to balance the 2022/23 budget.
- The majority of the savings proposals are self-explanatory and if approved the 2022/23 proposals can be implemented from 1st April 2021. A number of proposals have longer lead times and require Members to provide a strategic direction as part of the 2022/23 budget process to enable savings to be achieved in 2023/24.

5.2 In line with the Council's Constitution Finance and Policy Committee are seeking the views of individual Policy Committees on the savings proposals for their areas. Accordingly details of proposed savings for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 are summarised in **Appendix A. This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order 2006) namely: - Paragraph 1 - Information relating to any individual and Paragraph 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.**

6. OTHER CONSIDERATION

6.1 Equality and Diversity

6.2 The savings proposals put forward will impact on the delivery of frontline services or service users to varying degrees. There are some proposals which simply by the nature of the service area that they cover will impact on those with protected characteristics e.g. adult social care relating to older adults or

those with disabilities. However, due to the financial challenges facing the Council we have no choice but to change, redesign and potentially close services to reduce costs. Where we may need to change, redesign and close services we are working to minimise the impact on those with protected characteristics and will focus on securing services for those who are the most vulnerable within those protected characteristics.

- 6.3 Members are aware from previous MTFS reports that in making financial decisions the Council is required to demonstrate that those decisions are made in a fair, transparent and accountable way, considering the needs and the rights of different members of the community. This is achieved through assessing the impact that changes to policies, procedures and practices could have on different equality groups.
- 6.4 Appendix A – Part 1 Summary of Initial Savings Proposals identifies those who could potentially be affected by each proposal from the 9 protected characteristics. Further analysis will be undertaken to determine who will be directly and indirectly impacted by the proposals and Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) will be undertaken where required. Further information will be provided within the next Finance and Policy Committee report to enable Members to satisfy themselves that they are able to consider fully the potential impact of the proposed changes when making their decisions.
- 6.5 An overall central assessment will be undertaken to determine the cumulative impact of the savings proposals on each individual protected characteristic. This assessment will be included within the December MTFS report.

6.6 Child and Family Poverty

- 6.7 Appendix A – Part 1 Summary of Initial Savings Proposals identifies where proposal could potentially affect child and family poverty. Further analysis will be undertaken to determine who will be directly and indirectly impacted by the proposals and Child and Family Poverty Impact Assessments will be undertaken where required.
- 6.8 An overall central assessment will be undertaken to determine the cumulative impact of the savings proposals on child and family poverty. This assessment will be included within the December MTFS report to enable Members to satisfy themselves that they are able to consider fully the potential impact of the proposed changes when making their decisions.

6.9 Legal Considerations

- 6.10 The following issues are relevant in relation to this report:
- the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires local authorities to set a balanced budget – this report starts the budget process and further reports will enable budget proposals to be approved and then referred to Council to meet this requirement;

- the Local Government Act 2003 requires local authorities to consider the advice of their Section 151 Chief Finance Officer (the Director of Resources and Development) when making budget decisions. This advice must include details of the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. These requirements will be addressed in future reports and initial advice is detailed later in the report.

6.11 Staff and Asset Management Considerations

- 6.12 These are covered in the detailed savings proposals and the cumulative staffing impact will be included within the December MTFS report.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Council faces an extremely challenging financial position and budget deficits will need to be addressed from a combination of increasing Council Tax and the Adult Social Care precept, reflecting nationally set referendum limits, and budget cuts.
- 7.2 The report seeks the Committees views on the proposed budget savings they wish to refer back to Finance and Policy Committee for consider in December, prior to Finance and Policy Committee determining the savings proposals to be referred to Council.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is recommended that Members consider the savings proposals detailed in Appendix A and determine the feedback they wish to refer back to Finance and Policy Committee, including the proposals which require a decision as part of the 2022/23 budget process to achieve a saving in 2023/24 owing to the lead time for implementation.

9. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Constitution requires individual Policy Committees to be consulted on savings proposals.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- Finance and Policy Committee - Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022/23 to 2024/25 – 11th October 2021;
- Finance and Policy Committee - Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022/23 to 2024/25 – 13th September 2021;
- Finance and Policy Committee - Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2021/22 to 2022/23 – 25th January 2021;

- Council - Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2021/22 to 2022/23 – 28th January 2021.

11. CONTACT OFFICER

Sally Robinson
Director of Children & Joint Commission
Email: sally.robinson@hartlepool.gov.uk
Telephone: 01429 523914

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Director of Resources and Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Chief Solicitor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

19th October 2021



Report of: Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: SHORT BREAKS SERVICES STATEMENT

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 Non - key decision

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 For members to approve the Short Break Service Statement.

2.2 To inform members of the short break services that have been delivered over the last year.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide a short break service designed to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children. The duty and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 came into force on 1st April 2011. The regulations require each local authority to produce a short break services statement so that families know what services are available, the eligibility criteria for those services, and how the range of short breaks is designed to meet local needs of families with disabled children. It is a requirement that the Statement be reviewed on an annual basis.

3.2 Short Breaks provide disabled children and young people with the opportunity to spend time away from their parents, relaxing and having fun with their friends. They also provide families with a break from their caring responsibilities.

4. SHORT BREAKS SERVICE STATEMENT

- 4.1 The review of the Statement was undertaken by the Parent Led Forum (1 Hart, 1 Mind 1 Future) and officers within the council. The draft Statement was circulated to members of the Parent Led Forum, specialist providers of services, officers within the local authority, health and voluntary and community sector organisations. All comments received have been incorporated into the final version.
- 4.2 The revised Short Breaks Services Statement is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 4.3 The Statement forms the foundation for the delivery of short break services for disabled children and their families. It will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis ensuring that any provision is reflective of local need. Parents, disabled children and young will continue to be involved in the process and the Parent Led Forum (1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future) will continue to be the driving force behind the shaping of short break services.
- 4.4 The Short Breaks Services Statement needs to be published and made available to the general public. Once approved, the Statement will be published on the local authority's website and the SEND Local Offer of Services website. The Statement will also be made available in paper format upon request.

5. SHORT BREAK PROVISION

- 5.1 COVID 19 has had a significant impact on our most vulnerable children and their families over the last 18 months. The providers have looked for new ways of working and introduced innovative approaches to their delivery. They have continued to support children and their families in challenging circumstances which has allowed children and families to continue to receive support when they most needed it. The majority of children and families have been able to access services, both remotely and face to face when safe to do so. The reports attached provide feedback from children and families which shows how important these services have been for them.
- 5.2 The council provide a number of opportunities for short breaks for children with disabilities and their families. Hartlepool Borough Council's Sport and Physical Activity Team have been working in partnership with the Short Break Intervention Programme to deliver weekly sessions in Hartlepool. These sessions run on a Thursday (Funability) and a Saturday (Multi-sports activities) aiming to break down barriers and engage more people with additional needs to participate in physical activity and sports including: football, basketball, multi-skills and more. The evaluation of the 2020/21 period is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 5.3 Over the past four years, Hartlepool Borough Council has contracted with Families First (North East) to provide Extended Activities, Short Breaks and

Specialist Loan Equipment for those children and families with children with additional needs. Some of the provision has been delivered in partnership with Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group. The evaluation for this contract is attached as **Appendix 3**.

- 5.4 Over the past year the Short Break Lead has been working closely with the Parent Led Forum to support the delivery of a series of activities and peer support to families of disabled children during COVID 19. The Parent Led Forum also teamed up with Hartlepool Borough Council's Sport and Physical Activity Team to deliver some of the virtual sessions to families who were clinically shielding. The evaluation of these activities and support is attached as **Appendix 4**.
- 5.5 Exmoor Grove is a children's home in Hartlepool that offers short break care to children with additional needs and disabilities in the form of day visits, overnight stays and events and activities. Exmoor Grove is regulated by Ofsted and has been judged as an outstanding provision for the past 5 years. Reports in relation to Exmoor Grove are presented to committee regularly.

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial considerations within this report however the Short Breaks Service Statement will be used to inform decision making when reviewing and commissioning services.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no risk implications within this report

8. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Annual review of the Short Break Services Statement ensures Hartlepool Borough Council is compliant with the Children Act 1989 and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011.

9. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The Short Break Service supports children with disabilities.

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 The Short Break Service supports children with disabilities.

11. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 There is no staff considerations.

12. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 12.1 There is no asset management considerations.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 For members to approve the Short Breaks Services Statement (**Appendix1.**)
- 13.2 For members to note the short break services that have been delivered over the last year. (**Appendix 2, 3 and 4.**)

14. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 The annual review and publication of the Short Breaks Services Statement is a requirement of the local authority to produce as part of the duty and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulation 2011.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

16. CONTACT OFFICER

- 16.1 Tracy Liveras
Short Break & Parent Participation Officer
Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
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SHORT BREAK SERVICE STATEMENT



April 2021 – March 2022



Contents

Introduction

What is a short break?

Why do we need a Short Break Service Statement and what is it for?

How has the Statement been prepared and who was involved?

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What have we achieved in the last 12 months?

Short Break Support

How do we know short breaks are meeting needs of children and young people?

How does the council support transition into adult services?

Where can families get more information about short breaks?

What do we want to achieve in the next 12 months?

What do parents/carers do if they want to register a complaint or compliment?

How can people access the statement?

Introduction

Welcome to Hartlepool's Short Breaks Statement. The aim of this statement is to provide parents and carers with information about:

- How we design short break services to meet the needs of disabled children and young people aged 0 – 18 years in Hartlepool and their parents/carers
- Who is eligible to receive short breaks
- The range of short breaks available in Hartlepool and how to access them

Hartlepool's Vision

'Our vision is that we are committed to ensuring that all disabled children and young people and their families in Hartlepool should have equal access to a range of flexible services that support their ambition to live ordinary lives, enjoy a happy and fulfilling childhood and grow up to achieve their full potential.'

Better Outcomes for Families of Disabled Children

The delivery of the short break priorities are designed to improve the outcomes for disabled children and their families. As part of our service delivery the outcomes below are designed to make a difference for families of disabled children.

- Short Breaks aim to support parents and carers in their caring role and reduce levels of stress and anxiety due to the demands of caring
- They will aim to support disabled children and young people to access activities whereby they can make friends, have fun and support the development of their social, communication and independence skills
- When disabled young people are leaving school and making the transition to adulthood that they will be supported and are able to express their wishes and make appropriate choices
- Short Breaks will provide opportunities to enable families to spend time, relax together and for parents and their children to get to know other families and to build up a network of support and develop friendships

What is a Short Break?

A short break is an opportunity for children and young people to spend time away from their parents and carers, to take part in enjoyable activities and meet up with friends while being appropriately supported. It provides a break for parents and carers from their caring responsibilities; giving the parents a chance to relax, recharge their batteries, complete those everyday task and spend time with other family members.

A short break could be a couple of hours each week to an overnight stay in a residential setting or with a carer. The offer currently includes:

- Holiday Play schemes
- Out of School Clubs
- Extended Activities Provision
- Sport & Physical Activities
- Overnight Stays, including local residential or foster care provision
- Social groups
- Parent led Activities
- Specialist Toy Loan Service (including Stay & Play)
- Family based short break activities

Why do we need a Short Breaks Service Statement and what is it for?

The Local Authority is guided by 'The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011' and 'Disabled Children Regulations 2011'. This means that all Local Authorities must:

- Prepare a statement that explains the range of Short Break Services it will provide
- Make information available and accessible
- Have a clear criteria for eligibility for Short Break Services
- Say how the services will meet the needs of families

How has this statement been prepared and who was involved?

Hartlepool Borough Council has worked with Hartlepool's Parent Carer Forum – 1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future to develop this statement.

1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future is the Parent Participation Forum who work closely with the council to represent views and opinions of parents and carers across Hartlepool. They support the ongoing development and reshaping of services to support families.

Who is responsible?

The lead officer with responsibility for ensuring the statement has been prepared is the Short Break and Parent Participation Officer. Overall responsibility for the statement sits with the Director of Children and Joint Commissioning Services.

What have we achieved in the last 12 months?

During the last 12 months Hartlepool Borough Council have continued to commission a series of services that have been identified within feedback received by families as part of the evaluation and feedback requirements of the short break commissioned services and what families have told us via the Parent Carer Forum. The services have reflected on the feedback and adapted where appropriate.

We have continued to deliver short break activities during the COVID 19 lockdowns and groups have delivered innovatively to ensure that families still received the support when needed, albeit not always face to face delivery. A full evaluation report of the extensive activities delivered across the year has been produced to demonstrate the depth of activities delivered and the feedback received from families.

We have reviewed the Children's Disability Register and launched the online registration form to make it easier for families to access. This provides us with data and information to help the Council plan services.

We continue to maintain as a council the specialist changing facilities managed by the local authority which are located across Hartlepool.

We have consulted and worked with the Parent Carer Forum to review and revamp the Local offer of Services website. This site is has now been launched and is located under the banner of Hartlepool Now website.

We have provided free Max Discount Cards and continue to do so for families which provide great discounts to many attractions both locally, across the North East and the rest of the country. Families have benefitted from access to this service and saved money.

Short Breaks Support

Not all children and families will need the same level of support and short breaks. Some will need more than others because of the nature of their child's disability while some families may need more support because of their individual family circumstances. As a local authority we therefore need to assess your child and family to ensure that we provide the right level of support and short breaks at the right time.

Not all services require an assessment to be carried out and can be accessed directly by families. These are called 'Universal Services'.

Universal Services

These short breaks are available to all families where there are **low support needs** and might include youth clubs, holiday play schemes, activity clubs, Children's Centres and the Max Discount Card (which offers a discounted cost to access many attractions across the country.) The local authority also produce a Short Break Activity Programme which does not require an assessment of need, but includes commissioned services that are more targeted to meet the needs of disabled children. To find out more about these universal short break services for disabled children and their families you can contact the Short Break and Parent Participation Officer on: 01429 284876 or go onto the Local Offer of Services website: www.hartlepoolnow.gov.uk

Targeted and Specialist

Targeted

These are services available to children/young people with some support needs but may not meet the threshold for specialist social care support. In this case the family will have an Early Help Assessment which has been completed by any practitioner involved with your child/family such as a teacher, health visitor, parent support advisor or a family support worker within the Early Help teams.

Following assessment, a plan is drawn up outlining the support needed, which may include a short break. Plans are reviewed regularly to check what progress is being made and to decide whether less or more support may be needed.

Although the Short Break Activity Programme does not require an assessment of need to be undertaken these services partially commissioned by the local authority provide more targeted support than those delivered by universal services.

Specialist

These are highly specialist or bespoke services which are available to children and young people with high support need. They can only be assessed as a result as a Child in Need (CIN) assessment which will be carried out by a social worker from the Children's Disability Team.

The Social Worker has 45 days to complete the CIN assessment which looks carefully at the child's development needs, the parents'/carers' specific needs, any parenting issues and the wider family circumstances and environment. They will also gather relevant information from professionals involved with your child.

A support plan is devised following the assessment, which includes the services and short breaks that may be appropriate to be provided and how this will meet the child's/families' needs. The plan needs to be approved a panel before the short break is approved.

All plans are reviewed at least 6 monthly to make sure they respond to the needs of a child and family. Examples of a specialist short breaks package may include: day placements/overnight stays within a residential or foster placement, the provision of a Direct Payment in order to fund specific activities to meet the identified needs of your child such as accessing a specialist group or club or to fund 1:1 support to enable attendance and participation at a specific activity.

How do we know that Short Break services are meeting needs of children and young people?

In Hartlepool we have a very proactive Parent Led Forum that works in partnership with the Local Authority Short Break Lead Officer, other relevant agencies and groups to ensure that service delivery meets the need of families of disabled children.

There is also parent representation on a number of strategic and operational groups, which provides a platform for parents to contribute and influence change. Parents are also actively involved in the commissioning of non-assessed short break provision and continue to play a very active role in the development of the local offer of services.

Children and young people are actively engaged in having their say about things they like to do. This is carried out in a number of ways, including: questionnaires, face to face discussion and group work within the short break sessions. This information is also gathered to plan for future delivery.

All of our commissioned services are required as part of their terms and conditions of funding to engage service users in evaluating services on a quarterly basis. It is expected that this helps providers to adapt their services as required.

Examples of feedback are set out below:

Sport and Physical Activity Team

The team on behalf of the Short Break Services Programme deliver 2 sessions a week across 50 weeks of the year. These sessions consist of Fun-ability session every Thursday and a Multi Sports Session every Saturday morning for children and young people aged 6 – 16 years to support them in participating in a wide variety of physical activities.

This last year has not been without its challenges, the team have continued to work in partnership to deliver the weekly sessions. However, a variety of innovative online provision was scheduled through pre-recorded and live virtual delivery aiming to break the barriers and engage more people with additional needs to participate in sport and physical activity.

During this reporting period the team when allowed to provide face to face delivery COVID restrictions permitting, in addition to identifying supplementary engagement through activity packs, online delivery and the use of wider resources.

Throughout the year staff carry out participation feedback sessions to assist the delivery of future sessions to meet the needs of individuals accessing the session.

This is a snap shot of what parents, children and young people told us they enjoyed:

“As members of staff from Hartlepool Young Carers it was great to have the children involved in the sessions. Everyone had so much fun and we have lots of ideas as to how we can use the activity packs”

“I just wanted to leave my feedback for the Saturday Sports & Football sessions. How much an invaluable service they are to my child. He first joined the sessions when he was 5 and he is now 8”

“The Saturday sessions are amazing for my 6 year old child who suffers from poor core muscle strength, poor spatial awareness and epilepsy amongst other conditions. I was reluctant to send him at first, as I was anxious he would fall over and hurt himself or be pushed around by older children. The staff are amazing

Supporting him during the sessions. He returns home a happy boy and I have seen him join in and the older children are great with him and so patient”

“The kids have loved being back. They have so much fun here. This has been one of the only breaks we have had through lockdown.”

“Thanks for keeping in touch. Our child won’t join in the online sessions, he just wants to do it when it is ‘normal’ again. We’ll be back though.”



Families First North East & Hartlepool, including Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group

Provide the commissioned short break service on behalf of the local authority.

These services are offered over 50 weeks of the year and include: extended afterschool activities, holiday play schemes, and weekend activities, toy loan service and stay & play sessions.

In March 2020, COVID 19 pandemic saw the world of delivering services to children take a dramatic change. The doors to delivering face to face services closed until further notice.

So what did FFNE do to respond to family’s needs?

- Provided weekly telephone calls to all parents, children and young people, including the offer of practical support
- Delivered hundreds of regular activity packs, equipment from the toy loan service, including lap top and iPad distribution from normally utilised in the centre

- Youth group activities established themselves in the on line world and staff ensured that social gatherings continued, and friendships blossomed in a safe and supportive environment

As soon as government guidance started to feed through, the service quickly adapted to make plans to restart face to face services where it was permitted within the guidance.

The delivery of the service even as some restrictions lifted was not straight forward and it had to be mindful of the most vulnerable families who were still shielding, their worries of this virus and the potential impact on their children.

This however did not deter the passion of the staff to ensure children and young people had access to activities. A combination of bubbles, additional sanitisation, open spaces, improved hand hygiene, less travelling and social distancing allowed the service to achieve what initially appeared to be the unbelievable.

Here are quotes from families that use these services:

Families First NE

"It's the difference between us coping and not. Absolutely recommend".

"It's hard to find places you feel comfortable leaving your child. I am extremely comfortable leaving my child in their care. The staff are truly caring and my son has great fun there. I would definitely recommend to a friend".

"Fantastic, friendly, professional and they care about my son".

"It's his safe space".

"They are absolutely amazing. Without their continued support my child and family would still be very isolated. My child has had the opportunity to experience life in a way that he would never get to. To hear him come home at night telling me how many goals he has scored at football when all standard football teams couldn't cater for his needs is amazing".

During the COVID 19 pandemic, this is what families said about the service:

"Reduced isolation".

"Just knowing there was someone was there at the end of a phone was a great support".

"Fantastic to know we had a support network".

What did some of our young people tell us?

"I enjoyed the movie. I liked it when Simba went home to be king, it was awesome".

"I went outside to plant some seeds so we can grow some peas and cauliflowers and the children were saying that they want to socially distance the potatoes".

"I played in the playroom and in the arts and crafts. When I feel myself getting angry, I asked to go to the sensory room".



Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group

“Alfie joined Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group 11 years ago when he came to live with us, although it was very difficult at the time for him as it was a new adventure he soon settled in and to this day loves the group. He has become very confident and sociable and made many friends. Alfie has cerebral palsy and is non-verbal and the staff all communicate with him using signs and gestures as well as speech, he has become very independent and has been able to access specialised equipment i.e. go-karts, specialised bikes etc. Alfie particularly loves the Summer Scheme as he has jobs that he has to do including washing up, emptying bins and going on the bus he starts looking forward to the next one before the first one is over. This amazing group helped members access activities during lockdown through zoom and Pat rang regularly to see how we were all doing and if there was anything she could help with. It was a very hard time for everyone.”

“I cannot speak highly enough of the care and professionalism of the group. The group are the ‘best’ part of Shelby’s life outside of home. They have cared for her despite her constant epileptic fits which excludes her from every other form of group activity. With the group Shelby gets to be herself and her disabilities become no longer the major part of her life. She feels very much part of the group and it is the only place that I can have without doubt full confidence that all of Shelby’s needs are fully met with care and compassion.”

“Connor always looks forward to attending Children’s Fun Club, he really missed not seeing his friends during the lockdown. When the club started up again he was really happy and this gave as a break. He liked receiving his Christmas packs as well as his sister and brother.”

Parent Carer Forum - 1 Hart 1Mind 1 Future

1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future has continued to work with families in Hartlepool to develop family led activities. Through consultation with families the Forum has delivered many parent led activities for families to enjoy together. The activities delivered have brought the whole family together and the impact on families has been extremely positive. The Forum has increased families’ resilience, reduced isolation and increased social opportunities for the whole family.

During lockdown the Parent Carer Forum in conjunction with Hartlepool Carers and other organisations provided a wide range of activities and support and a more detailed evaluation of this can be found in the Short Break Provision Evaluation Report.

This is what families have told us:

“Thank you so much, you all have your children with needs, but you still manage to help others, this is so kind of you”

“This is the most amazing day, we have been locked up in shielding for months and to get out of the house and come somewhere different and take part in things we have never tried has been brilliant. The kids have had a ball”

“Absolutely brilliant, we had the rip, the staff were so friendly and accommodating”

“These packs are amazing, I managed to get 30 minutes in the bath by myself and can’t tell you how good that felt”

How does the council support transition to adult services?

The 0-18 Children’s Disability Team and the Adults 18 – 25 Disability Team will work together in partnership with a young person and the people that are important to them to explore if support needs to continue or be in place in preparation for the young person turning 18 years old. Children’s and Adult Social Care work together in carrying out assessments of need under the Care Act 2014 to ensure that effective arrangements are in place which enhances the quality of life for all young people with a disability and their family as they move forward into adulthood.

The children and adult disabilities teams also work closely with the SEND education team to ensure that young people can access education and training.

Where can families get more information about Short Breaks?

There are a number of places where you can find Information regarding Short Breaks in Hartlepool:

- Contacting the Short Break & Parent Participation Officer. Tel No: 01429 284876.
- Hartlepool’s Local Offer of services for families of disabled children website: www.hartlepoolnow.co.uk
- Sign up to the Children’s Disability Register either by emailing to: ChildrensDisabilityRegister@hartlepool.gov.uk or request on line via the Local Offer of Services: www.hartlepoolnow.co.uk

- Hartlepool's Parent Carer Forum - 1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future Contact: 07896 054361 or via their email address: HartMindFuture@yahoo.co.uk or join their face book page: 1Hart, 1Mind, 1Future Group Forum

If you are looking for more targeted or specialist service which may involve an assessment of need contact the Childrens Hub on: 01429 284284

What do we want to achieve in the next 12 months?

Priority	Action
Holiday Play schemes	Maintain and wherever possible to increase the numbers of places to accommodate children and young people to include 11 weeks of holiday play scheme provision
Extended Activities - out of school hours	Continue to maintain delivery of extended activity provision across 50 weeks of the year
Family Based and parent led activities	Continue to support the work of the Parent Carer Forum to increase awareness and engage with new families accessing short break services.
Specialist Toy Loan service, including Stay & Play	Maintain the service to include access to specialist toy provision for families and settings and to support families of children under the age of 5 to access play and stay services
Sport/Physical Activities	To maintain the delivery of the current number of sessions across the year (100) in total, to increase the participation and encourage access to club based sporting activity.
Increase access to information	Review and deliver briefing sessions of the new local offer of services website to increase better access to information.

	<p>The Parent Carer Forum to continue to use and promote their own face book page to reach wider audiences to disseminate information.</p> <p>Attend information day events to widen the reach of families accessing service.</p> <p>Produce easy read literature on services and products available.</p>
Max Discount Card Membership	Maintain access to free discount cards for families of children with additional needs and disability to enable them to access many attractions across the country at discounted prices.
Continue to support Parent Participation to influence the development of services	<p>Continue to support the parent led forum in the delivery of their work.</p> <p>Continue to raise awareness and increase the membership base of the group to ensure a broader range of parents are involved in the development of services.</p>

What do parents/carers do if they want to register a complaint or compliment?

If the Short Break is either delivered or commissioned by Hartlepool Borough Council, then the Comments, Complaints and Compliments Procedure should be followed. For further information you can complete an online form by going to: www.hartlepool.gov.uk or via email to cascomplaints@hartlepool.gov.uk or by calling: 01429 284020.

How can people access the statement?

Hartlepool's Short Break Service statement will be available in the following places:

- Hartlepool's SEND Local Offer of Services published on: www.hartlepoolnow.co.uk
- Hartlepool's Parent Carer Forum: 1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future: www.1hart1mind1future.co.uk
- The Short Break & Parent Participation Officer. Tel No: 01429 284876



Evaluation Report

Junior Funability & Saturday Short Breaks

2020/21

Delivered by Hartlepool Borough Council, Participation Team. Supported by Short Break Intervention Funding

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Introduction

2020 – 21 has not been without its challenges. However Hartlepool Borough Council's Participation Team have continued working in partnership with the Short Breaks Intervention Programme to deliver weekly engaging sessions. These sessions have taken place predominantly on a Thursday (Funability) and a Saturday (Short breaks); however, a variety of innovative online provision was scheduled through pre-recorded and live virtual delivery. The aim of these were to break down barriers and engage more people with additional needs to participate in sport and physical activity.

The reporting period covers when the team were allowed to provide face to face delivery around COVID restrictions in addition to identifying supplementary engagement through activity packs, online delivery, challenges and wider resources. The purpose of this report is to highlight the programmes statistics from the year, provide evidence of impact and collate feedback from both parents/guardians and participants. This will help to further develop these activities in the forthcoming years.

Junior Funability

The Junior Funability session has taken place weekly on a Thursday 4:30pm-6pm at Brierton Sports Centre, although due to Covid-19 restrictions this has reduced physical face to face delivery. This session has been aimed towards children and young people living in Hartlepool aged between 6-16, with additional educational needs or disabilities. It is a multi-sports session, which sees the children participate in a wide variety of activities including tennis, cricket, and target games.

After consultation with coaches, parents/guardians, participants and the Parent Participation Officer alterations were made to ensure the session was more accommodating for participants. The coaches also felt the large difference in age range made tailoring the session to ability quite difficult. The difference in age range led to a big difference in physicality's of the children too, which can lead to an unfair advantage in game play for the older ones. By amending the ages we have had the opportunity to focus on developing the fundamentals of sport with the KS1/2 and then look to develop skills further and separately with the KS3+ bracket. Speaking with parents/guardians it was noted that the session was too long. Many felt that the children were too tired for a session of that length after a full day at school. They noticed the children's concentration dipping. With this in mind we amended the session time based on getting a good quality session, rather than just a long session.

Post COVID the return times will be 4.30 – 5.15pm for primary school ages, and 5.00 – 6.00pm for secondary school ages. These times fit in around the previous session delivery in order to maintain the consistency for the families, whilst adapting them slightly in order to hopefully make the session even more beneficial. The lead coach is well experienced in sports delivery for primary school age, delivering to hundreds of children each week, and has noticed a huge improvement in attentiveness and absorption of the information with the reduced time slots.

Due to COVID, clean down implementation meant that sessions became shorter, which highlighted the positive outcome. The changes will help make the session more suitable for the participant's age, physical and emotional demands. This was also a great opportunity to revamp the promotional material for the session too. There were opportunities to provide the session within the current climate.

Due to restrictions on sporting events we also held a Family Funability Day for the first time which received a lot of positive feedback. This was complimented by a comprehensive virtual offer.



Short Breaks Session

The short breaks session has taken place weekly on a Saturday 11am-1pm at both Brierton Sports Centre and Mill House Leisure Centre, although due to COVID-19 restrictions this impacted slightly upon physical face to face delivery within the spring and early summer.

The session is a partnership between, the Participation Team and Hartlepool's Families First North East. The target audience is young people aged 8 – 16, with additional educational needs or disabilities who live in Hartlepool.

They participate in a wide range of different sports and physical activities, including football, basketball and badminton. Due to restrictions the sessions were offered digitally as well as returning to outdoor play, for a shorter time period, as soon as possible forming part of a blended approach. However, based on guidance and participants willingness to partake in activity outdoors on the AGP at Brierton Sports Centre delivery has continued throughout lockdown 2 and 3. Also, when restrictions permitted for indoor provision the sports hall at Mill House Leisure Centre was utilised.

Carlton Adventure Family Visits

Six families visited Carlton Adventure to partake in a day of outdoor activities during the summer break. Activities including Archery, Forest Adventure, Gully Walks, High Ropes, Indoor Climbing, Orienteering, Weaselling at Scugdale and The Wainstones, and Wild Country Walks.



Participation Figures

Figure 1: Thursday's Junior Funability, Saturday Short Breaks and family visits to Carlton Adventure combined Statistics.

Measurement	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Participants	53	39	32	27	19	12
Males	35	29	23	17	12	9
Females	18	10	9	10	7	3
Throughput	102	84	92	69	61	42

Throughout the year a spreadsheet has been used to monitor key statistics from the sessions, these can be seen in figure 1. The data highlights how many participants have attended the sessions with a breakdown of males and females. This captures attendance on a monthly basis.

This year has been different with sessions being physically and digitally provided, it has impacted on engagement within certain months, although moving forwards regular pre-recorded materials will be produced.

In the first lockdown we created activity packs and resources to be delivered to the young people. These were physical packs inclusive of equipment as well as creating content to be assessed online to be used in conjunction with the equipment.

The team created and continue to create various inclusive exercise videos with the key focuses of having fun and staying active. Provision has ranged from children's Pilates, HIIT, PE games/challenges, football, as well how to use the equipment distributed and what could be substituted if participants didn't have the exact same items.

The team made the decision to use our own coaches as a way of reaching and making it more relatable for the young people. The recognition and familiarity spurred participants to continue to remain active whilst keeping normality and consistency. Through various social media platforms, including YouTube and Facebook we have received over 9,500 views of pre-recorded material provision targeting young people.



Through the months of November and December the Thursday Funability sessions were offered online due to restrictions in place, as outdoors not being a suitable option on an evening. Whereas, the outdoor option was suitable for the Saturday session.

Throughout the reporting period, a total of 12 sessions took place on a Thursday and 24 took place on a Saturday, having an extended break over Christmas.

This equates to 60 hours of physical activity provision offered to children and young adults with additional needs in Hartlepool. Both sessions combined have seen a throughput total of 450, which is the total number of weekly attendees added together. Based on these figures, given the current climate, we would've been on target to have record numbers if we were able to operate as usual for the full 50 weeks of the year. Also, it is worth noting that these figures are based on details available at the end of January with two months of delivery remaining.

The Saturdays Short Break session continues to have a higher attendance on a weekly basis, this is partly credit to the great partnership have with Families First North East and the transport links.

As a way of continuing to build our relationship with Hartlepool Carers, in particular the Young Carers, we arranged additional sessions in order give the Young Carers some well-deserved rest time to play. They all brought their activity packs and we created various games using the equipment. It was one of the first sessions back we were allowed to complete due to COVID, even the rain didn't dampen our spirits. Throughout July and August. 15 outdoor sessions took place, engaging with 90 participants. The delivery worked well in increasing their confidence to use the equipment

- ***'As a member of staff from Hartlepool Young Carers it was great to have the children involved in the session, everyone had so much fun and we have lots of ideas as to how we can use the activity packs'***

Partner/Parent/Guardian Feedback

“As the Section Head for Children and Young People I often attend this session to see the children, staff and parents and to ensure the sessions are running smoothly. I have a good relationship with the Hartlepool Borough Council staff and we keep each other updated. I love going to observe these sessions as everyone is always happy. The sessions run smoothly, Scott and Callum are great at organising the various activities and grouping the different age groups and abilities off into sections so they can take part in all activities at their own pace. Scott and Callum get on great with Families First staff and the parents/carers. I feel I have a good relationship with everyone involved and it is my job to keep everyone updated.

During this past year, every time Boris Johnson changes the restrictions, the children and parents are quick to ask if football will still be running as they do not want it to stop. The parents and staff have astounded me with their resilience with all the changes to venues, suspended sessions, different environments and changes to times due to weather.”

*“Here is my feedback excuse the essay but I just thought that it was important to get the full picture across regarding ***** and using these sessions.”*

*“I just wanted to leave my feedback for the Saturday Sports and Football sessions and how much of an invaluable service that they are to ****. I feel it is important to give you a bit of background first though to help understand how important this service really is. ***** is now 8 years old he joined the sessions when he was 5 he was born 12 weeks prematurely and has a diagnosis of autism and more recently epilepsy to, he also attends Springwell school. Before **** started the sessions he was intermittently having appointments with the OT's at the local hospital for his muscles and to build his core strength he also had a great deal of attachment to me and struggled with his independence and social skills. I had tried joining a local Footie Tots session prior to finding out about these sessions but **** struggled to follow instructions, detach from me and found it very distressing. The people running the sessions were although very friendly and helpful struggled to know how to support us and we were at a loss.”*

*“After using the additional needs toy library I spoke to Nicola about how hard we had found getting involved in local sports sessions and she recommended the Saturday sessions to me and was so patient with me listening to my concerns and what had not worked in the past. We came along on the Saturday and it was fantastic although **** struggled at first the staff were so patient with him and understood him pretty quickly by reading the plan that had been put together about ***** and even built confidence in using the transport provided giving him some more much needed independence.”*

*"It also gave me a chance to spend much needed time with my other daughters and even taking one to weekly piano lessons while **** was at his sessions and she went on to achieve an award for her achievements. **** has grown so much in strength and character using his confidence learned to interact with the other children and staff members which is an important part of his EHCP to have a team of people to work with him. He no longer uses the OT services through the NHS which I think is partly to do with the skills that he has learnt at these sessions."*

*"Lockdown was hard everything was taken away from us in terms of support with school and social care services taken away from us and with the addition of me needing to shield and my husband still needing to work full time there was a lot of pressure to ensure **** needs were met. He had had a growth spurt during lockdown and his muscles had struggled which was effecting his mobility and requiring musculoskeletal to support with new insoles for his shoes and really needed his sports sessions to help towards supporting him with this."*

*"Families first and Hartlepool Council were great they were able to provide us with regular updates and some weekly zoom sessions and it gave me the chance to see how far ***** had actually came he was able to follow all of the instructions that the staff members gave and complete all of the tasks with hardly any assistance from me it was fantastic to watch, it also gave him some structure for his day which was much needed. When the sessions were set back up for ***** to attend in person again although anxious with the support of staff he was able to pick up with the sessions again, even with the change of buildings used for the sessions with support ***** was still able to manage the sessions."*

*"More recently in the last 12 months ***** has been in and out of hospital with Tonic-Clonic seizures and just received a diagnosis of temporal focal epilepsy which has led to him requiring daily medication to manage it. It did cross my mind to consider that this may be the end to ****sports sessions but I didn't need to worry with great support from Nicola I was able to get a support plan in place to help ***** and he didn't even notice any change to his sessions, how fantastic is that. Saturday sports sessions are of great importance to us and we are so grateful to have an out of school activity for our son that is so beneficial to him."*

"The Saturday Sessions are amazing for my 6 year old child who suffers from poor core muscles, poor spatial awareness and epilepsy among other conditions (he cannot control his balance and often falls over). I was reluctant to send him at first as I was anxious he would fall and hurt himself or be pushed around by the older children, the staff are amazing and support him during sessions. He goes to sessions and returns from them a happy boy. I have seen him join in and the older children a great with him as so patient."

*"The Saturday support sessions are a great way for the children to interact with the coaches and other children. It is a fun way for the children to exercise and gain confidence, **** loves his football and is disappointed if the sessions are cancelled. They have also been wonderful during the current lockdown, enabling the children to still participate and see their friends. I am a Carer of a male aged 11 years old"*

"The kids have loved being back. They have so much fun here. This has been one of the only breaks we have had through lockdown."

*"Thanks for keeping in touch. **** won't join in the online sessions, he just wants to do it when it is 'normal' again. We'll be back though."*

*"We have struggled to keep **** motivated through all of this. Even though it is different doing it on a screen we are so glad he is interested in joining in. He said it was nice to see Vicki again."*

"The class was ideal for my little boy. With having autism and a low level of mobility we have struggled to get him to join in things. We've done every walk you can imagine in town. This session was fab, it was fun which meant he didn't realise he was actually doing stretches, fitness and even gymnastics!"

*"Can you please pass on our thanks to the staff at Carlton? The boys had a brilliant day yesterday. It was **** first time going, he's never done anything like that before and he loved it. He took part in things he never would have if I'd been there, he talked about it all night!"*

"I just wanted to say what an absolutely wonderful day we all had today - Paul and Snow were outstanding - please pass on our thanks to them both. They are absolute ambassadors for the Centre!"

"Thank you for all your help organising the day too."

"We'll definitely be returning!"

Participant Feedback

Question 1&2	Good	OK	Not Good
The Session is?	89.2	10.8	
The Coaches are?	90.1	9.9	

Question 3	Yes	No
Do you enjoy coming to the session?	100%	

Question 4	Yes	No
Would you like to continue coming to the session?	100%	

Family Funability Day

The aim of the day was to offer a break for families with children with additional needs and/or disabilities.

We offered an Xplorer orienteering trails, arts & craft packs, fruit & water, multi-sports including: football, badminton, howlers, cricket and netball, activity leaflets featuring scavenger hunts and nature walks, and to finish an instructor led dancercise.

To comply with COVID requirements we had families attend at staggered times. In total 8 families took part over the course of the afternoon. There were 11 adults and 20 children taking part across the range of activities.

Overall, the day ran smoothly given the current climate we were/are in. Numbers were limited and it was important to give those families that needed a break just that. The opportunity to be together, having fun, not thinking about the situation we are living in at present.

The variety of activities provided something for everyone in order to cover all preferences, but as the craft packs were individually packed, it meant families could also take it home with them if they had spent more time on the other proceedings.

In future years we would like to expand on this event and engage more families when restrictions are lifted. The team are continuing to build relationships with Hartlepool Carers and would look to make this a venture with a range of other partners in September of 2021 to add value and enhance the offer.

We spoke with families after the event, and feedback is identified below:

"We really enjoyed the event. It was great to see lots of different activities that catered for all ages and abilities."

"The instructors were patient and got involved as much as they could without compromising social distancing."

"We would love to take part in any future events."

"This day should happen again, it was a great success for the team and gave the families that took part a safe, fun afternoon out together."









Summary

From the findings in Figures 1 we can see that the majority of participants that attend are male, this reflects last year's findings. Increasing the number of females attending the session is something we are looking to address, although there has been a significant increase to previous years. This is, however, very common with other mixed sessions the Participation Team run.

COVID -19 restrictions most certainly hindered the numbers attending as part of the first lockdown. There was a cautious approach because we (participants, coaches, parents) did not know what to expect. Some of those that usually attend were in the higher risk category too, and we wanted to ensure all provision was running in line with the ever changing government guidance. However, once safe COVID secure delivery commenced the figures picked up again almost instantly through word of mouth.

During a very strange year we have opted for more of a digital approach to promotions which has worked well and will continue. We shared a lot through our social media platforms and can link in with the schools through this too. They frequently re-tweet posts for their student followers. We will continue to promote in relevant facilities when re-open.

Our relationships with Hartlepool Carers and 1 Hart, 1 Mind, 1 Future Parent Carer Forum continues to grow, they have actively pushed delivery to people accessing their services. We are working in unison to offer inclusive activity whilst giving respite to those who may need it. This works well in advertising the session to the relevant target audience. For example, we have over 3,000 followers on Facebook, but we are a multi-purpose service. By working with these groups we can target the most suitable participants for the sessions.

We are hoping this ongoing push on promotion will increase the awareness of these sessions across the borough, ensuring more participants with additional needs positively engage and become more active more often.

Looking back at the positives to come out of this year, we would say the opportunity to provide a full afternoon of activity was a highlight. To enjoy being outside, trying lots of different activities as a family brought a lot of smiles to the faces of those attending. This is something we will offer more frequently once restrictions are lifted.

The overall feedback from the sessions both written (via e-mail) and verbal has been hugely positive; it has highlighted the impact the session is having on individual participants.

Appendix 1- New Artwork

This artwork was used in order to promote the Family Funability Day.



**FAMILY
FUNABILITY DAY**

Icons representing various activities: Arts & Crafts, Sports, Family, Water, Music, Golf, Accessibility, and Map/Scavenger Hunt.

SUMMERHILL COUNTRY PARK
Saturday 19th September 2020
1pm - 4pm

Xplorer Trails, Arts & Crafts Packs,
 Fruit & Water Packs, Multisports, Dancercise,
 Activity Leaflet & Scavenger Hunt

For families of children with additional needs and/or disability.
 To book onto the event please contact the Participation Team on
 01429 523452 or participation@hartlepool.gov.uk

GetHartlepoolActive.co.uk
 [gethartlepoolactive](https://www.facebook.com/gethartlepoolactive)  [@gethpoolactive](https://twitter.com/gethpoolactive)

 **HARTLEPOOL
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Supported by the Short Break Activity Programme

This is the artwork that will be used to promote the digital session. Times have been left off for now so that we can remain flexible with the ever changing times.



GetHartlepoolActive.co.uk



gethartlepoolactive



@gethpoolactive



HARTLEPOOL
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Supported by the Short Break Activity Programme

This is the artwork that we will use to showcase the new session, highlighting the split in ages, when we are allowed to operate indoors again. The new artwork has been used throughout all sessions in order for it to become recognisable. It showcases the variety of sports we have on offer and has also now incorporate images which highlight this is an inclusive session.

JUNIOR FUNABILITY



BRIERTON SPORTS CENTRE

Every Thursday 4.30pm – 6.00pm

4.30 – 5.15pm – primary school ages (5 – 10)
5.00 – 6.00pm – secondary school ages (11 – 16)

This is a fun, exciting and interactive session to suit children with additional needs. This is a multi-skills session so come ready to give something new a try in a welcoming environment, we have football, dodgeball, fitness, netball and so much more!

To book onto the event please contact the Participation Team on 01429 523452 or participation@hartlepool.gov.uk

GetHartlepoolActive.co.uk
 [gethartlepoolactive](https://www.facebook.com/gethartlepoolactive)  [@gethpoolactive](https://twitter.com/gethpoolactive)

 **HARTLEPOOL**
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Supported by the Short Break Activity Programme

Appendix 2 - Participant Feedback Form

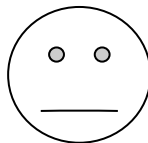
Activity Attended.....

Date.....

The session is?



Great



OK

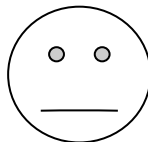


Not Very Good

The Coaches are?



Great



OK



Not Very Good

Do you enjoy Coming to the session?

YES

NO

Would you like to continue coming to the sessions?

YES

NO



A Year Like No Other

**Delivering short breaks during a
global pandemic**

April 2020 – March 2021

Foreword

For over a decade, Families First (North East) has led and delivered Short Breaks and Extended Activities to children and young people in Hartlepool with additional needs.

Throughout this time, the services have grown substantially, adapted to meet increased local demand and changing needs and overcome several significant obstacles to service delivery and barriers to access.

However, nothing prepared us for the major changes which were required 'overnight' in light of the Covid19 outbreak.

Despite all of the precautions and safe working practices we already had in place, we worked up a specific Covid19 plan and were committed to operating at full pace for as long as possible.

However, all of that changed when the Prime Minister addressed the Nation on 23 March 2020 and told us all to "stay at home".

Our commitment to supporting families and children with additional needs never wavered.

In the initial absence of clear guidance, we set about offering an alternative offer. One which temporarily supported children and their families at home, online, over the telephone and practically.

In short, we took a view that the circumstances were so unprecedented, that we would do whatever was necessary and possible to ensure that the impact of change and uncertainty was minimised as much as practicable.

This report details how short breaks were delivered over the last, challenging, 12 months and how our response was fluid, evolving and often innovative.



Introduction to Short Breaks

Hartlepool Borough Council has contracted with Families First (North East) to provide Extended Activities, Short Breaks and Specialist Loan Equipment for those children and families with Children with additional needs. Some of the provision has been delivered in partnership with Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group.

This report sets out the progress of service, achievements over the past 12 months and the positive impact that this work has had on the intended client group.

What is a short break ?

Sometimes families who have disabled children and/or health conditions benefit from a break from their caring responsibilities. Local authorities now have duties to provide short break services and make clear how families can access these.

Taking a break from caring for your child is not an admission of failure or a way of saying you don't care. A break is an opportunity to recharge batteries, spend time with others or pursue a particular interest. Short breaks may also allow your child to have a change of scene, try different experiences, have fun and make friends.

Short breaks can include:

- Care at home - includes sitting or care attendant schemes, which provide someone to sit with or 'mind' your child.
- Day care away from home - includes nurseries, playgroups, out of school and weekend clubs and, during school holidays, access to playschemes.
- Overnight short breaks - includes an overnight sitting or nursing service if your child needs it.
- Residential breaks - includes residential homes, special units in hospitals and hospices.
- Family link schemes - where your child stays with another family on a regular basis or occasionally.

(Source : Contact, the charity for families with disabled children)



Details of the services that are covered

The short breaks and extended activities contract provides the following services:

SNIPS - An after-school club and holiday playscheme specifically for children with profound learning disabilities and challenging needs (the only service in Hartlepool offering such respite for parents/carers). Many of our children who attend the after-school and holiday programme cannot access any other scheme due to their complex needs and in some cases their need for 1:1 or 2:1 support. This operates every week day. This service also receives considerable financial support from BBC Children In Need.



SocialEyes - a new and innovative approach to facilitating social skills and social understanding with people on the autism spectrum. Launched by The National Autistic Society in 2010, this learning resource has been developed with people with autism and Asperger syndrome, along with leading professionals in the field. All SocialEyes resources have been extensively piloted and re-piloted with ongoing development and research since 2005.

SocialEyes does not ask people on the autism spectrum to change 'inappropriate' social behaviour, or to acquire social skills by copying the 'typical' behaviour of others. Instead, it gives people the option of learning social interaction skills or alternative social strategies. SocialEyes focuses on eight social skills that people on the autism spectrum can have difficulty with, including starting a conversation, eye contact and personal space.

ACTIVE KIDS - a number of physical activity projects aimed at children and young people with additional needs under the name of Active Kidz. It includes the following :

- dance sessions,
- a weekly football group
- basketball sessions,
- outdoor activities (orienteering, den building, archery)
- adventure activities (canoeing, abseiling, water sports)

Some of this activity happens weekly, some only during summer months

STREET Projects - are principally supported youth provision for young people with additional needs across Hartlepool. Those attending are wide ranging including those who have low confidence, self-esteem or social skills, young people with learning and physical disabilities, those with autism and some who have suffered some form of emotional trauma in their lives.

The project prides itself on using modern techniques to engage young people with challenging issues and additional support needs.

The service initially launched specifically for those aged 5-19, but now successfully operates over 4 nights a week offering sessions targeted at Juniors and Seniors as well as a much smaller group aimed at children with ASD. This has become possible due to significant financial support from National Lottery Community Fund.

Special Needs Toy Loan Service - A facility for parents that have or organisations that work with a child with a disability / additional support need. It offers toys and play equipment that can be used on either a short term or long term hire.

The equipment is chosen by children and parents to meet their needs. Regular outreach and parental demonstration sessions will be held in order for families to get the best out of the resource. Equipment out on long term hire will receive regular safety inspections.

The project holds two sessions per week where parents and children can attend, use equipment and offer each other peer support. In addition, there are opportunities for families to access the service during week days.

The Fun Club - is held on a Monday evening 5.30 pm to 7.00 pm, term-time and occasionally at other times. The club is available to children with additional needs and their siblings, aged 3-12 years and based within Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group. Activities at the club include: Arts and Crafts, Games, Multi-sensory Room, Cold Cookery, Parachute Games, Watch movies, Sing songs, Themed parties and Sensory Stories.

HSNSG Friends Fun - is a performance group for children with additional needs and their siblings, aged 3 – 13 years of age. Sessions are held weekly on a Sunday afternoon 4.00 pm - 6.00 pm (term-time only). During the sessions, children enjoy singing and dancing to their favourite songs. The children also have the opportunity to take part in our annual theatre performance. There is also time for fun and games! These sessions are based within Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group.



HSNSG The Youth Club - Our Youth Club is available for young people with additional needs, aged 12+. Session are held weekly on a Wednesday evening 6.00-8.00 pm (term-time only). This club gives young people a chance to meet up and relax with their friends. We have a huge variety of activities available including: Board Games & Card Games, PlayStation & Wii, Laptop, Watching movies, Multi-sensory room, Arts and crafts

HSNSG School Holiday Activities - During school holidays we run a program of activities and community visits. The program varies each time but our most popular activities include: Trampoline Park session, Theatre & Cinema visits, Social Lunches, Soft Play sessions, Circus Tricks demonstrations, Magic Shows, Parties.

HSNSG Summer Programme - The very popular Summer Scheme caters for all ages and needs. It runs for 11 days during the school summer holidays. Parents/carers can leave their children, young people and adults to enjoy a very varied programme of activities and entertainment during the fun packed days in a safe environment. A huge range of activities are available including :Arts and Crafts, Specialised Bicycles and Tandems, Face Painting, Farmyard Bus/Pet Corner, Sing and Sign, Magic/Circus Tricks and Bubble Man Shows and much more.

Short Breaks during a global pandemic

On 23 March 2020, the Prime Minister ordered the entire UK to “Stay at home”. Exceptions were few and policy for supporting those with additional needs was non-existent. The nation was assured we would get through this together, but the detail of how was absent.

It was therefore clear to us that we would need to be creative in our approach and ensure that the impact on the most vulnerable was minimised.

Our initial response provided a weekly telephone call to all parents and children / young people. The main purpose was to offer a listening ear, some human contact, practical support (such as grocery shopping and medication collection) and support / ideas on coping at home. Some of these calls were short ‘check-ins’ and others were substantially longer, over an hour, with parents who were so isolated that this interaction was the only other social contact outside of their own family environment.

As a result, hundreds of regular activity packs were printed & delivered / emailed and equipment from the Toy Loan service distributed. Even laptops / iPads from our centre were put into action. The team worked longer hours, more days of the week to ensure that no family was left alone and unsupported.

Youth group activities established themselves in the online world and staff ensured that social gatherings continued, and friendships blossomed in a safe and supportive environment. Clearly not all young people engaged in this arena but those who did found the experience fun, novel and a suitable, albeit temporary, replacement.

As soon as guidance started to trickle out from government, we made immediate plans to restart face-to-face services, where it was within the spirit of the law, and where we could put safe working practices in place. However, this was not as straightforward as it sounds. With many destinations still closed or not accepting groups larger than 1 family, our range of provision was limited.

Furthermore, given the specific health needs of some of the children and young people, ‘shielding’ was imperative and the return to group based activities for some has been slower than others due to family anxieties and the necessity to isolate when required to do so by law. Therefore, group attendances during the year have undoubtedly been impacted by the Covid19 Pandemic.



This did not deter us from undertaking our Summer Activities though. A combination of bubbles, additional sanitisation, open spaces, improved hand hygiene, less travelling and social distancing, allowed us to achieve what initially appeared to be the unachievable. Happy children returning to a sense of stability and normality is evident from many of the pictures scattered throughout this report.

From that point, and ongoing organisational learning, we have continued to restore all activities back to their pre-Covid19 form. Clearly there are ongoing challenges to ensure that the provision remains safe for those who attend. However, the vast majority of families and children / young people have climatised to these new ways of working.

The post-Christmas lockdown was a small set back, but one we were able to take in our stride, given the plans, processes and experiences we had built up over the previous 9 months. Given the much clearer government advice at this point, we were able to continue with a substantial proportion of our activity and again seek to minimise the impact on those with additional needs.

In addition to all of this, and with the financial support of the National Lottery Community Fund, we established a Telephone Support Service which operated 7 days a week, from 7am to Midnight. This operated from July 2020 to March 2021. The team answering these calls were able to provide emotional and practical support at the point they needed it. Furthermore, they also had access to an immediate discretionary fund which could purchase immediate groceries and utility top ups. It removed the immediate stress of finance so that families could concentrate on supporting their children and young people.

With the amount of time invested in children and families and additional outcomes produced during the year, it could be said that much more has been achieved in the past 12 months than has ever been. The group attendance data is only one benchmark of achievement and does not reflect the shopping trips, the collection of medicines, the emotional support and the offer of consistency. The combined team efforts to ensure that normality can be achieved and returned to as soon as possible is applaudable.



Background stats as to the makeup of the children using the services and their conditions.

The provision supported 414 different children and young people from across Hartlepool with a vast array of different conditions and additional needs.

	0 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 16	17 to 18	19-25	TOTAL
Female	42	32	54	7	8	143
Male	54	54	112	18	31	269
Trans			2			2
Total	96	86	168	25	39	414

SEN Data Code	Number of Children / Young People
AD - Attachment Disorder	10
ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	37
ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder	152
CHD - Chromosome / Genetic Disorder	21
CP - Cerebral Palsy	6
CPS - Chronic Pain Syndrome	2
DS - Downs Syndrome	10
DYS - Dyslexia / Dyscalculia	7
DYSP - Dyspraxia	15
EBD - Emotional Behavioural Difficulties	42
EPIL - Epilepsy	21
FAS - Foetal Alcohol Syndrome	5
GAD - Generalised Anxiety Disorder	27
GDD - Global / General Development Delay	24
HI - Hearing Impairment	17
KAB - Kabuki Syndrome	1
MED - Medical	65
MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty	53
MSI - Multi Sensory Impairment	1
OCD - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder	1
ODD - Oppositional Defiant Disorder	1
PATH - Pathological Demand Avoidance	3
PD - Physical Disability	14
PICA - Eating Disorder	2
PIT - Pitt Hopkins Syndrome	1

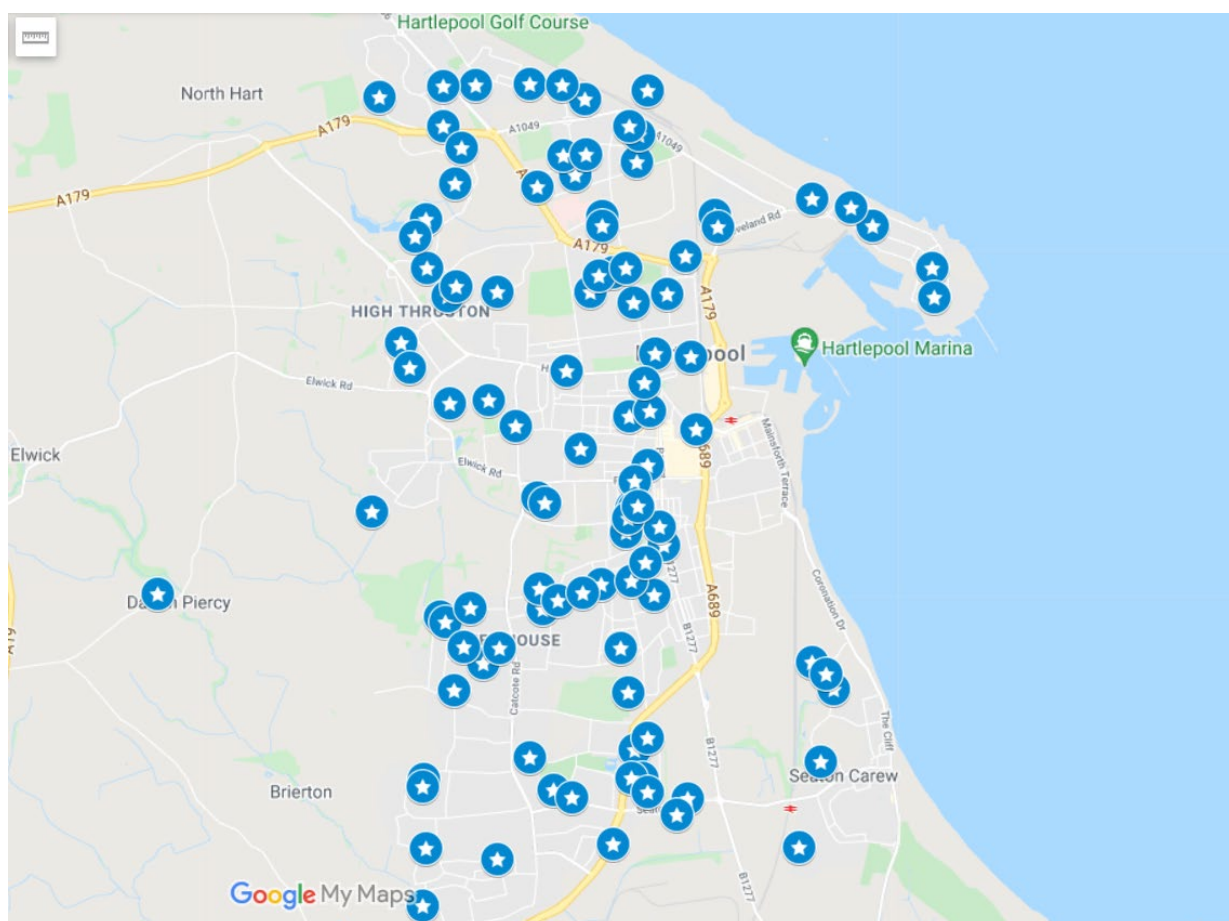
PMLD - Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	1
PREASD - On the ASD / Neuro Pathway and awaiting diagnosis	9
RET - Rett Syndrome	1
SAD - Severe Anxiety Disorder	5
SEMH - Social Emotional Mental Health	52
SLCN - Speech Language and Communication	24
SLD - Significant Learning Difficulty	5
SPD – Sensory Processing Disorder / Issues	20
SPLD – Specific Learning Difficulty	2
VI – Visual Impairment	12

In addition to this, we have a further record of 58 additional support needs registered which would not ordinarily be classed as a SEN but are needs which the provision supports.

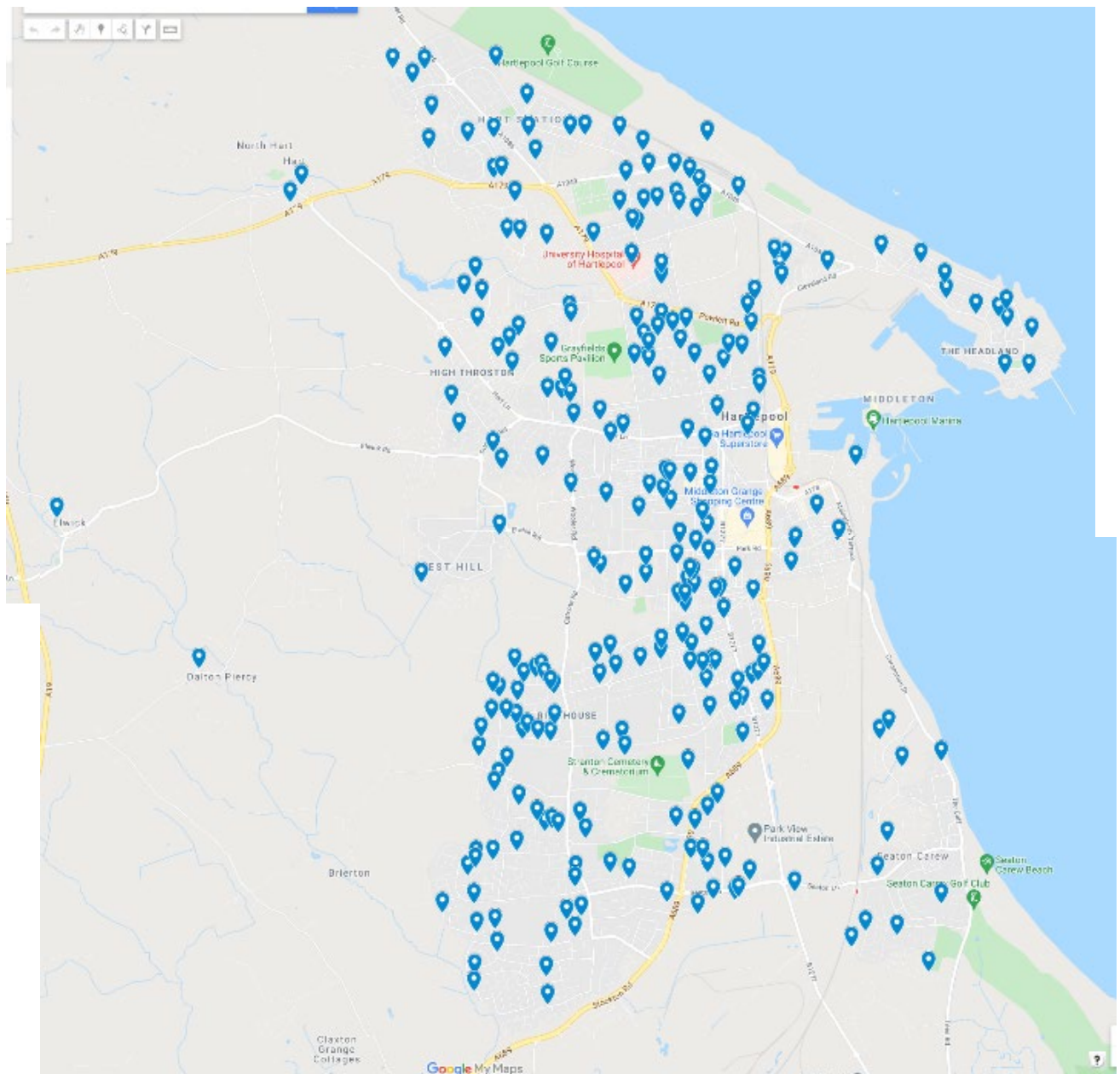
Some children will be listed more than once if they have multiple additional needs.

The children and young people accessing these services are from every part of the town and quite uniformly spread.

The below map shows this spread. Each dot represents a postcode where one or more child / young person who accessed a group activity during the past 12 months lives



The below map shows the spread of all children and young people supported (group activity and alternative methods) during the year. Each dot represents a postcode where one or more child / young person lives.



Usage during the year (Quantitative Data)

Total attendances by activity

	1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 (Pandemic period)	1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 (For Comparison only)
SNIPS (A/S)	1281	3136
STREET Juniors	65	850
STREET Seniors	171	1646
STREET Zoom	415	n/a
Active Kidz	387	859
Adventure Activities	29	389
Girlz Group	42	60
Social Eyes	10	99
SNIPS (Hol)	675	1282
HSNSG Youth Group	58	280
HSNSG Friends Fun	0	211
HSNSG Holiday Activities	9	511
HSNSG Fun Club	103	387
Totals	3245	9710

Total hours by activity

	1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 (Pandemic period)	1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 (For Comparison only)
SNIPS (A/S)	3202.5	7840
STREET Juniors	195	2550
STREET Seniors	598.5	5761
STREET Zoom	830	n/a
Active Kidz	774	1718
Adventure Activities	174	2334
Girlz Group	84	120
Social Eyes	16	148.5
SNIPS (Hol)	4050	7692
HSNSG Youth Group	116	336
HSNSG Friends Fun	0	408
HSNSG Holiday Activities	22.5	536
HSNSG Fun Club	206	720
Totals	10268.5	30163.5

Additional outcomes during the year

Service / Provision	Total Activity
Welfare Calls made (FFNE)	4778
Activity Packs distributed (FFNE)	447
Shopping Trips made (FFNE)	76
Christmas Gifts Distributed (FFNE)	220
Welfare Contacts (Telephone, Virtual, Email, SM) (HSNSG)	44
Delivered Family Pizza Night (HSNSG)	20
Activity Packs distributed (HSNSG)	67
Christmas / Easter Treats Delivered (HSNSG)	35
Christmas Interactive Toy Packs Distributed (HSNSG)	34



The difference made (Qualitative Data)



Over the past 4 years, we have developed our own tool which measures qualitative data, often referred to as the distance travelled, journey made or impact change. This tool is called C.H.R.I.S. This has been designed alongside children and young people.

It is a digital tool which the young people can either complete themselves or with the assistance of a team member if they have profound learning needs.

There are two elements to C.H.R.I.S. The first is completely anonymous and young people complete each time they end a session. It asks them three questions, at random, from a bank of 10 questions. The questions are designed to inform service delivery and responses are reviewed each week. Examples of the questions are “Did you enjoy

tonight’s session?”, “Do you feel that you can trust the staff?”, “Was tonight’s session appropriate to you?”. The questions can be added to as required. It is then completed using an iPad by young people as they leave (similar to the type you see when you check through airport security).

The second element is the more substantive part. Again, digital but this time all entries correspond to a unique reference number for each of our young people. This allows us to track the progress that each individual young person is making. It starts off with a ‘baseline assessment’ where the young person answers a series of questions about themselves and how they feel about particular issues

CHRIS specifically looks at 9 key areas :

- Communication skills
- Participation skills
- Confidence
- Mental Health
- Social Skills
- Friendships
- Behaviour
- Leadership skills
- Practical skills

They grade themselves, using a very simple set of indicators, and can add further evidence to support their ‘grade’. This can be either by speaking to the iPad, making a short selfie-video or typing something in.

Once the initial assessment is completed, a team member will work with them to see which area they wish to improve and set milestones as to what and how they are going to do to achieve this. The team member will then support them through this process.

During each session, the young person can record further evidence to their own personal journal on C.H.R.I.S. They can upload things that they have created, such as photos, videos, speech, music and text along with a journal entry of their own words.

The young person will re-complete C.H.R.I.S. at regular intervals and complete the same assessment. This will track progress that is being made for that individual and see if milestones are being met. It will allow us to measure how effective the sessions are for that particular young person.

The above cumulates in bringing together all supporting evidence and assessments to create a timeline of involvement with the project. It's quite powerful and visual when you review it and supports the young person in their progression.

Over the past year, CHRIS has told us :

Theme	Yet to make progress	Some progress	Significant progress
Communication skills	9 %	66 %	25 %
Participation skills	7 %	57 %	36 %
Confidence	11 %	42 %	47 %
Mental Health	6 %	43 %	51 %
Social Skills	6 %	30 %	64 %
Friendships	2 %	20 %	78 %
Behaviour	3 %	41 %	56 %
Leadership skills	13 %	60 %	27 %
Practical skills	9 %	42 %	49 %

Notes:

(For presentation reasons, these figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage)

Yet to make progress

This is where there is no difference between the starting point and the current position. In the main, this is children and young people who are relatively new to engaging with any of the services. It is also accepted that there are some areas where some young people are unable to make progress due to their disability.

Some progress

This is where the distance travelled from a starting point to the current position is 1 or 2 points higher

Significant progress

This is where the distance travelled from a starting point to the current position is more than 2 points higher.



Added Value

As well as the incredible difference that the services make to individual families and children / young people, the combined services also bring in significant further investment to Hartlepool and create a number of additional good quality jobs, which are underpinned by quality training and professional development.

Furthermore, all services offer a plethora of learning opportunities and placements for those studying from GCSE right through to Masters Degrees.

Project	Paid Regular Staff	Additional Paid staff	Volunteers	Additional Funding each year
SNIPS Afterschool / Holiday Provision	8	6	12 regulars 25 throughout the year	£ 79,865.00
Adventure Activities	2	2	2	£6,000.00
Street Seniors, Juniors and Sociales	6	10	15 regulars 35 throughout the year	£71,000.00
Active Kids	2	1	4	£4,000.00
HSNSG Fun Club	3	4	4	£ 7,500.00
HSNSG Youth Group	3	4	4	£ 7,500.00
HSNSG Fun Friends	2	4	4	£ 5,000.00
HSNSG Holiday Provision	10	8	15	£ 19,000.00
Special Needs Toy Loan Service	1	0	6	£15,000.00
TOTAL ADDITIONAL FUNDING				£214,865.00



Feedback from parents

During June 2021, we surveyed parents who had used any of the services over the past 12 months. Responses, although lower than expected in volume, provide an insight into the impact that these services have upon families. The responses are summarised as follows :



How often do you use our services ?

Daily	24%
A few times every week	38%
Weekly	38%

My child accessing this service has meant for me.....

Being able to continue to work	38%
Spending time with my other children	44%
Spending time with my partner	63%
Being able to relax and have confident that my child is safe	100%
Spending time with my friends and extended family	37%
Being able to do things for myself such as having a coffee, relaxing etc, etc sleeping, shopping	69%

Using this service has meant for my child(ren)

Spending time with their friends	87%
Making new friends	93%
Meeting and feeling comfortable with other appropriate adults	93%
Having the opportunity to experience new activities	93%
Having fun	93%
Having a short break from the family	67%
Having the opportunity to learn and practice new skills	73%
Gaining confidence in new situations	93%
Having the same opportunities as those without additional needs	100%

I chose this service because.....

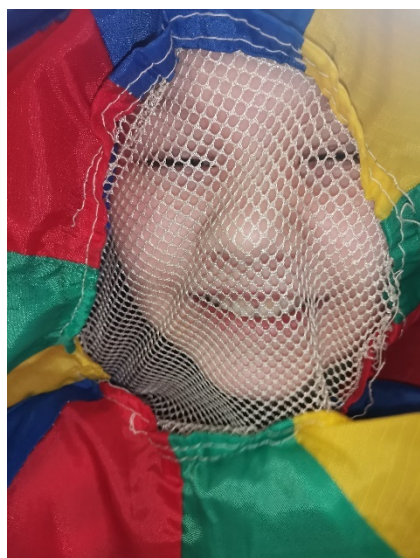
The experience and expertise of the staff	93%
The accessibility of the venue	67%
We have used this service before	33%
The service was recommended by other families	60%
The activities are appropriate and meet the needs of my child	93%
The staff made us feel welcome	93%
The service is flexible and responds to the individual needs of my child	80%
The service is available at the times that we needed the support	67%

We asked Families to tell us how they feel about the services offered by Families First and the Short Breaks.

So glad me and my kids started coming here everyone is fantastic, there is lots of activities for the kids to do and they really enjoy it. The playscheme is great my son doesn't normally go anywhere but he loved going on days out with everyone. they have helped me so much when I first started coming here I felt like I was struggling a little bit with certain things but having people who care, listen and give advice if u ask for it has made a massive difference. Thank you xx

My son attends the youth project and has attended the play schemes during holidays. I honestly couldn't recommend families first enough. My son has made so many friends, the staff are fantastic and he has had the opportunity to take part in activities he would never have gotten to do.

It's the difference between us coping and not. Absolutely recommend



I would absolutely recommend and have recommended this service. The staff are brilliant, the service is irreplaceable. I would be lost without Families First.

Absolutely fantastic team! I recommend to everyone that has children with additional needs.

Great service

It's hard to find places you feel comfortable leaving your child. I am extremely comfortable leaving my child in their care. The staff are truly caring my son has great fun there, I would definitely recommend to a friend

They are absolutely amazing. Without their continued support my child and family would still be very isolated. My child has the opportunity to experience life in a way that he would never get to, to hear him come home telling me how

many goals he has scored at football when all standard football teams couldn't cater for his needs is amazing. Also to see other staff being able to take him out in the community confidently whether via hand in hand or playscheme when he had struggled for so long to leave the house is fantastic, he's like a different child with his confidence and independence. If we ever had an emergency at home we know we could always contact families first for support with our child if needed. We are so lucky and grateful to have the services of families first.

I think the service provided is amazing. And yes i would recommend it to a friend.

Yes as always been supportive to my foster child and family.

Staff at families first are always really friendly and nothing is ever a problem. They always try their best to help

I would definitely recommend families first to a friend because they do a really good job looking after and supporting my daughter who has Adhd, Social and emotional difficulties and learning difficulties. My daughter has come on so much socially since attending families first and it shows in her daily and when we go out places. Its lovely to see my daughter feeling comfortable and part of somewhere that accepts her for who she is and understands her additional needs ❤️ xx

I appreciate the service which offers a safe controlled environment in which the children learn new skills while having fun.

My grandsons confidence has grown and with support and the groups Families First North East offers he has grown in to a fabulous young man. Before he attended he was very vulnerable and with drawn.

Excellent support

We always recommend families first, it's a fantastic service we would be lost without. We have accessed it not just through my son but also my daughter (non SEN) with playgroup etc over the years.

Fantastic, friendly, professional and they care about my son.



When asked where he's been my son says "club" and when asked if he enjoyed it he always says yes, every time, before double checking if he's there again tomorrow!

He said football is the best, and he has a lot of good friends.

My son says “I feel very confident and have friends and staff who I get on with”

My son said he had made lots of new friends and had lots of fun with the staff

It's his safe place !

Alfie joined Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group 11 years ago when he came to live with us, although it was very difficult at the time for him as it was an new adventure he soon settled in and to this day loves the group. He has become very confident and sociable and made many friends. Alfie has cerebral palsy and is non-verbal and the staff all communicate with him using signs and gestures as well as speech, he has become very independent and has been able to access specialised equipment i.e. go-karts, specialised bikes etc. Alfie particularly loves the Summer Scheme as he has jobs that he has to do including washing up, emptying bins and going on the bus he starts looking forward to the next one before the first one is over. This amazing group helped members access activities during lockdown through zoom and Pat rang regularly to see how we were all doing and if there was anything she could help with. It was a very hard time for everyone.

The group has given Ewan the chance to socialise this summer when ordinarily he would struggle. He has thoroughly enjoyed his time in the summer scheme and strengthened his relationships with the fantastic staff. During lockdown Ewan and his sister received activities packs and regularly contact which helped us all. When he returned to "Monday club" he adapted really well to the changes in place, this Club is very important to him and he enjoys having time with "kids like him". It is also very a big help to us as a family giving us time with his sister and knowing that he is in an environment where he is fully understood. We are very grateful to Pat, Michael and all of the staff at HSNSG, they are a fabulous support.

The group provide emotional, physical and social support for Shelby. We depend highly on the support of the team over the summer and throughout the year. Providing the support for Shelby allows us to continue to work and us to have an essential break to allow us to recharge.

Shelby is confident in the care and support that is provided in the team. They are very much her social circle and without the group there would be nothing to replace this. Shelby is allowed to be a teenager in a safe environment where she feels supported despite her high level needs within the group.

I cannot speak highly enough of the care and professionalism of the group. The group are the 'best' part of Shelby's life outside of home. They have cared for her despite her constant epileptic fits which excludes her from every other form of group activity. With the group Shelby gets to be herself and her disabilities become no longer the major part of her life. She feels very much part of the group and it is the only place that I can have without doubt full confidence that all of Shelbys' needs are fully met with care and compassion.

Chloe has always loved attending the Summer Scheme. She previously participated in Drama Club but fell on the same days as Guides unfortunately due to Covid Guides folded and we were lost until Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group gave Chloe her social life back and re- introduced her into the Youth Club, she has started to really enjoy this club. As she is getting older I realise there is not a lot out there for Chloe to enjoy socially for her but Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group provides that for her, which us as a family are forever grateful.

Connor always looks forward to attending Children's Fun Club, he really missed not seeing his friends during the lockdown. When the club started up again he was really happy and this give as a break. He liked receiving his Christmas packs aswell as his sister and brother.

We also asked for specific comments regarding our support offered during the initial Covid19 Pandemic....

What support did you receive?

Shopping, calls, activity packs

Phone calls and fun packs.

Attended youth club

We were offered extra support but didn't require it

But I knew if I needed it I just had to ask

Yes we received phone calls to check in on us all and as soon as it was safe some hand in hand support.

Yes resources to do at home.

My son always got 2 hours a week but in the lockdown we upped it to 4 hours which wasn't a problem with families first. We also received regular phone calls

Yes we received activities and colours packs for the children

We had different members of staff that worked with our family checking in on us and keeping us up to date with support available.

That holiday clubs continued although not the same for the children still provided well needed respite. Also regular check in phone calls.

Weekly phone calls.

Peter always called on a weekly basis to check how we were coping.

Support was offered in phone calls .

After school support



Due to a diagnoses that wasn't covid, Nicola supported me through phone calls and was prepared to support my grandson if he needed. Which is definitely fantastic.

Phone calls to check if all was well at home.

Yes 1 to 1 which was very much needed.

My son was able to return to families first once schools had reopened and it was safe to do so, he was over the moon to get back to some sort of normal.

1 to 1

Great service it really helped m

What difference did the support make to you, your child and your family ?

Reduced isolation

Just knowing someone was there at the end of the phone was a great support.

It was nice to know that someone was there for support if it was needed

Fantastic difference to know we had a support network.

After school support so I could continue to offer support as a front line support

As structure and routine is important to my child, everything closing and him being home (without an end date in sight at the time) really impacted on him and he really just didn't understand why everything changed. Accessing families first when we could helped his anxiety and stress as although he still didn't know what was going on, knew he was getting at least some of the things back he was so used to. Seeing familiar faces and being with friends he hadn't seen in such a long time really brightened him up again.

Ability to have a more relaxed child at home.

It really help out a lot to everyone them at need the help and support that was needed

It was the difference between coping and not



Feedback from children and young people

The young people accessing the services are just as vocal. Here is just a selection of the comments made by young people whilst updating CHRIS during the last 12 months :

*I've really enjoyed playing cards and playing in the playroom with the soft ball
Today I've played in the playroom and downstairs with the blocks*

Liked bar football

Played with the ball in the playroom and I loved my tea

I have really enjoyed going outside and planting seeds

This place is really fun!

Families first is great, I enjoy arts and crafts

Enjoyed dancing and food

I enjoy getting picked up on the bus by bob, and colouring in.

I like to go in the playroom and play with the toys

Families first is fun

Enjoyed playing dobble

Whilst at families first I really like playing in the sensory room and being with my friends.

I've played chess today in the club I also watch a movie whilst doing this it was great.

In the club today I had my tea and watched a movie I really liked today's session

I am pottie training and I really am trying. I loved my tea today.

I enjoy colouring in and spending time with Jordan

I enjoyed my tea tonight

I love the food and playing

I enjoyed the film that was on tonight

I liked my tea and doing my picture in the arts and crafts room

I loved my food and the games in today's session

I played cards and watch my friends do the games

It was good we got to play some games that was different

I played with my friends in the club today

I ate all my tea up today

It's good at families first

I enjoy being with my friends at families first

I enjoy dancing at families first and I like hanging out with Hannah and Ellie

It's nice at families first

It's really good here

Playing with the football table

I liked eating my tea without making a mess today 😊 And playing with my friends

I enjoyed the movie I liked it when Simba went home to be king it was awesome

Tonight's games were fun

I enjoyed colouring in and playing on the iPad tonight

I went outside to plant some seeds so we can grow some peas and cauliflower and the children were saying that they want to social distance the potatoes

I've enjoyed playing in the playroom

I've enjoyed working with the staff

Watching star wars was awesome today

Liked playing in the playroom today

I liked playing with my friends today

I loved making my fireworks picture today

I enjoyed playing the games today

I've did a drawing today fireworks and Christmas tree

I made a picture and it was awesome

I liked my tea and jumping on the matts

I really enjoyed just dance and playing in the playroom also I drew a picture

I spent time in the arts and crafts today with my friends

*I played in the playroom and in the arts and crafts when I felt myself getting angry
I asked to go the sensory room*

I liked all the staff today

*I liked playing snakes and ladders with my friends
I loved playing in the playroom*

We had a disco today I liked dancing

I've played with my friends tons

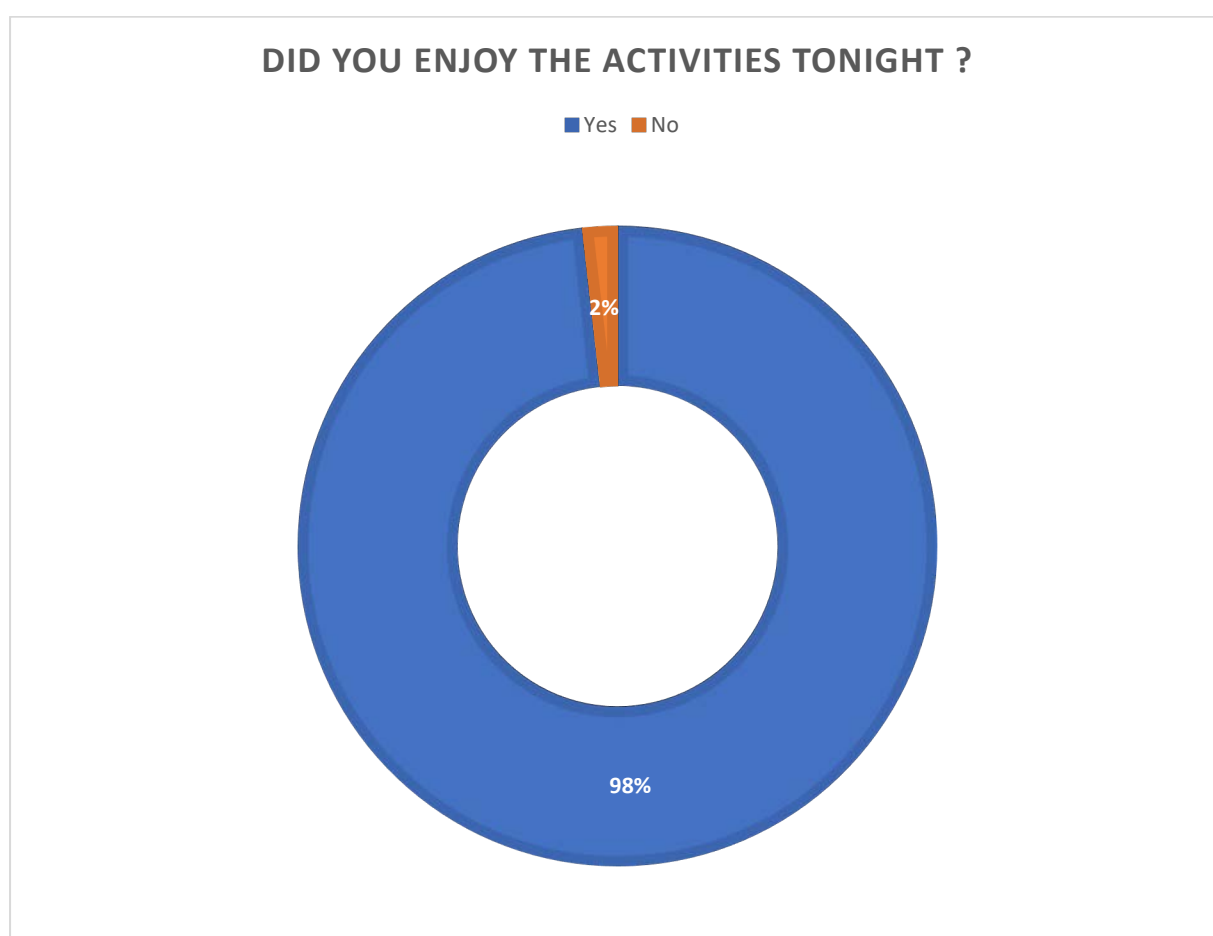
I liked seeing my friends today and playing snakes and ladders

I've played downstairs today listening to music

I liked the food and the games in the session today

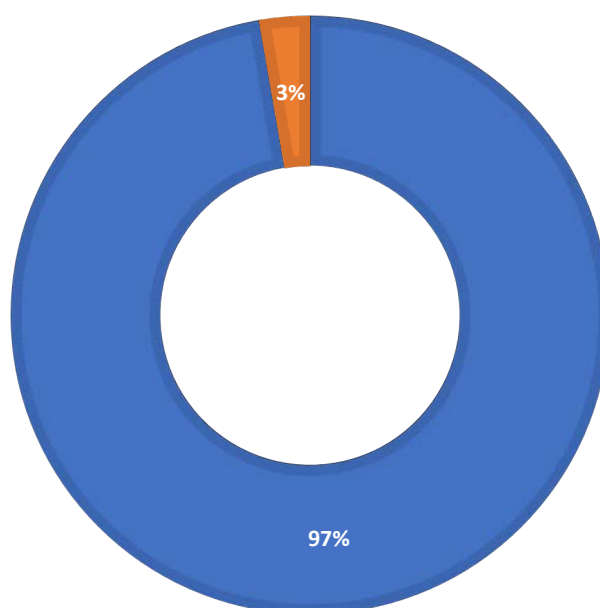
Liked playing musical chairs

Responses from the 'out of door' short random survey include :



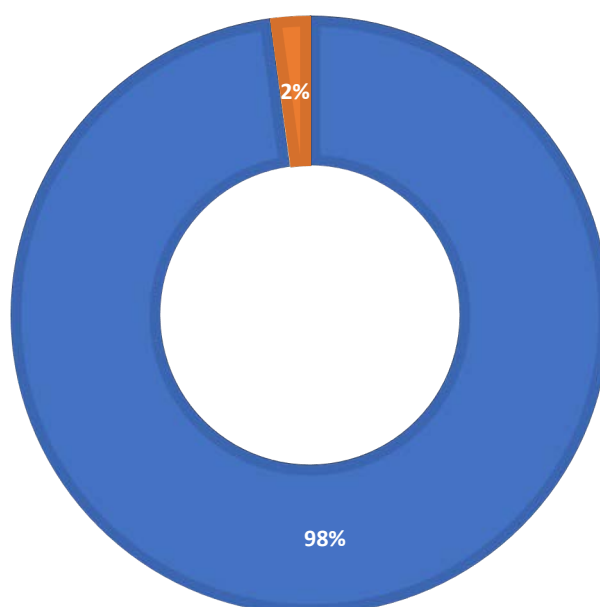
DO YOU THINK THAT OUR ACTIVITIES ARE APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR AGE ?

■ Yes ■ No



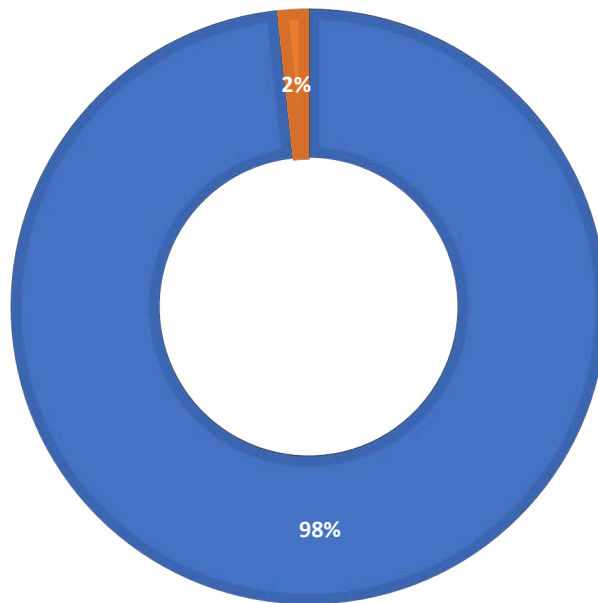
DO YOU TRUST THE STAFF ?

■ Yes ■ No



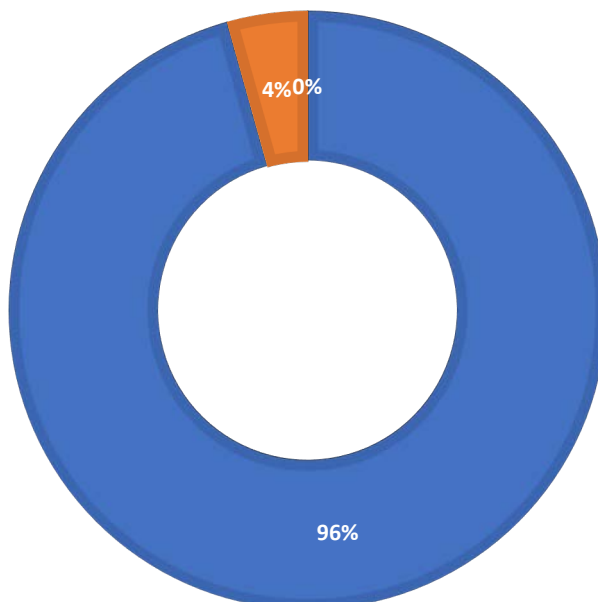
DO YOU THINK THAT THE BUILDING IS CLEAN AND SMART ?

■ Yes ■ No



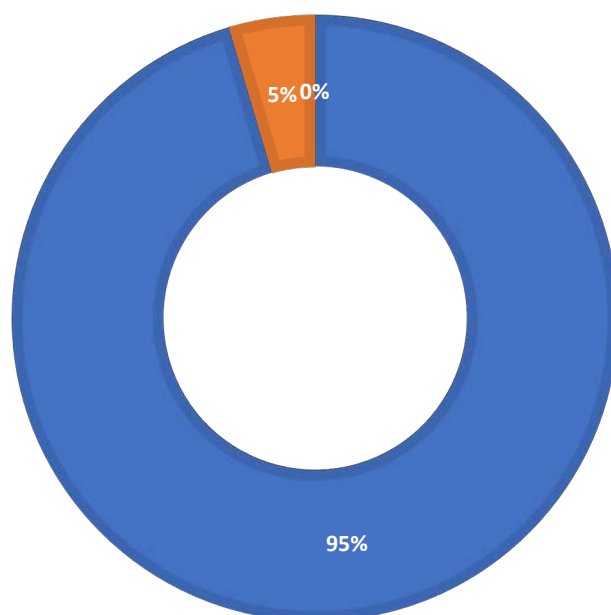
HOW MUCH DO YOU ENJOY YOUR TIME HERE ?

■ A great deal ■ Somewhat ■ Not at all



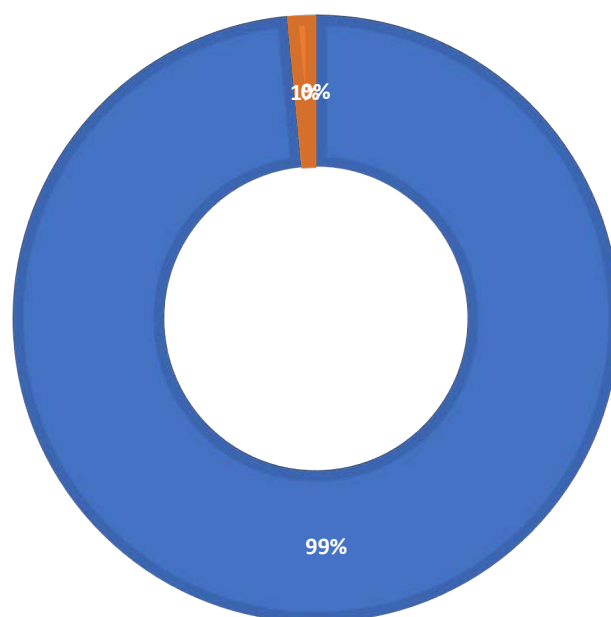
DO YOU FEEL VALUED AS AN INDIVIDUAL WHILST HERE ?

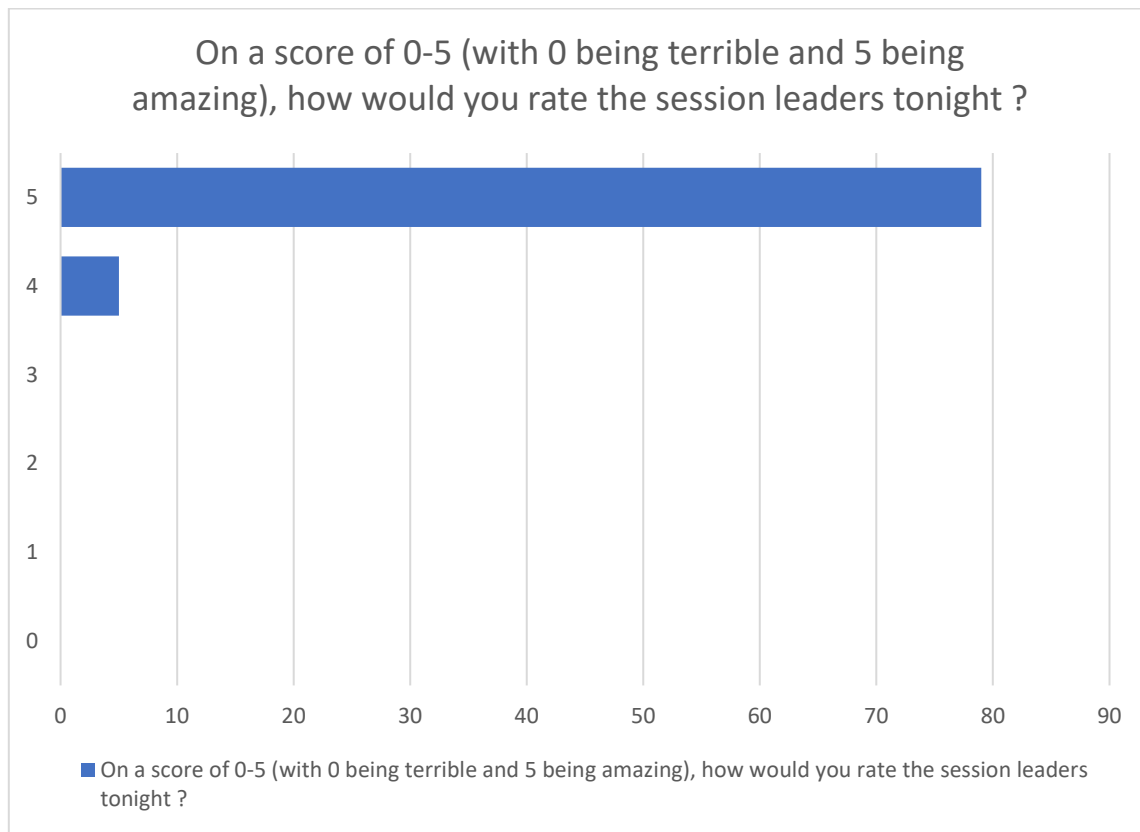
■ A great deal ■ Somewhat ■ Not at all



HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL WHILST AT FAMILIES FIRST ?

■ A great deal ■ Somewhat ■ Not at all





1 Hart, 1 Mind, 1 Future (Parent Carer Forum) Activities 2020-2021

Introduction

From April 2020 the Parent Carer Forum in conjunction with Hartlepool Carers and the Council's Participation Team delivered a variety of activities and provided on-going support to families of disabled children during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Below is the excellent work of this partnership and feedback from families who accessed these services.

Spread a little Sunshine!

In April 2020, the PCF successfully distributed over 120 free activity packs to families across Hartlepool. The packs enabled families to have resources to support their children in lockdown. Packs included sensory balls, garden games, arts, and crafts, cooking materials and more. We were supported by volunteers to distribute the bags as well as Hartlepool Borough Council staff members.

Just a few of the comments received:

"Thank you so much, you all have your children with needs, but you still manage to help others, this is so kind of you"

"WOW, what can I say you guys are amazing, this will keep the kids entertained for hours!"

Welfare Calls/Social Media

Throughout the first lockdown the PCF identified several families who needed a little support. We provided a phone line Monday to Friday and out of hours through social media, to provide Information, Advice and Guidance. The impact was significant as families felt 'cut off' from services, but the PCF could signpost families to services that were operating and feedback to decision makers the issues and concerns families faced.

Bags of Fun

65 bags were provided via Hartlepool Borough Council and families had the opportunity to receive free activity equipment to keep the children entertained. The PCF worked with the local Sport and Recreation Participation Team and offered small group activities over the summer when restrictions were lifted.

Storytime and Pamper for Parents (Summer Programme)

Working in partnership with Hartlepool Borough Councils Community Led Support Team we were able to provide small group activities across Hartlepool. Families enjoyed taking part in activities together. The local Sport and Recreation Participation Team provided physical activities for the children while parents took part in relaxation techniques.

Carlton Camp

Through Short Break Funding, three families accessed Carlton Camp Outdoor Centre for the day. Restrictions allowed only one family to attend per day, however the impact was incredibly positive. Families enjoyed taking part in Crate Building, High Ropes, Archery, Climbing and Orienteering. Families shared their stories –

“This was the most amazing day, we have been locked up shielding for months and to get out of the house, come somewhere different and take part in things we have never tried has been brilliant. The kids have had a ball.”

“Absolutely brilliant, we had the rip, the staff were so friendly and accommodating!”

Picnic in the Park (Summer Programme)

Over the summer period the PCF enjoyed a beautiful day at Ward Jackson Park. The children brought their activity packs and we provided picnics and ice-cream! 19 family members took part and enjoyed catching up and seeing other families. Families shared their experiences in lockdown and helped support each other giving advice and tips. Families thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and shared views.

“This was such a lovely day, a couple of hours out the house, with likeminded people, it was just brilliant, I hope we can start to arrange more things like this”.

“It’s the first time we have been to any sessions and could recommend anymore, just meeting people who ‘Get It’ was an eye opener. It made me feel more confident as no one battered an eye when my son started to have a meltdown.”

Magic Show (Summer Programme)

The PCF were lucky enough to hold a socially distanced Magic Show in the summer holidays. Held at Ward Jackson Park we had 8 families attend. It was a little different to our usual magic shows but the children still thoroughly enjoyed it.

“Thank you once again, while you have your own kids to sort out you still managed to pull this off in such challenging circumstances. Just to have something to do and get out of the house is great.”

Christmas card Competition

This Christmas we teamed up with Ords Stationary supplies to launch our first Christmas card competition. The competition was covered by the Hartlepool Mail and we had some excellent submissions. All children received a prize and the over all winner had a batch of his Christmas cards printed to send to his families and friends.

Christmas Hampers

We provided 33 families with Christmas Lunch and all the trimmings feeding a total 132 people on Christmas day. Funding was secured by the PCF to enable us to order and deliver the goods in time for Christmas Day.

Santa Visit and Christmas Eve Boxes

Hartlepool PCF secured over 40 slots for children with SEND to receive a personal virtual meeting with Santa himself. Families enjoyed speaking to Santa and receiving a visit from his Elves, socially distanced of course!

On 23rd December we also delivered over 40 Christmas Eve boxes to children with additional needs, which was a great surprise to many of the children.

Hartlepool Giving Tree

Hartlepool PCF were grateful to receive over 50 gifts to donate to families in need this Christmas. Gifts were delivered to many families across Hartlepool by volunteers just in time for Christmas.

Bloomin Art Packs

Families enjoyed receiving a number of packs from Bloomin Art, The packs had excellent resources in to learn new art skills and take part in a local competition. Thank you to Bloomin Art who received funding to enable families to receive these great packs.

Lockdown 3 Activities

Third lockdown has had a significant impact on families of children with additional needs and/or disabilities. Working with families and securing funding has allowed us to offer several sessions including 'A Teddy Bears Picnic', 'Slim-Fest' and 'Family pizza evening' all via zoom. Families thoroughly enjoy these sessions and make suggestions of the following events. Families are now planning what they would like to do once lockdown 3 restrictions ease.

Pamper Packs for Parents

Families have faced challenging times over the past year and in January 2021 we have been able to provide 50 Pamper Packs for parents. Its essential parent carers look after themselves and the packs helped with this. Packs included sleep sprays, hand and foot lotions, relaxing bath creams, face masks and more.

“These packs are amazing! I actually managed to get 30 mins in the bath by myself and can’t tell you how good that felt!”

Wellness for Women

We have teamed up with Wellness for Women who are providing several relaxations packs and sessions for families to have the opportunity to relax and take a break. Regular sessions help parents build resilience, provide coping strategies and confidence in themselves.

Repeat for Kids – Mindfulness and Relaxation

Lockdown has had a significant impact on children and young people with SEND, routines are not there, and many families share their worries about their children’s mental health. Working with Repeat we are providing 12 sessions for 8 children per session. The sessions help children focus on their breathing, body, and emotional awareness to enable them to regulate themselves throughout the day.

Managing Anxiety through lockdown training

CAMHS training team provided a bespoke session for Hartlepool Families, following families concerns about their children’s mental health in lockdown. 18 families took part via Teams and felt the session was greatly beneficial.

Focus Groups

Focus Groups have re-established via Zoom and we have regular participation. The sessions provide families one hour a week to have a cuppa with other families and share their emotions and experiences from the week. Our Parent Carer Link Worker signposts families and gathers feedback to enable the PCF to share collective views from families. Listening to families we have now got guest speakers from Educational Psychology, SENDIAS Service, SEND Education Department and regular meeting with the CCG. As restrictions ease we will be able to go back to face to face meetings within the community, connecting carers to local services and support.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 October 2021



Report of: Director, Children and Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: 2020/21 ANNUAL REPORT OF ADOPTION TEES VALLEY

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 For information only.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Children Service's Committee with information relating to the activity of the Adoption Service for the April 2020-March 2021 (**Appendix 1**). The Adoption Service is ran by Adoption Tees Valley Regional Agency (ATV) and this is for Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Redcar and Cleveland Councils. Stockton Borough Council is the host local authority.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 As reported to Children's Services Committee on 17th October 2017 the five Local Authorities made a successful bid to the Department of Education for funding to develop the Adoption Tees Valley Regional Agency (ATV). The ATV went live in April 2018.

3.2 Adoption Tees Valley is overseen by a governance board made up of Local Authority Directors, non-executive members who are adoptive parents, legal representation, voluntary adoption agencies and ATV. The board meet to support the running and oversight of ATV.

3.3 The 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance and Adoption National Minimum Standards places a requirement upon adoption services to ensure that the Executive side of the Council receive an annual report which demonstrates the management and outcomes of the agency.

3.4 ATV is managed in accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2004, the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 and Care Standards Act 2000.

- 3.5 The aim of ATV is to recruit, train and support adopters within the region to ensure our children can live locally with families who understand the children's individual backgrounds and can provide a good quality of life for our 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 adoptive parent/s at the earliest opportunity;
 - Providing robust assessment of and support to adoptive parents 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 the 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 the approval of adopters, and matching of children with their adoptive families;
 - Providing support to the Agency Decision Maker in relation to consideration and decision making regarding plans for the adoption of children.
 - Ensure the adopter and adoptee voices are heard and support shaping and developing the service. In turn this will support the improvement of the adopter and adoptee journey

4. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 The vision for Adoption Tees Valley is to be a centre of excellence and resource for adopted children and their families throughout the period of their childhood, and beyond where necessary. ATV know that there can be considerable support needs for children and families after the Adoption Order is granted, and sometimes even shortly after placement. Many adopted children have needs associated with early trauma; attachment difficulties; separation and loss; and may need some help with recovering and managing the long term impact of these issues.

- 4.2 The report out sets out the:

- Covid regulations Flexibilities use in ATV
- Governance Arrangements
- National context of Adoption
- The key strategic developments in 20/21
- Information relating to the three year review
- Performance Information, including characteristics of children requiring adoptive placement ,early permanence , referrals, matching and placing of children for adoption
- Children's voice in adoption
- Life story work
- Adopter journey from enquiry to approval and the post adoption assessment and support arrangements
- Non agency adoption
- Quality assurance
- Development planning

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 ATV work is vital to ensure children can enjoy permanence at the earliest opportunity which promotes their attachment to the adopters which supports increasing the child's life chances.

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific financial considerations within this report.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific legal considerations within this report, the report does contain information relating to the use of Covid Flexibilities , contained within The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations (2020)

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Adopters and children who have been adopted are supported by the ATV to ensure their voices are heard, that they can shape the service and also be part of work that improves the adopter / adoptee journey.

9. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE.)

- 9.1 There are no child and family poverty considerations

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE.)

10.1 There are no equality and diversity considerations.

11. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

11.1 There are no staff considerations.

12. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

12.1 There are no staff considerations.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to note the annual report in relation to the work of the ATV Service and what it has achieved in 2020/21.

14. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 Adoption Tees Valley fulfils the council's statutory responsibilities to children requiring permanence through adoption and also the recruiting of adopters. This report is provided to Children Services Committee to enable the Committee to satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of the registration and agreement.

14.2 Children's Services Committee has an important role in the scrutiny of activities of the ATV to ensure that performance in this area is of good quality, caring and robust.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 Annual Report April 2020- March 2021

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report 2020-2021



Transform a child's life...

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Glossary

ADM- agency decision maker

PO- Placement order

RAA- Regional Adoption Agency

VAA- Voluntary Adoption Agency

1. Introduction

This is the 3rd full annual report of Adoption Tees Valley, which is the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), for the 5 Local Authority Councils of Darlington; Hartlepool; Middlesbrough; Redcar and Cleveland; and Stockton.

This Annual Report covers the period of 1.4.20 - 31.3.2021.

This period has been impacted by the national Covid 19 pandemic, and the year reported on has been characterised by adoption activity which has been conducted within the amended regulations and restrictions that have been imposed because of the public health emergency.

The pandemic has brought both challenge and opportunity to work **differently across Children's Services, and within the arena of adoption**. To continue adoption activity and finding permanent new families for children requiring adoption, it has been essential to work creatively, and collaboratively, to deliver the best possible services to children and adoptive parents throughout. The service has trialled new ways of working and has implemented practices which have been underpinned by nationally developing adoption practice, and research.

This report will show that 82 children have been placed for adoption within this year, and a further 17 have been placed for early permanence, not yet **"placed for adoption"** which is overall placement activity broadly consistent with the previous year. This level of adoption activity demonstrates that **across the 5 Children's Services Teams, and within Adoption Tees Valley, work** has been continued, challenges discussed, and solutions found, and children with an adoption plan have continued to achieve permanence, through safe, and well supported social work practice. A point of celebration is that 20 % of children placed have been over 5 years of age, and 56% have been in the harder to place categories, which includes children aged 5 +, siblings and children of ethnic minority backgrounds.

Referral numbers of children to ATV have continued to rise, with a 19% increase on the previous year. This is indicative of continuing high numbers of children in our care across the Tees Valley, which is in contrast to national trends across England.

Adoption Orders granted have been at their highest numbers for 6 years in the region, at 89, again going against national trends in adoption activity.

The data for this period shows that there is a continued demand for permanence via adoption for children who are, sadly, unable to be cared for safely by birth parents, or within their birth family, or kinship network.

The timeliness data shows that ATV has brought a year on year steady improvement to overall average timescales, for children from starting their care journey to moving in with adopters. This is a positive indicator as we know that there are a number of children, now adopted, who have had significant periods of time before becoming adopted, and who are now reflected in overall timeliness data.

The specific data on Placement Order to Match timescales has shown an increase, which is reflective of this same group of children. The service is working with Local Authorities to understand the story for children with lengthy care episodes prior to adoption. It is notable that across England this timeliness figure (A2) has also increased this year.

ATV is also reviewing and analysing critically the practice which supports timely matching of children once PO is granted. It's crucial that Local Authorities and ATV work closely and collectively together where a child may have a plan for adoption, and that information is shared in a timely way, to enable early family finding to take place. There are good processes in place for early notification of children, who may have a plan for adoption, but we know timely sharing of all information has been a barrier in some cases. The service has asked its Legal Advisor to develop an Information Sharing Protocol for early permanence planning for children, and this has been a piece of work which has been ratified through the Local Family Justice Board, and through consultation with multi agency partners. It is intended that this protocol will support early information sharing for the benefit of finding families for children at the earliest opportunity where adoption is their plan.

The work, and outcomes are reflective of good, well planned and collaborative work through multiple stakeholders, including the Courts. Professionals have communicated well, and have planned together, using new ways of working to achieve best outcomes for children and their families, taking account of the challenges of the pandemic, on health and movement within and between communities.

Although the pandemic has brought some significant challenges, the service has developed and piloted some new ways of working, which are outlined in the report.

- Early permanence has been embedded in a more systemic way, with a clear pathway for adopters wishing to offer this placement type.
- The service has worked with the University of East Anglia research "Moving on to Adoption" to trial a model of Introductions and Placement planning, which supports moving children in with adopters at a pace they need.
- The service has developed the "Assessment to Support Pathway", enhancing the continuity of preparation for adoption, and adoption

support, using the underpinning model of Secure Base, and PACE parenting.

- A new Friends and Family training module is now offered to all adopters and their support networks.

2. Covid Regulation Flexibilities

The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations (2020) was passed through parliament on the 23.4.20 and came into force on the 27.4.20. These permitted adoption services a range of flexibilities which would enable adoption activity to progress, through the pandemic. The amended regulations were again amended in September 2020, and March 2021, changing what flexibilities were permitted.

ATV has used flexibilities as follows:

- i. A panel has always been convened for usual panel business. No adopter has been approved, and no match has proceeded to a decision, without being considered at the adoption panel. The flexibility to stand down panel has not been used.
- ii. The Agency produced amended procedures to allow for the possibility that the panel may not achieve quoracy of 5, in unforeseen circumstances. On 4 occasions the agency has operated with 4 panel members, and on all other occasions, there have been at least 5 panel members. The panel is independently chaired, and there is always at least 2 further independent panel members. This flexibility has not been permitted since September 2020 and has not been used since that time.
- iii. No relinquished child has been referred or considered within this period.
- iv. The agency has progressed adopters to stage 2 of the assessment process, without having yet obtained health information, and/or DBS information. This has been necessary, **as GP's have not been able to prioritise adoption medicals of prospective adopters.** Since September adopters have only been progressed to stage 2 without Medical Reports having yet been received.
- v. No adopter who is required to have a medical assessment has been approved without one having taken place and considered by one of the Agency Medical Advisors.

A significant challenge for the Agency has been the situation with respect of provision of Medical Reports by GP's, due to challenges of covid, and pressure on GP practices.

The service has worked at a local GP practice, and strategic partnership level to attempt to address the timeliness of adopter medicals. The service valued the input of Safeguarding GP's particularly for Hartlepool/Stockton and for Darlington, who have liaised with local GP practices to promote the importance of adopter medicals in the safeguarding of children. However, some GP practices continue to present lengthy delays in providing adopter medicals, which has impacted on overall assessment timescales, and in some cases led to some dissatisfaction for prospective adopters.

3. Governance

The RAA is governed by a Board, which comprises the 5 Directors for Children's Services of the 5 Local Authorities within the partnership. There are 2 non-Executive Directors, who were recruited to the Board in 2020, and who are adoptive parents who have adopted through ATV.

The Service Manager for ATV attends all Board meetings and presents information to enable oversight of the performance of the RAA, strategic direction and operational practice. The Board has a role in being assured of the quality of adoption work in Adoption Tees Valley, and receives information on quality, outcomes, and proposed improvements.

Board meetings are held quarterly.

The Chair of the Board is Sue Butcher, DCS at Middlesbrough Children's Services, and it is now agreed Chair tenure will be for 2 years.

In each of the 5 LA's there is an Adoption Lead Officer who is responsible for ensuring that the RAA is delivering effective and high quality adoption services for the children in its area. The Adoption Lead Officer is registered with Ofsted,

Adoption Leads meet with the Service Manager and Team Managers of ATV monthly.

The Lead Elected Members of the Council with responsibility for Children's Services, for each Local Authority area meet bi-annually with the Board and Service Manager, to oversee the work of ATV, and be kept informed of key developments.

4. National Context of Adoption

The government has rolled out the programme of regionalisation of adoption over the past 4 years, and almost all Local Authorities in England are now in a RAA.

Regionalisation has enabled a viable working group of RAA leaders to meet and work together, to develop practice, and address challenges and opportunities affecting the adoption of children across England.

The core objectives are to enable children to be placed with adoptive families more quickly, reducing waiting time to be adopted; and to improve the quality of adoption support for children and families.

The DfE have supported the regionalisation programme, and there is now central government funding to progress strategic leadership, and programme workstreams for adoption across the national RAA Leaders Group.

The ATV Service Manager participates in the national RAA leaders' forum, and through this, ATV is developing adoption practice within a national context, influenced by key stakeholders.

The Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) seeks to address matters impacting on permanence for children. Locally, the regional ASGLB is a strategic and practice forum for North East and Cumbrian Local Authorities, and Voluntary Adoption Agencies, and is chaired by Sally Robinson, DCS at Hartlepool BC who is also a member of ATV Board.

Within this year, the Regional ASGLB convened a conference, delivered virtually, with researchers from The University of East Anglia presenting the findings of the Moving on To Adoption Model. ATV has begun to adopt this best practice model in some targeted cases, planning for an introductions programme for the child which is centred around good relationship building **between foster carers and adopters, and taken at the child's pace.**

ATV works as part of the regional and national strategic and operational forums, to be influenced by, and to influence best practice for adopted children, and those who have a plan for permanence via adoption.

Through regional collaborative work, there has been a drive to achieve better opportunities for placing children within the region, where possible **through the development of a regional protocol, where VAA's and RAA's** have agreed to maximise and protect the opportunities for children to be placed with locally approved adoptive parents, where possible.

Work is underway through the RASGLB partnerships to develop a regional market position statement, to underpin sufficiency analysis and planning for the children requiring adoption. The aim is to use regional adopters for regional children, and to plan for future needs, and skills to take the children who require adoption.

5. Key Strategic Development

Early Permanence

ATV has set out to offer more opportunity for children to be cared for by their likely permanent family, at an earlier stage in their lives. This is achieved through fostering for adoption, where the child's plan is well developed before the Placement Order is granted, enabling a transparent, well planned placement, which reduces moves for children, and enables vital bonding and attachment with those likely to become parents to the child, at an earlier stage.

This has been mobilised through the Early Permanence Strategy, which has been collaborative, and has involved key stakeholders with a role in care planning and the placement of children for adoption.

This report will show the work and progress in developing early permanence, and key challenges learned through the process.

In total 17 children have been placed on a fostering for adoption basis, prior to the Court authorisation to place for adoption.

6. Three Year Review of Adoption Tees Valley

The Board have directed a review of ATV, in line with original plans in the Business case presented to Councils prior to implementation.

The review will measure performance against the 4 key objectives set out in the original full business case, presented to the 5 Local Authority Councils for agreement, prior to the establishment of the RAA.

These were:

- To deliver better outcomes for children and families
- To deliver improved value for money
- To establish strong and sustainable services
- To successfully implement the RAA

The review is being supported by a member of the Stockton BC Transformation Team and is using a mixed methodology of data and financial review; surveys; focus groups; and peer to peer learning project between ATV and a similar sized RAA. An independent facilitator, experienced in RAA development, has been appointed for a Focus Group with the Board of ATV.

The review is underway and will conclude with findings in September 2021.

7. Performance Benchmarking Information

This section will compare ATV overall performance to England average, where comparable data is published and exists.

Individual LA data for the 5 Local Authority partners will be provided in later sections

Children

	ATV 2019-20	ATV 2020-21	Direction	All England	Direction
Adoption Orders	64	89	↑ Inc 39%	2,863	↓ Dec 16%
Placements	91	82	↓ Dec 10%	3,064	↓ Dec 7.5%
PO's	82	76	↓ Dec 7%	2,907	↓ Dec 12.5%
ADM BID's	96	99	↑ Inc 3%	3,731	↓ Dec 9.5%
Early Permanence	10	17	↑ Inc 70%	449	↓ Dec 7%
A10 (entering care to moving in with adopters) - days	414	405	↓ Dec 2%	418	↑ Inc 11% from 375 2019/20 Adoption Scorecard
A2	214	238	↑ Inc 11%	206	↑ Inc 11% from 185 2019/20 Adoption Scorecard
Rate of leaving care by AO	10%	12%	↑ Inc 2%	11% (2019/20)	↓ Dec 1% from 12% 2018/19

From ATV Q4 Scorecard, taken from ASGLB returns, England Data from ASGLB Q4 2020-21

X indicates data not available, or not meaningful in this report

Adopters

	ATV 2019-20	ATV 2020-21	Direction	All England	Direction
Approvals	51	62	↑ Inc 22%	3,164	↑ Inc 6%
Numbers in assessment-end of period	34	40	↑ Inc 18%	X	
Stage 1 starts	60	63	↑ Inc 3%	X	

	ATV 2019-20	ATV 2020-21	Direction	All England	Direction
Stage 2 starts	57	62	↑ Inc 9%	X	
Fastrack	20	12	Dec 40%	X	
Waiting to be matched at end of period	22	36	↑ Inc 64%	X	
Waited more than 3 months to be matched	71%	54%	↓ Dec 17%	X	
Approval to match timescale Days		129		269	
Approval timescale days	202	217		295	
Stage 1 days		93		112	
Stage 2 Days		127		141	

From ATV Q4 Scorecard, taken from ASGLB returns, England Data from ASGLB Q4 2020-21

X indicates data not available, or not meaningful in this report

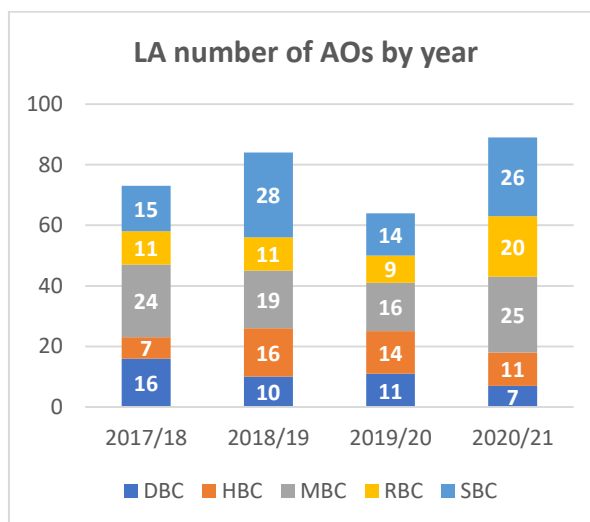
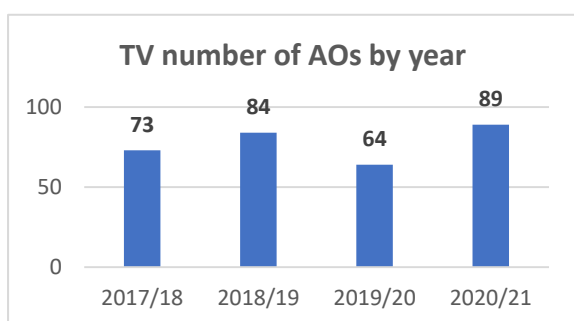
Characteristics of children Adopted 2020-21, and Children Waiting with PO as of 31.3.21

	Age under 5	Age over 5	Female	Male	Ethnic Minority Heritage	Disabled	Part of Sib group	Harder to place
Adopted	71	18	49	40	8	2	37	46
Waiting with PO, 31.3.21	39	9	25	23	7	0	19	20
Waiting over 18 months since	9	6	7	8	4	0	10	10

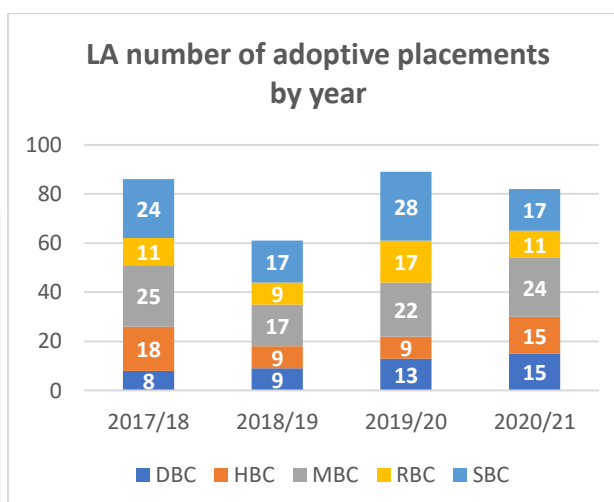
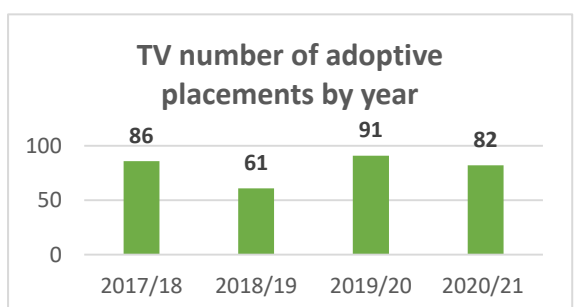
entering care								
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Individual Local Authority Performance

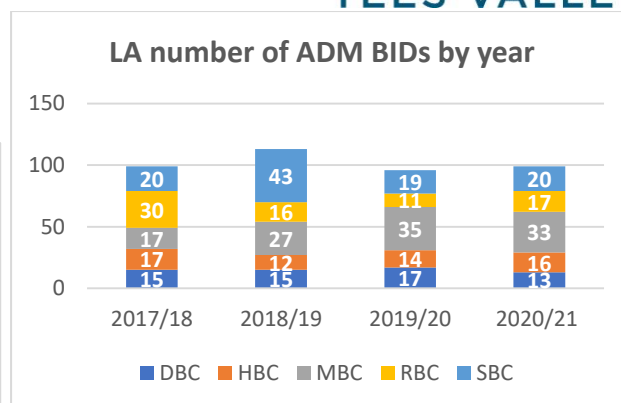
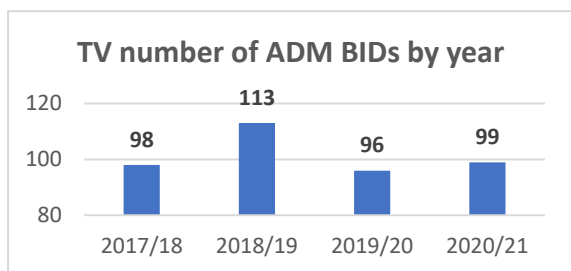
Adoption Orders



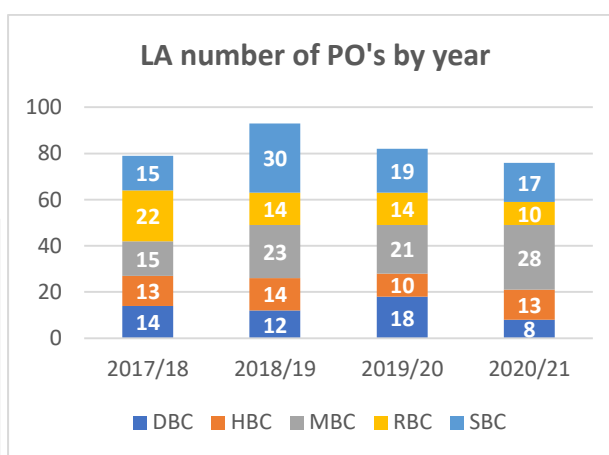
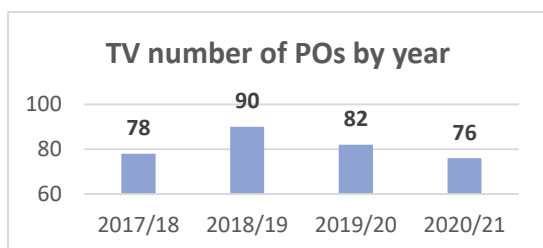
Children Placed for Adoption



Agency Decisions that Adoption is in the Child's Best Interest (ADM BID)



Placement Orders



Analysis of Performance

The numbers of children adopted from care in this year has risen by 39%, with 89 children having been adopted this year. This is the highest level of adoption orders in the last 6 years, and indicates that in Tees Valley, adoption activity does not appear to be following the national trend, of a decline in numbers.

Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland, and Middlesbrough have seen Adoptions from care rise in the last year, with Redcar and Cleveland seeing a 122% increase; Stockton seeing an 85% increase and Middlesbrough seeing a 56% increase.

Darlington and Hartlepool have seen fewer children adopted in this year, than the previous one.

Adoptions from care in this year reflect the high numbers of children placed overall for adoption in the previous year.

This year, the numbers of children placed with adoptive families has dropped by 9% from 91 to 82 children placed for adoption in the year.

Stockton have seen a 39% drop in placements; and Redcar and Cleveland a 35% drop. Middlesbrough have had 9% more children placed; Hartlepool have had 66% increase and Darlington 15% increase.

The service has promoted early permanence (EP), as detailed above. This has impacted on EP cases, with more children having started their adoption placements at an earlier stage, via fostering for adoption. The number of children in EP has risen by 70%, although numbers are small. The numbers have risen from 10 in the previous year to 17 in this year.

To date no children have been returned to parental care following placement in a fostering to adopt placement, however, the Service is now beginning to encounter cases where this is being considered. It should always be remembered that where parents are able to care for their child safely, this is the best plan for that child.

ATV has had significant impact in terms of adoptions of older children from care, with 18 of the 89 children adopted from care this year being over age 5. This is 20% of all children adopted were over the age of 5. This particular outcome is a positive one, indicating that in Tees Valley, we are collectively ambitious that older children can be adopted, and have achieved permanence via adoption for many older children.

The number of children for whom the permanence decision has changed from adoption remains steady at 21. The reasons include: a change of plan due to the child's needs changing; no adopters able to be found in the timescale required; Court not granting PO.

Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds have increased slightly in this year, from 5 to 8. This represents 9% of all children adopted.

Agency Decisions that adoption is in the child's best interest have risen slightly (3%), with Redcar and Cleveland being the LA which has seen more plans decided.

Placement Orders have declined in this year by 7%, from 82 to 76. This may reflect the national trend is beginning to follow in Tees Valley, with national adoptions reducing, or due to delays in Final hearings. Better analysis will be available of the trend in PO's, as the year 2021-22 progresses.

ATV has increased its approval of adopters by 24%, rising from 51 in the previous year to 62 adopter approvals in this year. This is a significant achievement, especially during the pandemic. This figure could have been greater; however, many assessments have been delayed due to delays in GP practices in undertaking adult health assessments.

ATV has seen a greater number of Stage 1 assessments starts (a rise of 3% to 63) however, noted is a number of stage 1 drop outs due to the adopters not being at the right time in their lives to adopt, or checks identifying it is not suitable to proceed. It is felt that more people considered adoption during covid, but more applicants were not yet ready to adopt, when stage 1 commenced. Stage 2 starts have increased in the year, from 57 to 62, a 9% rise.

The above reflects that in Tees Valley, adoption is continuing to be busy and to thrive, with children being matched and placed at a relatively similar level, and with a continuing interest in adopting from people within the community.

The performance also will help address whether ATV is recruiting the right adopters for the children who require placement.

This year 30 children have been placed with external agency adopters, which is the same number as the previous year, but is a greater percentage of the total (36%). Of these 30 children, 15 were placed within the NE and Cumbria region, with local VAA's, which is a positive in terms of seeking to offer children families where contact plans can more easily be maintained, and where their regional identity, and longer term adoption support needs are planned for closer to the home region.

At the end of the period 36 families were approved, not yet matched. However, of these families many were in the process of matching, and the data shows that the percentage of families who wait more than 3 months following approval, to match has reduced from 71% to 54%. This means that nearly half of all families were matched with children within 3 months of their approval and is a positive indicator that ATV is utilising its own adopter resources. The rise in numbers not yet matched is also indicative of a greater number approved. There are few adopters who are waiting over 12 months to take a child, and ATV adopters are almost always taking Tees Valley children.

ATV is matching adopters more quickly following approval than the England average, by 140 days, with ATV average timescale being 129 days following approval, and the England average being 269 days following approval. This indicates that ATV is recruiting the right adopters for children, and is effective in matching quickly, with much linking activity taking place as adopters are in the later stages of assessment.

More adopters are needed to meet the demand for placements, which is continuing to show an increase, with no reduction in placements.

ATV has been working on an improved Assessment to Support Pathway, as detailed, seeking to offer greater information, support and provide more confidence to those adopters who can consider children in the harder to

place category, which includes older children, siblings, children of ethnic minority heritage, and disabled children, or those with developmental delays.

Within this year, ATV has placed a sibling group of 3 children together, with adopters recruited and approved internally, which is a significant achievement.

8. Marketing and Recruitment

ATV has planned a number of key marketing activities, aimed at promoting the RAA and achieving more people choosing to come to ATV to adopt.

There have been key lines of marketing approach this year, supported by 3 campaigns, focussing on attracting more prospective adopters to ATV.

1. The service has worked with the RAA National Recruitment Campaign, funded through DfE, targeting adopters for children who wait the longest. Nationally these are children from black ethnic minority backgrounds. The campaign has been branded #YouCanAdopt and has its own website. National film and materials were used, and ATV produced its own film, echoing this campaign, with our social worker, Chioma, being the face of ATV during this campaign.
2. ATV analysed our sufficiency needs, assessing the needs of children in this region who wait the longest to be adopted. In this RAA it is siblings, where one or both siblings have additional needs, and one or both children are aged 5 +. In August 2020 ATV did a dedicated (anonymised) profile campaign, generating huge social media interest, making ATV one of the biggest RAA facebook accounts in England.

To promote needs, ATV set out 3 clear campaign periods in 2020-21:

- August 2020– profiling our needs for adopters for hard to place children.
- October 2020- National Adoption Week- supported the National Adopter Recruitment campaign, with use of national materials, and our own film. Focus was on promoting the need for adopters for black and ethnic minority children, who wait the longest to be adopted in UK.
- March- April 2021- Sibling campaign, with media interviews, and a dedicated focus on the need for adopters for siblings in Tees Valley.

The ATV website (www.adoptionteesvalley.org.uk) is the largest source of enquiries, and enquirers can now request a call back, seeking an initial conversation with one of our team to discuss their interest. Systems in ATV mean that enquirers receive a friendly call, within the same day, and can

easily access an initial conversation followed by an initial visit, to progress their interest.

Outcomes:

87 visitors to the ATV website as a result of national campaigns, and who have directly visited the #YouCanAdopt website.

Significant increase in social media following as a result of profiling. It is not yet clear what impact on overall approval rate, however, since 3.1.21 there have been 5 approvals of adoptive parents who can seek to adopt siblings.

2 families of ethnic minority heritage have come to ATV as a result of the National Adoption week/ATV promotional campaign.

	Full year 2019-20	Q1&Q2 2020-21	Full Year 2020-21
Enquiries	270	196	357 (32% increase)
Social media followers	1,000		10, 989
Website Visits	18,175	11,000	17,738
Attendees at Information Events	Not counted	Not counted	205
Registration of Interest	61	30	63

Conversion Enquiry to Registration of Interest- 22%

In the forthcoming year, ATV will be focussing more effort on developing the website, and reaching out to our target audience, supported by digital marketing expertise.

9. Adopter Journey – Enquiry to Approval

	Total 2019-20	Q1 & Q2 2020-21	Q3 & Q4 2020-21	Total 2020-21
Initial Visits to prospective Adopters	65	50	42	92
Stage 1 Starts	61	30	33	63
Stage 2 Starts	54	32	30	62
Adopter Approvals	50	26	36	62

Conversion Initial Visit to Approval – 67%

Assessments have been undertaken virtually by assessing social workers, qualified and experienced under the Restriction on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations. During the early part of the year, assessments were being fully continued via virtual video technology, for those assessments started face to face before the initial lockdown. ATV operated within practice guidelines agreed through the RAA Leaders group, enabling sharing and learning around opportunities for best practice, and high quality assessments, conducted virtually. During the year, assessing social workers identified that where they had not yet met the applicants, building a relationship with prospective adopters was more difficult via virtual means. The service agreed planned face to face visits, to enable good quality assessments to be undertaken, while maintaining careful risk assessment around covid protection, for all parties. It has been high priority to ensure that children's welfare and future safety are paramount, and this has been at the forefront of continued assessment work. No adopters have been approved without at least one home visit, which enabled a full home safety inspection, and face to face meeting between assessor and the applicants.

New Initiative

10. Assessment to Support Pathway for Adopters

During this year, service planning has sought to strengthen the preparation, assessment, and support pathway for prospective adopters. The objectives are:

- To help ATV adopters to feel even more equipped and prepared to consider children with greater needs, with the aim of increasing more internal placements, and reducing inter agency placements
- To follow recommendations of the 2020 Adoption Barometer report (Adoption UK) which recommends that all adopters should have an identified support plan.

A small group of social workers, and the Recruitment Manager have developed the ATV model of assessment, using the Adopter Hub (PACT UK) materials, and webinars, and building on the Secure Base Model (Schofield and Beek). Additional elements of the assessment include:

- More use of Adopter Hub materials to explore how prospective adopters understand and will meet the needs of children with wider needs
- A Self-Care plan, developed and worked out by applicants with their social worker
- Case Studies available to develop thinking and self-awareness

- A new Family and Friends Training Course, enabling the support network of adoptive parents to learn more about the needs of adopted children.

Kirsty - one of ATV's experienced social workers, who developed the course explains:

"The motivation to start this training session was to share our knowledge at ATV with the people that will be ultimately supporting the adopter(s) as parents and who will be the ones that are playing an important role in a child's life. The aim was to provide an understanding of the differences parenting an adopted child and the reasons why a child's behaviour and development might be slightly different to other children in the family and network. Ultimately it was to equip the family and friends with how best to support the child and the adopters.

We started the training in March 2021, and we have facilitated 4 sessions. There are another 3 sessions scheduled for the rest of the year and are running bimonthly. So far, we have had 39 individuals who have attended the half-day session, supporting 20 couples / single prospective adopters in their adoption journey.

The topics we cover include: The adoption process, attachment, contact in adoption, why children require an adoptive family, the different categories of abuse, identity, fostering for adoption, therapeutic parenting and how you can support and help".

Feedback from a prospective grandparent highlights "Each child has gone through trauma and they will remember and grieve for that. They have no idea what is ahead of them so they will need time to readjust, so we as new grandparents need to be mindful of that and adjust ourselves to think first and foremost of their life story and realise this child will have different needs from us too regarding what we knew as parenting".

11. Preparation for Adoption Groups

ATV saw an increase in the numbers of applicants starting the process during covid and progressing through assessment and preparation.

The Preparation sessions were held via Video conferencing however, applicants completed all 4 days and the same content, and opportunity to meet various key people who could talk about adoption was maintained.

ATV has a lead social worker for the development and implementation of Preparation Training. She has maintained a dedicated focus on the preparation of adopters, supported by a number of social workers in the

team, ensuring that all speakers continued to join, giving prospective adopters a good preparation experience.

Angi Simmons - ATV's Lead Trainer

We have completed all training since May 2020 in the virtual format. This has been a learning curve but so far, the feedback has been positive. We have now the ability to have "breakouts rooms" and this has helped in the socialising of the group members too. Extra groups were held in October 2020 and January 2021

Within ATV we have continued to move forward with our assessment tools and the training has also been a tool that has been updated.

Using the Secure Base Model (Schofield and Beek) and incorporating this throughout the 4 days will ensure our adopters have awareness of this important theory in child development to carry on through their stage 2 assessment period, offering a range of ongoing learning.

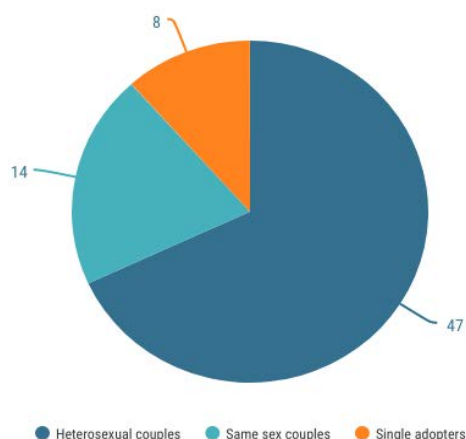
Prospective Adopter feedback -

- *I thought today was amazing taught us more than expected considering it was the first day.*
- *There is a lot to take in but it definitely was worth it*
- *Learning about separation and loss was really important. We always believed that we would be as open as possible with our child to help with their identity. This input reaffirmed that for us, and we believe strongly about children knowing where and who they have come from and having open and honest conversations.*
- *We look forward to being part of the ATV family and meeting you in person. Thank you!*
- *The courses have allowed us to question our own preconceptions and has totally changed our opinions on some aspects such as contact and meeting the birth family. We feel like we are more informed in general and now feel this is definitely the journey we want to follow.*
- *We feel the preparation training was extremely useful. It has opened our eyes to the issues we may face as well as providing us with tools and resources to help us along the way.*

Number of groups held: 6

Number of households attending in total: 69

Characteristics of attendees at preparation training



12. Early Permanence

ATV has acted on a strategic plan to deliver early permanence for children in the Tees Valley for whom the Local Authority has an adoption plan, or is in the process of assessment, with adoption as one possible outcome.

Early Permanence (EP) is the placement of a child who may have/is likely to have an adoption plan, with prospective adopters, who are dually approved as foster carers and adopters. The usual route is often called Fostering for Adoption (FFA) and the approved adopters are identified as prospective carers for the child, before the Court has authorised the placement for adoption of that child, through a Placement Order. The child is placed with the family on a fostering basis, until such time as the Court grant a Placement Order, or that the Court determines that the child will return to birth parents, or to a family member, based on evidence provide in the Final Hearing.

The benefits of EP are that the child has fewer moves in care, prior to formal placement for adoption, and the child has the opportunity for beginning bonding and attachment to their permanent carers, at the earliest time. Both these actions are well researched as being beneficial to children in the short and long term.

Early permanence does not pre-empt the decision of the Court and Judges will always decide a child will return to the care of parents, or family members where the welfare of the child dictates this is the best outcome.

ATV rolled out the early permanence Strategy is 2020-21, a delivery plan which was delayed due to covid.

- Meetings were held with senior managers and senior solicitors in each LA, to agree the key approach to early permanence across Tees Valley.
- An Information Sharing Protocol has been drawn up by ATV Legal Advisor (Cygnets Family Law) which was consulted on, through the Local Family Justice Board, including with members of the Judiciary.
- ATV Managers delivered a training programme to each Local Authority in Tees Valley, and to Cafcass and the Adoption Panel. Additional sessions have been offered to some IRO's.
- ATV has implemented a preparation workshop which is mandatory for any prospective adopter wishing to consider early permanence.

ATV and the Local Authorities have delivered 17 early permanence placements for children in Tees Valley, an increase of 7 on the previous year.

Of these 17 placements, no child has returned to parents within the year. One child continues without PO and may return to birth family care.

More opportunity for Early Permanence is a strategic goal of the national RAA system, and ATV has worked in collaboration with other RAA's practice to develop the service in Tees Valley. Its success as a pathway for children is based on good quality assessment work by the Local Authority children's social work team, and in good preparation and support to prospective adopters.

ATV will build on support to adopters offering early permanence in this year (2021-22). ATV will further develop the preparation module for prospective adopters, in line with Coram BAAF training in September 2021. Work is underway to strengthen the partnership between the 5 LA Fostering Services and ATV, to deliver a clearer and more cohesive offer to adopters and the child.

13. Referrals of Children, Matching and Placing

Early Notifications to ATV

	Q1&Q2	Q3 &Q4	Full Year	
Early Notifications 2019-20	88	76	164	
Early Notifications 2020-21	98	97	195	19% increase

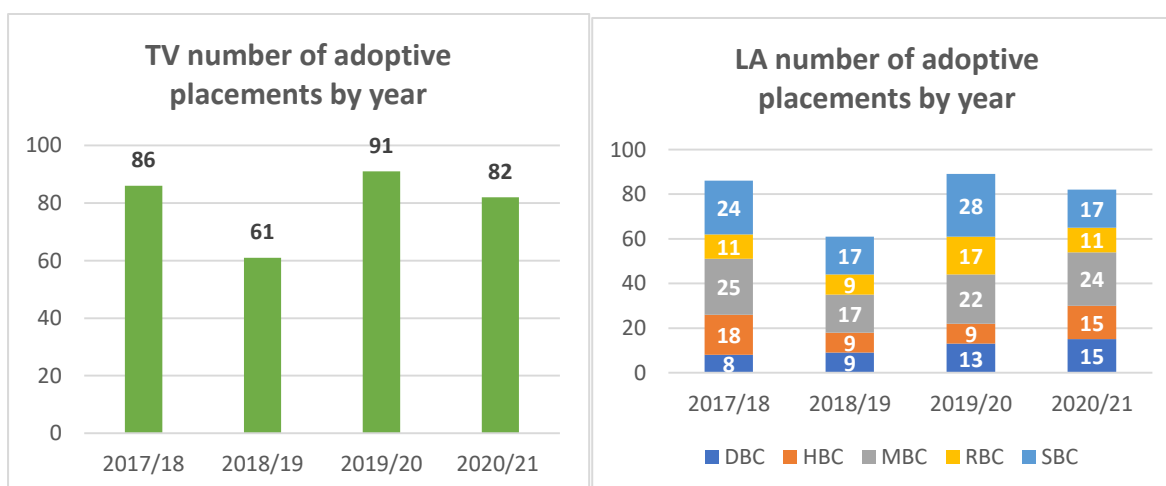
Referrals by Local Authority

Year	DBC	HBC	MBC	R&CBC	SBC	TV
2020/21	26	28	58	31	52	195

Placements

	2019-20	2020-21: April-September	2020-21: Oct-March	Totals 2020-21
ATV children placed with ATV adopters	60	27	25	52
ATV Children placed with external adopters	31	18	12	30
External children placed with ATV adopters	2	1	1	2
Total ATV children placed	91	45	37	82
Total placements	93	46	38	84

Placements by Local Authority



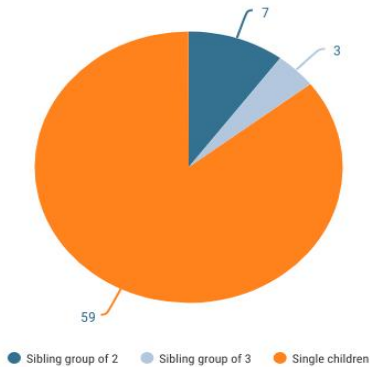
14. Characteristics of children placed

Age at the time of moving in:

0-12 months	1-2 yrs.	2-3 yrs.	3-4 yrs.	4-5 yrs.	5+ yrs.
26	31	11	4	4	6
32%	38%	13%	5%	5%	7%

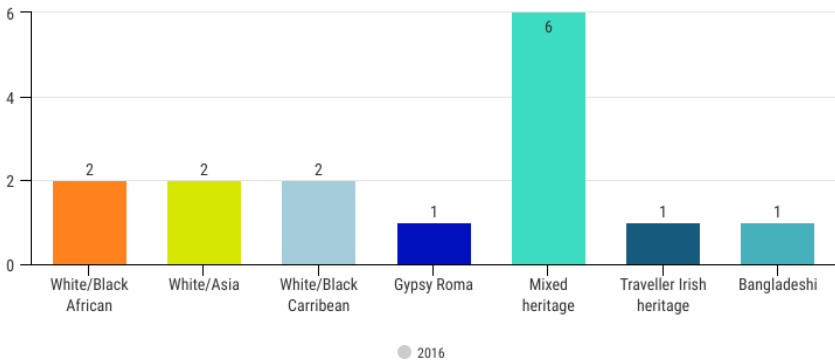
Siblings

Number of children in sibling groups, 2020-2021

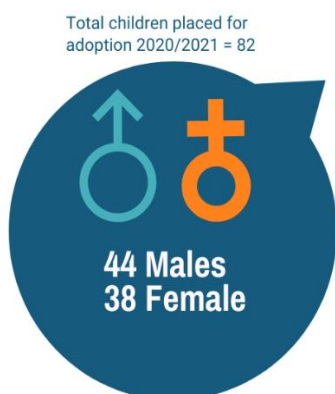


Ethnicity

Ethnicity breakdown (15 children from ethnic minority backgrounds), 2020-2021



Gender



Children who wait the longest to be adopted in Tees Valley

Analysis of children waiting with a Placement Order data, at the end of Q4, identifies that the characteristics of children waiting more than 4 months in almost all cases include children in sibling groups. There were 27 children waiting with PO, not matched, at the end of Q4. Of these children:

5 have waited more than 12 months to be matched

7 have waited between 8-12 months to be matched

4 have waited 4-8 months to be matched

11 have waited less than 4 months

4 of the 5 children who have waited longest (over 12 months) are in sibling groups, and each of the sibling groups includes at least one child over age 5.

One who has waited over 12 months is a young child, with uncertain developmental needs, but not a disability.

Of the children waiting 8-12 months, 2 are part of a sibling group of 3 children, waiting to be placed, aged over 5 and ethnic minority heritage.

There is a further white sibling group of 3, with a child aged over 5 in that group. Also, a white sibling group of 2, also with a child aged over 5.

15. Disruptions

There have been no disruptions to a child's placement, following placement with adopters, and before the adoption order is granted.

This is a positive, indicating that children have been matched appropriately, and adopters have been supported to meet the child's needs.

One child was matched, and began introductions, but then did not go on to be placed.

16. Adoption Panel

An Adoption panel Chairs report has been co-produced by 2 Independent Chairs, as required by Adoption National Minimum Standard 17.2 (NMS 2014)

The full report is made available to the Board of ATV; to the Adoption Panel; to the management and team at ATV.

This report is for the second period of 6 months in this year- 1.10.20-31.3.21

Thematic strengths and areas for improvement for ATV Panel Business and Management of panel

Panel chairs fed back that overall adoption activity was positive, and panel was operating well.

There were a total of 28 panels held within this six month period and 23 within the previous six months. The total number of cases considered was 69 as opposed to 70 in the previous period reflecting the limit on work presented to any one panel, which is welcomed.

Panel chairs summarised:

- It is to the adoption team and panel members credit that adoption business has been maintained throughout this period, including a third 'lockdown' and that no panels have had to be cancelled due to Covid related issues.
- Due to the 'virtual' nature of Panels, the Chair continues to have a much more formal role in directing the business and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to speak and to ask questions. This format does reduce the free flowing discussion previously held during face-to-face meetings, which does not sit comfortably with Panel Chairs.
- The Chair continues to take on the additional role of agreeing and collating panel member questions, which are submitted in advance of panel.
- There continue to be the challenges associated with technology and virtual panels. IT issues during virtual panel meetings have delayed business on occasions and have meant that the experience for adopters will have been less well managed and supported.
- None of the panels in this timeframe were held with the reduced quoracy allowed under the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. However panel continued to see the

impact of the 'easing' allowed by these regulations, particularly in timescales for medicals, meaning these were not always completed until nearer the end of the assessment process, giving little or no time for medical issues to be fully addressed within the reports in some cases.

- Adopter preparation training, meetings and assessment sessions continued to be held virtually rather than face-to-face. Although applicants and adopters are generally positive about their experiences the longer-term impact of this remains to be seen.

Strengths identified over the past 6 months include

- Continued consideration of adoption business and commitment of everyone involved throughout a time of unprecedented upheaval and anxiety due to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Consideration of questions for applicants/adopters prior to panel has been a benefit and saved time on the day.
- In contrast to the national trend, adoption business is increasing in the region with 6 additional panels having to be arranged to supplement the weekly panels already planned. Additional panels are already being planned for the next 6 months ensuring there are sufficient central list members available and documentation can be read in a timely manner.
- There have been 17 fostering for adoption cases presented for match, ensuring good outcomes for those children in terms of establishing and maintaining their early attachments.
- Panel minutes are now circulated to all panel members for consideration to ensure a full and accurate record is agreed.
- All Central List Members have now had an Annual Review.

Areas for improvement include:

- 1 Panel was cancelled at short notice due to lack of business during this timeframe, with 6 additional Panels arranged at relatively short notice, although with the required 10 day period for panel papers to be circulated, and read, indicating that the planning of work to be presented at panel perhaps needs more careful oversight.
- The number of individual documents presented for adoption matches continues to prove challenging when dealing with information electronically.
- Although a very helpful update on outcomes was provided in February 21, panel members do not receive regular, timely feedback on outcomes following Panel e.g. whether ADM agreed with panel recommendations and made their decision within the 7 day timescale;

whether planned placements went ahead successfully, information about reasons for interruptions/disruptions or feedback received from presenting social workers or prospective adopters.

- It would be helpful for a summary of pertinent issues raised in Central List member appraisals to be made available to Panel Chairs to contribute to the 6 monthly report.
- Although there has now been training relating to trends in disruption in specific cases that have disrupted since ATV went live, this did not allow the panels that dealt with the particular cases to look forensically at their practise in the approval and/or match.
- There continues to be some evidence of missed opportunities for early permanence placements when matches come to panel, though early permanence does seem to be embedding in some of the Local Authorities.
- There continue to be some delays in progressing children's plans, resulting in delays in identifying children who require adoption and subsequent matching. Availability of case work time, changes of social worker, staff sickness and Court timescales are some of the reasons cited.
- There is not always consistent practice across the Tees Valley Local Authorities in respect of Life Appreciation events, which are not always in evidence where, ideally, they should be required. Sometimes there has been planning and thinking about Life Appreciation Events, but not shared in the panel documentation. Such events should draw on information from all carers and significant agencies involved in a child's life.
- Although there are some excellent examples of CPR's the inconsistent quality continues to cause concern at panel where lack of knowledge about regulatory requirements on the part of some authors in preparing children's plans for adoption is evident. Some CPR's don't have updated information in and this compromises what is available for adopter and children. The importance of full, factual and qualitative information being available to children for their future cannot be overstated.

The agency meets with panel Chairs following provision of the annual report and has continued to make changes and amendments to process, to reflect feedback, and improve quality. A challenge for Adoption Tees Valley is that although panel is a busy, weekly (sometimes twice weekly) formal meeting requiring a significant amount of administration, planning, and quality preparation, there is no additional Panel Advisor or Panel Administrator to support this process, as is the case in most other Regional Adoption Agencies.

17. Life Story Work

The Biannual report 2020-21 highlighted challenges with managing the volume of life story books for children who are placed for adoption. The forum of LA Adoption Lead Officers and ATV have continued to address backlog of life story work, looking at short term and longer term measures to address this issue. Additional staffing (temporary) has been introduced to address backlog however, **barriers are identified whereby the child's social worker may not always provide information in a timely way or gather this at the time events are progressing with the child's journey through care.** The ATV Board have considered this matter and agreed that children's social workers should be responsible for life story work for children. It has been agreed that **children's social workers will be more actively monitored within each LA for progress with life story work, and the ATV role will be to support the child's social worker in producing the book.**

The backlog of life story work is being addressed between each Local Authority and ATV, via agency agreements in each case.

Longer term options for a digital app, to support gathering life story information are being explored. Consultation has taken place with a group of adopters, who have given valuable feedback, but in general welcome the idea.

18. Adoption Support

The adoption support service to adopters has by necessity been delivered largely through virtual means, due to the pandemic, with some face to face contacts where this has been required for case work, and the need to visit children and families.

	2019-20	2020-21	
Number of adoption support referrals	147	83	
Access to Files requests/completed	35	36	
Adoption Support Assessments completed	132	55	
Successful application to ASF	175	166	
Unsuccessful application to ASF	0	0	
Value of applications to ASF	£692,833	£637,551 + £70,965 Covid	

Education Support Cases during year	28	59	
Number of Post Box Contract Agreements		279	

The 3 Tier model continues to be in place. Tier one face to face supports located within the ATV building have not been delivered within this year.

Referrals

Referrals for adoption support are now managed through the duty system, with social workers being booked for a one hour call back, to undertake a telephone duty referral, which is then forwarded to the Adoption Support manager for consideration.

Referrals for adoption support have decreased this year, which may be reflective of less demand due to covid. Another possibility is that the service faced a high demand arising from adopters waiting for a service, prior to commencement of ATV, with more adopters in high need now receiving a service, and underway with a support plan. It may be early days to evaluate the impact of strengthened tier 1 and tier 2 offers, and whether the universal offer via ATV is beginning to meet needs at an earlier stage.

A challenge for the service is the waiting list for adoption support allocation, which can run into months. The service has designated 3 FTE adoption social workers to the Adoption Support Service.

The service development plan for 2021 is to increase partnership working, and **a more integrated approach with LA's, to enable children and their adoptive parents to access more readily wider supports from Local Authorities and strategic partners, where services can and should be made available to families from wider partner provision.**

Adoption Support Assessments

The number of adoption support assessments has reduced this year. However, this is reflective of covid funding enabling the service to "group book" therapeutic training, without having to use the multiple application process. Also, the impact of the Education Support Worker may be now helping families to receive the support they need, in the area of education, which is reducing demand for adoption support assessments. The waiting list continues to be a challenge to adopters waiting, and for the service.

Applications to Adoption Support Fund

The service has progressed slightly fewer applications to the ASF in this year, although as with adoption support assessments, covid funding has allowed

for group applications to be progressed as one application, rather than many individual applications.

Many of the individual applications are repeat applications for families who referred in for support, and assessment in 2018, 2019, and 2020, but have entered into repeated annual applications for continuing therapeutic input.

The application process for ASF funding has become more administrative this financial year, due to changes in the ASF. Nevertheless, it is welcome additional funding, to enable access to therapeutic supports for families and children.

The application value in this year is c£638,000 down from c£693,000 in the previous year. Although down by £55,000 there has been additional covid funding which the service applied for, amounting to £71,000 spent in total.

Therapeutic provision

The Service was supported by Stockton procurement team to re-open the Preferred providers list for therapeutic services, to be funded via ASF.

A further 4 services were admitted to the list.

Children and families continue to value the therapeutic input which is vital to help children who have experienced harm, through early adverse childhood experiences, abuse and neglect.

Access to files

The service has commissioned Adoption Matters to deliver the service for Access to Files for adult adoptees, and birth relatives. Significant partnership working has taken place to establish a procedure for access to records, including work with all 5 Local Authorities, via Adoption Lead officers. After considerable working together, with this experienced Voluntary Adoption Agency the service is working effectively to provide timely access to records, for eligible people.

There have been 36 Access to Records requests progressed this year. This is a similar level to the previous year.

Education Support

The service has continued to employ an Education Support worker, co-funded through the 5 Local Authority Virtual Schools, via DFE grant funding for children previously in the care of the LA.

This post has become well embedded over the last year, and the worker is delivering effective education support to children, and families, within the context of schools. This means that she also works frequently with Designated Teachers, and others involved in helping and supporting children. The worker

meets regularly with Virtual School Heads, to plan for her own development, to work within a collective approach to educating children, and facilitating emotional and attachment related needs to be understood and planned for within the school setting.

59 families and children have been supported during this year.

The Education Support Worker says:

The main areas of support are helping schools to understand a child's behaviour and needs, training schools about developmental trauma and the impact, mediating between parents and schools when relationships have broken down and providing schools with strategies to help the child be ready and able to learn. Also, to help families to have a better understanding of the education system.

As the post has developed and become more well known, schools and parents contact me directly for support and advice daily.

Thrive Approach: I'm now a Thrive trained practitioner, and I have added this element to my support within schools. It has been used as a social and emotional intervention to help support the children with neurodevelopmental gaps due to adverse childhood experiences. I work closely with the teachers to profile the children and this indicates where the 'gaps' in their neurodevelopment have occurred. I then provide planning for the schools to deliver the interventions and then reprofile the child to assess. It is a holistic approach therefore I provide parents also with lists of planned activities that they can complete at home, which will consolidate what has taken place in school. This support has been positively received by the schools, children and the families involved.

Training: I was a speaker at Middlesbrough practice week and delivered a presentation on Previously Looked After Children.

Delivered developmental trauma and attachment training at schools.

I am also due to deliver adoption awareness training during the next academic year to schools.

I attended the FASD conference network which furthered my knowledge and understanding in this area and how it can be used to support schools, children and families.

Hartlepool Virtual School Heads says:

The Education officer provides invaluable advice, guidance and support to children, their parents and schools in relation to any aspect of education. This input has been important in ensuring that schools are aware of the difficulties that children adopted may face in school, providing training and recommendations to support. She also provides parents with a significant assistance with any aspect of education,

attending meetings alongside parents, guiding them through complex education processes and being a point of contact for them.

Post Box

The service has reviewed how post box contact, also known as letterbox is delivered in ATV.

The system is one which takes time to make sure all letters exchanged are properly recorded and checked, also that where letters aren't received according to agreed arrangements a follow up is made with parties to remind of the need for the contacts to be sent.

The service has made changes to the way in which these arrangements are recorded in the system, aimed at providing greater confidence in the flow and exchange of the information, with records kept in the system of all correspondence exchanged.

The way in which the arrangements are counted has also changed. Therefore, data provision is not a like for like comparison with previously reported data.

There have been 279 post box contact arrangements in the last year.

Birth Parent Support

Adoption Tees Valley has commissioned Adoption Matters to provide birth parent support to all birth parents whose child is to be placed for adoption, from the point at which adoption is the plan for the child. There has been work across all 5 LA's, though Adoption Lead officers to promote this service.

Adoption Matters have called their Birth Parent Support project "Birth Ties" and have produced a leaflet for awareness raising with families and professionals working with them. Leaflets have been made available to IRO's and Adoption lead officers, and it is now agreed that referral for independent birth parent support will take place at the time the LA makes its sole plan for adoption.

In this year, 37 families were provided with independent birth parent support. The families came from all 5 Local Authorities across the Tees Valley and Darlington.

Therapeutic Parenting Courses

ATV seeks to offer a regular option for therapeutic parenting training, which is funded through applications to the ASF. This is part of the Tier 2 offer, and all adopters are encouraged to attend once the child is placed with them.

In the year, one course was held in this period. The Nurturing Attachments training was held in November 2020 and was attended by 3 families. Although the service sought to generate applicants from the adopter community, for therapeutic parenting training, the numbers seeking to attend during covid have been lower than during pre-pandemic times.

Efforts were made to convene a Future Stars (a sensory parenting) programme, however, take up was again low, and this has been run in June 2021, outside of this time period.

One provider of non-violent resistance training specifically delivered the course to adoptive parents and special guardians, during the lockdown, and this was funded through covid funding for adoption and SG support.

Adopter Hub

The service commissioned the Adopter Hub as a new on-line tool for adopters providing information, detailed in depth guidance, webinars and on line support. This was initially commissioned as part of covid funding and has provided a range of valuable information to adopters. It is now being used for support to adopters and prospective adopters, throughout assessment, preparation and post placement support. Around 170 users have registered.

Covid Funding

Covid funding was made available and applied for via DfE, to provide additional supports to families in need.

The following services were provided through this additional, one off, funding source.

- Adopter Hub
- NVR (non-violent resistance training and support)
- Child Psychology Service
- Access to specialist support via Child Psychologist

Adoption Support – Development areas

Post adoption support is one of the areas that has received most attention for development since regionalisation of adoption. One of the key government objectives was to improve adoption support to children and families, to improve long term outcomes for adopted children.

Measures of success in ATV include:

- Implementation of an adoption support service, with dedicated adoption support workers
- Collaborative work with virtual schools, and the partnership funding model for an Education Support Worker post.
- Regular opportunity for all adoptive parents to access therapeutic parenting training
- Significantly higher draw down on ASF funding and therapeutic service input.

ATV continues to work with the national forum of RAA's to learn and develop around improving support to adoptive families.

In ATV all families now have an adoption support plan, in line with recommendations from the National Adoption Barometer Report (Adoption UK, 2020). The support plan will detail the available support to families within ATV, at Tier 1,2, and 3.

All families have access to register for a 2 day therapeutic parenting course, and all families will receive one year adoption support from their assessing social worker, beyond the adoption order.

The service now requires that any requests for financial allowances or supports are made prior to matching panel, in order that families are clear about the financial support plans, prior to confirming they wish to progress the match. This does not mean families cannot request further assessments, post placement, but the service is much clearer that adoption allowances must have been applied for, and agreed by the relevant LA, prior to matching panel.

The biggest challenges for adoption support in ATV are:

- Waiting timescales for allocation for adoption support assessments
- Having a shared wider strategic partnership approach that means adoption support needs are understood and recognised by local authority, health and other statutory and third sector partners.

To address these issues, ATV is working to review allocation timescales for adoption support assessments.

ATV is also currently undertaking wider systems awareness of adoption support, across early help, and other LA Children's services teams.

19. Children's Voice in Adoption

ATV has been working with a Doctorate Researcher, Helen Woolley, who is undertaking research into life stories for children. Through the research project, a group of teenage young people has been formed- the Junior Researchers, who are now working closely with the researcher, to share ideas

and thinking about what it means to be adopted, and where they feel organisations and individuals could be influenced to better understand adoption.

The Junior Researchers have already identified they believe that ATV would benefit from a Teenagers Worker, to support adopted young people with the variety of issues that they encounter as they grow up.

The service will be working with this group, to help progress the voice of the child, through influencing and targeted campaigns, but also on how the service can better develop to listen to the voice of adopted young people.

Prior to the national pandemic, ATV had started a children's group, to incorporate the child's voice into ATV, and to enable groups of children to receive some dedicated support to help them with understanding their identity as adopted children, alongside other adopted children.

The group has not progressed due to the pandemic. It is planned to resume this group as an when the service is able to commence working safely again in the building.

20. Non Agency Adoptions

ATV is responsible for non- agency, step parent adoptions. This is the adoption by one birth parent and a partner to that person, who is not the natural birth parent, of a child. It is a full assessment, which will inform the Court on the granting of an adoption order, and the permanent dispensation of parental responsibility to the absent birth parent.

This service continues to present a resource and demand issue, whereby the service has the challenge of allocation of resources to step parent adoptions, from the overall team which must focus effort on the high number of children in our care, requiring permanence planning and adoption.

One worker has been allocated to manage step parent adoptions.

The following data applies to 2020-21

Enquiries	46
Initial Visits	9
Awaiting assessment	39
In assessment as of 31.3.21	10
Adoption Orders granted	8

21. Quality Assurance

National Minimum Standard 25.

The following mechanisms have been implemented for managing and monitoring the work of the agency, and the quality of work.

- The Review of ATV is a wide reaching review, to assess progress of the RAA against the agreed objectives that were set out at the implementation of the RAA.
- Tracking systems to enable regular monitoring of children and adopter journeys; timeliness, and outcomes. Tracking systems have been further improved in this period. Tracking highlights barriers to be addressed, for example, delays in GP reports have been addressed with Commissioners in health; Designated Child in Our care Nurses, and via safeguarding GP's.
- Tracking of children enables focussed discussions with Adoption Lead officers quarterly, or as required, to ensure that individual children's plans are progressed in a timely way, and that thematic practice issues within Local Authorities are addressed.
- A performance, assurance and challenge meeting (PAC) has been held with the senior adoption lead for each LA, quarterly following ASGLB and ATV Scorecard data returns. All children for each LA have been tracked and monitored, and agreement about direction, or decisions signposted where applicable.
- Permanence Champions for each Local Authority ensure that children's referrals are progressed and tracked in a timely way. This means that ATV is able to family find for children at the right time, and with the right information about that child's plan.
- ATV attends one Local Authority (Middlesbrough) Permanence Monitoring Group, monthly, and the Gateway panel monthly, to assist with the improvement journey for that LA, and with quality and timeliness of practice for children.
- The balanced scorecard (BSC) has been reviewed and developed to better reflect nationally submitted data, via ASGLB returns from Local Authorities and Adoption Tees Valley. The BSC is generated quarterly detailing key performance data, user feedback/satisfaction measures; complaints/compliments; finance. This has been presented to the Board, which has a role in questioning, challenge and being satisfied of the effectiveness of the service.
- The Adoption Panel has a quality monitoring role in the Service around business presented to it, for consideration and advice. As detailed in the Panel section, this period has seen some gaps in provision of quality monitoring data which is now being addressed. Quality of PARS is felt to be high, with some recommendations about consistency of practice across PAR's. Quality of CPR's is generally improved, although some remain poor. Minutes now detail feedback on quality of CPR in order that ADM's in Local Authorities are able to read the panel comments

around quality of the CPR. Panel has commented on improvements to the Adoption Support Plan, and APR.

- The Adoption Panel Chairs provide a report bi-annually to the Service Manager, which will be presented to the Board; Panel; and to the team, for learning and improvement where required.
- Staff performance is monitored via supervision, which is monthly for all staff.
- A case practice audit tool has been developed. Case practice audits were undertaken, across a sample of case records, with managers independent of that case, and the worker. These will be collated into a thematic audit report for board to consider.
- Most staff, and all managers have had an annual appraisal.
- All Central List members and Panel Chairs have had an annual appraisal. Panel chairs now request that the agency collates themes from appraisal for the annual report. Panel training has been delivered to panel members arising from feedback from panel appraisals, which includes Disruptions; Roles and Operational processes for ATV; early Permanence.
- Team meetings take place monthly, and are used to convey policy and practice information, involve staff in developments and any quality improvements that are required.
- Adopter feedback has been sought at the start of lockdown via a Consultation Survey. User feedback was used to inform adoption support needs during lockdown. There is an adopter survey currently live, seeking adopter views on the services ATV provides, which will be analysed as part of the ATV review.
- The Service Manager, and Team Manager, post adoption support, have reviewed and monitored work undertaken by external agencies for post adoption support, to ensure that work supports outcomes and delivers best value.
- Stockton BC have undertaken an audit of the service to provide an “independent” QA mechanism.
- The Service has commissioned a person with senior experience and understanding to update and write the policies and procedures for ATV. These are now well underway and will be completed by September 2021. Policies have been shared via Adoption Leads, to enable LA development of policy framework which is integrated with ATV, for adoption practice.

22. Finance

Adoption tees Valley is joint funded as a shared service under the Education and Adoption Act (2016) and is a joint funded on a shared basis, with the allocations of funding per LA as detailed below.

	Baseline Running Costs (based on former costs of the Adoption Services in the year preceding the RAA)	Percentage Interagency fee contributions (based on average annual adoption numbers 2014/15 to 2016/17)
Darlington	16.2%	20.2%
Hartlepool	13.5 %	14.0%
Middlesbrough	31.8%	27.2%
Redcar and Cleveland	16.7%	14.0%
Stockton	21 %	24.7%
	100%	100.0%

2020/21 Financial Year End Position

At the end of the 2020/21 financial year, Adoption Tees Valley underspent by £24,000, which has been carried forward in the ATV reserve.

Expenditure Heading	Budget 2020/21	Actual Outturn	Variance year end
Employees	1,322,700	1,432,000	109,300
Running Costs	295,000	190,000	(105,000)
Support Service Costs	113,000	118,000	5,000
Interagency Fees	500,000	909,000	409,000
Income	(2,230,700)	(2,673,000)	(442,300)
Total	0	(24,000)	(24,000)

Interagency Fees

Interagency fees are payable for those children matched with adopters who are not recruited by ATV. The budget for interagency fees is £500,000 and was overspent by £409,000. This led to additional contributions from each Local Authority, as follows:

	Budgeted Contribution to Interagency Fees	Actual for 2020/21	Additional Contribution for 20/21
ATV Interagency 2020/21	500,000	909,000	409,000
Darlington - 20.2%	101,000	184,000	83,000
Hartlepool - 14%	70,000	127,000	57,000
Middlesbrough - 27.2%	136,000	247,000	111,000
Redcar & Cleveland - 14%	70,000	127,000	57,000

Stockton -24.6%	123,000	224,000	101,000
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Overspend on employee costs is largely offset by underspend on running costs, leading to a net budget saving. This is being reinvested into services for post adoption support, and marketing.

The interagency fees budget overspend is reflective of the higher numbers of children who have been referred and placed for adoption than was forecast at the outset of the RAA implementation.

The Service is seeking to increase recruitment of adopters, and by the close of the year had increased adopter recruitment by 39% on the previous year.

Nevertheless, a similar number of children have been placed for adoption externally as the previous year. Data shows that adopters in Tees valley are being used for placements, with few being available for external placements. ATV adopters are on average being matched 100 days more quickly than the national average.

The service has progressed the Invest to Save model noted in the Biannual report. there is a small pool of casual assessors who are able to supplement assessment activity where demand is high, and pressures exist.

Furthermore, a greater focus on digital marketing is being progressed with a local Digital Marketing Company, with the aim of securing more market share of those wishing to adopt in this region.

The review of ATV will evaluate the “Value for Money” objective in ATV, and all LA Finance Teams are involved in the evaluation.

The ATV board has considered the Budget and Financial Report. the ATV Board continues to monitor actions to reduce external expenditure, however, children who are waiting to be adopted should not be further delayed due to an unwillingness to use external agencies, and in this region, this is agreed as paramount by the Board.

23. Development Areas for Adoption Tees Valley

The service continues to review and develop, in the light of data analysis against national and regional benchmarking; through feedback; national and regional practice development in adoption; Panel Chairs feedback; Quality feedback. The Service will also be taking account of the Review of ATV, and any lessons or themes for improvement.

Key Developments within the 2021 Service Plan are:

- Strengthening the involvement and voice of adopted children in ATV.

- Strengthening the Preparation and Assessment of Adopters, to help them feel more informed and equipped to meet the needs of children, including those with additional needs. The Assessment to Support Pathway has already commenced, and is practitioner led.
- Continuing to address sufficiency of adopters, through improved marketing and recruitment. Also through the strategic work with VAA partners to provide regional sufficiency, where ATV does not have adopters available. This will help ATV to continue to work at reducing the waiting time for all children who require permanence via adoption
- Taking the Early permanence strategy to “Phase 2”, building on the learning and experience during “Phase 1”, especially with respect to supporting adopters, and professionals; working more closely with Fostering Services; working across more multi agency partners including health; workforce development.
- Strengthening the partnership working with children's services partners, Early Help, and other strategic partners, to extend and improve access to support when and where it is needed, at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Continuing to address the model for life story work, to ensure this is done in a more timely way. This will be informed by the PhD research currently underway, which in turn is informed by Junior Researchers.
- Continuing to address timescales for adoption support assessments. Also, extending the options for Tier 1 and Tier 2 support, include peer to peer support, to help adopters and children.
- Taking forward actions from Panel Chairs report, to continue to work at smooth and streamlined operation of panel.
- Working together with the 5 LA partners, to continuously improve permanence planning, and quality of CPR's, to deliver timely and well matched placements for children.