

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

AGENDA



Tuesday 18 January 2022

at 4.00 pm

**in 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 17 January 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, Cassidy, Fleming, Groves, Harrison, Lindridge and Moore.

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 People's 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 date 16 November 2021 (*previously circulated and published*).

CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire alarm or a bomb alarm, please leave by the nearest emergency exit as directed by Council Officers. A Fire Alarm is a continuous ringing. A Bomb Alarm is a continuous tone.

The Assembly Point for everyone is Victory Square by the Cenotaph. If the meeting has to be evacuated, please proceed to the Assembly Point so that you can be safely accounted for.

4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS

No items.

5. KEY DECISIONS

- 5.1 Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block 2022/23 - *Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 5.2 Dedicated Schools Grant – School Budget Shares 2022/23 and Central School Services Block 2022/23- *Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 6.1 Hartlepool's Strategy for the Early Years - *Director Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 6.2 To Nominate a Local Authority Representative to Serve on the Federated Governing Body of Golden Flatts and Lynnfield Primary Schools - *Director Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 6.3 To Nominate a Local Authority Representative to Serve on the Governing Body of Fens Primary School - *Director Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 7.1 Annual Report of Children Social Care Complaints and Compliments 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 - *Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – Tuesday 15 February 2022 at 4.00pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

18 January 2022



Report of: Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning

Subject: DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT –
HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2022/23

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 This report is for key decisions - test (i) and (ii) applies.

1.2 The forward plan reference is **CJCS 120/21**.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the funding allocation for the High Needs Block in 2022/23 and to seek approval for the 2022/23 budget. The High Needs Block forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Updated High Needs Block funding allocations for 2022/23 were published on 16 December 2021. As with other areas of the DSG, funding for the High Needs Block is via a National Funding Formula (NFF).

3.2 Hartlepool has benefited from a 11% (£1.489m) increase in 2022/23 (12% in 2021/22). This is the third successive year of significantly increased funding.

3.3 In addition to the 11% increase in core high needs block funding, a further allocation of £0.616m for Hartlepool has been announced following the autumn spending review. This further amount is to help cover the costs of the health and social care levy, along with any colleges and other providers offering extra hours of study to students with high needs.

3.4 Officers are in the process of establishing a three-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for provision for pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

- 3.5 The MTFS will take a longer term view of forecast demand and level of need for pupils with SEND in Hartlepool. This will provide a clearer understanding of budget requirements and affordability of budget options over the three year period.
- 3.6 Council officers, Schools' Forum and Head Teachers are working closely to establish the MTFS. An independent external consultant has been engaged to assist in the review.
- 3.7 The increases in funding from 2020/21 to 2022/23 have allowed Schools' Forum to consider the continuation of increased funding to both maintained schools and special schools for pupils with SEND in 2022/23, pending completion of the MTFS.

4 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING 2022/23

- 4.1 The High Needs Block allocation for 2022/23 is shown in the following table. The amount to be recouped from academies is an internal estimate based on the place changes requested for academic year 2022-23.

High Needs Block	2022/23 Funding £m
DSG High Needs Block Allocation (before funding of academies)	16.128
Additional funding (autumn spending review)	0.616
Recoupment for academy funding	(2.224)
Total High Needs Funding 2022/23	14.520

- 4.2 Members are asked to note that final allocations remain subject to change, from changes known as import/export adjustments, during 2022/23 depending on volumes of pupils accessing provision outside of their home authority. These updates take place in June 2022.

5. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK BUDGET PROPOSAL 2022/23

- 5.1 The planned high needs budget for 2022/23 is shown in the table below:

High Needs Block Budget Requirement 2022/23	£m
Place Funding - Maintained	1.610
Independent School Fees	3.555
Out of Authority Top-ups	0.495
Alternative Provision (including Horizon School)	0.753
Top-ups and Support	5.850
Post-16 Top-ups	1.040
High Needs Services	0.467
Provision for MTFS proposals	0.750
Total Budget	14.520

- 5.2 Work to establish the three-year MTFS is underway. The MTFS will provide information to support planned budgets over a three-year planning period. Until the MTFS work is complete, any budget changes have been reviewed for 2022/23 only.
- 5.3 The planned budget at paragraph 5.1 includes two proposals for implementation for 2022/23 only, pending the completion of the three-year MTFS. Both of these proposals were approved by Members for 2021/22 and it is proposed to continue each budget increase for a further year in 2022/23.
- 5.4 The first proposal is to increase the SEND top-up ranges payable to schools to fund additional provision and support for pupils with SEND. The top-up ranges were approved by this Committee and implemented during 2018/19. Rates had not been inflated since implementation in 2018/19 until Members approved a backdated inflation increase in 2021/22. The backdated increases were based on 2.75% pay award inflation. It is proposed that the increased top-up ranges continue in 2022/23 with an additional 2.75% increase added for 2022/23.
- 5.5 At their meeting on 21 September 2021, Schools' Forum voted unanimously to recommend continuation of the increased SEND top-up ranges in 2022/23, along with a further year's inflation at 2.75%.
- 5.6 The cost of this proposal in 2022/23 is estimated at £0.182m. This cost is considered fully affordable within the High Needs Block funding available.
- 5.7 The second proposal is to increase the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) payable to special schools (Springwell Primary School and Catcote Academy). This Committee approved and implemented the MFG arrangement in 2018/19. Since 2020/21, the regulations have required that special schools receive protection of at least 100% of their prior year MFG budget. Authorities are able to provide protection of above 100% at Member's discretion.
- 5.8 At their meeting on 21 September 2021, Schools' Forum voted unanimously to continue to apply backdated annual increases of 3% to special school's MFG for a further year, along with an additional year's increase at 3% for 2022/23.
- 5.9 The cost of this proposal in 2022/23 is estimated at £0.241m. This cost is considered fully affordable within the High Needs Block funding available.

6. RISK AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Although there is a high level of confidence regarding the affordability of budget proposals presented at paragraphs 5.5 and 5.9 of this report, this position may not be sustainable in future years.
- 6.2 To mitigate this risk, both proposals are restricted to one financial year (2022/23) whilst the MTFS is completed.
- 6.3 The MTFS will allow for a greater consideration of risk for the demand and complexity of SEND provision over a three-year planning period.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The local authority is required to set an annual budget for its High Needs Block.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 All schools have been consulted on budget proposals for the High Needs Block for 2022/23 via Schools' Forum.

9. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 There are no specific child and family poverty considerations.

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 There are no specific equality and diversity considerations.

11. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

11.1 There are no specific considerations.

12. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

12.1 There are no asset management considerations.

13. CONCLUSIONS

13.1 The planned budget for high needs spending in 2022/23 is shown at paragraph 5.1 of this report.

13.2 The Council will receive an increase of 11% (£1.489m) for High Needs Block funding in 2022/23, following on from a 12% increase in 2021/22. An additional allocation of £0.616m has been announced for 2022/23 following the autumn spending review.

13.3 Schools' Forum are recommending two growth proposals for 2022/23 only as outlined in section 5 of this report. The proposals amount to a combined estimated cost of £0.423m.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 It is recommended that Members:

- a) note the contents of this report;
- b) approve the recommendation from Schools' Forum to increase the SEND top-up ranges in 2022/23 at an estimated cost of £0.182m as described in paragraph 5.5 of this report;
- c) approve the recommendation from Schools' Forum to increase the protection to special schools MFG budget in 2022/23 at an estimated cost of £0.241m as described in paragraph 5.8 of this report;
- d) approve the 2022/23 budget shown at the table in paragraph 5.1 of this report. Please note that the table assumes that recommendation b) and c) above are approved.

15. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1 To ensure the local authority establishes an appropriate budget for High Needs in 2022/23 that meets expected demand.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1 Schools' Forum report of 21 September 2021 – High Needs Block Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Director of Resources and Development



Chief Solicitor



CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18 January 2022



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

Subject: DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT –
SCHOOL BUDGET SHARES 2022/23 AND CENTRAL
SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK 2022/23

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

- 1.1 This report is for key decisions – test (i) and (ii) applies.
- 1.2 The forward plan reference is CJCS 117/21. Key decisions relating to forward plan reference CJCS 119/21 are also included within this report.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To provide details of the 2022/23 schools block funding allocation and to propose school budget shares for 2022/23. The schools block funding forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) published indicative National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations for 2022/23 during July 2021. On 16 December 2021, updated allocations based on the October 2021 school census were released by ESFA.
- 3.2 Members will recall that Hartlepool agreed to adopt the “hard” formula that mirrors the NFF. This approach continues to be supported by the Schools' Forum for 2022/23.
- 3.3 In adopting the “hard” formula, local authorities are still required to consider how they set their individual school budgets (ISBs) for 2022/23. Any transfers to and from the schools block from other DSG blocks must be considered. Also, a local approach to setting a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) and Cap must be agreed and implemented.

- 3.4 Consultation on setting individual school budgets (ISBs) took place with Schools' Forum during September to November 2021. These discussions were on the basis of the indicative NFF published in July 2021. However, budget models based on internal estimates for October 2021 pupil numbers were presented to Schools' Forum so that a more accurate assessment of expected funding could be considered. The internal estimates predicted a reduction in funding owing to an overall decrease in pupil numbers across the town.
- 3.5 At their meeting on 18 November 2021, Schools' Forum voted in favour of applying the maximum possible MFG (the regulations allow an MFG of up to 2%), along with an appropriate cap. The need for a cap could not be calculated until ESFA released the Authority Pro-Forma Tool containing individual school data on 20 December 2021.
- 3.6 At their meeting on 21 September 2021, Schools' Forum agreed to the transfer of £0.173m from the Central School Services Block (CSSB) to the Schools Block. The transfer represents CSSB funding remaining, after permitted planned expenditure on historic and ongoing commitments.

4. 2022/23 SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING

- 4.1 The following table shows the Hartlepool schools block allocation of £72.648m for 2022/23 based on October 2021 census numbers.
- 4.2 This shows an increase of £1.868m for 2022/23, or 2.64%.

Schools Block	Pupil Numbers (Oct 2021)	2022/23 Funding (£m)
Primary	7,654	36.991
Secondary	5,604	34.750
Premises		0.631
Growth		0.275
NFF Schools Block 2022/23		72.647
NFF Schools Block 2021/22		70.779
Funding increase		1.868
Percentage increase in funding		2.64%

- 4.3 ESFA have made a change to the funding of National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) for schools from 2022/23 onwards. ESFA will make payment for NNDR direct to billing authorities instead of including NNDR funding within the DSG. This means that the premises amount of £0.631m in the table at paragraph 4.2 above is not passed to the authority but will be used by ESFA to pay rates on behalf of schools.
- 4.4 Unit values for basic per pupil funding (known as AWPU) have been increased by 3% from the current financial year, along with similar increases across other formula factors.

4.4 The guarantee of a minimum per-pupil funded amount per school remains within the NFF for 2022/23. The minimum per pupil funding levels in 2022/23 have increased to £4,265 (from £4,180) for all primary schools and £5,525 (from £5,415) for all secondary schools.

5. PROPOSED BLOCK TRANSFERS

5.1 The Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) of the DSG funds local authorities for the statutory duties and other commitments they hold for maintained and academy schools.

5.2 CSSB funding of £0.731m for 2022/23 (£0.769m in 2021/22) has been confirmed based on October 2021 census numbers. The historic cost element of the CSSB (originally approximately 50% of the block) has been reduced by 20% in 2022/23 for the third successive year as part of government's strategy to gradually remove funding for historic items that are expected to reduce in cost over time.

5.3 Although a number of historic items for Hartlepool no longer require CSSB funding, there are two historic items remaining that will not reduce or come to an end in the short to medium term. These relate to the school contribution to licences and the pension costs associated with the former Brierton school closure. Although the government's 20% reduction will eventually result in a financial pressure, this is not expected to materialise until 2025/26. Officers have raised this position in advance with EFSA.

5.4 Schools' Forum is required to agree each element of spending against the CSSB on an annual basis. At their meeting on 21 September 2021, Schools' Forum agreed to fund the elements amounting to £0.558m shown in the table below and for the balance of CSSB funding (£0.173m) to be transferred to the schools block for 2022/23.

Historic Commitments		£m
Licenses		0.067
Termination of Employment costs		0.031
	Total	0.098
Ongoing Responsibilities		£m
Retained Education Services		0.217
Admissions		0.136
Copyright licences		0.071
Servicing Schools Forum		0.036
	Total	0.460
Grand Total		0.558

6. INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL BUDGETS

- 6.1 At their meeting on 9 December 2021, Schools' Forum voted unanimously to apply an MFG of 2.0% (the maximum allowed), along with an appropriate cap if required. Having analysed the school budget requirement using October 2021 pupil numbers and characteristics released by ESFA on 20 December 2021, the maximum MFG of 2.0% is affordable, alongside a cap of 3.4%. This means that all schools will receive an increase per pupil of at least 2.0% and no more than 3.4% in comparison to 2021/22.
- 6.2 The table below summarises the proposed school budget for 2022/23. Individual school budgets for 2022/23 would mirror the NFF plus the transfer of funding from CSSB. The table includes a comparison with 2021/22 individual school budgets. So as to provide a meaningful comparison, the NNDR budgets have been excluded from 2021/22 school budget shares.

School Budget Shares 2022/23	Proposed Budget £m
Schools Block funding (ESFA) after NNDR deduction	71.741
Transfer-in from CSSB	0.173
School Budget Shares Proposed 2022/23	71.914
School Budget Share Increase from 2021/22 (£m)	1.757
School Budget Share Increase from 2021/22 (%)	2.50%

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 If individual school budgets are not approved, the local authority may not meet its requirement to notify the ESFA of individual school budgets by 21 January 2022. In addition, individual schools will not be able to plan their budgets.

8. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 As outlined in this report, providing schools with an MFG of the maximum 2.0% per pupil, along with a cap at 3.4%, is affordable within the 2022/23 NFF, despite an overall reduction in pupil numbers. However, there is uncertainty regarding the impact of potential future reductions in pupil numbers from 2023/24 or beyond.

9. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The local authority is required to consult all schools on annual changes to their formula, along with any proposed block transfers.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 All schools have been consulted on individual budget share options for 2022/23 via Schools' Forum.

11. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

11.1 There are no specific child and family poverty considerations.

12. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

12.1 There are no specific equality and diversity considerations.

13. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

13.1 There are no specific considerations.

14. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

14.1 There are no asset management considerations.

15. CONCLUSIONS

15.1 The government funding arrangements for Schools Block in 2022/23 allow for an MFG of a maximum 2.0% increase per pupil from 2021/22 funding. The maximum MFG is affordable, alongside a cap of 3.4%.

15.2 Following consultation, Schools' Forum recommended a block transfer of £0.173m from the CSSB.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 It is recommended that Committee:

a) Note the contents of this report;

b) Note the agreement by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of £0.558m, with the residual £0.173m being transferred to the schools block as detailed in paragraph 5.4;

c) Agree the MFG to be used for 2022/23 as outlined in paragraph 6.1 of this report and noting the recommendation from Schools' Forum of applying an MFG of 2.0%, alongside an appropriate cap;

d) Approve the individual school budget share for 2022/23 as summarised in the table at paragraph 6.2 of this report.

17. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

17.1 It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to consult and agree individual school budget allocations so that figures can be confirmed to ESFA by the deadline of 21 January 2022. Members are asked to note that figures will be provided to ESFA by the deadline, stating the date of approval as the date of this Committee.

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Schools' Forum reports of 21 September 2021 and 18 November 2021.

19. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-
Director of Resources and Development
Chief Solicitor



CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18 January 2022



Report of: Director Children's and Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: HARTLEPOOL'S STRATEGY FOR THE EARLY YEARS

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 Non key decision.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To recommend that members of Children's Service Committee approve Hartlepool's Strategy for the Early Years.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In 2020 the Local Government Association (LGA) supported a multi stakeholder review into the delivery of support for children in their early year's services in Hartlepool. As a result of that review a number of recommendations were made that, if implemented, would have a positive impact on the delivery of early year's services in Hartlepool which would, in turn, improve outcomes for children.

3.2. As a result of the review an Early Years Strategic Planning Group was established. The remit of this group was to create an Early Years Strategy with clear priorities to address the recommendations and drive improvements in the outcomes achieve by children in their early years.

3.3 The Early Years Strategic Planning Group consists of:

Amanda Whitehead – AD Education

Penny Thompson – Head of Housing, Hardship and Welfare Services

Jacqui Braithwaite – Head of Integrated Services for Learning

Linda McGlasham – EYFS Consultant

Deborah Clarke – Health Improvement Practitioner C&Y P&F

Kelly Armstrong – Strategic Children Commissioner

Nikki Clarke – Sallie Ivison – Clinical Lead

Invited and to be agreed - Lisa Adams – Early Help; Jo Heaney – NHS.

- 3.4. The EYFS Strategy and Plan will feed in to the Children's Strategic Partnership who will monitor and support progress.

4. DEVELOPING AN EARLY YEARS STRATEGY FOR HARTLEPOOL

- 4.1 The first draft of the Early Years Strategy was prepared based upon Local Authority officers' knowledge and experience. This served as the basis for open consultation which took place between the 24th September, 2021 and the 29th October, 2021.
- 4.2 The methodology used included an online public consultation through the council's 'Your Say' platform, emails to a wide range of stakeholders including Headteachers, early years settings and Early Years Leads asking for their comments and also two face to face multi agency meetings were carried out.
- 4.3 The second draft is attached at **APPENDIX 1** and has been edited to include those consultation responses.
- 4.4 The following responses were noted:
- Six emailed responses
 - Two hand written responses
 - 133 visitors engaged in the online platform
 - 17 completed survey responses
 - Two workshops (one day, one evening) were held with 23 attendees (as above); this included 5 childminders, 6 schools and 12 day nurseries.

We know that at least 12 responses from the above were parents with young children.

4.5 General comments from professionals included:

- Everyone agreed with the priorities outlined although some thought others should be added with, for example, more focus on prevention, multi-agency working and more use of community based resources.
- A lack of joined-up approach by services, no shared accountability and concerns about families that 'do not engage'.
- Comments that it lacked a parent voice and that it was not parent friendly.
- Comment around the challenge of poor funding facing Early Years and how the priorities and actions would be resourced.
- Comment that the Early Years workforce does not figure prominently and in particular the low pay and qualifications of this workforce.
- A concern that training in future would be online which is not effective to peer support and learning.
- Comment around Speech and Language Therapy services: perception of long waiting times, children not being taken to appointments, needs being dismissed in the hope they would resolve themselves.
- Comment of families not knowing who their Health Visitor is (5 in total).

- Agreement that a partnership is needed and it must cover all areas of Early Years.
- A need for the Early Years Strategy to be joined up with the wider poverty strategy that is being developed.

4.6 Responses from parents:

- Worried about social skills of their children, especially given the length of time spent at home due to the pandemic.
- A lot of concerns from parents of children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) who felt that they were not helped enough.
- School readiness was a concern, particularly potty training and behaviour.
- Comment regarding Health Visiting contacts over the phone because they would prefer to see them and talk to them. Some referred to not knowing who their Health Visitor is (5 in total).

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is widely acknowledged that the early years is the most important time of a child's life and it is in this period that physical and emotional foundations are set. If we do not support children in their early years to be the best they can be we risk limiting their future opportunities.

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 Early years is widely reported to be under-funded and is subject to national political debate. We already have a budget deficit for the provision of funded two year old childcare places which is being addressed through a Task and Finish Group of Schools Forum. Many of the ideas for action noted in the strategy are no-cost however some will need funding. It is hoped that much can be achieved through multi agency collaborative working, the sharing of resources and budgets and through the announcement of further funding for the early years as highlighted in the latest spending review.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has a number of statutory duties including delivering a free early years education and childcare entitlement and mandated health check responsibilities.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 As detailed in paragraphs 4.1 – 4.6 above

9. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 Support for children in their early years through delivering the priorities outlined in the strategy promotes social mobility, raises aspiration and achievement and narrows the gap between those less advantaged than their peers.

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 It is crucial that all early years children have the same opportunities as their peers.

11. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 There are no staff considerations.

12. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 12.1 There are no asset management considerations.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 It is recommended Children's Services Committee note and approve the contents of the Hartlepool Strategy for the Early Years at **APPENDIX 1**.

14. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 It is important that Committee recognises the priorities to be addressed to improve outcomes for Hartlepool children in the Early Years.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 15.1 There are no background papers.

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Director of Finance and Policy

Chief Solicitor



Hartlepool's Strategy for the Early Years

Autumn, 2021

Table of contents

Glossary of abbreviations and terms	p3
Foreword	p4
1.0 Introduction	p5
2.0 Case for change	p5
3.1 Vision and values	p6
3.2 Our vision	
3.3 Our values	
4.0 Key factors supporting implementation	p7
5.0 Our strategic priorities	p8
6.0 How will we do this?	p11
7.0 Monitoring and measuring progress	p15
Appendix A – Hartlepool data	p16
Appendix B – national drivers	p16

Glossary of Abbreviations and Terms

Continuous professional development – CPD

Department for Education – DfE

Early intervention – trying to identify and resolve problems before they become more difficult to reverse.

Early Intervention Foundation – EIF

Early years – in this report, the period from conception until a child is aged five

Early Years Foundation Stage – EYFS

Early Years Partnership – EYP

Home Learning Environment – HLE

Local Government Association – LGA

Speech and Language Team - SALT

Special educational needs and disabilities– SEND

Special educational needs inclusion fund - SENIF

Speech, language and communication – SLC

Voluntary and Community Sector - VCS

Foreword

We are delighted to introduce Hartlepool's Early Years Strategy 2021 – 2024. Our ambition is that all children get the best possible start in life. This can only be achieved if we change the way we work and provide the most effective support to children and their families so that they feel safe, have good health and achieve their full potential.

We know that what happens during pregnancy and in a child's Early Years shapes their physical health, their speech, language and communication, and their emotional wellbeing.

We are therefore committed to the delivery of high quality Early Years services in Hartlepool together with early intervention that is equally accessible to all through a continuum of support from conception through to the age of five. This strategy is based around our vision for babies and young children which is for them to:

- Be safe, supported, valued and loved
- Be as healthy and as happy as they can
- Have access to opportunities, be supported to be an individual and to achieve their full potential
- Live free from poverty
- Be equipped and ready for life.

The development of this strategy, and the support behind it, is an important milestone in the partnership between Hartlepool Council, the Education Sector, Health, other services and local partners. It follows the work carried out in 2020 by the Local Government Association (LGA) whose findings offered us an opportunity to re-think our approach to early years. It has created a renewed impetus and focus on the importance of Early Years which we believe will achieve improved outcomes and a reduction in inequalities.

Councillor J Lindridge, Chair of Children's Services Committee

1.0 Introduction

Every child deserves the best possible start in life. A child's earliest years, the period from pregnancy to statutory school age at five, are crucial to their long term life chances. Children develop rapidly in the early years and research shows that this stage of learning and development matters more than any other (Ofsted, 2016).

Children are born ready and eager to learn and the support they get during the first five years has long term effects on their health, well-being and educational outcomes. Young children thrive in environments that are predictable and responsive to their needs but struggle in environments that are neglectful, unpredictable or overwhelming. A positive early years experience is critical to improving educational outcomes and preventing poverty in adulthood.

'If we get the early years right, we pave the way for a lifetime of achievement. If we get them wrong, we miss the opportunity to shape a child's future (Ofsted, 2016). This is particularly important for disadvantaged children where support in the early years can have the greatest impact.

2.0 The case for change

Poverty in Hartlepool is rising at an alarming rate (currently 37.8%) with Hartlepool now in the top 10 local authorities across the country with the highest percentage increase of children living in low income families in the past five years (Stone, 2021). We know that poverty and disadvantage can have an adverse impact on a child's life chances yet The Early Intervention Foundation states, 'the effects of disadvantage or adversity in early life can be negative, but they are by no means universal or irreversible' (EIF, 2020).

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) results show that children in Hartlepool from poorer backgrounds do not achieve as well as those from more affluent homes. In 2019, only 61.6% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds (measured by pupil premium) achieved a good level of development (GLD) whilst 77% of children from more affluent homes achieved a GLD. Children are defined as having reached a good level of development if they achieve 'expected' or 'exceeded' levels of development for the prime areas of learning - literacy and maths.

We know that poverty and disadvantage can have an adverse impact on a child's life chances yet the Early Intervention Foundation states, 'the effects of disadvantage or adversity in early life can be negative, but they are by no means universal or irreversible'. (EIF, 2020)

Whilst there are lots of services and support for the Early Years in Hartlepool, we recognise, in light of the above reasons and with the legacy of missed learning through the COVID pandemic, that we need a new positive vision and

a coherent strategic approach to ensure that every child accesses the support they need to get the best start in life.

Hartlepool's Strategy for the Early Years encompasses the council's statutory duties to improve outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities and ensure that there is sufficient high-quality early years provision. It contributes to the council's ambition that all children have the best possible start in life and champion's the government agenda for social mobility by focussing on the most disadvantaged children and families and targeting services that support narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. All this demands joined up thinking. By working together we will lay the foundations for all children to start school ready to learn by ensuring children in their early years are ready for the next stage in their learning journey.

The strategy sets out our early years vision and values, identifies our key priorities and lays out the objectives and actions we will take to achieve these goals over next three years.

3.0 Vision and values

3.1 Our vision

Hartlepool is a place where all families are valued and respected; a place where every child gets the best start in life so that they can grow up healthy, safe and secure, and able to fulfil their potential.

We want all our early years children to:

- Be an individual
- Be safe, supported, valued and loved
- Be as healthy and as happy as they can
- Have access to opportunities and supported to achieve their full potential
- Live free from poverty
- Be equipped and ready for life.

3.2 Our values

Prevention and early intervention: we will have a renewed focus on identification, prevention and intervention - from conception all the way through pregnancy to birth and up to the age of five years. We will harness the expertise within existing services and bring partners together to target resources. We will constantly look for opportunities where we can to work cooperatively. We will work closely with parents, partners and communities to design and deliver services.

Children and young people first, driven with selflessness

Improving the opportunities and life chances of all of our children and young people, which will drive policy and decision making, with a legacy of hope and

aspiration. We value all aspects of the life of the child, recognising the importance of taking a holistic approach to supporting children's development and addressing their needs through wellbeing and resilience. We know that emotional and physical safety is foundational to child health and development. We work collectively to keep our children safe in Hartlepool.

High expectations for all

We want the very best for each and every child and young person, no matter what their background is, or what their individual needs are. We believe that children should feel valued and have equal opportunities. We have high expectations of all of our children.

A cooperative community

We are committed to keeping children at the heart of strong and effective collaboration, based on honest relationships and clear communication. Supporting the whole community including parents and carers is very important to us.

Clear accountability and measures, doing what is right with integrity

We will set ourselves ambitious and clear milestones, which are research informed where possible, so that everyone knows how well we are doing and what we need to do to improve.

Listen to and respond to need

The needs of the child are at the centre of what we do. We will listen to the needs of individuals and our learning communities. We take an **inclusive** approach with all children, families and communities and we will ensure we use our collective resources efficiently to meet need.

4.0 Key Factors Supporting Implementation

Governance and leadership

A new 'Early Years Partnership' (EYP) will ensure consistency of approaches throughout the Early Years by providing clear direction, purpose and accountability. The EYP will drive forward the strategy which in turn will feed into the Children's Strategic Partnership for Hartlepool. The EYP will include a cross-spectrum of professionals from partner agencies with a collective will and desire to effect positive change for children in the early years. It will include local parents who will keep us grounded and be best placed to tell us what will and will not work.

The Early Years Strategy will be supported with 'a plan on a page' and an action plan which identifies the key tasks that need to be undertaken including who will do them and by when. We are ambitious and intend to begin to see the impact of our work by the end of 2024.

5.0 Our Strategic Priorities

We know that no single service, programme or activity will be successful in transforming and sustaining improved outcomes in the Early Years in Hartlepool. There are no quick wins. It will take a concerted and long term effort across a range of partners, strategic policies and services to deliver the changes we want to see. Using the recommendations set out by LGA in 2020 together with the experience of a range of professionals across care, education and health sectors the following strategic priorities have been identified:

Information and Data Sharing

Create a comprehensive performance information framework that clearly indicates through the collective use of partner agency data, the early years position in Hartlepool enabling us to focus our attentions in areas of greatest need. The framework will work on a baseline of conception through to children aged 5 years.

A Multi Agency Early Years Team

Create a multi-agency early years service (or team) that includes the broadest possible spectrum of people that reach children in their early years. Enable this team to work innovatively, creatively and collectively to support the achievement of our strategic goals, sharing their knowledge, skills and expertise for the good of the child.

Speech, Language and Communication

Speech, language and communication skills are crucial to young children's overall development. Being able to speak clearly and process speech sounds, understand others, express ideas and interact with others are fundamental building blocks for a child's development. Research suggests that good communication, language and literacy at a young age have the highest correlation with outcomes at school.

- Develop an integrated local strategy for early language and literacy that places speech, language and communication at the core of our early years work ensuring that every child experiences a language rich environment at home, in the community and in their education and care setting.

Poverty and Social Mobility

Ensure that our early years strategy includes a robust understanding of the levels and impact of poverty in Hartlepool and support efforts to eradicate this. Encourage aspiration which in turn supports social mobility. Link our strategy for the early years directly into the town's wider anti-poverty strategy so that impact can be achieved at an early age.

Early Identification and Intervention

The benefits of early identification are widely recognised – identifying need at the earliest point, and then making effective provision, improves long-term outcomes for children. All those who work with young children should be alert to emerging difficulties and respond early. Once children fall behind, it is hard for them to catch up and they are likely to fall further behind throughout school. Early years is a key opportunity to make a difference as gaps in a child's learning in the early years, with the right support, are likely to catch up.

- Implement an effective early identification and early intervention pathway for 0-5s that ensures children who require additional support are identified and proportionate intervention is in place as soon as possible, including those with emerging/low level and transient need.

SEND

Early identification of needs and the timely provision of appropriate support, together with high aspirations, can help ensure that the vast majority of children who have SEN or disabilities can achieve well and make a successful transition into adulthood.

- Develop an Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disabilities strategy that ensures our SEND children aged 0-5, their families and the professionals that engage with them are provided with the necessary support to ensure they achieve their full early years potential.

Influencing the Home Learning Environment (HLE)

Parents need to have the capacity to create a positive home learning environment that encourages socialisation, communication, language and literacy and they may need help and support to do this.

- Ensure that at all points that a child is seen, their home learning environment is considered and that parents and caregivers are supported, if needed, with ideas, resources and interventions
- Ensure that professionals and all those that come into contact with early years children understand the importance of the HLE and support parents to create the very best HLE that they can
- Ensure that professionals and all those that come into contact with early years children promote Hartlepool Now as being the place where parents can find accessible information, including places to go, things to do and where to get help for a child.

Health and Wellbeing – the best start in life

In order to support children and their parents to be healthy we need to ensure that we provide universal access to services, that professionals identify early and intervention services are offered as early as possible.

Quality Early Education and Childcare Provision

Research tells us that high quality early childhood education and care have positive and long-lasting impacts on children's outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children.

- Develop a programme of support for early years providers that involves local quality assurance methods and ensures every childcare and education setting is at least 'good' (as identified by Ofsted) and is on a continuous improvement journey.

Effective Early Years Transition

Smooth transitions within the EYFS depend on a commitment from all professionals involved to develop positive communication links in order to promote continuity for all children experiencing transitions between settings. It is important that there is a shared approach between all those professionals involved. Transitions in the early years need to be carefully planned, as if they are not, they can prevent a child from engaging quickly and fully in the learning opportunities on offer. Transitions should therefore be the highest priority for schools and settings, planned with individual needs in mind.

- Work with early years professionals to develop transition practice guidance that supports effective transitions across early years.

Early Years Sector Skills and Expertise

Skilled and well-qualified practitioners are a key element of high quality early education and care and make a proven difference to children's learning and development, particularly for children from low income and at risk families (Sylva, 2014). Workforce quality is key to addressing gaps both in terms of attainment and emotional wellbeing as early as possible, and in improving a child's long-term life chances and social mobility (Trust, 2020).

- Develop a comprehensive and inclusive early years workforce development strategy that supports the early years workforce to be the best they can be by providing flexible CPD and support that meets the needs of all providers; supports the early identification pathway and ensures all those that come into contact with children in their early years have the skills and knowledge necessary to make a difference to their early years development.

The Voluntary and Community Sector

Strengthen the role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to support parents and their children in their local communities. The VCS have a vital role to play being well placed to know their local community and have the trust from parents to deliver services to meet their needs.

6.0 How will we do this?

Information and Data Sharing

- Develop an understanding of what data and information is available and what will enable us understand need
- Develop an information sharing protocol that allows all relevant agencies share information to enable an effective performance management framework be developed.
- Create a baseline so that future performance can be effectively measured
- Drill down into child level data so that effective intervention can take place where there are concerns
- Prepare a score card so that we can see the turn in the curve.

A Multi Agency Early Years Team

- Harness the resources available across partner agencies to establish a multi-agency early years service or team that clearly understands strategic priorities and goals and shares accountability
- Tackle concerns around a 'lack of joined-up-ness', clarifying roles, pathways and agencies responsibilities to ensure an effective offer is available
- Enable this team to work innovatively, creatively and flexibly to deliver exceptional early years services and support
- Empower the team to use their funding to support the strategic priorities and goals.

Speech, Language and Communication

- Review current SAL arrangements taking into account parents and professionals' concerns around waiting lists and delays.
- In partnership with ICAN, develop a SLC strategy that:
- promotes the importance of early language and early literacy across health, education and community services
- establishes a clear pathway for identifying and supporting SLC needs including low level and emerging need, as soon as need is identified 0-5
- ensures that all communications across health, education and community services around early years continually promote the importance of early language
- ensures that a newly developed training and development programme and associated materials have a strong focus on early language and early literacy
- establishes clear connections between SLC/early language and literacy and the Home Learning Environment enabling parents and caregivers to understand the importance and how to effectively support SLC and early literacy

- ensures that at every point a parent or caregiver is seen the importance of SLC is stressed including providing information on how the parent can get ideas, resources or support if they need them
- promotes the use of WellComm and the Early Language Identification Measure as early identification and intervention tools

Poverty and Social Mobility

- Ensure that the Early Years Partnership and Early Years Team have a thorough understanding of the levels of poverty across Hartlepool and the strategic priorities that have been agreed to address this
- Link the early years strategy firmly to a newly developed town wide anti-poverty strategy acknowledging that the early years is the beginning of a child's journey and that it is crucial that every effort is made to make this a positive life experience.
- Promote aspiration and educational achievement as a route out of poverty and an opportunity to increase social mobility.

Early Identification and Intervention

- Implement an effective identification, prevention and early intervention pathway that ensures children that require additional support are identified as soon as possible; this includes children with special educational needs and disabilities
- Re-design health pathways and statutory checks to ensure that we see a child at every possible stage and identify problems early
- Re-shape the integrated two year old check and create a further check at or around age 3
- Ensure that the Early Years Team knows about all children, in all cohorts from conception through to age five and that they can enable intervention if required
- Support professionals in their engagement with families where there are concerns that a child has not been taken to an appointment and/ or the family appears to be disengaged from support
- Ensure every parent knows who their Health Visitor is and how to contact them for advice
- Re-shape information sharing processes for the statutory development check at aged 2 to support early identification and intervention
- Create a further development check at or around age 3 to support children's transition to nursery that assesses early language and early literacy skills as a further early identification of need.

SEND

- Ensure that every child with SEND is identified early so that their development and progress is not limited
- Ensure families and caregivers have the help they need by developing clear pathways to access SEND services and support
- Ensure the early years workforce has the training, skills and knowledge to equip them to work with children with SEND
- Ensure that funding such as SENIF has the maximum impact through thorough review and monitoring.

Influencing the Home Learning Environment

- Ensure that parents have access to the support they need to be the best parent they can be
- Ensure that at all points that a child is seen their home learning environment is considered and that parents and caregivers are supported if needed with ideas, resources and intervention if required
- Ensure that professionals and all those that come into contact with early years children understand the importance of the HLE and support parents to do the very best they can
- Be mindful that the HLE is linked to parent support and that parents need to have the capacity to create a positive HLE and that they may need help and support to do this
- Further develop Hartlepool Now to hold all the information a parent needs with places to go, things to do and where to get help for a child; communicate this offer clearly to parents
- Support the VCS to deliver local parent and child groups that encourage socialisation, SLC and peer to peer support for families.

Health and wellbeing – best start in life

- Ensure children's physical and emotional health and wellbeing is supported through early identification and intervention and access to universal services
- Ensure parents and caregivers physical and emotional health and wellbeing is supported – including peri and post natal mental health
- Ensure the early years workforce knows how to help children and their families' access health and wellbeing support.
- Focus attention on infant feeding helping parents understand the importance of their early decisions and behaviours
- Engage the VCS in activities such as parent support and breastfeeding support being well placed to work in local communities gaining trust and engagement.

High Quality Early Years Education and Childcare

- Create a profile for each early years setting that provides a clear understanding of the quality of all care and education based on their Ofsted judgement and local assessment processes
- Provide a programme of universal and targeted support for early years and childcare settings that utilises a quality assurance process and encourages self-evaluation
- Support providers in their engagement with a newly developed free early years training programme that includes a focus on prevention, early intervention, SEND, SLC and the HLE.

Effective Early Years Transition

- Develop guidance on transition practices to ensure robust procedures are in place to support children at all transition points in their early years
- Resolve data sharing issues to ensure that important information about a child is shared at appropriate transition points
- Support professionals to acknowledge the importance of transition information in their understanding of the needs of the children
- Provide opportunities to share transition good practice.

Early Years Sector Skills and Expertise

- Support early years professionals to be able to access training; make training as accessible and flexible as possible to enable the engagement of learners
- Create a workforce development strategy and associated programme that focuses on the requirements of the early years foundation stage and reaches out to all those that come into contact with children
- Embed SLC, SEND and the HLE in workforce training and development
- Create a library of resources (virtually and physically) that is accessible to everyone across the early years workforce
- Provide opportunities for networking and the sharing of good practice.

The Voluntary and Community Sector

- Strengthen the role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to support parents and their children
- Support the VCS to offer e.g. local opportunities to parents and their children improving socialisation and mental health for both parent and child
- Support the VCS to locate and secure funding to enable them to develop and deliver services in line with the strategy.

7.0 Monitoring and measuring progress

The Early Years Partnership will meet monthly and will provide clear leadership in the area of early years. It will oversee the early years strategy and plan and ensure the key priorities remain on track. It will monitor the newly developed early years performance management framework and provide critical analysis and challenge where needed. It will direct resources to areas of need.

Success will take time to be visible however it will be measured by:

- an increase in the number of children accessing their early years entitlements
- improved inspection outcomes for early years providers
- improved educational outcomes for children
- a narrowing of the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers
- fewer children needing statutory intervention including Early Help or Social Care support
- a reduction in the number of children requiring SALT referrals
- a reduction in children living in poverty.

Appendix A – Hartlepool data

Population of Hartlepool	93,800
Number of children and young people 0-16 years	17,800
Number of children aged 0-5 years	6,202
Level of relative poverty (financial)	37.8%

Appendix B - National drivers

Childcare Act 2006 Places a duty on councils to improve outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities and ensure that there is sufficient, high-quality early years provision and childcare for parents locally.

Children and Families Act 2016 Places a duty on local authorities to secure free childcare for qualifying children.

The early years statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, Sept 2021 sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It requires a strong focus on early language and early literacy skills and early identification of need and intervention.

The Code of Practice 0-25 for children and young people with special educational needs and disabled children and young people (2015) sets standards for SEND provision. Providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities.

0 to 19 agenda / Best start in life and beyond, March 2018 Statutory guidance that supports local authorities in the commissioning of health visiting and school nursing services to lead and coordinate delivery of public health for children from birth up to the age of 19.

The Marmot Report, 2010 on health inequalities cites evidence that development begins before birth and that the health of a baby is crucially affected by the health and well-being of the mother. *‘The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being.’*

Unknown Children Destined for disadvantage (Ofsted 2016). This report recognises that, ‘The role of local authorities is paramount. They are charged with meeting the needs of young children through the Childcare Act 2006. All this demands joined-up thinking. *‘When learning, development and health are so inextricably linked for the under-fives, tackling all forms of inequality should be integrated across the range of local children’s services. This, in turn, requires*

strong and effective leadership at every level from the council cabinet to those leading early years provision.'

Language as a wellbeing indicator report, 2017 recommended that children's language development should be viewed as a public health wellbeing indicator, rather than just as an individual or 'clinical' concern and that a child's language development should be formally monitored between aged two and five, so that those not making good progress are offered additional support.

Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: a plan for improving social mobility through education (DfE, 2017). This government plan sets an overarching ambition: 'no community left behind' and set their ambition to close the word gap in the early years. *'Children with strong foundations will start school in a position to progress, but too many children still fall behind early, and it is hard to close the gaps that emerge. We need to tackle these development gaps at the earliest opportunity, particularly focussing on the key early language and literacy skills, so that all children can begin school ready to thrive.'*

July 2018, The Secretary of State for Education announced his ambition to halve the proportion of children who do not achieve at least expected levels across all goals in the "communication and language "and "literacy" areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile at the end of reception year by 2028.

Best beginnings in the early years report, July 2020 a proposal from the Children's Commissioner to give every child the best start in life. The report recommends 'to bring about change, we need to focus on the first years of life'. It recognises that investment in the early years has been inconsistent and has resulted in services to the youngest children and their families has become disjointed and fragmented in some areas.

Identifying and supporting children's early language needs (Public Health England, 2020) *'The gap in the cognitive development and specifically oral language skills between children from different social backgrounds is widely acknowledged. This gap is identifiable very early in life and well established by school entry and can have long term consequences in terms of educational attainment and outcomes in adulthood. Effective interventions are available but matching the right intervention to the child's needs is sometimes a challenge, in part because the rate at which children's language develops naturally varies and it can be difficult to know when to consider intervention. Central to this process is the review of child development carried out by health visitors at the Healthy Child Programme 2 to 2½ year review'*.

Public Health England (PHE) and the Department for Education's (DfE) Best Start in Speech, Language and Communication Programme, September 2020 aims to improve the rate of early identification of need in the early years and increase the number of children who are ready for school by the age of 5. This includes a suite of materials to support commissioners including the Early language identification and intervention measure (ELIM).

Best start in life and beyond: improving public health outcomes for children, young people and families, August 2021. This report recognises that the foundations for virtually every aspect of human development including physical, intellectual and emotional, are established in pregnancy and early childhood. For families facing multiple challenges, the importance of appropriate support at this crucial time can have lifelong impact.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18th January 2022



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

Subject: TO NOMINATE A LOCAL AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVE TO SERVE ON THE FEDERATED GOVERNING BODY OF GOLDEN FLATTS AND LYNNFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOLS

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 This is a Non Key decision.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To consider a nomination for the Local Authority Governor position on the Federated Governing Body of Golden Flatts and Lynnfield Primary Schools.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Under the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 the process for appointing Local Authority Governors to school governing bodies requires the local authority to consider nominations to vacancies before they are presented to the relevant governing body for formal approval. Applications have been received for the vacant positions at the above schools details of which are set out in **Appendix A**.

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government), (Access to Information), (Variations Order 2006) namely, information relating to any individual (Para 1).

4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The report seeks the committee's decision on the application for nomination as Local Authority Governor on the Federated Governing Body of Golden Flatts and Lynnfield Primary Schools.

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no risk implications

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial considerations

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 There are no legal considerations

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Discussions have taken place between the applicant and head teacher around the skills the applicant can contribute to the Governing Body. The application received relates to a position that is currently vacant.

9. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 There are no child and family considerations

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 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 asset management considerations

13. RECOMMENDATION

- 13.1 The committee gives consideration to application for nomination as Local Authority Governor as set out in **Appendix B**.

14. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 To ensure that the identified governing body can appoint a Local Authority Governor who is able to contribute to the effectiveness of governance at the school.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 15.1 There are no background papers

16. CONTACT OFFICER

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Sign Off:-

Director of Finance and Policy

Chief Solicitor

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18th January 2022



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

Subject: TO NOMINATE A LOCAL AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVE TO SERVE ON THE GOVERNING BODY OF FENS PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 This is a Non Key decision.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To consider a nomination for the Local Authority Governor position at Fens Primary School.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Under the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 the process for appointing Local Authority Governors to school governing bodies requires the local authority to consider nominations to vacancies before they are presented to the relevant governing body for formal approval. Applications have been received for the vacant positions at the above schools details of which are set out in **Appendix A**.

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government), (Access to Information), (Variations Order 2006) namely, information relating to any individual (Para 1).

4. PROPOSAL

4.1 The report seeks the committee's decision on the application for nomination as Local Authority Governor at Fens Primary School

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no risk implications

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 There are no financial considerations

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 There are no legal considerations

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 Discussions have taken place between the applicant and head teacher of the school around the skills the applicant can contribute to the Governing Body. The application received relates to a position that is currently vacant.

9. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 There are no child and family considerations

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

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 asset management considerations

13. RECOMMENDATION

13.1 The committee gives consideration to application for nomination as Local Authority Governor as set out in **Appendix B**.

14. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 To ensure that the identified governing body can appoint a Local Authority Governor who is able to contribute to the effectiveness of governance at the school.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 15.1 There are no background papers

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Chief Solicitor

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18 January 2022



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

Subject: ANNUAL REPORT OF CHILDREN SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS 1 APRIL 2020 – 31 MARCH 2021

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 For information.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To present to members the Annual Report of Children Social Care Complaints and Compliments 2020/21

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Annual Complaints and Compliments Report provides information on the complaints for children's social care and public health. It summarises information in relation to complaints that have been received and responded to, as well as compliments received during the reporting period.

4. PROPOSALS

4.1 The report is attached as **Appendix 1** and provides an analysis of complaints and compliments during the reporting period. The report outlines where learning has occurred from complaints and actions implemented as a result.

4.2 The report includes:

- Complaints and compliments received in 2020/21
- Outcomes of complaints;
- Actions undertaken following findings; and
- Complaints considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2020/21.

5. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE COMPLIMENTS/ COMPLAINTS

- 5.1 During 2020/21, 46 compliments have been received relating to children's social care. This is a significant increase from 2019/2020. These range from an expression of thanks and appreciation in the form of a thank-you card to written communication.
- 5.2 A total of 40 complaints were received in 2020/21. The number of complaints received has increased by 4 from the previous year.
- 5.3 Of the 40 complaints received in 2020/21, 20 were not considered further leaving 20 complaints for investigation. Overall, although there was an increase of 4 in the number of complaints received in 2020/21 compared to the previous year, there was a decrease of 5 in the number of complaints investigated in 2020/21 than the previous year.
- 5.4 Details of the different stages of investigation are included within the annual report (Appendix 1)

6. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no risk implications identified.

7. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial considerations identified.

8. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 There are no legal considerations identified.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 There is no consultation required in relation to this issue.

10. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY

- 10.1 There are no child and family poverty considerations identified.

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 There are no equality and diversity considerations identified.

12. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

12.1 There are no staff considerations identified.

13. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

13.1 There are no asset management considerations identified.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 That members of Children's Services Committee note the contents of the Annual Report of Complaints and Compliments 20120/21 and note that the report will be published online.

15. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 It is a requirement that an Annual Report regarding complaints is prepared presented to the relevant Policy Committee and published on the Council's website.

16. CONTACT OFFICER

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Children's and Joint Commissioning Services Annual Complaint Report 2020-2021



Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Background	4
3. Children's social care complaint framework	5
4. Public health complaint framework	7
5. Principles and outcomes	8
6. Public information	8
7. Summary of representations	9
8. Actions taken following complaints	12
9. Conclusions and way forward	12

Appendices

A: Examples of compliments received in children's social care services

B: Examples of actions taken in complaints about children's social care services

1. Introduction

Welcome to Hartlepool Borough Council's Children's and Joint Commissioning Services Complaints, Compliments and Representations Annual Report. The report covers statutory complaints and compliments received for children's social care services and public health functions for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The report outlines:

- Details of the complaints and compliments received over the reporting period;
- Performance in relation to handling of complaints;
- Actions implemented, any lessons learned and resulting improvements following enquiry into complaints.

2. Background

Complaints and compliments are valued as an important source of feedback on the quality of services. Each complaint is investigated and, where appropriate, redress made. Equally important is the work to learn lessons to prevent a repeat of failure in service quality and continually improve services.

2.1. What is a complaint?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about a service that is being delivered, or the failure to deliver a service. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman define a complaint as “*an expression of dissatisfaction about a council service (whether that service is provided directly by the council or on its behalf by a contractor or partner) that requires a response.*”

A complaint can be made in person, in writing, by telephone or email or through the council's website. It can be made at any office. Every effort is made to assist people in making their complaint and any member of staff can take a complaint.

2.2. Who can complain?

A complaint can be made by:

- A child or young person
- A parent or carer
- Special Guardians
- Anyone who is or is likely to be affected by the actions, decisions or omissions of the service that is the subject of a complaint.

3. Children's Social Care Complaint Framework

3.1. Complaint management arrangements

The statutory complaint function for children's social care sits within Quality and Review under the management of the Head of Service (Quality and Review).

The remit of the Complaints Manager's function is:

- Managing, developing and administering the complaint procedure.
- Providing assistance and advice to those who wish to complain.
- Overseeing the investigation of complaints that cannot be managed at source.
- Supporting and training staff.
- Monitoring and reporting on complaints activity.

3.2. The complaint regulations and procedure

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 came into force from 1 September 2006. This procedure is for all representations received from children and young people, their parents, foster carers or other qualifying adults about social care services provided or commissioned by children's social care. The full detail of the complaints procedure is available on the Council's website at:

https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20004/council_and_democracy/429/complaints_comments_and_compliments

The Regulations and Statutory Guidance '*Getting the Best from Complaints*' are now fully embedded into the children's social care complaints system and

information derived from complaints is included in the annual monitoring of children's social care and made available to the public.

A child or young person who make a representation is allocated the services of an Advocate to enable their views to be effectively promoted.

There are three stages to the procedure.

» **Stage 1**

Local Resolution: The aim of stage 1 is to sort out the matter as quickly as possible. The complaint will be allocated to a manager who will contact the complainant to discuss the complaint. Stage 1 of the complaints procedure should be completed within 10 working days but if there are a number of issues to look into, this can be extended up to 20 working days. The complainant will receive a response to the complaint in writing.

» **Stage 2**

Investigation: This part of the procedure is used when the complainant remains unhappy after their complaint has been responded to at Stage 1 or the complaint is sufficiently serious enough to warrant a more formal investigation. Investigations are conducted by an Investigating Officer who must be independent of the service area and/or decision making being complained about. Sometimes, an Investigating Officer external to the Council is appointed when the issues complained about are complex, have a number of elements to them or there is sufficient justification to appoint an external Investigating Officer. An Independent Person is also appointed at Stage 2. This is a statutory role and the Independent Person (who is external to the Council) works alongside the Investigating Officer with a remit to ensure that the process is open, transparent and fair.

Reports completed by the Investigating Officer and Independent Person are submitted to an Adjudicating Officer (usually the Assistant Director) for response.

The investigation and adjudication process should be concluded within 65 working days.

» Stage 3

Independent Complaint Review Panel: If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, they may request that the issues are taken to a Complaint Review Panel (Stage 3). The Panel consists of an Independent Chair and two independent panel members. The Panel considers the complaint and can make recommendations to the Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services within 5 working days of the Panel meeting.

The Director is required to make a formal response to any findings and recommendations of the Review Panel within 15 working days of receiving the Panel's report.

3.3. Referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If, at the end of the complaints procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome or the way in which their complaint has been handled, they may ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) to investigate their complaint. Complainants may also approach the LGSCO directly without accessing the complaints process. In these cases it is usual for the LGSCO to refer them back to the Council for their complaint to be examined through the relevant complaints process before they intervene.

4. Public Health Complaint Framework

4.1. The complaint regulations

The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 cover the statutory complaint handling arrangements relating to public health functions of a Local Authority. These regulations also cover the provision of services by a service provider where the complaint relates to public health functions for which the Local Authority Director of Public Health has responsibility for.

4.2. Complaint management arrangements

The statutory complaint function for public health also sits within the Quality and Review Service under the management of the Head of Service (Quality and Review).

5. Principles and outcomes

Good handling of complaints and representations involves:

- Keeping the complainant at the centre of the complaints process;
- Being open and accountable;
- Responding to complainants in a way that is fair;
- Being committed to try to get things right when they go wrong;
- Seeking to continually improve services.

Statutory complaints are underpinned by the following:

- A procedure that aims to be fair, clear, robust and accessible;
- Support being available to those wishing to make a complaint;
- Timely resolution following enquiry into complaints/representations;
- Lessons learnt following complaints and services improved;
- Monitoring being used as a means of improving performance.

6. Public information

Information about the complaints and representations framework is accessible via the Council's public access points and also the Council's website at: https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20004/council_and_democracy/429/complaints_comments_and_compliments

Children, young people and their carers are provided with factsheets explaining the procedure.

Information in other formats such as large print or Braille or translation in languages other than English are made available upon request.

7. Summary of representations

7.1. Compliments

Compliments are generally recognised to be an indicator of good outcomes for children, young people and their families. They also serve to provide wider lessons regarding the quality of services.

During 2020/21, 46 compliments have been received relating to children's social care. These range from an expression of thanks and appreciation in the form of a thank-you card to written communication. This has increased by 38 compliments reported to the Quality and Review Team in 2019/20. The increase in compliments may partly relate to the awareness raising undertaken in the past year about the importance of forwarding expressions of thanks and appreciation from children and their families on to the Quality and Review Team. Appendix A provides some examples of compliments received during the period.

7.2. Complaints received in 2020/21 – Children's social care

A total of 40 complaints were received in 2020/21. The number of complaints received has increased by 4 from the previous year. Actions implemented to improve services as a result of complaints are outlined in Appendix B. There were no complaints carried forward to 2020/21 from 2019/20.

Of the 40 complaints received in 2020/21, 20 were not considered further leaving 20 complaints for investigation. Overall, although there was an increase of 4 in the number of complaints received in 2020/21 compared to the previous year, there was a decrease of 5 in the number of complaints investigated in 2020/21 than the previous year.

Of the 20 complaints not considered further, this was because:

- 16 complaints related to ongoing or concluded court proceedings. Any dissatisfaction about legal proceedings cannot be considered within the complaints framework. These should be raised during the court proceedings before decisions are reached by a Judge or, in the case of disagreement with decisions made within proceedings, via the legal appeal process. In these 16 cases, the complainant was informed that their representation could not be considered under the complaints procedure and was signposted to the LGSCO if they remained unhappy with the decision not to investigate their complaint.
- 2 complaints were withdrawn by the Council when the complainants did not communicate further despite repeated efforts by the Council to engage with the complainants.
- 1 complaint received was based on anecdotal evidence. The Council outlined its reason for not investigating the complaint and signposted the complainant to the LGSCO if they remained unhappy with the decision reached not to investigate their complaint.
- 1 complaint received related to another organisation. The Council outlined why it could not investigate the complaint and signposted the complainant to the relevant organisation responsible for the subject matter being complained about.

Of the 40 complaints received:

- 37 complaints were received from a parent;
- 1 complaint was received from a grandparent;
- 1 complaint was received from a connected carer; and
- 1 complaint was received from a child.

Of the 20 complaints investigated:

- 17 complaints were responded to at Stage 1 in the first instance; and
- 3 complaints proceeded directly to Stage 2 without being first considered at Stage 1.

- Of the 17 complaints responded to at Stage 1:
 - 11 complaints were resolved; and
 - 6 complaints progressed to Stage 2.
- Of the 9 complaints investigated at Stage 2:
 - 1 complaint was withdrawn at Stage 2 by the Council when the complainant did not engage despite repeated efforts made by the Investigating Officer (overseen by an Independent Person) to engage the complainant;
 - 5 complaints concluded following the completion of Stage 2;
 - 2 complaints remain ongoing at Stage 2; and
 - 1 complaint remains 'on hold' at Stage 2 at the complainant's request.

7.3. Advocacy services

Of the 40 complaints received, one complainant chose to have an advocate support them during the complaint process.

7.4. Complaints considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in 2020/21

There were no complaints considered by the LGSCO about children's social care during 2020/21.

7.5. Complaints carried forward to 2020/21

A total of 3 complaints from 2020/21 remain at Stage 2 and will be carried forward to 2021/22.

7.6. Complaints in 2020/21 – Public Health relating to children's services

There was 1 complaint received in relation to public health functions during 2020/21. There were no complaints received in the previous year. The complaint received in 2020/21 was not upheld.

8. Actions taken following complaints

Actions implemented following the conclusion of a complaint are an important aspect of the complaints framework. Appendices B and C outline the context of some actions that have been put in place to improve services as a direct result of complaints and representations received in children's social care.

9. Conclusions and way forward

9.1. Going forward

We continue to ensure that a person-centred approach is adopted for the handling and investigation of each complaint. We will continue to focus on ensuring we monitor that: complainants receive appropriate and timely feedback on complaints; appropriate apologies are offered; and any service improvement recommendations are delivered.

9.2. Action plan

Actions for 2021/22 are as follows:

- Continue to raise awareness of and promote the relevant statutory complaints procedure for children's social care and public health services for children.
- Continue to remind and encourage the workforce to inform the Quality and Review Service when expressions of thanks have been received. These provide an indication of satisfaction with services and should be recorded and reported.
- Continue to raise awareness of lessons learnt from complaints by ensuring:
 - they are collated on a quarterly basis for discussion to inform learning at the continuous improvement group;
 - any workforce development needs are identified and training implemented; and
 - the electronic practice manual is updated to reflect any changes to policies and procedures.

Appendix A: Examples of compliments received across Children's Social Care Services

"I just wanted to send a short thank you whilst I had 5 minutes to thank you for going over and above with the support to our children, especially throughout this pandemic. Whilst I appreciate that it has been a testing time for everyone involved, working alongside like-minded colleagues for the best of our children means that our work has been made as easy as it possibly could be. Thank you for your hard work and dedication."

From another professional about a Social Worker

"We are going to miss you thank you so much from all of us. For helping to get the girls settled into our family and making sure they (and we) are happy! The best of our wishes for all you chose to do in the future."

From a family with a Special Guardianship Order about a Social Worker

"J was very lovely and easy to get on with. I loved working with her because she made me feel comfortable. One thing I want to say is for J not to change the way she deals with people because she would make anyone feel relaxed and at ease and she is approachable"

From a parent about a Social Worker

"We can't put into words how much we appreciate all your help and support over the past 3 years! We wish you all the best for the future"

From a parent & child about a Social Worker

"Please accept my compliments on the quality of your final evidence and parenting assessment. Your work is so detailed but also very easy to read and understand."

From a Children's Guardian about a Social Worker

"She made sure I was totally involved with everything, for the first time I understood why social care where involved and what we needed to do to close my case. She kept her phone on when she knew I would need to ring her and was there exactly when I needed her."

From an young person about a Social Worker

"Z chaired the Looked after Review for the children yesterday and Nana rang me today to let me know how well she felt the meeting had gone, she said that she could tell Z was extremely experienced and made the review centred around the children and their care which was important to her. Nana said that Z was honest and made it clear to Mam that people are there for her but she needs to put the work in now."

From a nana caring for her grandchildren
about an Independent Reviewing Officer

"I just wanted to send a message to say thanks and that you are doing a great job. I don't think you realise how much you have helped my family over the last year and it is fair to say that this past year and a half have been truly awful. Not enough people say thanks and usually only complain about things but I really don't know what we would have done without you. I am sure you help lots of families and as I have said earlier we appreciate it and I am sure a lot of others do too."

From a parent about a Social Worker

Appendix B: Examples of actions taken in complaints about Children's Social Care Services

Details of complaint/Outcome	Actions following findings
<p>The complainant was unhappy with the Social Worker's way of working and raised concerns about her sister's children residing with their father.</p> <p>Concluded at Stage 1</p>	<p>The Team Manager resolved the complaint in a telephone call with the complainant. The Team Manager and complainant were able to have a discussion of how to move forward which all parties agreed with.</p>
<p>The complainant was unhappy that his partner's children's Social Worker knew about his children being removed from his care. The complainant believed the Social Worker had breached data protection regulations by speaking to past social workers without his consent.</p> <p>Concluded at Stage 1</p>	<p>A Team Manager contacted the complainant to explain the procedures Social Workers must follow in legal proceedings about gathering information on new partners and their children. The complainant accepted the explanation provided about the procedures and was happy no data protection regulations had been breached.</p>
<p>The complainant (a young person supported by his Advocate) was unhappy that his contact with his mother was not as regular as he would have liked.</p> <p>Concluded at Stage 1</p>	<p>An explanation was provided to the complainant and his advocate about the arrangements for supervised contact sessions. The arrangements were confirmed to the complainant in writing.</p>

Details of complaint/Outcome	Actions following findings
<p>The complainant expressed his unhappiness that he had not been given enough time to read a report and voice his concerns before the meeting.</p> <p>Concluded at Stage 1</p>	<p>The Team Manager looked into what had happened and although it was found the complainant had been provided with an opportunity to voice his opinions and concerns before the meeting, the report had been provided late to the complainant and an apology was provided for this.</p>
<p>The complainants expressed concerns about the care given to their child as well the conduct of the foster carers during their child's period in care.</p> <p>Concluded at Stage 2</p>	<p>Although the Investigating Officer (IO) partly upheld one element and the remainder of the complaint was not upheld, an apology was provided for some missed communication that had occurred. The IO also made a recommendation that all parents have necessary information about a child's daily routines prior to any rehabilitation visits taking place. This service improvement was accepted and implemented.</p>
<p>The complainant expressed his dissatisfaction about an incident which occurred involving his child and raised concerns in relation to a lack of supervision by Support Workers.</p> <p>Concluded at Stage 2</p>	<p>Although the point of complaint investigated by the Investigating Officer (IO) was not upheld, it is always useful for any learning to be identified for service improvement. In this case, the IO made a recommendation for a risk assessment to be updated which reflected the current circumstances relating to the children. This service improvement was accepted and implemented.</p>