

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

## AGENDA



**Tuesday 12 September 2023**

**at 4.00 pm**

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

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillors Cowie, Harrison, Holbrook, Lindridge, Little, Moore and Sharp.

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

School Heads Representatives: Adam Palmer (Secondary), Sue Sharpe (Primary), Zoe Westley (Special).

Parent Governor Representative: Martin Pout

Six Young Peoples Representatives

Observer: Councillor Buchan, 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 22 June 2023 (*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**

- 4.1 Youth Justice Strategic Plan – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

**5. KEY DECISIONS**

No items.

**6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**

No items.

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- 7.1 2022/2023 Annual Report of Adoption Tees Valley – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 7.2 Staying Close – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

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

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – Tuesday 14 November at 4.00pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

12<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023



**Subject:** YOUTH JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN  
**Report of:** Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services  
**Decision Type:** Budget and Policy Framework

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## 1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

<b>Hartlepool will be a place:</b>
- Where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- Where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Council with the Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2023 - 2024 (**Appendix 1**) and gain approval from Children's Service Committee to begin a consultation process for the approval of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023/24, which will be presented to Safer Hartlepool Partnership on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023 and Audit and Governance Committee on the 10th October 2023. Recommendations made by the Children's Services Committee, Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Audit and Governance Committee will be incorporated into the final plan which will be reported back to Children's Services Committee prior to final adoption of the plan by full Council.
- 2.2 The report will be presented to Children's Service Committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> November to seek approval for the presentation to Full Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> November to seek adoption of the Youth Justice Plan 2023 – 2024.
- 2.3 The final Plan will also be sent to the National 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

### 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

#### 4.1 Youth Justice Service Strategic Objectives and Priorities – 2023-2024

**Re-offending** - reduce further offending by children who have committed crime with a particular emphasis on continuing the development of Service interventions that are structured, responsive, tailored to meet identified individual need and evaluated. (Both within Youth Justice Services and provided by external agencies).

**Early/Targeted Intervention, Prevention & Diversion** – 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 from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

**Remand, Custody & Constructive Resettlement** – demonstrate that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the need for remands and custody. Ensure bespoke constructive resettlement packages are implemented at the earliest opportunity.

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

**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 children who offend.

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

**Voice of the Children** – ensure that all children are actively involved in developing their own plans and are encouraged and supported to inform current and future service delivery.

**'Child First'** – ensure that the Child First principles are regularly reviewed and 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.

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

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

**Serious Violence & Exploitation** – Working with and alongside all partners including the Police, MACE and Violence Reduction Unit to address and reduce serious violence and all forms of child exploitation

**Over Represented Children** - Identify and address any areas of over representation within the YJS cohort alongside the management board and partners.

**5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS**

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	<p>The strategic plan identifies key risk to future delivery as detailed in Section 8. of the plan these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Managing the potential for reduction in YJB grant and partnership financial and 'in-kind' contributions pre and post 2023/24</li> <li>• Ongoing recruitment issues within the Probation Services having a direct impact on YJS Seconded Probation Officer</li> <li>• Performance on reoffending outcomes and impact on children</li> <li>• Continued concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines.</li> </ul>
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	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.
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	<p>The report is being presented to Children's Services Committee to seek approval to commence a programme of consultation on the draft 2023 – 2024 plan.</p> <p>Consultation will be undertaken with children, young people and their families, partners and other key stakeholders prior to a final draft of the plan being prepared which will be presented to Children's Services Committee and full Council.</p>

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 To note the progress made against the local Youth Justice Plan (2023/2024).
- 6.2 To approve the required process of consultation.

**7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The development of the Youth Justice Plan for 2023 – 2024 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.
- 7.2 The local Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2023 – 2024 will establish responsibility across the Youth Justice Service and the Youth Justice Strategic Board for taking each improvement activity forward within agreed timescales.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998

**9. CONTACT OFFICERS**

- 9.1 Jane Young, Assistant Director, Children and Families, Hartlepool Borough Council, level 4, Civic Centre, TS24 8AY. Tel 01429 523957. E-mail [jane.young@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:jane.young@hartlepool.gov.uk)

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 11 August 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 11 August 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 11 August 2023



## Hartlepool Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2023-24



<b>Service</b>	Hartlepool Youth Justice Service
<b>Service Manager/ Lead</b>	Roni Checksfield, Youth Justice Service Manager
<b>Chair of YJS Board</b>	Jo Heaney, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Delivery (Children, Young People and Maternity - Tees Valley) North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. (Chair Hartlepool YJS Management Board)



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## **Foreword**

Welcome to the 2023 - 2024 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 year.

The Safer Hartlepool Partnership, Community Safety Plan 2021-24 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 children 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 children entering the youth justice system for the first time, but there still remains a need to drive down incidents of re-offending by children 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 all wrapped around a “Child First” ethos. Encouragingly, Hartlepool Youth Justice Service alongside partners continues to maintain a strong health offer for all children and is constantly striving to build upon its restorative offer whilst ensuring that victims of youth crime also have a voice.

There has been a significant increase in work placed upon the Youth Justice Service both last year and in the current year. The introduction of the Turnaround programme nationally with its very tight lead in and planning times, the addition of the new KPIs, representation and input into the newly funded Cleveland Violence Reduction Unit (CURV) and more recently ongoing discussions with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) regarding the recently published Anti-Social Behaviour action plan and the pending YJS involvement within the “Immediate Justice” element.

Despite the increased workload, I am 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 2023-24 we will strive to continuously improve by:

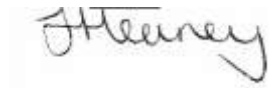
- Maintaining and building upon the current Health offer with trauma informed practice at its core.
- Continuing to work with partners to develop a clear and consistent approach to all forms of child exploitation.
- Building on the improving YJS offer of a ‘whole family approach’
- Ensuring the Service maintains a ‘child first’ ethos.
- Continuing to maintain a creative Early/Targeted Intervention, Prevention and Diversion offer.

#### 4.1 APPENDIX 1

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 risks of reducing partnership budgets whilst maintaining the quality and effectiveness of the Service.

As always, the local authority and Strategic Management Board is extremely grateful for the skill and dedication shown by managers, staff, employees and volunteers of the YJS in continuing to support children who offend, or are at risk of becoming involved in offending.

On behalf of the Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board I am pleased to pledge my support to and endorse the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023-24

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J Heaney', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Jo Heaney, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Delivery (Children, Young People and Maternity - Tees Valley) North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.  
(Chair Hartlepool YJS Management Board)

## 1. Introduction, vision, strategy & local context

### Introduction

The National Youth Justice System primarily exists to ensure that children 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, children who offend are:

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

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority and statutory partners to secure and coordinate local youth justice services for children 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 Services.

The primary functions of Youth Justice Services are to prevent offending and re-offending by children, 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, Health, Education and Community Safety. Hartlepool Youth Justice Service seeks to ensure that:

- All children 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 child.
- Services provided to courts are of a high quality and ensure that magistrates and the judiciary have confidence in the supervision of children.
- Comprehensive bail and remand management services are in place locally for children remanded or committed to custody, or on bail while awaiting trial or sentence.
- The needs and risks of children 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 now a requirement to ensure that:

## 4.1 APPENDIX 1

- Creative strategies and services are in place locally to prevent children 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 children who offend.
- The Turnaround Programme is implemented and meeting targets in line with Government criteria

The Hartlepool Youth Justice Plan for 2023-2024 sets out how youth justice services will be delivered, funded and governed in response to both local need, national policy changes and in line with the Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019, our most recent HMIP inspection findings, ongoing HMIP Thematic reports and the YJB Strategic Plan 2021-24. It also highlights how Hartlepool Youth Justice Service will work in partnership to prevent offending and re-offending by children and reduce the use of remands and custody ensuring we put the “Child First” throughout all processes.

### **Vision & Strategy**

Hartlepool’s Children’s Strategic Partnership has set out its vision for children 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.

#### **Priorities:**

- Children 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 children 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 ambitions through a number of identified Youth Justice Service Strategic Priorities for 2023 - 2024.

In addition, these priorities align and overlap with the strategic priorities set by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership for 2021-24:

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

## Youth Justice Service Strategic Objectives and Priorities – 2023-2024

We will use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver our services that enable us to work towards achieving the following objectives and priorities annually:

**Re-offending** - reduce further offending by children who have committed crime with a particular emphasis on continuing the development of Service interventions that are structured, responsive, tailored to meet identified individual need and evaluated. (Both within Youth Justice Services and provided by external agencies).

**Early/Targeted Intervention, Prevention & Diversion** – 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 from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

**Remand, Custody & Constructive Resettlement** – demonstrate that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the need for remands and custody. Ensure bespoke constructive resettlement packages are implemented at the earliest opportunity.

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

**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 children who offend.

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

**Voice of the Children** – ensure that all children are actively involved in developing their own plans and are encouraged and supported to inform current and future service delivery.

**‘Child First’** – ensure that the Child First principles are regularly reviewed and 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.

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

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

**Serious Violence & Exploitation** – Working with and alongside all partners including the Police, MACE and Violence Reduction Unit to address and reduce serious violence and all forms of child exploitation

**Over Represented Children** - Identify and address any areas of over representation within the YJS cohort alongside the management board and partners.

## **Local Context**

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, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and substance misuse.

All of these factors provide significant challenges to the children we work with impacting on their behaviours and influencing outcomes.

According to the mid 2021 population estimates – ONS, the population of Hartlepool was in the region of **92,571** with approx.**9359** being between the ages of 10-17.

The BAME population in Hartlepool continues to remain somewhat low in comparison to other areas locally, **3,270** or **3.5%** of Hartlepool Population (Non-White ethnic groups, Census 2021 – ONS)

10-17 BAME population – No published data.

Current number of Children in our Care (CIOC), all ages – **320** (Active as at 31 March 2023, Hartlepool Performance Team)

Current CIOC figures 10–17 – **203** (Active as at 04 05 2023, Hartlepool Performance Team)

**\*\***At the time of writing this Strategic Plan there are 4 children open to the YJS who are CIOC.

Hartlepool is served by 5 Secondary Schools, 1 Pupil Referral Unit (Horizon School) 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.

Hartlepool YJS has had to evolve over the years in response to changing local circumstances and economic factors. The current service is a traditional YOS model with two small operational teams delivering case management across Out of Court Disposals and Post Court Orders/DTO. The operational teams are supported by a Leadership Team which carry out day to day operational oversight, performance management, service planning and policies & procedures. There is also support from a small business admin team as well as sessional staff and Panel Volunteers who provide a very valuable service.

The YJS is constantly striving to ensure that the service is able to meet the current and future demands of service users, based on a 'fit for purpose' structure which supports high quality service delivery. Central to this is the recognition that all staff will need to be well equipped to deal with a wide variety of service user needs, and keep abreast of emerging areas of practice not least trauma informed practice, the developing body of knowledge and evidence surrounding County Lines, Modern Day Slavery and Serious Youth Violence as well as findings from HMIP and other relevant inspection bodies.

As with the majority of YJSs the service is dealing with smaller caseloads, however these are much more complex individuals with multiple risks and vulnerabilities, the main cohort are predominantly young males aged between 14 and 17, many of whom reside within Hartlepool's most deprived neighbourhoods. Although not mutually exclusive, the common criminogenic and welfare issues prevalent amongst this cohort are identified as:

- higher than average mental health needs
- higher levels of drug and alcohol use than for the general population
- low educational attachment, attendance and attainment
- having family members or friends who offend

## 4.1 APPENDIX 1

- higher than average levels of loss, bereavement, abuse and violence experienced within the family – historical trauma
- a history of family disruption
- chaotic and unstructured lifestyles
- Vulnerable to all elements of exploitation

Alongside this cohort of young males, there is another cohort of young females of similar age 14-17, whom although perhaps not as prolific in terms of reoffending, are of significant concern due to multiple complex issues which are more welfare-orientated. These include: Substance misuse, chaotic lifestyles, and sexual exploitation, missing from home and 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.

As can be seen from the figures above Hartlepool does have a relatively low BAME percentage compared to locally and regionally, however the service does have the necessary training and skills to respond to work with children from a BAME or other diverse background. More notably the number of Children in our care (CIOC) does fluctuate within the YJS cohort, the data is regularly analysed and there is ongoing work with partners and carers in order to ensure appropriate actions are in place to support this vulnerable group of children. This is a strategic priority and actions and progress is reported to the Strategic Management Board.

Working in partnership is key to supporting a greater understanding of these underlying issues and addressing them in a holistic and co-ordinated way to provide “pathways out of offending”, reduce crime and break the cycle of offending behaviour across generations.

## 2. Child First

In line with the Youth Justice Boards Strategic Plan 2021-24 Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) is committed to:

- Prioritise the best interests of children and recognise their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
- Promote children’s individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
- Encourage children’s active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
- Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

We continue to ensure the “Child First” principles are embedded and maintained within all areas of service delivery in collaboration with other services and all partners.

In early 2022 Hartlepool YJS produced a “Child First” guidance for all staff to ensure this approach is embedded across all areas of service delivery from assessment, planning, intervention and at closure and exit.

This approach continues to be central to our operational delivery across the whole service and within staff supervisions, case audits and quality assessment of Asset Plus/plans.



In addition to providing guidance to staff the YJS manager and Chair of the management board designed and delivered bite size “Child First” and the “Voice of the Child” sessions for all board members, which will be reviewed and delivered on an ongoing basis.

\*\* (The process below is taken from Hartlepool YJS Child First Guidance)

### Assessment/Planning

- The assessment is needs led and not just offence focussed
- We utilise the assessment period to start relationship building and getting to know the child
- We find out what the child likes doing and what they are good at and promote these throughout their time with the service
- Whilst completing the SAQ within the assessment we utilise Why, Where, What, When, Who etc. to gather the Childs/Parents/Carers feelings and thoughts better
- The child's plan is completed with them and parent/carer with their comments and signatures included
- We utilise Positive Activities within the plan and in collaboration with the child
- We ensure appropriate priority pathways are identified within the plan i.e. Health input and that they will run concurrent to other areas of the plan

### Interventions

- We deliver as many sessions as possible away from the YJS Offices, utilising our offsite facilities more and other external locations as appropriate
- We ensure the Childs journey with the service is non-stigmatising
- We become the child's advocate during their time with us and have regular communication with all other services involved i.e. Health, Education and Social Care etc. advocating on behalf of the child
- We use appropriate language at all times with the child and throughout their journey with the service
- Reparation isn't used as a “tick box exercise” but is used correctly in a reparative way with the child understanding why they are required to complete it
- We complete a feedback form after each planned intervention ensuring we capture the child's voice and their thoughts & feelings (feedback forms are shared with Management Team and presented at Management Boards)

### Reviews/Closures

- We will ensure that as and when required Child/Parent/Carer are actively included in all reviews, ensuring we capture their voices and comments
- We ensure that a Case Summary and Survey Monkey are completed with the Child/Parent/Carer at the end of the child's journey with the service (Case Summary are attached to Child View and the Survey Monkey shared with management team, analysed and findings subsequently presented at board meetings looking at potential service development)

**Example** - Hartlepool YJS acknowledged the need for a collective response to meeting the educational needs of all children open to the YJS.

As a response, we are now working with the towns 5 secondary schools via the Inclusion Partnership meeting. This partnership affords us the opportunity to work more closely with the Senior Leaders from schools and discuss issues their students face which may include unmet need i.e. undiagnosed Speech, Language and Communication Needs.

Working in partnership we aim to reduce the number of exclusions and improve the child's attainment and attendance, which will support them into further education and lead positive, pro-social lifestyles, which are free of crime.

Schools also have the opportunity to attend training delivered by the YJS on restorative approaches to help mitigate any in-school behaviours.

### 3. Voice of the child

Hartlepool YJS work collaboratively with all Children/Parents/Carers to ensure their voice is heard, listened to and helps shape service delivery as required.

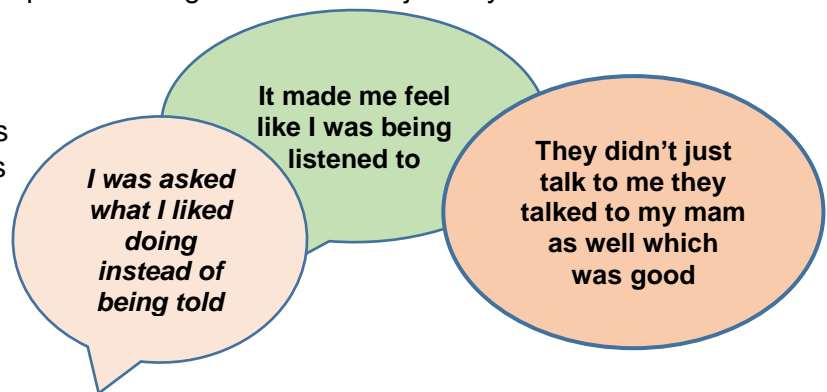
We will continuously review and enhance our delivery, so that the views of children are sufficiently captured, central to our work, and lead to change in the system to support children into positive outcomes and successful adulthood.

We strongly promote and encourage relationship building between staff and children from the outset of all involvement with the YJS.

Staff will start the process of capturing the child's voice during this period which also aids assessment. All SAQ and feedback sessions are completed face to face where possible and relevant and staff will encourage the child to expand on their responses. This process is also carried out with parents/carers.

We ensure that the child's voice is captured throughout the child's journey with the service:

- All SAQs
- Designing the child's plan
- After all completed interventions
- Asset Plus and all other reviews
- Closure Summaries
- Survey Monkey



Feedback is consolidated from the various sources and analysed via the monthly leadership meetings and quarterly service management boards. Any potential areas for concern or good practice are addressed appropriately.

The YJS will always advocate on behalf of the child at all meetings attended and where required their voice and that of parents/carers will be gathered in advance. There has been a marked increase and improvement in this process which has been very evident within education meetings. More in depth discussions are now taking place with education providers on a regular basis especially around exclusions/suspensions, reduced timetables and alternative provision.

**Example** – A child was encouraged and supported to attend and talk about their experiences of reparation at a recent YJS Management Board meeting. The child highlighted how he was given the opportunity to identify what he likes doing and how if possible the YJS could support with this. Subsequently he was able to help in a local foodbank, helping pack orders, stocktake etc. which gave him a real sense of achievement and pride. He has continued to support the foodbank in his own time.

This direct feedback to board members evoked considerable discussion and ensured we now, where feasibly possible, have those discussions with all children giving them the opportunity to identify what they would like to do and how it benefits the communities and others.

## 4. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

### Governance:

The Youth Justice Service is part of Hartlepool Borough Councils Children & Joint Commissioning Services Department which also includes Children's Social Care and Early Help services. The Management Board is chaired by Jo Heaney, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Delivery (Children, Young People and Maternity - Tees Valley) North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

The board is made up of representatives from Children's Social Care, Police, Probation, Public Health, Courts, Education, Youth Support Services, and Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, Community Safety, VCS and an elected member.

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 children;
- 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 and the Child First ethos 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 YJB papers and HMIP inspection reports/thematic reviews 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/diversion 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, Safer Hartlepool

## 4.1 APPENDIX 1

Partnership and Health and Wellbeing partnerships as well as the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board, all which contribute to effective partnership working at a strategic level. Board meetings are well structured and members are held accountable.

During 2022/23 board members attended a YJS Board Induction and interactive bite size sessions on the recently published Management Board guidance and Child First/Voice of the Child. These sessions will be reviewed and updated for delivery again this year alongside any further updates.

### **Leadership/Structure**

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service has a staff team of 22 people, which includes 3 seconded staff, and 4 sessional workers (**Staffing structure attached at Appendix 1**). The service also benefits from a team of 3 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.

There are also 2 external staff commissioned into the service 1 x PT Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) (funded by the YJS) and 1 x PT Clinical Psychologist (funded by the ICB). Discussions and plans are underway to commission time from an Educational Psychologist (start date -Sept 23).

Via the recently implemented Violence Reduction Unit (CURV) 4 x Custody Navigators have been employed, they will be located in the central Custody Suite (Middlesbrough) and will engage all children entering the Custody Suite, with a view to support, guidance and directing them to further support and the relevant YJS (Due to go live in July 23).

At the time of writing this report all statutory partners have seconded staff within the YJS or have provided direct pathways i.e. Health, Education, Police and Social Care.

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 children 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 children across the range of statutory and preventative services.

The Assistant Director (AD), Children & Families is also the designated Head of Service for the Youth Justice Service with a service manager having responsibility and oversight for all elements of service delivery. The AD reports directly to the Director of Children's Services (DCS).

### **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 and their families.

#### **4.1 APPENDIX 1**

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 children 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 children. 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 children'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 Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) 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

The YJS has both operational and strategic representation on the following forums that all contribute to the support of children in the justice system.



## 5. Board development

As highlighted in Section 5 above 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.

In line with the guidance provided by the YJB in 2021 “Youth Justice Service governance and Leadership” the following training was undertaken with all board members. This training is being reviewed and will be delivered again in 2023/24.

	Board Development	Action Taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date/Completed
1	Management Board TOR rewritten	The board TOR to be consulted with the board, agreed and re written	Management Board	Completed Sept 2021

#### 4.1 APPENDIX 1

2	Board induction for all members	Board induction to be undertaken with all board members, utilising the template shared by the AYM	YJS Manager/Board chair	Completed Sept 22
3	Update all board members on YJ service governance and leadership	Utilising the YJB - YJ service governance and leadership document, Sessions designed for all board members to attend and actively engage	YJS Manager/Board Chair	Completed over 4 sessions Apr – Oct 22
4	Child First/Voice of the Child	Sessions developed for all board members to attend and participate in Child First ethos/Voice of the child	YJS Manager/Board Chair	Completed over 4 sessions Apr – Oct 22
5	Key Performance Indicators	Power Point (YJB) presented to all board members updating on new KPIs	YJS Manager	Initial documentation and board discussion held. Power Point to be delivered July 23
6	Serious Youth Violence & Exploitation	Presentation & Discussion with Director of CURV	CURV Director	Initial Presentation and Discussion held in Feb 23 Management Board – Further presentations planned for Sept 23

Spotlight sessions have also been introduced into Management Board meetings and presented by YJS staff, this gives all partners and board members a better insight into daily delivery within the service. To date the following have been presented and discussed:

- Out of Court Disposals (OOCDD)
- Reparation
- Restorative Justice
- YJS Health Offer
- Court & Post Court offer (to be presented at Sept 23 board)

There is a proposal for board members to also deliver spotlight sessions on their role/service and how they link, support and advocate on behalf of the YJS and its cohort of children.

Added to the above all statutory partners and board members are invited to attend all YJS internal training and are offered shadowing opportunities.

## 6. Progress on previous plan

### Youth Justice Strategic Priorities 2022/23

**Re-offending** - reduce further offending by children 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).

### Key Actions

- Undertake quality assessments of children at risk of re-offending, ensuring risks, desistance factors and needs are identified which inform effective intervention planning
- Continue to improve interventions delivered, through innovation and collaboration where appropriate
- Improve intelligence and timely information sharing relating to those children who are at risk of offending, to inform service-wide improvement activity or targeted work
- Continue to improve the 'Child First' 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 pathways within the YJS beyond March 2023

### Update

- All of the above actions have been achieved.
- Hartlepool YJS are now in a position to run a Reoffending report from Child View and are utilising the tracker available. The information being provided is more timely and allows us to update Leadership meetings and Management boards much quicker with data and analysis
- Senior representation at the regional Reoffending Group chaired by the OPCC
- Since the inception of the Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) there are now far greater sources of intelligence alongside the Police and partners which aids service wide improvements and targeted work.
- Reoffending figures do however continue to fluctuate and there has been some considerable increase in time between charge and outcome for those children open under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

### Concerns

- As indicated above the length of time children and courts are waiting for NRM outcomes, this has a considerable effect on the number of adjournments with minimal oversight of these children during this period – There are ongoing discussions with the SCA and within the local authority.

**Early & Targeted Intervention/Diversion** – Continue to prioritise a reduction in first time entrants to the youth justice system by ensuring that creative strategies and services remain in place locally to prevent children and children from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

### Key Actions

- Maintain and enhance the YJS Early & Targeted Intervention programme "CHOICES" across Children's Services and the partnership
- Operate a targeted approach to supporting individuals and groups of children at risk of offending - based on intelligence and collaborative working with key partners (Police, ASB, Early Help, Voluntary Community Sector, Schools, etc.)
- Work with the Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) and partners to reduce and respond to 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



- Continue to review and deliver our point of arrest diversion as a distinct and substantially different response to formal out of court disposals
- Continue to review the Diversion & Prevention strategy in place ensuring it includes how children are identified for diversion/prevention, how the services are delivered, by whom and how success is evaluated.

### Update:

- All of the above actions were achieved
- Early & Targeted Intervention programme, CHOICES is continuing to receive referrals from within Children's Services.
- The service continues to work directly with children through our diversionary offer of Restorative Intervention and both Triage 1 and 2, all referrals are via the Police and Courts.
- The Turnaround programme is now up and running and adding a further offer alongside Preventions & Diversion
- Hartlepool YJS alongside South Tees YJS and Stockton YJS are in discussion with the OPCC re the "Immediate Justice" element of the very recently published Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan

### Concerns

- There have been a significant amount of changes and increased workload placed on YJSs nationally with the introduction of Turnaround the added KPIs. These changes and developments will take time to establish and within day to day operational delivery.

**Remand and Custody & Resettlement** – demonstrate that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands and custody and the YJS Resettlement Policy is reviewed and evaluated.

### 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 children in custody and the factors relating to their offending behaviour are addressed in the secure estate to prevent further offending upon release
- Continue to review and evaluate the Resettlement Policy in place for children upon release from the secure estate (HMIP Youth Justice inspection framework, standard 4.1 Resettlement, May 2021)
- Regularly review capacity to deliver ISS, and resource appropriately, through a multi-agency approach

### Update

- All of the above was achieved
- We continue to utilise and review our current Resettlement Policy
- We continue to be without a seconded Probation Officer since Nov 2021, discussions continue with the Probation Service.
- We have seen an increase in children remanded to local authority care in line with the Remand Framework and continue to work closely with the courts and partners to ensure all children receive the best support available
- Hartlepool YJS will be a part of the upcoming YRO (ISS) pilot commencing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 23.

### Concerns

- There is a national shortage of suitable regulated local placements for children remanded to local authority accommodation.

**Risk and Safety & Wellbeing (Asset Plus)** – ensure all children and children 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 child's needs
- Work in partnership with other agencies to ensure there is a co-ordinated assessment and plan relating to a child'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 child 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 children 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 children and their families. The evaluation of practice week will inform the service development plan.

#### Updates

- All above achieved and continuing throughout 2023/24

**Restorative Justice & Victims** – 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 children 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, children 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

#### Updates

- RJ continues to be a priority area across all service delivery
- We are seeing an increase in Victim participation
- Victim evaluation & feedback is improving
- We continue to provide a suite of suitable reparation projects and will aim to source projects in line with the child's voice.

**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 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

### Update

- All of the above was achieved
- There is a continued programme in place for all board members
- Board members will be offered a number of bite size sessions to upskill and aid their knowledge of the service, service delivery and requirements etc.

**Voice of the Children** – ensure that all children are actively involved in developing their own plans having the opportunity to develop and inform current and future service delivery

### Key Actions

- Ensure children's involvement in relation to their assessment and plans is clearly evidenced within the records.
- Children 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 children are provided with opportunities to influence and shape service delivery – through access to, and completion of, Survey Monkey feedback, session evaluations, closure summaries and SAQ
- YJS leadership team to hold regular evaluation/feedback meetings to ensure all comments are seen and actioned where required and findings shared at quarterly management board meetings

### Update

- Considerable work has been undertaken across the service with all staff, the implementation of a Child First operational guidance includes how we capture the voice of the child and more importantly what we do with the findings. The Voice of the Child continues to be captured via SAQ, sessional feedback sheets, Survey Monkey and Closure Summaries, all findings are analysed at Leadership meetings and produced at board meetings for further scrutiny and action.

**'Child First'** – ensure that the Child First principles are regularly reviewed and 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.

### Update

- We continue to advocate strongly on the "Child First" ethos embedded with the YJS
- Guidance clearly highlights what is expected throughout Assessment, planning, interventions, reviews and closures for all children within the YJS.

- The above is monitored by way of children feedback and evaluation as well as via supervision, QA, case audits and direct 1:1 with the child.

**Education, Training, Employment** – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Schools, Virtual School, One Stop Shop etc. to ensure all Children 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 are submitted by partners for each Strategic Management Board meeting and contain as a minimum, how many children are not receiving their education entitlement, how many are excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. This data should be analysed to identify any disproportionality and care status of the child. The number of children who have Education and Health Care plans (EHCP) who are open to the service should be provided.
- Encourage children's active engagement with their respective education provider
- Continue to build upon the monthly Education meetings with all education partners
- Continue working in collaboration regarding children with EHCP/SEN

### Update

- Education reports are now presented at every quarterly management board meeting, data is provided on how many children are not receiving their education entitlement, how many are excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. This data is analysed to identify any disproportionality and care status of the child. The number of children who have Education and Health Care plans (EHCP) who are open to the service is also provided, analysed and discussed.
- Our education support is growing and our communication and challenge with education providers is vastly improving.

**Serious Youth Violence & Exploitation** – Working in collaboration with the MACE, Police and all other partners to ensure that all forms of serious youth violence and exploitation are identified and suitable plans implemented to reduce the risks.

### Key Actions

- Continue to have representation at all MACE meetings
- Ensure any identification of potential exploitation via assessment and ongoing work is referred into the MACE straight away
- Alongside partners ensure NRM referrals are completed for all relevant children and followed up
- Build upon the risk management meetings (RMM) convened by the YJS ensuring all actions are completed, safety plans are in place and suitable contingency plans are identified
- Continue to ensure senior YJS representation at all relevant strategies/complex case discussions and mapping meetings
- Continue to have senior representation at all PREVENT meetings
- Continue to work alongside the OPCC/Police and all partners in implementing and sustaining the Violence Reduction Unit (funding recently received in Cleveland for implementation)

### Update

- The YJS have senior representation at all MACE meetings
- All ongoing NRM and potential NRM are discussed and scrutinised at the MACE meetings

- The YJS attend monthly Police Tactical Control Group and Multi Agency Risk of Serious and Organised Crime meetings to discuss in depth Organised Crime Groups, Criminal Peer Groups and any children potentially linked to these
- Regular staff training is made available by the LA re exploitation, County Lines and all forms of Modern Day Slavery
- RUI continue to be analysed in monthly leadership meetings and scrutinised alongside serious youth violence offences with the Police and CPS, daily data spreadsheets are produced by the seconded Police Officer giving live updates on all cases.
- The 3 Cleveland YOTs have strategic representation across all tiers of the VRU (CURV)
- Via CURV and with mangement oversight by the Cleveland YJSs we have 4 x Custody Navigators in post due to go live in July 2023, this will ensure earlier engagement with all children entering the Custody Suite.

**Substance Misuse** – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Horizons/START to improve and sustain the engagement of children 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 continued working arrangements/pathways are embedded between the YJS and Substance Misuse partners
- All children and children identified as needing support are actively encouraged to engage with appropriate Substance Misuse services

### Updates

- All of the above has been achieved
- Pathways into SM services are maintained with regular communication and their representation at board meetings
- All children entering the YJS are actively encouraged to engage with SM services as required

**Over represented children** – Identify and adress any areas of over representation within the YJS cohort alongside the management board and partners

### Key Actions

- Ensure a quarterly Needs Analysis of the YJS cohort continues to be presented at each Management Board for analysis of over representation and ongoing needs/gaps within service delivery
- Continue to scrutinise all HMIP Thematic report findings I.e. the over representation of BCIOCK and Mixed Heritage boys, Looked After Children etc and ensure discussions and any potential actions are agreed and implemented by the management board

### Update

- Disproportionality is now an agenda item with the YJS managers report to quarterly management boards.
- A service needs analysis to be presented at each management board meeting highlighting over representation, discussion and actions are formulated and monitored.
- Regular ongoing discussions with all partners including Police and Social Care are undertaken to address and look at potential actions for any areas of over representation within the service.

## 7. Resources and Services

## 4.1 APPENDIX 1

The Youth Justice Service budget is mainly resourced by a combination of Local Authority funding and Youth Justice Board grant.

### **\*\*2023/24 budget costs and contributions are attached at Appendix 2**

As we write and produce this plan we are unfortunately still unaware of the amount of YJB grant we will be receiving for 2023-24, the figures indicated in Appendix 2 have been based on last year's YJB grant amount without the uplift.

The National Probation Service continue to provide funding (£5k) as well as their staffing contribution which is 0.5 FTE, this post is currently vacant and ongoing discussions are underway with the Probation Service to resolve this. The ICB contribution is a non-cash contribution via the commissioning of the Trauma Informed Care Pathway and the YJS Nurse Specialist is funded from Public Health.

Cleveland Police still provide a full time seconded Police Officer. Funding once again has been secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner towards the delivery of Triage, this is secured until 2025.

We use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver the below services to all children. In 2023/24 we aim to improve and maintain our performance across all areas of delivery ensuring a child first ethos is embedded throughout.

- Early/Targeted Intervention
- Prevention & Diversion
- O OCD
- All Post Court orders

## **8. Performance & National Key Performance Indicators**

### **Existing key performance indicators**

#### **Binary reoffending rate**

Work has now been completed by the Data team, YJS leadership team and Business support to set up the reoffending toolkit within our management information system Child View, this data is very useful and informative for management boards and any reports requested.

Unfortunately the Youth Data Summary from the MoJ/YJB isn't always timely with some significant waiting at times and discrepancies in the data. There have been discussions nationally with MoJ and YJB regarding this and plans are afoot to look at better and easier ways to capture this data.

We continue to establish and embed a collaborative Multi-Agency solution and response to reoffending. Strong communication across Children's Services and Cleveland Police ensures regular discussions/mapping meetings are being undertaken with clear accountable actions for everyone. Alongside this the YJS puts a great deal of focus on their Multi-Agency risk management meetings for those small numbers of cases posing the highest risk of reoffending.



## 4.1 APPENDIX 1

The YJS have representation on the Cleveland Reducing Reoffending Group which feeds into the Cleveland and Durham Local Criminal Justice Partnership. There is also representation on the Cleveland Prevention and Diversion, and Youth Offending sub-groups.

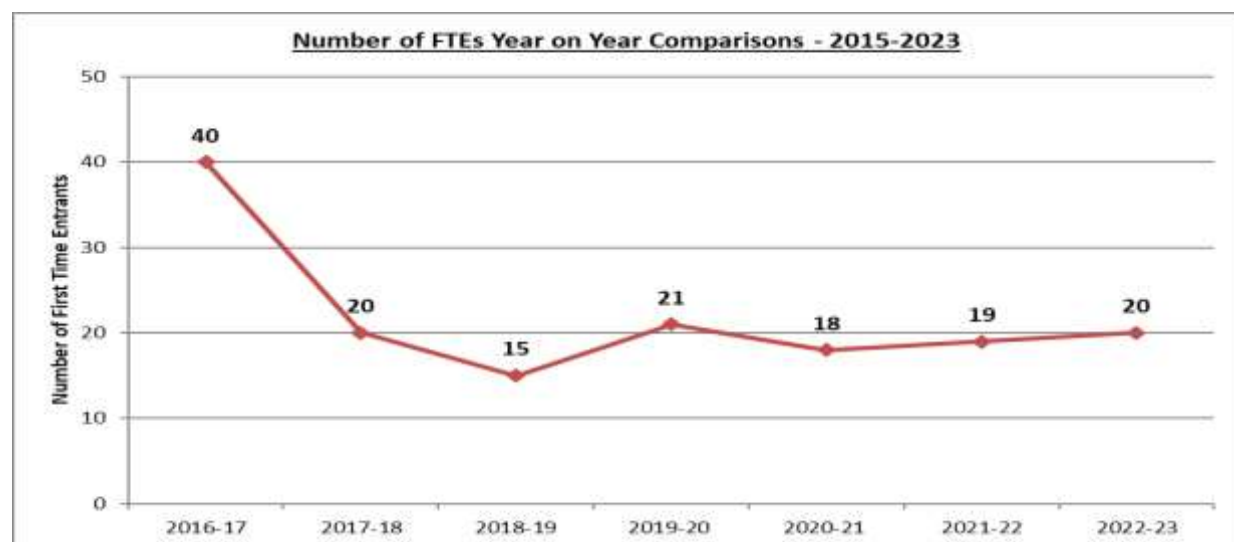
Latest data provided by YDS – Reoffending rates after 12 months, yearly cohorts

- Binary rate - Jul 20 - Jun 21 cohort (latest period) – **26.7%**
- Binary rate - Jul 19 - Jun 20 cohort – **47.8%**
- Percentage point change from selected baseline is **minus 21.16%**

This is lower than the regional and national percentages, however our reoffending binary rates do fluctuate. It is an area of priority for the YJS and partners to identify these YP earlier and offer suitable packages of support.

### First time entrants

Hartlepool YJS continue to work hard in reducing and sustaining those reductions in FTE, the last 3 years have seen a levelling off of FTE and numbers have fluctuated minimally. Our recently implemented Early and Targeted Intervention programme – Choices, alongside Turnaround and our diversionary offer of Restorative Intervention (RI) and both Triage 1 & 2 ensure we have robust offers in place to intervene and divert children away from the criminal justice system. Furthermore we worked directly with 50 children last year across Triage (39), Triage 2 (3) and RI (8) who may have become FTE.



### Use of custody

There have been 2 remands in 2022/23 and 2 custodial sentences, these are both increases on 2021/22. 1 child was initially remanded and then received a custodial sentence.

Hartlepool YJS have a clear process for alternatives to custody through the offer of ISS packages and utilisation of pre-breach compliance meetings for those at risk of custody via non-compliance. Hartlepool YJS alongside other North East colleagues will be participating in the YRO (ISS) Pilot due to commence on the 3 July 23

Year	Remands	Custody
2019-20	1	2
2020-21	0	2
2021-22	0	1
2022-23	2	2

### Additional key performance indicators (from April 2023)

It is a now a requirement of the service to report on the following new key performance indicators from April 2023, with the first submission due August 2023.

There will be an increased workload placed upon business support, especially whilst carrying out quarterly data cleansing, although over time it is hoped the process becomes seamless and that everyone benefits from the data and information that can be gathered from these added KPIs. Currently we don't perceive any issues or risks other than the increased workload on business support staff.

- **Suitable accommodation** – The YJS have senior representation on the local authority housing and accommodation panel. Attendance at all relevant Social Care meetings and ongoing communication will ensure we are able to identify suitable/unsuitable accommodation and challenge/address where needed.
- **Education, training and employment** – There is senior representation from the Virtual School and Post 16 service at management boards and a consolidated report is produced quarterly. There are also monthly internal education meetings.
- **Special educational needs and disabilities/additional learning needs** – Via the Virtual School pathways have been implemented with the SEND team. Regular ongoing communication, attendance at meetings and suitable challenge should ensure we are able to monitor and record sufficiently.
- **Mental health care and emotional wellbeing** – The YJS have a very good health offer via the YJS nurse specialist, Speech and Language therapist and Clinical Psychologist for the Trauma Informed Care Pathway (TICP). All have access to their own service systems and information and speedier (at times) processes for further referrals
- **Substance misuse** – The HOS Substance Misuse attends the management boards and produces a quarterly report. There are pathways/referral routes in place to ensure a speedy process and regular information sharing.
- **Out-of-Court Disposals** – We have a considerable amount of data and information available on all children engaging with the service via an OOC as well early/targeted intervention and Turnaround.
- **Links to wider services** – The YJS are in a position to clearly highlight and indicate the links to wider services and outward referrals made
- **Management board attendance** – This will be monitored on a quarterly basis and board members politely reminded of attendance on an ongoing basis.
- **Serious violence** – The YJS is well represented within the CURV and regular ongoing meetings are held to identify, discuss and analyse all elements of Serious Violence. The YJS manager was also part of the AYM consultation process with the Serious Violence Duty.
- **Victims** – A lot of work is carried out with victims of crime, the YJS RJ worker contacts all victims ascertains their willingness to engage and follows the process from there. All data is collected and stored securely on the MIS.

## 9. Local performance

The service is dealing with smaller caseloads consisting of very complex individuals with multiple risks and vulnerabilities. Hartlepool YJS carry out a quarterly Needs Analysis of all children open to the service to ensure we thoroughly understand the collective needs of the children and ensure the service is able to respond to 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 as well as any areas of over

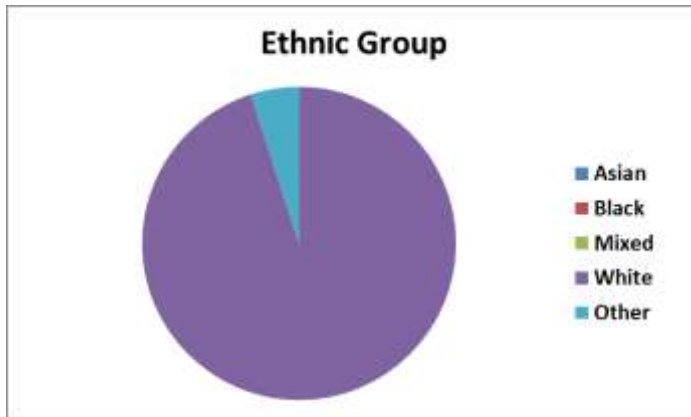


#### 4.1 APPENDIX 1

representation. Recent analysis reveals a cohort with many having very difficult home lives, they display much broader lifestyle choices i.e. substance misuse and the need to generate income to maintain this. This also reflects the national and regional picture in terms of caseload composition.

The information below was taken from the latest YJS Needs Analysis on the 04 05 23 and discussed at the management board on the 09 05 23.

The analysis was undertaken on 21 completed assessments.

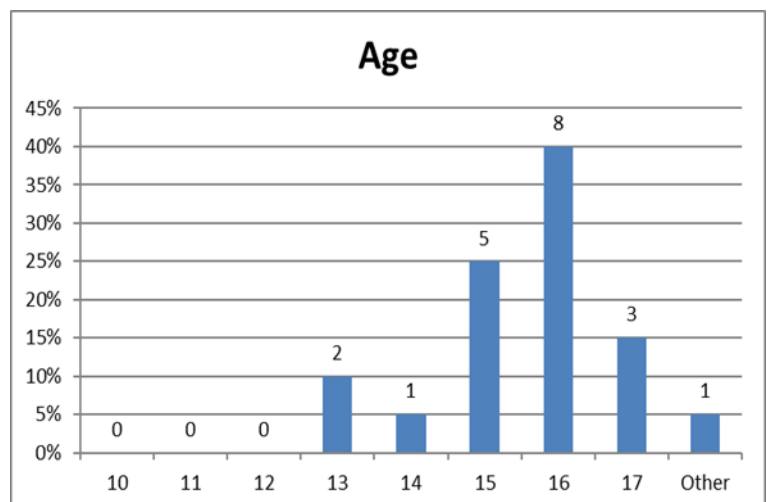


*Of the 21 CYP 1 is a Traveller and the remainder White*

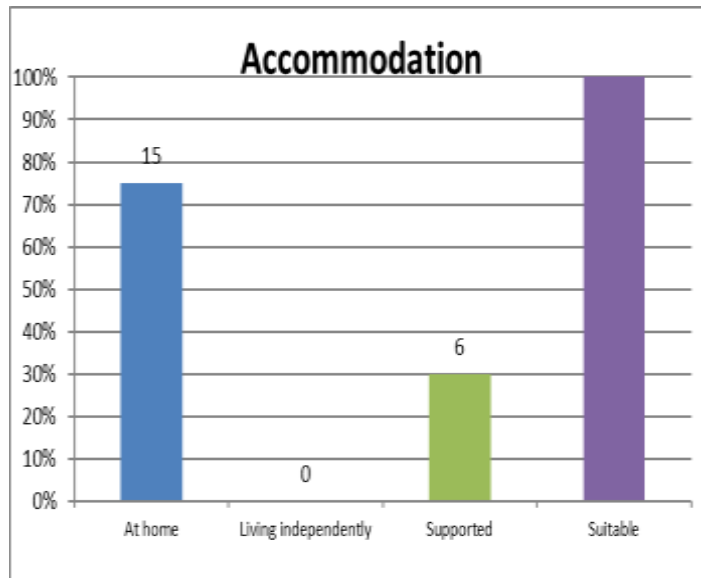
*Ages are spread across the spectrum, however currently the youngest being 13.*

*15, 16 & 17 are generally our busiest age range*

*This cohort includes 2 females 15 & 17*



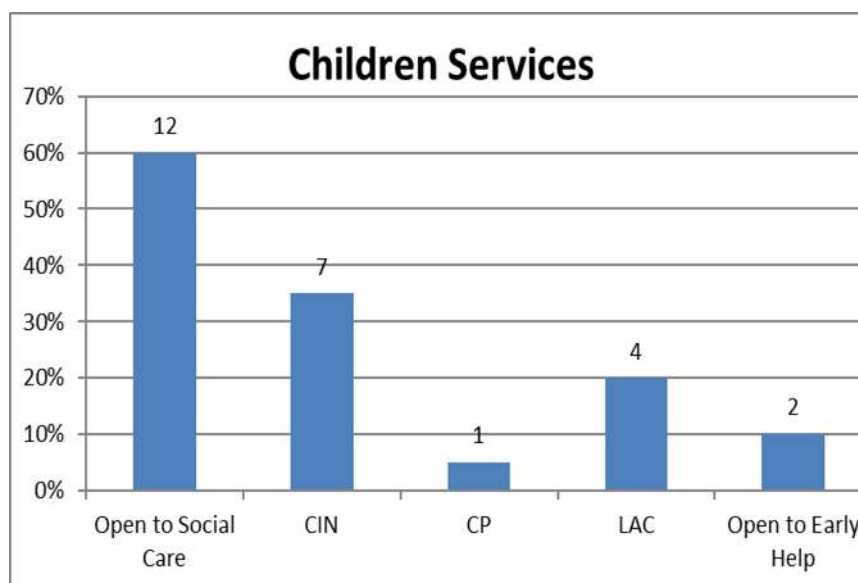
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17 CYP are classed as living at home, this is either with parents or an extended family member i.e. Auntie/Uncle, Grandparents etc.

6 x YP are classed as living in Supported accommodation, 2 of these are currently in HMYOI Wetherby, 2 are placed out of area and 2 placed in Hartlepool.

All accommodation is currently deemed suitable



Of the 21 YP 12 are currently open to Social Care – 7 are CiN, 1 CP and 4 are CIC

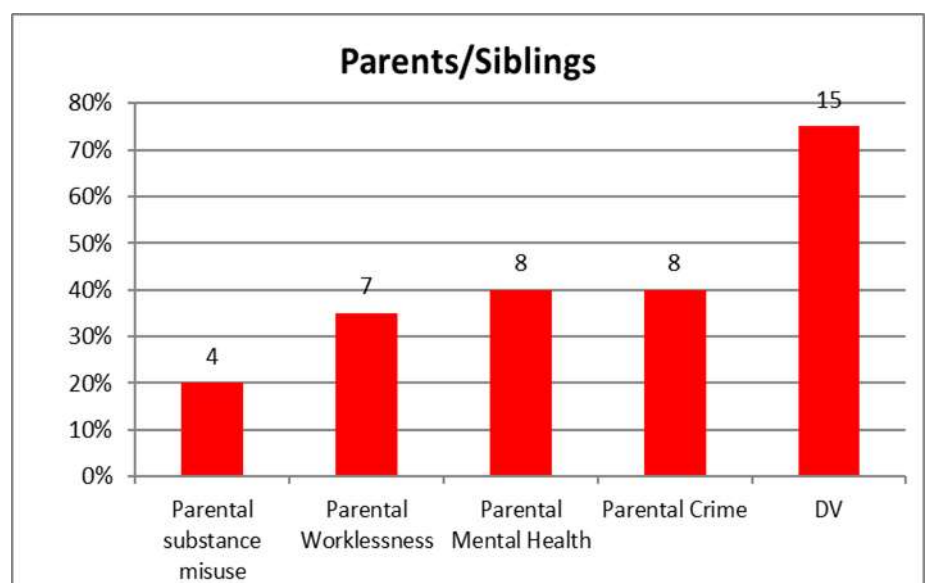
There are also 2 YP open to Early Help.

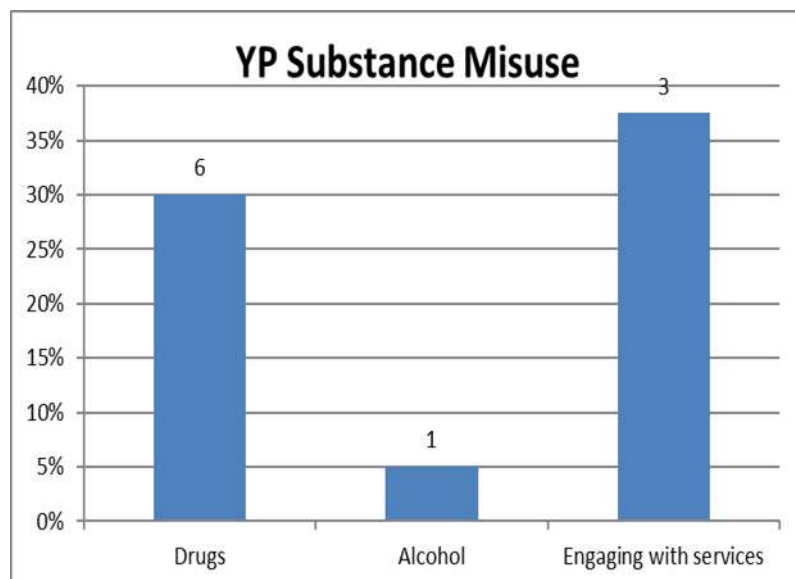
These figures equate to 15 of the 21 YP in this analysis.

Of the 4 parents identified as using substances 3 are engaging with services

Of the 8 identified as having MH issues 4 are engaging with services

DV – 15 CYP have witnessed DV





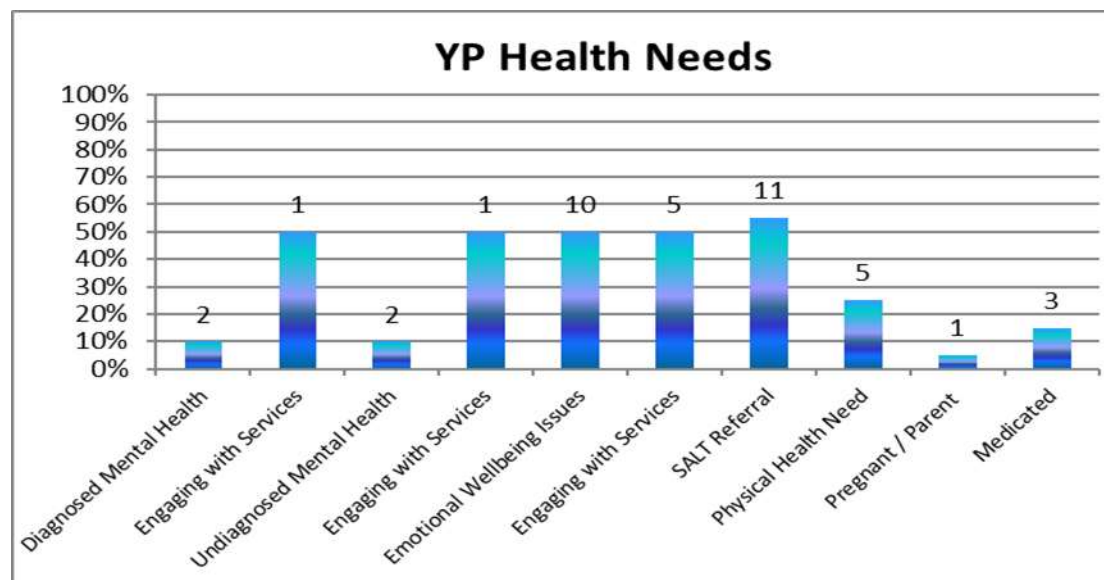
*7 YP have been assessed as using substances/Alcohol*

*6 Drugs only*

*1 Alcohol only*

*4 referrals have been made by either the YJS or other services*

*3 is currently engaging or have engaged*



*2 CYP have a MH diagnosis, of those 1 is actively engaging with support*

*2 CYP have undiagnosed MH with 1 currently engaging in support*

*10 CYP have been identified as needing some form of emotional wellbeing support, of those 5 are engaging with services*

*11 CYP have been referred for a SLCN assessment and have or are engaging in the process*

*5 CYP have an identified/diagnosed physical health need*

*1 CYP is pregnant*

*3 CYP are medicated*

**\*\*These graphs highlight a small snap shot of the Needs Analysis completed – May 2023**

**\*\*Education, attendance, SEND status i.e.EHCP and SEN need is captured in the Education report presented by the Virtual School Head teacher at all board meetings.**

## 10. Priorities

### Children from groups which are over-represented

It is widely known that children from a range of backgrounds are over-represented in the youth justice system. Nationally it is known that Black and Mixed ethnicity boys are over-represented and a recent HMIP thematic report made a number of recommendations for local authorities, YJS partnerships and YJS managers in relation to these children.

However, it is not only Black and Mixed ethnicity children that are over-represented, and the YJS are aware and respond to any local concerns about all children from over-represented groups. This includes but is not limited to children known to social care services, children excluded from school and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

There is no data to indicate that black and mixed ethnicity children are over-represented within Hartlepool YJS as well as Gypsy, Roma and traveller children. However the number of children within our care does fluctuate and at times there can be an over-representation as well as children excluded from school.

Disproportionality is covered within the YJS managers' report at the quarterly management board meetings. The following information was presented and discussed at the board meeting held in May 2023.

#### Children in our Care (CIOC)

- As at 02 05 23 there were **4** CYP who were CIOC open to the YJS, 2 on Statutory Referral Orders, 1 due to a remand episode with an ISS package and 1 for a Pre-Sentence Report (PSR)
- That equated to **11%** of the current YJS cohort
- Of the **4** CYP 2 were CIOC before becoming open to the service, **1** became a CIOC after entering the YJS and **1** became a CIOC due to their current remand episode, all are male.
- **3** of the CYP offences were committed out of placement, however **1** assaulted emergency workers at the point of arrest within their placement.
- We were also working with a further 3 CIOC on voluntary arrangements, 2 via the Choices programme and 1 via an AIM 3 assessment.
- As at the 02 05 23 in Hartlepool there were **203** CIOC 10-17 year old.
- **2%** of the overall 10-17 CIOC are currently open to the YJS on a statutory order/bail programme.

The YJS works very closely with Cleveland Police, CPS and the Courts to ensure protocol has been followed (10 point check) and there is clear transparent decision making. We also work alongside Social Care and the Through Care teams to ensure a good robust package of multi-agency support is afforded to each child. RJ training is also available and delivered to Care Home staff as required by the YJS RJ officer.

### Prevention

Hartlepool YJSs recently implemented early and/or targeted prevention programme is known locally as "The Choices Programme"

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Referrals are received from within Children's Services i.e. Social Care/Early Help for all children 10-17 displaying behaviours associated with offending, antisocial behaviour, or other vulnerabilities. All referrals are screened and discussed at management meetings

A worker is allocated from the Pre Court team who will undertake a further YJS screening tool, gain consent and implement an intervention plan alongside the child, parent/carer.

To date and in a short space of time we have engaged **18** children fully through a programme of interventions including positive activities, none of these children have had any further involvement with the YJS currently.

**\*\*This is a voluntary programme and children will and do decline to consent or disengage during interventions, we make every effort to keep all children engaged in the process which to date has proven effective.**

### Diversion

Hartlepool YJS as with the majority of YJSs has a strong diversionary offer to steer children out of the criminal justice system and avoid criminal records.

Our direct diversionary offer delivered directly by YJS staff consists of:

- Restorative Intervention (RI)
- Triage1 & 2
- (Turnaround)

Referrals are received via the Police (G26) and screened within our weekly OOC decision making panel, discussed in depth and decisions agreed as to the most suitable programme for the child. Mitigation, Gravity Scores and historical factors are taken into account prior to any decisions being made. Attendance at the panels will be a YJS manager, YJS Police Officer, RJ Officer, YJS nurse, SW/EHW (if open to other services) and education etc if required. At times referrals can also be sent from the court for consideration of an OOC and undergo the same process.

The child is allocated a worker who will gain consent and carry out a screening tool/assessment prior to jointly creating an intervention plan alongside the child, parent/carer. If the child fully engages with either RI, Triage or Triage 2 the initial offence is closed under Outcome 22. If however the child disengages or further offends it may be returned to the Police where a Youth Caution etc can be imposed.

The YJS has senior representation on the Durham/Cleveland OOC Scrutiny Panel where cases are looked at scrutinised/analysed i.e. was diversion the right offer, and all actions and future recommendations highlighted.

In 2022/23 Hartlepool YJS worked with **50** children via Triage (**39**), Triage 2 (**3**) and RI (**8**)

**\*\*From April 2021 to March 2022 Hartlepool YJS worked with 34 children across the diversionary offer as at 31 03 23 5 of those children had reoffended – this equates to a binary reoffending rate of 16%, however more importantly 84% hadn't reoffended.**

### Turnaround

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All YJSs nationally also have the Turnaround programme up and running. This programme has been very recently implemented and YJSs report directly to the MOJ with all returns, data and reports. This programme offers (voluntary) support via evidenced based interventions to all children who are currently Released Under Investigation (RUI), have been No Further Actioned (NFA) by the Police for an offence, at court may have received a Fine, been acquitted, had the case withdrawn or received a Conditional Discharge. Children having committed ASB and sign an Acceptable Behaviour Contract can also receive the support.

Children become ineligible for the programme if they are open to Social Care as Child Protection or a child in our care or are open to Early Help services – however children open as Child in Need can participate. A child can only participate with the programme once and can't be open to the YJS on a statutory order.

It's far too early in the life of the programme to create any meaningful data or be able to prove effectiveness, however in time the data will be valuable. The programme is funded until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025.

### Education

All YJS staff have direct access to a named Education worker within the Virtual School and a named worker within the One Stop Shop for all Post 16 children. The YJS will be commissioning time from an Educational Psychologist from Sept 23 who will significantly add to our education support offer.

There are monthly education meetings held within the YJS with all partners in attendance where every child is discussed, actions raised and the education database updated. The YJS also have senior representation on the monthly Inclusion partnership meetings. The Virtual School Head Teacher and One Stop Shop manager attend and produce reports for all management board meetings

**\*\*The following data is taken from the Education report produced for the Management board meetings**

No of moves	No of Young people
0	6
1	8
2	4
3	1
4	3
5	0
6	0
7	1

Attendance Band %	No of Young People
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Number of days suspension	
Child 1	5
Child 2	18
Child 3	5
Child 4	2
Child 5	20.5
Child 6	26
Child 7	10
Child 8	33.5
Child 9	16
Child 10	2
Child 11	1.5
Child 12	2.5
Child 13	15.5

100-95	1
94-90	5
89-85	3
84-80	1
79-75	1
74-70	1
69-65	0
64-60	1
59-55	0
54-50	1
49-45	0
44-40	2
Under 40%	6

The data proved is invaluable and provides excellent discussion, challenges and clear actions moving forward.

### Restorative approaches and victims

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 2022/23 there were **52** 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 children on YJS caseload, from Diversion to Detention & Training Orders.

Whilst restorative processes technically result in practical reparation, for example participating in a task that benefits the community, the communication between victim and the child who has committed a crime, as part of this process, can also produce powerful emotional responses leading to mutual satisfaction and socially inclusive outcomes.

All YJS staff have undertaken service-wide RJ training, many to level 3 and the RJ/Victim lead to Level 4. The previous decision to bring RJ and victim work in house has enabled Hartlepool YJS to have direct control and influence in shaping the direction and quality of this 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 children and is much more responsive to local need.



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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 couple of years direct and indirect reparative projects were difficult to deliver, however we are now introducing suitably risk assessed small group reparation projects. These are individual bespoke projects and are planned to take place involving furniture restoration, bird boxes for distribution to local groups, working alongside the RSPB, Heugh Gun Battery and local community projects at well-known land marks/venues across the town.



Reparation completed at the Heugh Gun Battery



Community reparation completed in a community allotment



**Serious violence and exploitation**

All 3 Cleveland YJS` have strategic representation within the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV). There are a number of meetings, boards and training events organised via CURV that the YJS attends. Improved data sharing and intelligence is evident and will continue to improve as the CURV takes shape and partner input begins to grow. There are also much clear links across the local authority and wider partners regarding Serious Violence. The YJS manager within his role as North East regional rep on the Association of YJS Managers (AYM) executive board led and produced the AYM national response for the consultation regarding the Serious Violence Duty.

The YJS Manager also has serious incidents within his report to the board and these are discussed and analysed for any lessons learned etc. During 2022/23 Hartlepool YJS reported 2 Serious Incidents to the YJB, all children involved were not known to the YJS previously.

There is ever improving partnership work across Hartlepool to address child criminal exploitation and interaction with the NRM. Hartlepool Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) lead on all matters regarding exploitation. There are regular case discussions and People/Areas of interest meetings which the YJS has senior representation at. The YJS has very good communication and information/intelligence sharing with the MACE team and co work many complex cases. A lot of work is ongoing with the SCA re NRM and regular liaison with the Police, CPS and Courts ensures everyone is as updated as can be. All YJS staff have attending various training events organised by the MACE re exploitation.

All YJS staff have carried out up to date Prevent training in line with local authority requirements.

The majority of children RUI who meet the criteria will be offered Turnaround, more up to date and current data will be made available as the programme progresses. As part of the YJS managers' report to management board meetings all RUI and bail figures are shared and discussed to measure the time from arrest to outcome. Suitable challenge is made where required.

**Detention in police custody**

A significant amount of work has been undertaken across Cleveland re children detained in Police custody. There is a monthly "Children in Custody" meeting where we discuss all children who have been held in custody 12 hours or more in the previous month. The meeting is attended by senior representation from the 3 Cleveland YJS`, Police Custody Management, EDT, Social Care, Custody health team and L&D. Every child is discussed to ascertain the reasons behind their length of stay in custody and suitable actions highlighted where required. The meeting is well attended and a lot of valuable information is shared.

This meeting has prompted further discussions and meetings such as, SCH Newton Aycliffe re the availability of PACE beds, discussions are underway.

The CURV has also recently funded 4 x Custody Navigators to engage, liaise and where needed support all children entering the custody suite. Management oversight is via South Tees YJS,

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however the Custody Navigators will engage all children and liaise directly with the home YJS, working across all 3 YJSs. This should hopefully speed up the process for children in the custody suite as the Navigators will also take on the role of Appropriate Adult as and when required.

Excitingly an area of the custody suite is being set aside for children only and a plan of works is in place to transform this into a Trauma informed space. There will be a separate entrance and exit, there will only be children allowed in this area and areas are being prepared with suitable reading materials, fidget objects, painted walls etc. We are very much looking forward to this being completed. The Custody Navigators are due to go live in early July.

The following data is correct as at June 23 regarding outstanding Police investigations/enquiries

- **39** Offences currently being investigated
- Of those **18** offences are currently Released Under Investigation (RUI)
- The remaining **21** are Conditional/Unconditional Bail
- **7** of the 39 are with CPS for charging decisions
- **16** are currently Out of Court disposals or awaiting referrals via the Police
- **14** ongoing investigations continue (most recent offences)
- **2** will be ready to charge within 6 weeks

The YJS monitors time from offence to outcome and updates all data via the quarterly YJS management board meetings and challenges the Police/CPS as required.

### Remands

There has been an increase in remands to Youth Detention Accommodation (YDA) and a small increase in the use of Remands to Local Authority Accommodation (RLAA). There are ongoing strategic discussions looking at suitable alternatives and plans for future RLAA.

In 2022/23 we had 2 very short remands to YDA, however 2 lengthy RLAA.

As a service we are constantly offering creative alternatives to the use of remands and custody. The changes to ISS and the impending YRO (ISS) pilot with trail monitoring will enhance this offer and allow us the opportunity to offer a more creative and potentially robust alternative to custody with an improved process of oversight and management.

### Use of custody

Nationally the use of custody has decreased significantly over the past ten years and this is rightly a success in the youth justice system. When children do go to custody it can have a damaging effect on their lives, disrupting education and straining family relationships. Children in custody are likely to be amongst the most complex and vulnerable children in society.

Hartlepool YJS generally has relatively low numbers of children with custodial sentences, and every effort is made by the service to offer creative alternatives to a custodial sentence.

The service has very good links to the local secure estate and ensures timely communication and planning is undertaken at all times.

All relevant services are involved from outset and the 7 point plan is instigated from the beginning of every custodial sentence and followed throughout their sentence ensuring **Constructive Resettlement**.

Hartlepool have implemented a Constructive Resettlement Guidance document which all staff follow to ensure every child is supported from sentence to resettlement.

There is regular management oversight of this via meetings, supervisions and QA. The guidance also highlights processes to be undertaken prior to sentence including Pre Sentence Reports

(PSR) and the need for child/family involvement throughout. Actions to be undertaken at court after sentence and also in the first 10 days of sentence and then throughout their sentence planning for constructive resettlement.

### 7 Point Plan:

**1. Case Management and Transition:** Ensure that young people serving custodial sentences receive effective, end to end service provision based on a thorough assessment of need and risk, in order to reintegrate them into the community

**2. Accommodation:** To ensure that all young people leaving custody can access suitable accommodation and support where appropriate.

**3. Education Training and Employment:** Provide all young people with suitable and sustainable Education, Training and Employment through their sentence and beyond.

**4. Health:** Ensure that all young people in custody have access to suitable and sustainable general and specialist healthcare services, based on individual need, so that problems are assessed and treated at the earliest opportunity and in the most appropriate manner.

**5. Substance Misuse:** Ensure that all young people entering custody are screened for substance misuse, with recognition of previous interventions. Those with identified needs should receive specialist assessment access to appropriate interventions and treatment services, with their aftercare needs met on return to community.

**6. Families:** Ensure that families of young people in custody receive timely, high quality support and information, from the point of arrest and throughout the young person's sentence.

**7. Finance, Benefits and Debt:** Ensure young people leaving custody and their families are provided with information and advice so that they are able to access appropriate financial support.

A multi-agency approach is embedded to ensure each area of the above plan is monitored and every child receives the best and most timely support available from all services involved. The service has direct links to all partners in relation to accommodation, health, education, finance/budget, substance misuse and children's services such as Social Care and Early Help who are brought together at the point of sentence.

## 10. Standards for children in the justice system

Last Judgements completed in 2019/20 from both Strategic and operational Self-Assessments:

Standard	Strategic Self-assessed results	Operational self-assessed results
N1 O OCD	GOOD	OUTSTANDING
N2 At Court	GOOD	GOOD
N3 In the Community	GOOD	GOOD
N	GOOD	GOOD

In Secure Settings		
N5 On Transition	OUTSTANDING	GOOD

All areas identified for improvement have been included in the updated YJS improvement plans, Strategic Plans and wider YJS/Partner training. There will be a requirement to carry out another self-assessment of the National Standards again this year, however recent documentation has indicated that YJSs will be asked to concentrate on the “At Court” standard. YJSs will be updated by the YJB later in the year.

## 11. Workforce Development

An annual YJS training needs analysis is completed with the staff and forwarded to the local authority Workforce Development team. The YJS is constantly looking at creative and bespoke training for the staff and in line with identified needs of the children we work with.

Clinical supervision/emotional well-being is available via the Clinical Psychologist for all staff and reflective sessions are built into the YJS internal training programme.

Staff also attend all relevant local authority training as and when required.

	Workforce Development	Action Taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date/Completed
1	AIM 3 - All case managing staff to have attended AIM 3 Assessor and Intervention training	1. All staff to be booked on and complete AIM 3 Assessment/Intervention training 2. Managers to have completed AIM 3 supervisor training	YJS Manager	1. 2 members of staff left to complete AIM 3 Intervention training – Will attend during 2023 2. Operational managers have completed supervisors training
2	YJS refresher trg - All staff to attend YJS internal training sessions identified in training programme. New KPIs included for May 23	1. Internal training programme updated and circulated to all staff 2. Attendance monitored to ensure all staff are captured within the training	YJS Manager/Health team/Business Support	1. Internal training programme ongoing 2. Programme reviewed 6 monthly
3	Child View Clinic - All staff to have access to a fortnightly Child View clinic to upskill, refresh and ask questions, sort issues	1. Fortnightly Child View Clinic implemented and available for all staff to attend.	Business Support Manager	1. Fortnightly Child View clinic implemented and ongoing

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4	YJS training needs analysis completed	1. YJS training needs analysis completed and shared with Workforce Development Team	Leadership Team	1. YJS Training needs analysis has been completed for 22/23 and shared with WD
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#### Hartlepool YJS

#### Annual Internal Briefing/Training/Refresher Programme 2023/24

Month	Date	Briefing/Training	Delivery	Comments
<b>Jun 23</b>				
	15 June 1000-1130	Working with Anxiety	SC	
	29 June 1000 - 1200	SLCN refresher	K H	
<b>July 23</b>				
	06 July 1000-1130	Safety Planning	LH	
	13 July 1000-1100	Reflective Practice	SC	
	27 July 1000-1130	Comic strip conversations	KH	
<b>Aug 23</b>				
	No training			
<b>Sept 23</b>				
	07 Sept 1000-1100	Reflective practice	SC	
	14 Sept 1000-1130	Time concepts	KH	
<b>Oct 23</b>				
	05 Oct 1000-1130	Child development	Health Team	
	19 Oct 1000-1130	ADHD	SC	
<b>Nov 23</b>				
	16 Nov 1000-1130	Communication/Trauma	SC, KH	
	30 Nov 1000-1100	Reflective Practice	SC	
<b>Dec 23</b>				
	07 Dec 1000-1130	Teenagers & Hormones	YJS Nurse	
<b>Jan 24</b>				
	11 Jan 1000-1100	Reflective Practice	SC	
<b>Feb 24</b>				
	15 Feb 1000-1100	Sexual Health Refresher	YJS Nurse	
<b>Mar 24</b>				
	21 March 1000-1100	Reflective Practice	SC	

## 12. Evidence-based practice and innovation

The purpose of evidence-based practice and innovation is to promote effective practices which achieve positive outcomes for children.

This includes systems, ways of working or specific interventions which are based on the best available research, are child focused and developmentally informed.

Alongside this the YJS are constantly looking at creative ways to improve delivery and evidence effectiveness, all commissioned services deliver evidence based practice i.e. SLCN, TICP.

The following 3 recent examples of emerging practice, innovation and evidence based practice below had a very positive impact on the children, Staff and board members.

**Emerging Practice** – In 2022/23 the YJS began to theme the Management Board meetings and introduce spotlight sessions into these. These are short presentations given by members of the staff team/children on areas of practice within the service. To date we have delivered 4 of these sessions, Diversion & OOD, Reparation, Restorative Justice & Victims and our service Health Offer.

Where feasible we are always looking at children to help deliver these sessions and give their experiences on areas of the service delivery being discussed. We were very fortunate to have a child agree to talk to the board about their experience of Reparation, with support from the case manager the session went extremely well and the child equipped themselves excellently in what many could potentially find very daunting. Everyone at the meeting agreed that the process worked extremely well, board members learnt a lot from the child and were able to understand the process better being able to ask questions directly and listen to a child actually undertaking Reparation.

**Innovation** - During some recent work with a victim a request was made by the victim, they wanted direct answers to some questions from the child but didn't want to see or meet them, the victim wasn't really keen on correspondence either.

The YJS Victim worker discussed this further with their line manager and a decision was made to potentially attempt to gather the child's answers/response via audio which could be played back to victim. Discussion and clarity was sought via legal and the LA Data Protection lead regarding this, the YJS under guidance created a new consent form and prepared the child for the session.

It was agreed that the process could go ahead and once the victim had heard the child's response the recorded audio would be secured in a safe and then at a given date destroyed. This is the first time as a service we have tried something along these lines, it worked extremely well for both the child and victim and it definitely won't be the last time we use it!

### Evidence Based Practice/Intervention

**Sports based provision** – There is a growing body of evidence ([Homepage - StreetGames](#)) to suggest engaging children and young people in sport can deter from any further involvement in crime and offending.

Child A was referred to the YJS after committing an assault and a further offence of possession of a knife. The Child was recently diagnosed with epilepsy. Following the completion of the AssetPlus assessment it was identified that Child A was spending an increased amount of time in the community and was eager to please his peers, regardless of their behaviour and the associated consequences. Child A's Case Manager referred them to a Parkour programme being delivered by the Local Authority Sports and Recreation Department. Child A engaged and quickly began to develop their personal and social skills, realising that epilepsy would not hold them back. Due to the positive attitude and engagement during sessions, Child A was offered a Junior Volunteer role, which would see them supporting and encouraging younger children. Child A also now gets free access to sessions which removed any potential financial barriers. Child A completed their GCSE's and is considering their Post-16 options, which included sports and leisure.



### 13. Evaluation

All areas of intervention and delivery are evaluated on a regular basis, commissioned services submit quarterly reports which are internally evaluated within the local authority Commissioning team. Speech, Language & Communication Needs (SLCN), Trauma Informed Care Pathway (TICP) and recently acquired input from ABC Therapies all deliver evidenced based interventions which are both internally and externally evaluated.

### 14. Service development

This Improvement Plan is presented quarterly within Management Board reports produced by the YJS Manager and discussed/monitored to ensure that relevant senior strategic oversight is in place and direction of travel remains positive.

	Service Improvement	Action taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date/Completed
1	Ensure that the identified priorities for the service correspond to the needs of the children supervised by Hartlepool YJS to ensure these needs are met.	Strategic Priorities have been amended following the findings of recent HMIP thematic inspections and the YJB Strategic plan. 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 to continue with the Virtual School, OSS, MACE, CURV 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	Ongoing and monitored/reviewed at all Management Board meetings
2	Maintain the Child First ethos across the YJS and partners	1. Produce and implement a Child First operational guidance for all staff and board members 2. Carry out bite size sessions with all staff and board members on the guidance 3. Review and update the guidance at planned regular intervals	YJS Management team Management board members All staff	1. Operational guidance produced, implemented and shared 2. Bite size sessions have been carried out with board members and all staff 3. The guidance will be reviewed in Sept 23 4. Monitoring of the process is ongoing via QA,

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		4. Audits, QA and Supervisions to monitor the progression of the Child First ethos identifying good practice and areas for improvement.		Supervision, case audits and feedback
3	Build upon and use the existing process to capture the voice of all children and their families to develop services.	1. SAQ are completed in depth for all children receiving an order 2. Intervention feedback forms are completed and handed to business support 3. Survey Monkey feedback is captured by children, parents/carers and victims of crime and shared with business support 4. Children, parents/carers are actively involved in planning and reviews, interventions and closures 5. All feedback is analysed at Leadership meetings and presented at board meetings for further discuss/service improvement.	YJS Management Team YJS Management Board Chair/Members	Process in place and all feedback and evaluation is presented at Management Board meetings for discussion
4	Maintain and where possible build upon the current service Health offer	1. Continue to establish funds annually to commission the SALT 2. Regular communication with the CCG to establish longevity and reassurance for the delivery of the TICP 3. Ensure the service retains a suitably qualified Nurse Specialist	YJS Management Board	Plans are in place via the YJS management board annually to review all commissioned services and secure future budgets as early as possible

## 15. Challenges, risks and issues

The key challenges, risks and issues 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
<b>Secure Remand Costs and an increase in children remanded to Local Authority</b>	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 the courts that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands and custody.



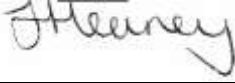
#### 4.1 APPENDIX 1

	The significant lack of suitable accommodation locally for RLAA leading to children being placed out of area with significant costs.	Coordinated Multi-Agency responses to children at risk of remand where safe and secure accommodation is the precipitating factor and is continuously monitored and further developed. Remand budget is incorporated within Wider Children's Services placement costs. North East YJSs piloting the new YRO (ISS) from 3 July 23.
<b>Managing the potential for reduction in YJB grant and partnership financial and 'in-kind' contributions pre and post 2023/24</b>	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 YJS' such as coverage of Teesside Youth Court. Robust financial management and oversight from strategic board.
<b>Continued concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines</b>	The rise in FTE, reoffending rates, serious youth violence and exploitation of vulnerable children. Ultimately leading to criminalisation and wider service involvement having an adverse impact on Looked After Children (CIOC) figures	Continued regular communication, intelligence and information sharing via MACE/CURV and across all services. Ensuring a multi-agency approach is adopted with senior strategic oversight. 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. Continue working alongside the OPCC, Cleveland Police and partners to support the VRU (CURV).
<b>Ongoing recruitment issues within the Probation Services having a direct impact on YJS Seconded PO</b>	The lack of Probation expertise, advice and guidance within the YJS process, especially regarding transitions and those potentially high risk transitions not getting the support they require.	It's difficult to identify any direct proposals/actions which can mitigate this ongoing issue. Financial reimbursement isn't the immediate answer as there aren't any available agency/temp PO available for YJSs to potentially employ?
<b>Challenges &amp; Issues</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>	<b>Proposed Controls/actions</b>

#### 4.1 APPENDIX 1

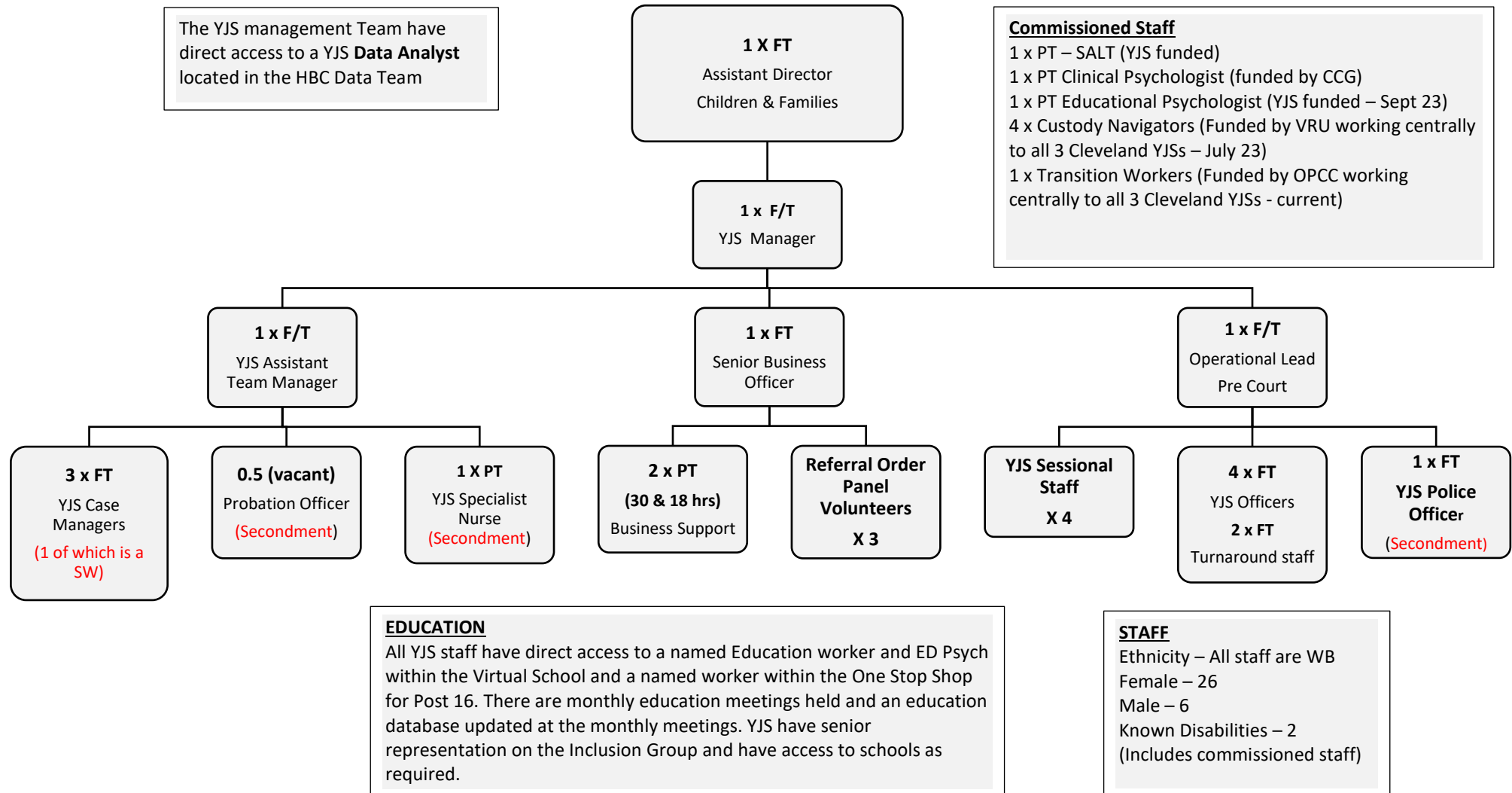
<b>The implementation of the new YJB KPI</b>	Unable to provide relevant and up to date information required due to inability within the Management Information System and the potential of added workload on business support/data analyst.	We are not due the latest upgrade until 15 August 23, which leaves a very tight turn around for our first submission on the 31 August 23. We also won't be certain that the MIS (Child View) is able to provide the information required.
<b>The continued delay in receipt of the YJB grant</b> (as at 26 June 23 we are still unsure as to the actual amount)	Slows down the process of budget planning/commissioning for the forthcoming year, services not in a position to implement a robust budget but having to plan on the previous year's amount. Restricts service creativity.	Communication is received early from the YJB highlighting the delays and at times we are informed that there won't be a reduction. This process needs to be smoother and more streamlined to allow YJSs to plan more robustly.

#### 16. Sign off, submission and approval

Chair of YJS Board	Jo Heaney
Signature	
Date	28/6/2023

## 4.1 APPENDIX 1

### Appendix 1 – YJS Service Structure



## Appendix 2 – Budget costs & Contributions 2023/24

### B5: YOT budget Costs and Contributions

Agency	Staffing Costs	Payments in kind	Other delegated funds	Total
Youth Justice Board	302,160		152,991	455,151
Local Authority	252,928	131,207	36,209	420,344
Police		50,000		50,000
Police and Crime Commissioner			32,000	32,000
Probation		29,609		29,609
Health		5,500		5,500
* Welsh Government				0
Other			4,000	4,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>555,088</b>	<b>216,316</b>	<b>225,200</b>	<b>996,604</b>

\* Welsh YOTs only

## Common youth justice terms

<b>ACE</b>	Adverse childhood experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
<b>AIM 2 and 3</b>	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
<b>ASB</b>	Anti-social behaviour
<b>AssetPlus</b>	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and adolescent mental health services
<b>CCE</b>	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
<b>Children</b>	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
<b>Child First</b>	A system wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system. There are four tenants to this approach, it should be: developmentally informed, strength based, promote participation, and encourage diversion
<b>Child looked-after</b>	Child Looked After, where a child is looked after by the local authority
<b>CME</b>	Child Missing Education
<b>Constructive resettlement</b>	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
<b>Contextual safeguarding</b>	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety

<b>Community resolution</b>	Community resolution, an informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
<b>EHCP</b>	Education and health care plan, a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
<b>ETE</b>	Education, training or employment
<b>EHE</b>	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school
<b>EOTAS</b>	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
<b>FTE</b>	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
<b>HMIP</b>	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
<b>HSB</b>	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
<b>JAC</b>	Junior Attendance Centre
<b>MAPPA</b>	Multi-agency public protection arrangements
<b>MFH</b>	Missing from Home
<b>NRM</b>	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
<b>OOCD</b>	Out-of-court disposal. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court
<b>Outcome 22/21</b>	An informal disposal, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
<b>Over-represented children</b>	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average

<b>RHI</b>	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
<b>SLCN</b>	Speech, Language and communication needs
<b>STC</b>	Secure training centre
<b>SCH</b>	Secure children's home
<b>Young adult</b>	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
<b>YJS</b>	Youth Justice Service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a child first approach
<b>YOI</b>	Young offender institution

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 SEPTEMBER 2023



**Subject:** 2022/2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF ADOPTION TEES VALLEY

**Report of:** Executive Director, Children and Joint Commissioning Services

**Decision Type:** For information

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## 1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

<b>Hartlepool will be a place:</b>
- Where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- Where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.
- Of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

## 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 2022-March 2023 (**Appendix 1**).

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Since 2018, Adoption Tees Valley has been the organisation that fulfils the role of the adoption agency for the five local authorities in Tees Valley, Darlington, Hartlepool, Middleborough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton on Tees. Adoption Tees Valley is a shared service, hosted by Stockton Borough Council.



- 3.2 The work and performance of Adoption Tees Valley is overseen by a Governance Board chaired by a Director. It is made up of senior managers in children's social care representing all five local authorities and non-executive members who are adoptive parents.
- 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. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 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. The Annual Report at **Appendix 1** provides a comprehensive overview of the work of ATV throughout 2022/23.

## 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	There are no risk implications arising from this report. Adoption Tees Valley effectively discharges the duties of Hartlepool Borough Council as an adoption agency.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	As set out in the report, the service overspent in 2022/23 by £225,000, of which Hartlepool's share is £33,000. This was funded from 2022/23 outturn.
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no legal considerations within this report. Adoption Tees Valley operates within the legal framework of the Adoption and Children Act 2004, the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 and Care Standards Act 2000.
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Adopters and children who have been adopted are supported by 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. The Annual Report includes feedback directly from adopters and adopted children.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to note the annual report in relation to the work of the ATV Service during the financial year 2022/23.

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 None

**9. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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01429 523910

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 11 August 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 18 August 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 14 August 2023

## A high-angle photograph of two young children playing on a light-colored wooden floor. The child on the left, with dark hair in a ponytail and wearing a red shirt, is reaching out towards a green wooden dinosaur. The child on the right, with brown hair and wearing a grey shirt and green overalls, is holding a green wooden block with a red top. Various other wooden toys, including a green cone, a yellow banana, and a wooden knife, are scattered around them.

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## **Introduction**

### **1. Executive Summary**

This annual report of the Regional Adoption Agency business covers the period 1.4.22-31.3.23.

This year has been one of building on partnerships, and existing practice to strengthen and improve adoption in Tees Valley. There has been more work with regional partner RAA's, and the regional VAA's, on collaborative projects which are detailed later in this report. Work has continued with the 5 partner Local Authorities to continue to strengthen early twin track care planning for adoption.

The adoption team have been working on trauma informed practice within this year, inspired by one of the presentations at the national RAA Adoption Support Conference in September 22. ATV has now implemented a model of the Trauma Timeline, and use of the trauma tree in assessments of adopters, and in preparation for matching children. Staff, adopters, partner Local Authorities and Panel are reporting very positively on this practice, which is helping to focus on the long term needs of the child, arising from early trauma.

ATV continues to work within the overall framework of the National Adoption Strategy. This year has seen significant focus on early permanence, including the launch of the National Early Permanence Practice Standards. <https://earlypermanence.org.uk/resources/> . While there have been the same number of EP placements as in the previous year, more prospective adopters have been approved for early permanence, however, we continue to aim for greater numbers. The focus has also continued on adoption support, including on the long term identity needs of adopted children and adults. With more early permanence for children, and continuous development of the framework for these placements, more adoptive parents are meeting with the parents of the child from the outset, and we see a national move towards long term maintenance of significant relationships, enacted through direct and indirect ways of keeping in touch, including "letterbox" contact. Research, including the latest Adoption Barometer Report (PAC UK) continues to tell us that many adopted people want to have some form of contact with their birth relatives, and as a whole system we need to continue to review how we move in this direction.

This year followed the "tail" of the Somerset judgement, and its repercussions for children in the adoption system across England. A small number of children in Teesside had delayed adoption orders, and there were some delayed placements due to the legal implications of Somerset in the previous



year: for this reason, we see a small number of children who have gone on to be adopted, or even placed for adoption within this period, who might otherwise have had that part of their adoption journey in the previous year.

Adoption Orders are higher than the last year, while children placed for adoption remains the same as in the previous year. This level of placement activity is at a lower level than has been the case, which follows the national trend, where adoptions from care have reduced over the last 2 years. Of Significance in this region is the increase in numbers of Placement Orders granted within this year – 87 which is the highest level in the previous 4 years. Similarly, ADM best interests' decisions have risen significantly - 100 in this year, a 28% increase on the previous year, also the highest for the previous 4 years.

This shows Local Authorities are planning for adoption for more children, and these care plans are being authorised through Court, indicating that adoption is the right plan for the child.

ATV continues to perform well in timeliness of adoption for children. Many children are being placed within government set timescales for placement once the Placement Order is granted. Timescales (PO to match) have improved this year, from 174 to 146 days and ATV continues to perform better than the England average by some 50 days, although remains over the government target. The time from a child starting their first care placement to moving in with adoptive parents has increased, with average days being 411 across the Tees Valley, which is lower than the national target (421 days) and 70 days lower than the England average.

The number of families approved over the past year has risen from the previous year, with 55 families having been assessed and approved to adopt. While this increase is welcomed, ATV continues to need more families for siblings, for older children up to the age of 5, and for children who may have some uncertainty in relation to developmental delay.

As part of this annual report, I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of "Lesley" (name changed) a Mum who has had 5 children leave her care, and one adopted, and who makes an important contribution to prospective adopter preparation training within this region. She talks at every preparation training group, about the perspective of birth parents and why keeping in touch matters. "Lesley" is truly exceptional. She has had the courage to talk to hundreds of prospective adopters over the years, and she makes a real and tangible difference to their views and feelings about birth parents, which then goes on to translate into a more informed understanding around keeping in touch.



## **2. Governance**

ATV is governed by the Board of Directors which comprise the DCS's for the 5 partner Local Authorities. There are additionally 2 non-executive directors who are adoptive parents.

In this year, the ATV Board was chaired by the Middlesbrough DCS, Sue Butcher, who has now left post. In February 2023 Sally Robinson, DCS in Hartlepool took over as chair.

Sally has significant operational experience in adoption. she is the ADM for Hartlepool and chairs the regional ASGLB until its decommissioning in 2022. Sally remains as chair of the NE regional adoption network meeting, involving LA's, VAA's and CAFCASS.

The ATV Board meets 4 times each year, and considers performance information, finance, and adoption operational and strategic issues within the region.

## **3. National Adoption – National Strategy**

Adoption Tees Valley works within the wider sector forum of the national Regional Adoption Agencies group, which is linked to ADCS, CVAA, DfE and a wide range of stakeholder committees and groups. The RAA leaders group works with a strategic plan, closely aligned to the National Adoption Strategy, Achieving Excellence Everywhere (2021). Through the RAA leader's forum, the DfE has made available national funding to support strategic delivery against the national priorities. The Service Manager at ATV chairs the national Early Permanence Working Group. Managers and practitioners in ATV have access to forums and training opportunities that are delivered through the RAA Leaders network.

This year has seen stronger pan regional working together across the 3 RAA's of Adoption Tees Valley, Adopt North East, and Adopt Coast to Coast. The 3 RAA's cover the 12 Local Authority areas of the North East, and through collaborative working we have together set an agenda for greater consistency of delivery in this "pan region".

We have secured funding for 2 significant projects pan regionally to offer improved services, and greater consistency of delivery in adoption across the NE region.



### **NE and Cumbria Early Permanence Project**

This is a 2 ½ year funded project to increase the number of children who have access to early permanence, and to develop a range of placements including more concurrent planning placements. The funding is £330,000, funded until April 2025, and has been secured and managed through the support of Stockton BC Procurement Team.

The project has recruited a lead consultant who is Kate Knowles, a manager from the North West Concurrency Project –which has strong experience and expertise in concurrent planning placements. Each RAA has seconded at least one social worker into the project, and one regional VAA, Arc Adoption, is also involved as a partner. The aim is to achieve regional sufficiency of EP carers, and more children having the opportunity for a single placement, without moves around the system, until a Court decision is made on the final care plan.

Adoption Tees Valley has been an active contributor to the Project, with 2 social workers, Angela Simmons, and Kirsty Taylor, being seconded for 1 day per week, to strengthen practice and delivery of EP placements.

### **North East Multi-Disciplinary Adoption Support Service**

This is a 2 year funded project to set up and establish a multi-agency adoption support service for the NE region. It is a pilot project testing out a model of adoption support for any child within the age range of 7-11, who it is considered would benefit from a multi-disciplinary assessment and intervention. The project has a clear ethos that to support children, parents must also be supported, and is seeking to test and refine a model which will be available for ASF funding in the long term.

A strength of the project is the partnership that has been achieved with the 3 RAA's and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for the NE region, bringing social care and health together in this developing service.

The project has secured £950,000 funding over 2 years and will run until April 2025.

## **4. Partnership Working**

Following the Review of ATV in 2021, the service has strengthened its focus on partnership working, a theme which is also evident in national strategy.

Working in partnership is one of the key elements of the service plan 2023-25, and new ways of working together are continually being tested in the maturation of the RAA. The 2 projects highlighted above reflect a stronger regional partnership, where we are achieving more together than would have been achieved by any single agency.



ATV works together with Local Authorities, through strategic and practice working arrangements. This year has seen a strengthened approach to working with LA Fostering Services, for early permanence. Also, a shared adoption support process, and a new approach whereby ATV will attend Legal Gateway meetings in the LA.

Work with VAA's has been strengthened through the early permanence project above. This builds on ATV regular working together with regional VAA's to secure regional placements for children where no in house option is available. Working relationships are positive although challenges exist in the increasing costs of VAA placements, while funding to LA's and the RAA is not increased.

ATV works with health predominantly around provision of the Medical Advisor role. This has been an area of significant challenge within the year, especially within the South Tees Trust, affecting Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. There have been pressures in achieving timely adoption medicals, and adult adopter health appointments. To address this, there has been a lot of collaborative working between Local Authorities, ATV, South Tees Trust and the ICB. Significant management and practitioner time in all agencies is dedicated to addressing how children can progress without delay. ATV remains appreciative of the Medical Advisors, who's expertise and commitment are valued, in helping to ensure that children's health needs are fully understood, and that adoptive parents are given high quality information about the child's health, prior to matching.

Pan regional partnership working has been positive in the year, reflected in the 2 projects highlighted above.

ATV has valued the continued support of the Virtual schools, in helping to understand and promote the needs of adopted children who can be "hidden" if schools are unaware that the child or young person is adopted. Working together is supported by tri-annual meetings and the partners virtual schools' collaborative funding of the ATV Education support worker. See section 13 for details of education support in this year.

ATV works with commissioned providers of services including multiple therapy providers via a commissioned framework, and a VAA providing independent support services to birth parents, and access to adoption records.

## **5. Benchmarking – Key Performance Data**

The key performance data is presented in summary in this section. More detailed performance information, presented by local authority is detailed in section 8.



Data is presented for ATV for the year 2022-23, at the end of quarter 4, and for the previous year 2021-22 for comparison.

Key Indicator	ATV 2021-22	ATV 2022-23	Current c/w previous	National Govt Target where applicable
Adopter Approvals	46	55	Inc 19%	N/A
Children referred to ATV	179	223	Inc 25%	N/A
Children with ADM -BID (Best interests' decision)	78	100	Inc 28%	N/A
PO	74	87	Inc 18%	N/A
Matches	79	81	Inc 1%	
Placed	77	77	No Change	N/A
Early Permanence	11	11	No Change	
Adoption Orders	78	84	Inc 8%	N/A
Disruptions – pre order	0	1		N/A
Timescale – A2 (PO to match)	174	146 days	Dec 16%	121 days
Timescale A10 – BLA-Moved in with Adopters	383	411	Inc 7%	421 days

## 6. Marketing and Recruitment

ATV marketing aims to promote awareness of the need for more people to consider adopting. ATV also seeks to increase awareness of the role of ATV in providing support to adoptive families including children and adoptive parents. ATV has a multi-channel approach to marketing, using social media including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and also commissioning support to digital marketing campaigns during key campaign periods. It can be difficult to evaluate the impact of any particular campaign, other than numbers of enquiries received. However, it is recognised that the consideration of adoption is a major life decision and there is a pre-contemplative period for adults in deciding to go on an enquire about adoption. As a result, we use social media reach, and engagement, enquiry numbers and approval numbers to indicate whether marketing is being effective. However, it is not an exact science, due to the time period that people may require, either before enquiring, or following enquiry, before commencing the “adopter journey”.

ATV is seeking to reach out to prospective adopters who can offer the family homes to children in the region where their needs are more complex arising from the child's needs or being part of a sibling group. Marketing has



therefore been targeted to people who are interested in older children (age 4+) children with additional needs, and siblings.

Activity	ATV 2021-22	ATV 2022-23
Number of ATV recruitment campaigns year to date	3	5
Number of all Adopter enquiries year to date (all methods )	287	309
Number of ATV enquiries converted to ROI	61	73
% of ATV enquiries converted to ROI	22%	24%
Number of adoptive families attending information events	123	131
Social media followers	11,724	11,751
Website visits	16,819	17,422

What has gone well?

- Greater numbers of enquiries, and adopter approvals
- Attendance at Pride at Newcastle- the major LFJB event in the North
- Introduction of blogs on the ATV website written by adoptive parents
- Press and media presence with coverage on ITV Tyne Tees twice in the last 12 months, interviews on BBC radio Tees and press releases local news outlets including the Gazette and Northern Echo.
- Conversion rate of enquiries to ROI increasing, and numbers increasing.

Challenges?

- The service continues to need more enquirers and adoptive parents for siblings and for older children, and those with more complex needs.

## **7. Preparation, Assessment and Approval of Adoptive Parents**

	Total 2021-22	Total 2022-23	Current c/w previous
<b>Initial Visits to prospective Adopters</b>	71	106	Inc 35%
<b>Stage 1 Starts</b>	46	58	Inc 26%
<b>Stage 2 Starts</b>	52	51	Dec 2%

<b>Adopter Approvals</b>	46	55	Inc 20%
<b>Numbers in assessment at the end of the period</b>	39	38	Dec 2%
<b>Numbers waiting to be matched at end of period</b>	29	29	No change
<b>Timescale S1 (Govt target 60 days)</b>	106	239	
<b>Timescale S2 (Govt target 121 days)</b>	146	156	

ATV has increased numbers of initial visits to prospective adopters and has focussed in this year on the Enquiry to Registration of Interest (ROI) timeline and experience. ATV has created a new role for enquiries management, and through this role, we have seen conversion from enquiry to ROI increase by 2%, however rising well beyond this in the current year, and we expect to see significant improvement in 2023-24.

ATV has partnered in with Redcar and Cleveland, and Darlington Virtual Schools, to share the new Virtual Reality Video headsets adopted by both agencies. These headsets are now being used in all preparation groups, to enable adoptive parents to experience the world of the child in a range of scenarios that a child may have experienced, for example- where domestic violence has taken place around the child. The headsets are aimed at helping prospective adopters have a better understanding of the trauma a child has experienced, and feedback so far is that they are powerful, impactful, and helpful.

ATV has incorporated learning from a national Child Safeguarding Review of a child placed for adoption (LJC case) and has progressed to a trauma informed approach across the service. The team now use the Trauma Timeline approach in assessment work with families, and then through the matching work for a child, helping prospective adopters and all professionals understand the lived trauma of the child. The Trauma Tree is a tool used within the direct work with families, and in preparing to care for a particular child.

ATV is now requiring all family and friends' networks to be involved during the assessment process. The aim is to raise the profile of the role of support networks in any potential safeguarding matters, and to help them be better prepared to support the child and family, with more awareness of the impact of trauma and attachment disruption for children.



All adoptive parents undertaking their first approval are required to complete the 4 day preparation training course, which is underpinned by the Secure Base Model (Schofield and Beek), the Trauma Timeline, and PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) parenting.

Families are all asked to register with CATCH (commissioned from PACT) which is an on line learning and support forum, and which is integrated into the ATV adopter journey, from assessment onwards.

Timescales for assessments have been challenging in this year (239 days on average with a target of 182 days), and the explanation is largely due to delays in medicals being completed in full during stage 1. This may be with either the GP practice, or with the Medical Advisor providing a summary of the adopter health and advice to the agency.

To address challenges around Medical Advisor capacity, ATV Service Manager has negotiated extensively with partners in the ICB, and Foundation Trusts and fed back to the ATV Board on this key challenge. As the year closes, the ATV Board and ICB have agreed to fund a dedicated "Adult Adopter" Medical Advisor (MA) for ATV to relieve pressure on the paediatricians carrying out adoption health assessments of children, through provision of a MA who will consider all adult health reports. This MA will also have a role in supporting GP awareness of the safeguarding nature of adopter medicals, and in improving GP returns in an improved timescale, through dedicated awareness raising sessions.

What has gone well?

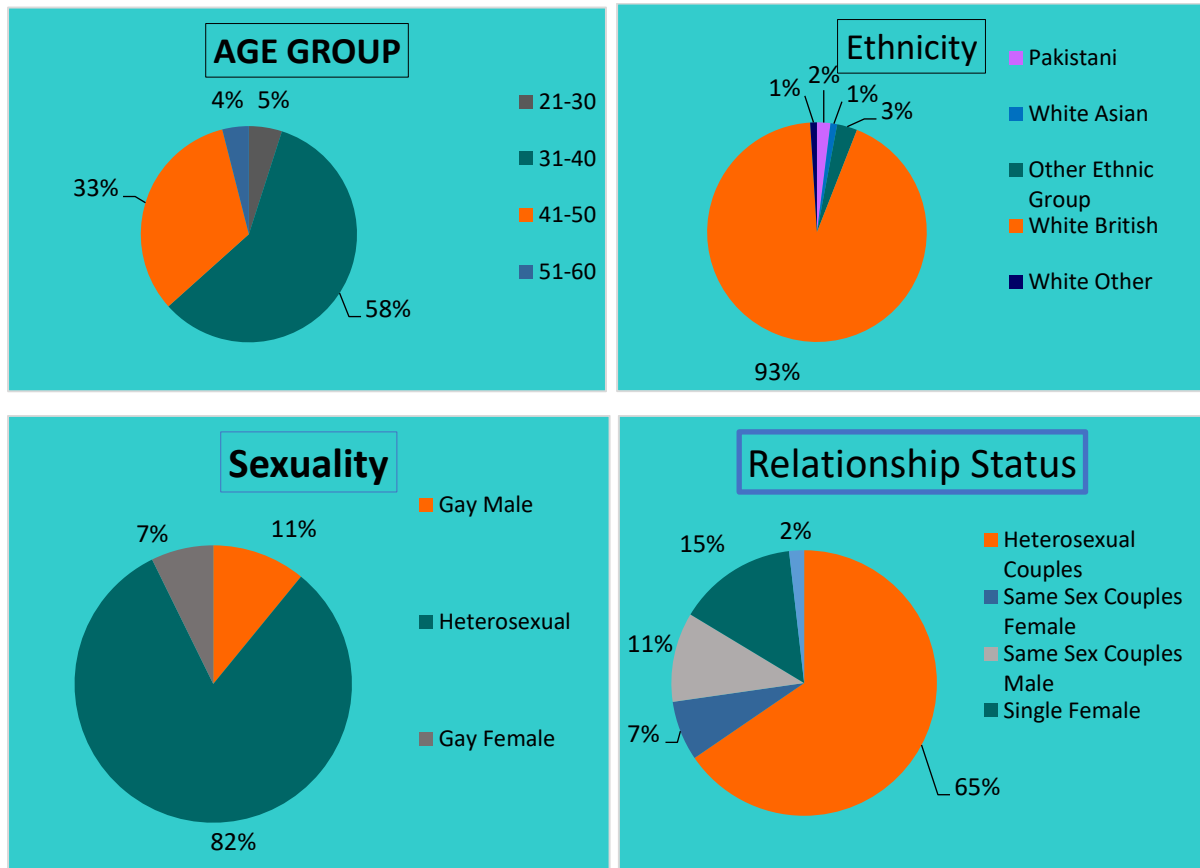
- Strengthening of work around trauma informed practice, and positive partnerships with LA's, enabling shared resources.
- Increased numbers of adopter approvals in 2022-23
- Improvement in the enquiry to ROI conversion
- Improved timescale from enquiry to ROI
- Response to the LJC safeguarding review- continued review on safeguarding and trauma informed practice.
- Collaborative response to medical advisor pressures.

Challenges?

- Not enough adoptive families for children who have more complex needs.
- Timescales for stage 1 are longer than wished for, and the key reason is delays in health information, either from GP, or from Medical Advisors.

### 7.1 Who did ATV approve?

Total approvals: 55 families: 99 individuals



Sexuality/relationship status: 35 heterosexual couples; 10 same sex couples; 8 single women and 1 single man.

Prospective Adopters approved for early permanence: 10 (18%)

Age- 92 % of all adopters are aged between 30 and 50 years old.

Ethnicity- most of all adoptive parents are white British, with 93 % in this category.

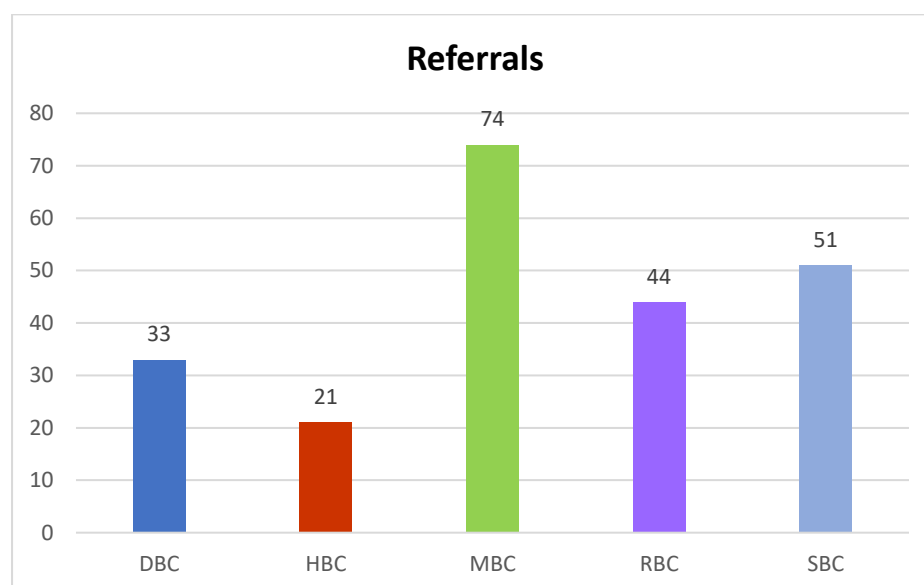
Timeliness of matching adoptive parents: of the adopters approved and matched within the period, 23 were matched with a child within 3 months of approval, and 28 were matched more than 3 months following approval. 4 were not matched within this period.

## 8. Referrals of children

There has been an increase overall in referrals of children who may require an adoptive family in this year. This has translated into higher numbers of ADM's and POs, although placements remain the same as in the last year.

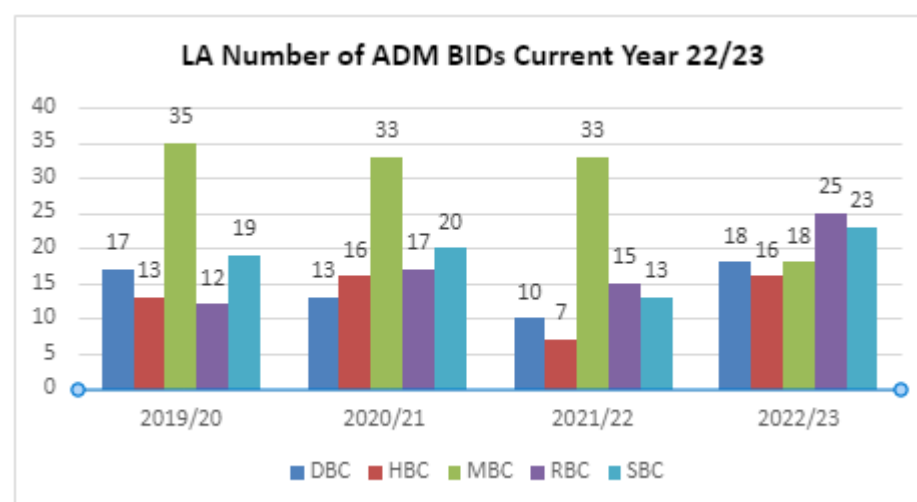
Data is provided below on the number and timescales by Local Authority

### 8.1 Referrals – Early Notifications by Local Authority

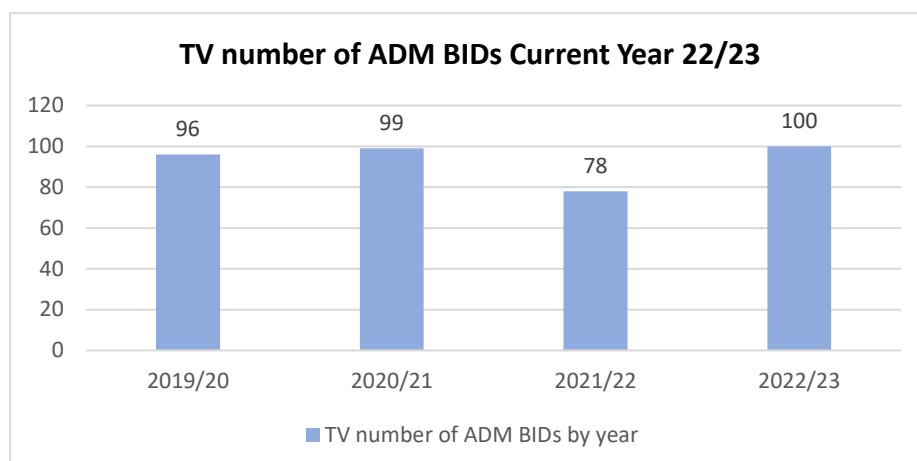


223 were referred in total. ATV asks for referrals of children at the earliest point they may have an ADM. Not all children progress to a plan of adoption. Middlesbrough are the highest referring LA, followed by Stockton.

### 8.2 ADM- "Best Interests Decision" by Local Authority





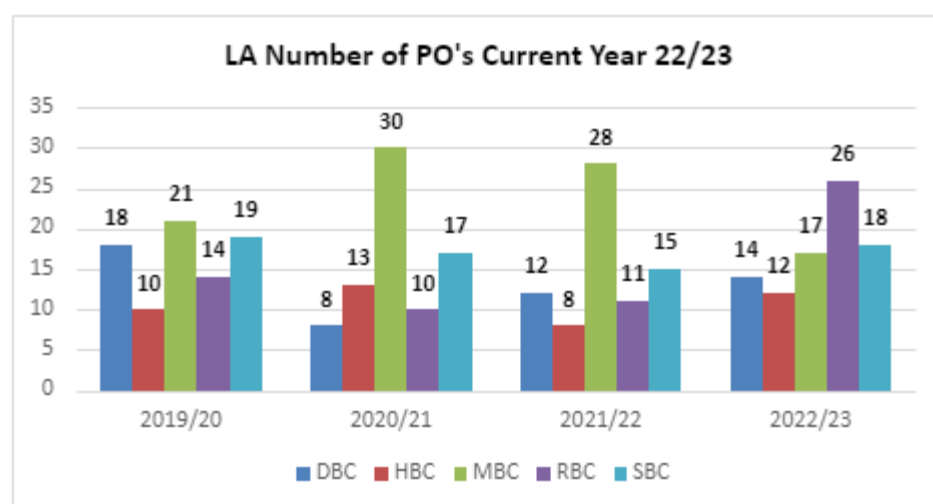


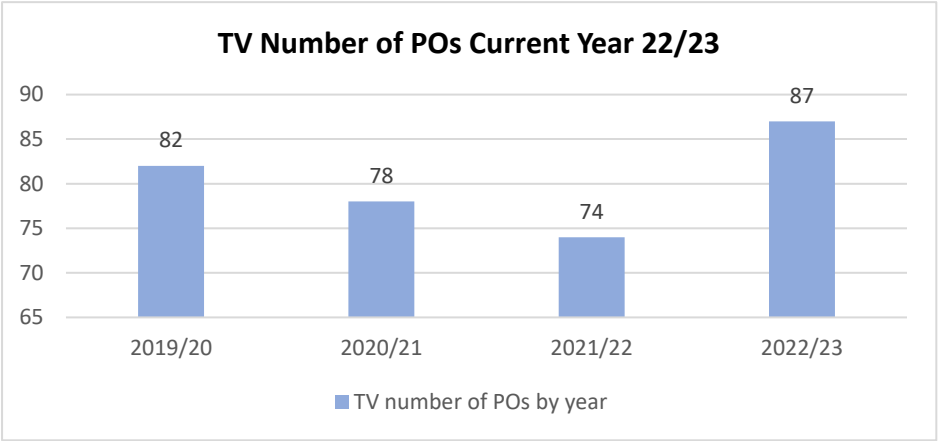
### Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 8- 80%
- Hartlepool increase by 9- 128%
- Middlesbrough decrease by 15- 45%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 10 – 66%
- Stockton increase by 10- 77%

4 of the 5 LA's have seen a significant rise in the numbers of children for whom they are planning for adoption. Middlesbrough is the outlier with a considerable decrease in numbers of children with an adoption plan.

### 8.3 Placement Orders- by Local Authority



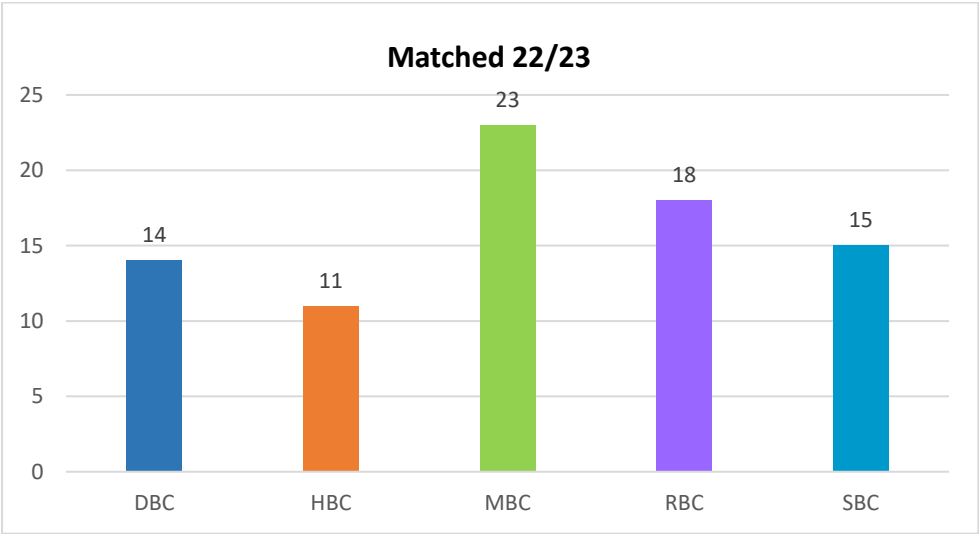


*Change by LA on Previous Year*

- Darlington increase by 2- 17%
- Hartlepool increase by 4- 50%
- Middlesbrough decrease by 11- 39%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 15- 136%
- Stockton increase by 3- 20%

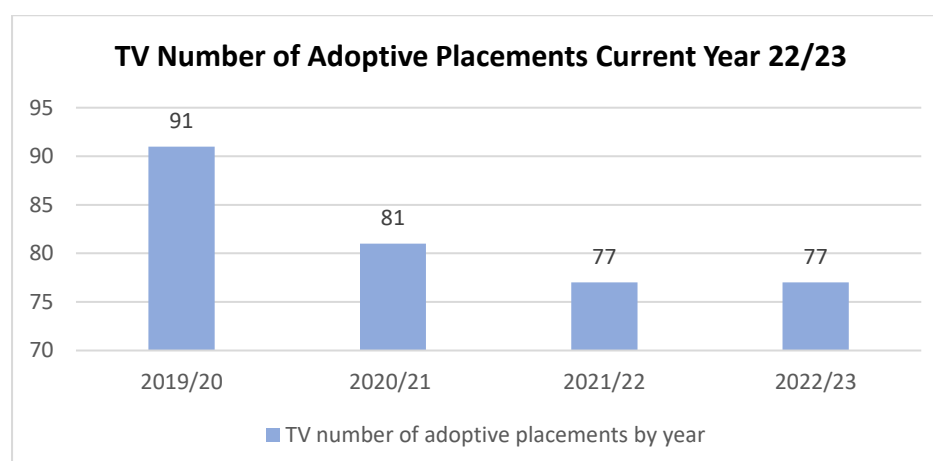
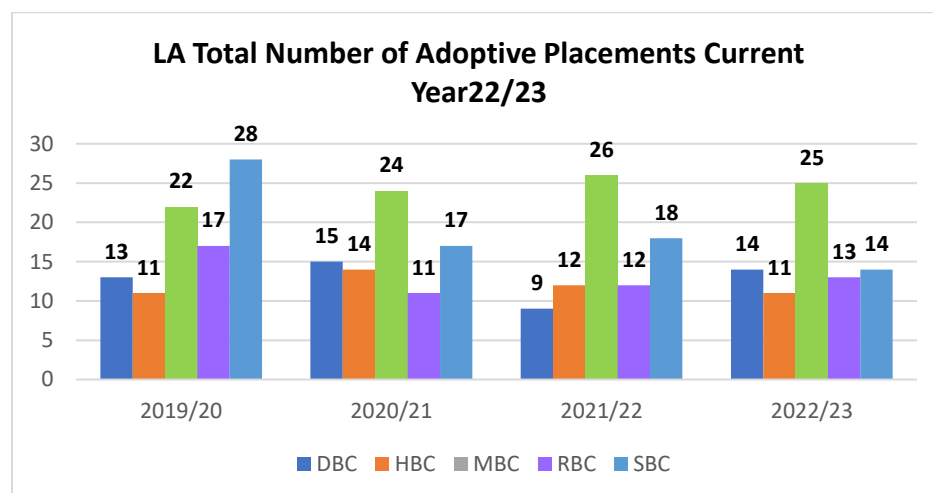
Again 4 LA's have increased the numbers of children for whom a PO has been granted, giving the LA Court authority to place for adoption. Redcar have seen an exceptional increase in numbers on previous years, and Hartlepool have returned to a similar number seen across a number of years, where 2021-22 was an exceptionally low number. Middlesbrough is an outlier with a significant reduction on previous years.

*8.4 Matches by Local Authority*



The numbers of children matched for adoption will reflect the numbers placed. Slight differences re due to timing within the year period under review.

### 8.5 Placements of children for adoption by Local Authority



### Change by LA on Previous Year

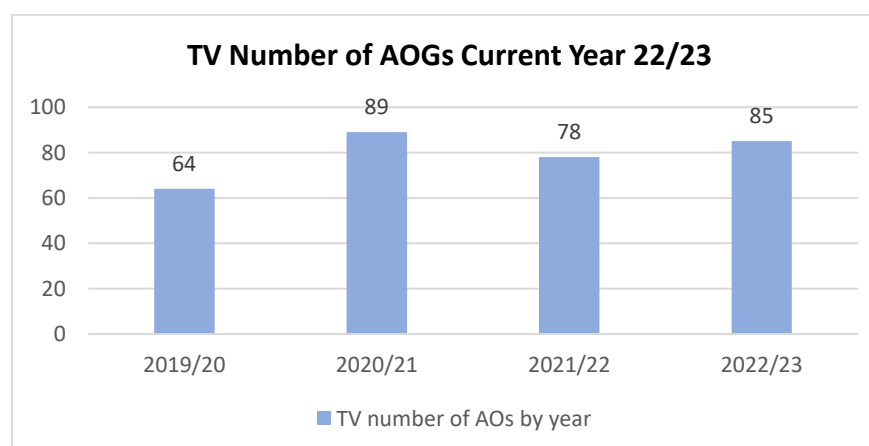
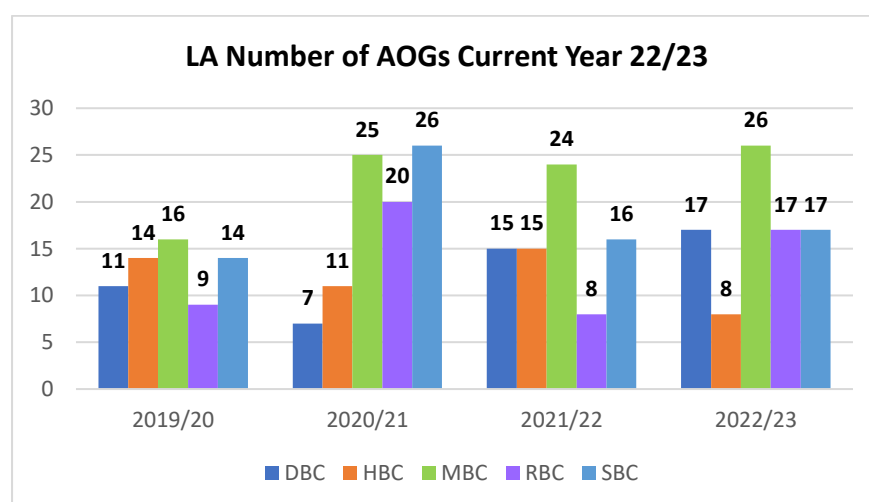
- Darlington increase by 5- 55%
- Hartlepool decrease by 1 – 8%
- Middlesbrough decrease by 1- 4%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 1- 8%
- Stockton decrease by 4- 22%

Placement numbers have remained the same over the last 2 years. Reviewing the increase in numbers of PO and ADM BIDs overall, it is identified that there was a rise in rate of PO during Q4 2022-23 and these children will be progressing to match and placement in the forthcoming months.

Although placement numbers remain the same, it is reasonable to evaluate that there is an overall increase in the numbers of children progressing for adoption in this region, due to ADM and PO activity.

Middlesbrough is the outlier. There has been a turnover of workforce, including Agency Advisor and ADM in Middlesbrough and this LA has been impacted by capacity in the Medical Advisor role, which is required for ADM to take place. Work is underway, including in partnership between the LA, ATV and the South Tees Acute Trust to improve and address capacity issues for MA time.

### 8.6 Adoption Orders Granted by Local Authority



### Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 2- 13%
- Hartlepool decrease by 8- 53%
- Middlesbrough increase by 2- 8%

- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 9- 112%
- Stockton increase by 1 – 6%

Hartlepool decrease reflects a lower number of placements in the previous year.

### 8.7 Timescales for Children Matched and moving in with Adoptive Parents

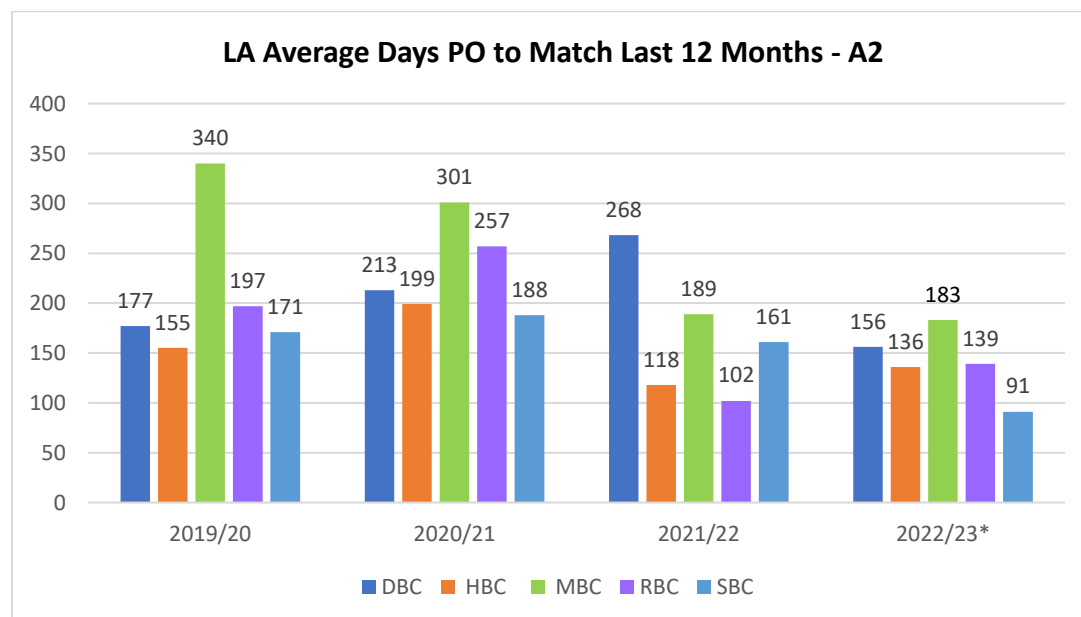
The headline measures for timeliness of adoption are:

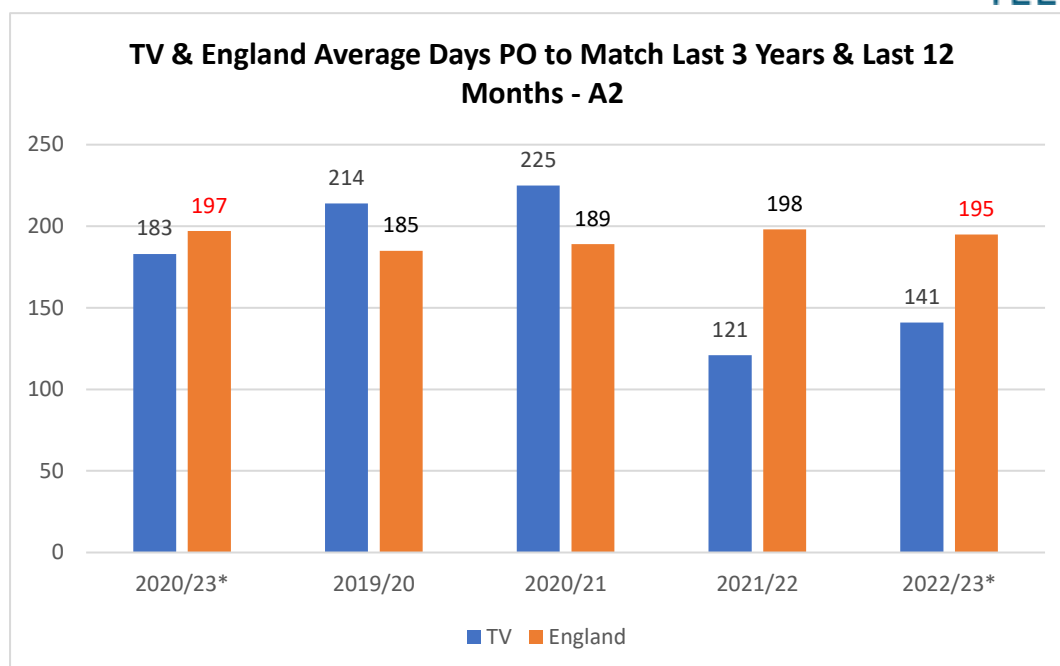
- Adoption scorecard indicator A2- Placement Order to match timescales
- Adoption Scorecard Indicator A10- date child became looked after, to date moved in with adoptive parents

All are based on the timescales of children who have been adopted in the year and are an average of those children. As numbers are low, children with exceptionally high timescales can distort figures.

### 8.8 A2 – PO to Match by Local Authority

The government target is 121 days





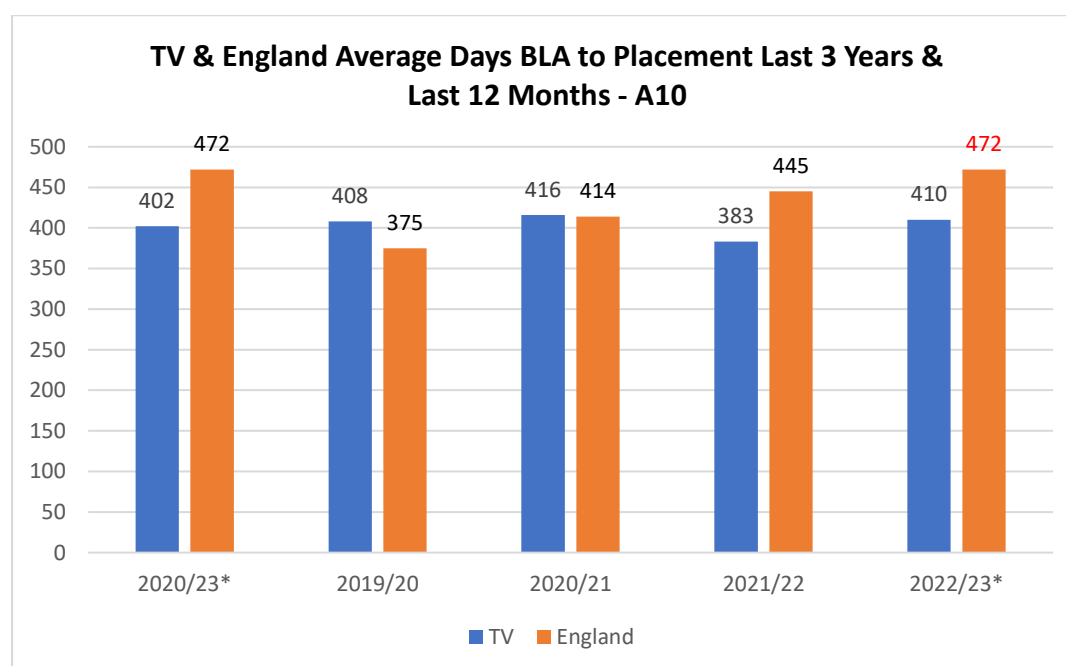
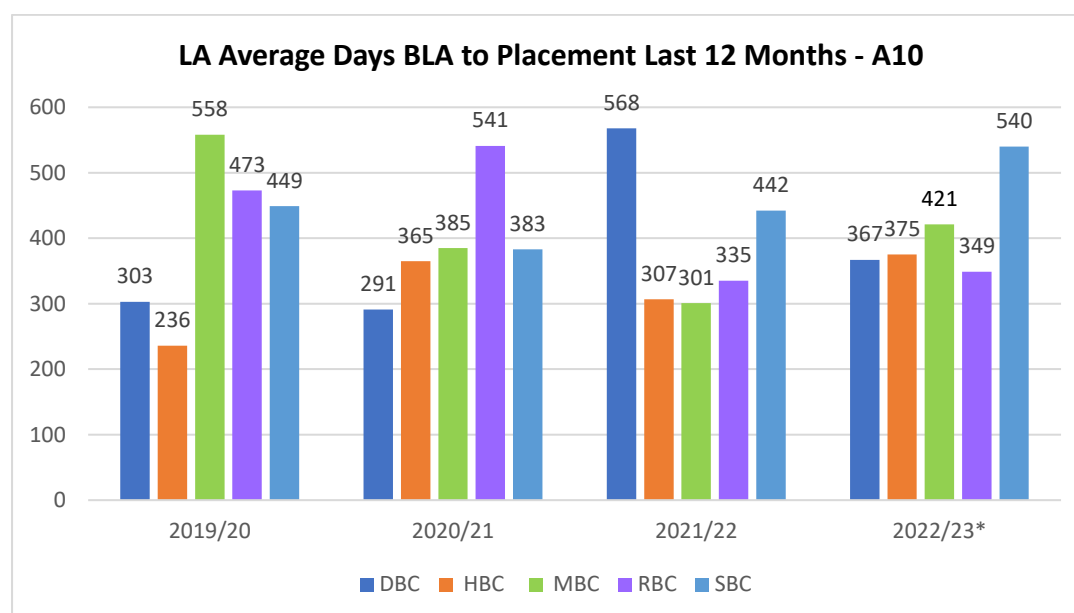
#### *Change by LA on Previous Year*

- Darlington reduced PO to match by 112 days, which is positive. The LA remains over the target time, but a reduction by 42 % in average timescale is positive.
- Hartlepool increase by 18 days, an increase of 15%
- Middlesbrough have reduced by 20 days, a decrease of 11%
- Redcar and Cleveland have increased by 37 days, an increase of 36%
- Stockton have reduced by 70 days, which is a decrease of 43%, which is extremely positive.

PO to match timescale is dependent on finding the right family for the child, and having good quality information on which to seek a family who is well positioned to meet the needs of the child. Family finding is most effective where there is an up to date good quality child permanence report, a good quality profile of the child, with high quality photographs and video imagery. Where social workers know the child well and consider the profiles and prospective adopter reports offered in a timely way, linking is effective, and centred around children's needs. Where children are to be placed alongside siblings, have more complex needs, or need to have contact with family members, it is important to have a good, well evidenced and up to date assessment of needs, as this is critical for successful matching.

*8.9 A10- Became a child in our care, to moving in with adoptive parents, by Local Authority*

The government target is 421 days.



### Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington reduced by 201 days, and 35% overall. Darlington has significantly reduced timescales for the children adopted, which is extremely positive.
- Hartlepool has increased by 95 days, which is 31%, Hartlepool remains on average within the government target timescale. 3 children had timescales which were higher than expected. As only 8 children were adopted in the year, these 3 children have increased overall average.

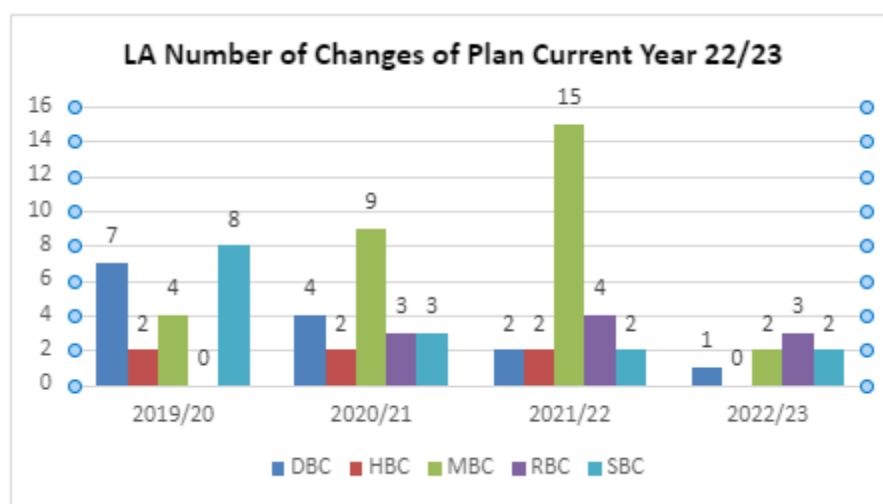
- Middlesbrough increase by 90 days, an increase of 30%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 14 days, and increase of 4%
- Stockton have increased by 98 days, an increase of 22%

Only Stockton have an average timescale which is over the government target timescale for children in this year, although 4 of the 5 LA's have increased overall timescale averages.

The analysis of timescales for Adoption Tees Valley shows that the average timescale overall for Placement Order to match has increased and is slightly above the government target. However, compared with the England average ATV continues to perform well, and there are generally few children waiting with a PO.

The timescales from a child entering care (CIOC) to moving in have increased for 4 out of the 5 Local Authorities. 4 remain within government target timescales on average, while one LA has a significantly higher average timescale, which is accounted for by a number of children. A theme is a child returning home on a care order, then coming back into care, and going on to be placed for adoption.

### 8.10 Changes of plan away from adoption by Local Authority



The total numbers of children for whom there is a change of plan away from adoption has reduced year on year, with a significant decrease in this year, which is largely accounted for by Middlesbrough continuing with a plan of adoption for more children (following ADM BID). Changes of plan can arise for a number of reasons, which can include the RAA being unable to find an





adoptive family, the needs of children changing, or family members being identified at a late stage during care proceedings.

### 8.11 Interruptions

There were 2 children who had an interruption to their planned placement. This is where the child is in introductions to their new family, and the plan does not proceed to placement. The 2 children were siblings.

### 8.12 Disruption

One child has had a disrupted placement. A disruption is where the child leaves the family prior to the granting of an adoption order.

A disruption meeting has taken place, independently chaired, and learning disseminated, and considered by the ATV team, and panel.

### 8.13 Children Returned to Care, post Adoption Order

6 Children are identified as having returned to care post adoption order, all being in the teenage age range.

## **9. Children Matched and Placed 2022-23**

### 9.1 Internal- External Families

	Totals 2021-22	2022-23 Q1 and Q2	2022-23 Q2 and Q3	2022-23 Totals
ATV children placed with ATV adopters	58	31	21	52
ATV Children placed with external adopters	19	15	10	25
External children placed with ATV adopters	0	0	0	0
Total ATV children placed	77	46	31	77
Total placements	77	46	31	77

52 of the children were placed with ATV families, and 25 with external agencies.



17 of the 25 (68%) children placed with external agencies were placed with the regional VAA's, with whom ATV works in partnership.

Of the 7 children being placed away from the region, 4 were placed with RAA's, in the North region.

ATV continues to strive for sufficiency of adoptive parents. The gap for ATV is adopters who can take siblings, and older children or children with additional needs, including needs arising from maternal alcohol consumption in pregnancy, and significant attachment difficulties.

### *9.2 Children waiting with PO – not linked at the year end*

On 31.3.23 there were 5 children with a PO not linked or matched.

Of these children, 2 were siblings, and there were 3 single children.

No child had a PO for over 7 months, and 4 of the 5 had PO for less than 3 months.

The single children were aged 4, 2 and 1.

One child was of mixed ethnicity, Asian- White British.

### *9.3 Demographics of Children*

Of the 85 children adopted in the last 12 months:

<b>Aged under 5 years</b>	73	<b>Aged over 5 years</b>	12 (14%)
<b>Female</b>	39	<b>Male</b>	46
<b>Minority ethnic background</b>	10 (12%)	<b>White British</b>	75
<b>Disabled</b>	0	<b>Part of Sibling Group</b>	27
<b>"Harder to Place"</b>	37 (44%)		

### *9.4 Matching and Family Finding Developments*

The first option for considering families for ATV children will always be with ATV approved adopters, and all children with an ADM, or progressing to ADM are considered for available ATV families. Children are placed with families who match their needs, and if no internal family is a suitable match, the agency will seek external families approved to adopt.

ATV has a developed process for family finding regionally, through regular VAA meetings with ATV Family Finding managers. 8 children were linked through these meetings in the reporting period.



Any child not linked by the time of PO is placed on Linkmaker, the national portal for linking children to the right family. In the reporting period 16 children were linked through Linkmaker to external adopters.

There have been 3 funded activity days for children, through the national RAA programme. 1 child has been linked through the Activity Days programme.

ATV has commissioned a professional photographer, to do high quality photos where these are not available, showing children in a positive, and playful light.

## **10. Early Permanence**

### *Key developments and Vision*

Early Permanence is a key strategic priority for ATV. The reason is that this reduces moves for children, while care plans are being developed, provides the potential for earlier secure attachments, but is not a pre-emptive placement prior to final Court decision making. The service has continued to practice a dedicated early permanence approach for children. Close monitoring of all new referrals by Permanence Champions enables early consideration of those children for whom early permanence may be an option to be considered.

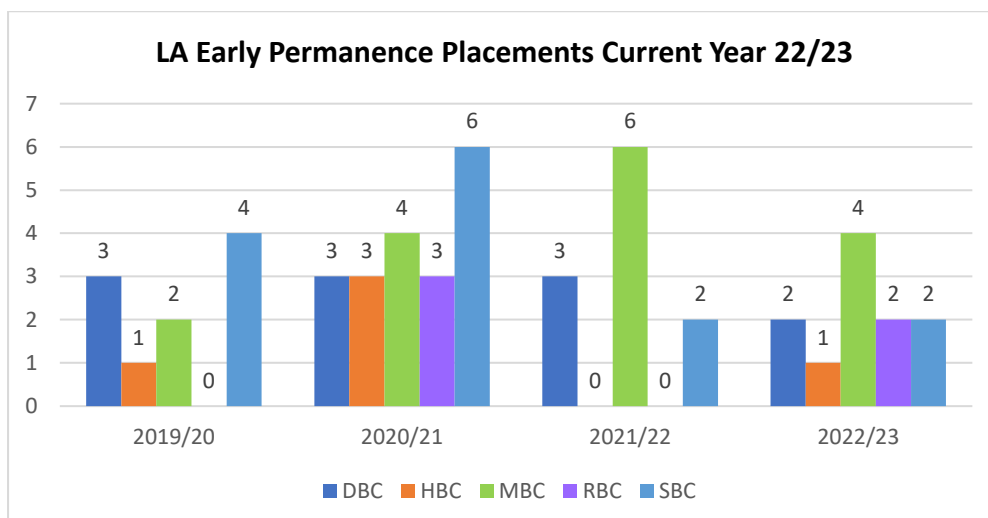
ATV sets out what early permanence means from an early stage with all people approaching the RAA to adopt. This starts with the Information Events, and is followed through initial visits, preparation training and assessments.

Learning from practice, ATV has:

- Moved to a dedicated 2 day preparation programme for all carers wishing to undertake early permanence, following the Coram BAAF EP training programme for carers. The focus is on the fostering role, and working with the wider system, and with birth parents.
- Started a support group for EP carers which is facilitated by one of the senior social workers in the team.
- Commenced wider system engagement through working with Fostering Managers and Fostering Supervising Social Workers, to increase working together. Each Fostering service has a named EP Champion who will promote knowledge and awareness of EP in the LA Fostering team.
- Continued with workforce development of LA social workers by delivering training to LA staff and managers.

- Worked across the regional Sufficiency and EP Placement Project footprint to develop more consistent practice in the North East, and to secure more availability of EP placements.
- Following learning from the National EP Conference, is now moving to attend Legal Gateway meetings in all LA's, where earlier knowledge of children during PLO enables active consideration of EP for more children.
- Has a suite of leaflets available for various parties, including birth parents.
- ATV now has experience of returning children to parents' care. It is viewed as a positive option where this is safe and right for the child, and the RAA is confident and experienced in promoting a better understanding of this with staff and EP carers.
- ATV will in 2023-24 create a dedicated EP team, to increase sufficiency of carers and promote more children having access to EP.

### 10.1 Early Permanence in Local Authorities



There have been 11 EP placements made this year. The distribution is shown across the partner Local Authorities.

11 adoptive families have been approved who can undertake EP.

The service will aim to increase the numbers of children who have access to EP and are placed through this route, and the numbers of adopters approved who can also undertake this placement type.



## **11. Adoption Support**

Adoption Support continues to be a key focus for ATV and as a national priority. We know that adopted children and their families need every bit as much consideration for support as foster carers. The child is no longer in the care system, but their needs associated with early adversity, and identity with a birth **and** adoptive family do not change because they are adopted. Adoption is a good outcome for children where no family members can provide the assurance of permanence for the duration of childhood and beyond. We know adoptive families accept, love and care for their children, and relatively few return to Local Authority care. However, many children and families need support to help them thrive and ATV continues to develop its support to adoptive parents and children, aiming to create a community of adoption, and early support for all children and families as they start their lives together.

### **Tier 1**

Support made available and provided for all adoptive families:

- Access to ATV closed Facebook group
- Monthly newsletter
- Face to face Stay and Play weekly- a facilitated support group where adoptive parents come, make friends, talk about parenting and the children play. This also enables an early help offer where more support is required.
- Loud and Clear music group, facilitated by the Sage, Gateshead. A music group encouraging relationships, bonding and fun, through the sensory world of music.
- ATV events available to all adoptive families, subject to numbers- events such as Christmas party, art days, etc... which engage children and families with ATV.
- Letterbox contact arrangements to support keeping in touch and maintaining significant relationships moving forward. Includes direct support to birth family members where needed.

In this year, 21 children and 23 parents have joined the weekly Loud and Clear music group, bringing opportunity for bonding, sensory development and building relationships between families for the future.

### **Tier 2**

Focussed groups, to support children and adoptive parents, according to needs.



These are:

- Children's Groups, ages 7-11, and 11-16. See below
- Nurturing Attachments- a therapeutic parenting training programme
- Talking about Adoption- a life story course to help parents talk about adoption as their child grows up
- Future Stars- a sensory therapeutic parenting programme for adoptive parents and children
- Non Violent Resistance- a 10 week programme for parents of children who are violent to parents/carers
- STEP group- a 6 weekly support group for adoptive parents undertaking early permanence placements, at any stage of that journey
- Education support provided by ATV dedicated Education Support Worker (ESW) . In many cases, the ESW works alongside an allocated social worker, to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to adoption support, according to the needs of the child.

#### **Partnership work with Virtual Schools**

ATV continues to work closely in partnership with the 5 LA Virtual Schools who co-fund the Education Support Worker in ATV. Additionally, VS Heads, and ATV Managers and ESW meet termly to work together to develop a comprehensive education support service developing in partnership with local and regional priorities and changes.

This year, Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland VS's have collaborated to share their virtual reality headsets with ATV, enabling prospective adoptive parents to gain this realistic and experiential insight into the early experiences of children placed for adoption.

Jo Johnson, Redcar and Cleveland Virtual School Head said:

*"It is fantastic that partners are so supportive of each other, focusing on the issues that are imperative to strengthening our offer to children and families. ATV have embraced the VR headsets, trained staff and are beginning to deliver headset sessions advocating a trauma based approach to the wider audience of our adopters, early permanence carers and the impact that this undoubtedly has upon our previously looked after cohort of children. This develops what the Virtual Schools are working on within schools and education providers across the Tees Valley."*

In this year, 15 parents have attended Nurturing Attachments to develop therapeutic parenting approaches and skills.

7 families/7 children have joined the Future Stars programme, benefiting from a therapeutic sensory programme for children.

13 families have attended the "Talking About Adoption" workshops, aimed at supporting adoptive parents to talk about adoption as their child grows up.

### Tier 3

A dedicated specialist adoption support service, with an allocated social worker from the ATV adoption support team. The adoption support assessment will have indicated a need for a specific adoption support intervention, provided through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF), or for more specialist intervention from a partner agency. ATV has expanded its work with Local Authority early help and assessment teams, to create a shared understanding of adoption support needs, and a shared responsibility for provision of advice, supports and services, including financial support packages.

The service has in this year changed the way in which adoption support assessments are responded to, with a shorter 1 hour telephone assessment within 10 days, enabling parents to feel confident there is access to support and therapy more quickly. Although delivery of therapy remains within timescale of the Adoption Support Fund (28 days application agreement process) this early response is better for adoptive parents and children and is reflected in a better response on the adopter survey – see below. The early duty response to requests for assessment involves:

- A social work response to requests for an adoption support assessment, either for a specific identified support, or a more comprehensive assessment of support needs.
- An offer of services available under tiers 1 and 2
- Therapeutic support provided by one of the commissioned therapy providers who have been agreed to join the ATV providers framework.

Currently, the gap is a more joined up approach with health services, provided via TEWV and CNTW mental health specialist services. It is planned



that this will be improved through the new partnership model for adoption support, outlined in the introduction to this report.

In this period, work has been undertaken to agree shared Adoption Support procedures across all 5 Local Authorities, and ATV. These detail the responsibilities of ATV, the local authority and how the agencies work together in respect of statutory responsibilities for assessment and provision of adoption support.

## **12. Commissioned Services**

### *12.1 Independent Birth Parent Support and Access to Adoption Records*

Adoption Tees Valley commissions independent birth parent support, and an access to adoption records service from a regional VAA.

In this year, the contract for these services was re-tendered, and was awarded to Arc Adoption, having previously been awarded to Adoption Matters.

The transitional arrangements have been supported by Stockton Procurement, as the host Authority for the RAA. The transition of the contract has been smooth and well managed, and recognition is given to both VAA's for the work that they have/are undertaking for the support of birth parents and adopted adults.

### *12.2 Framework of Therapeutic Providers*

ATV has operated a Framework of Therapeutic Providers for delivery of adoption support therapeutic services for children and families. The framework has been in operation since 2018 and has been fully retendered within this period. The funding for therapies for children is drawn down from the Adoption Support Fund.

Assessment is undertaken by the adoption support social work service as detailed above, and application is made in each case for the most appropriate therapeutic intervention based on the assessment, and in some cases, specialist assessment- also a commissioned service, through the Framework.

There are a total of 20 providers on the framework, who are awarded the contract for specific therapeutic input, as detailed within each aspect of the framework, dependent on their successful application. The providers are a mix of small and larger local and regional therapy providers, and the range of providers is valued, giving a range of options for therapy for children and families. Therapeutic approaches include: theraplay, Dyadic Developmental





Psychotherapy (DDP), play therapy, family therapy, sensory integration, therapeutic life story work.

The new multi-disciplinary adoption support service under development (MDASS) will bring the added benefit of a partnership with health, enabling more clinical oversight of assessments and of commissioned services.

### 12.3 ASF Applications

The value of applications to the ASF is set out below. A new process is in place, whereby invoices are paid once the therapy has been completed, and so actual payments are less than the value of applications.

The numbers of referrals and assessments, including cases with education support is set out below.

	2021-22	2022-23	
Number of adoption support referrals	106	126	Inc 19%
Access to Files requests/completed	40	45	Inc 12.5 %
Adoption Support Assessments completed	106 +94 repeated assessments	126 + 163 repeated assessments	Inc 19 % inc 74% repeated assessments
Successful application to ASF	200	289	Inc 44 %
Unsuccessful application to ASF	0	0	0
Value of applications to ASF	£718,302	£1,060,651	Inc £342,349
Education Support Cases during year	77	32 new	



		114 total	
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The information shows an increase in adoption support activity during the year.

ATV makes group applications to fund the Tier 2 therapeutic programmes, and the increase in Tier 2 supports accounts for some of the increase in funding applied for, and assessments.

It is planned that ATV will trial a new outcomes framework- measuring the outcomes of adoption support and therapeutic intervention during 2023-24. This is a national pilot, and a voluntary arrangement. However, ATV will be progressing to develop an outcomes framework, in line with national development moving forward.

### **13. Involving Children and Adults in ATV**

ATV has made good progress in working together with adopted children, and with adoptive parents, to help the service be shaped and informed through the voices of people with lived experience. This year has seen a resumption of groups for children, and of the adopter partnership forum, following the pandemic.

#### *13.1 Children's involvement – Childrens Groups*

There has been a full resumption and development of work with children and young people who are adopted, following the pandemic. In April 2022 ATV recommenced the children's groups, which are face to face groups led by one social worker, 2 adoption support workers, and the Education Support Worker.

There are 2 groups in place, each of which meets monthly.

There is a group for 7-11 year olds, and a group for 11-16's.

The groups have been well attended and are very valued by adopted children and their parents. Activities are collective, and promote adopted children meeting with each other, forming friendships, and getting more comfortable with their identity as adopted young people.

#### *13.2 Voice and Influence – Children and Young People*

The service has started a dedicated Voice and Influence Group, and development of this is underway within the reporting period, and into this new reporting year ( 2023-24).



The team have been supported in the development of this group through specialist training: they have learned that it's important to take time to develop the confidence of young people and seek their involvement in having a voice in service development as a separate activity to the focus of the young people's groups. With support from the National RAA project team, ATV has commenced its journey of development of our own Voice and Influence group.

There are 9 young people who have begun involvement, ranging from age 11 to 17, and the group has started to form its aims, and goals, which will include presenting to the ATV Board its ideas.

Young people have been involved in interviews for staff and have begun exploring their big issues which they feel need better understanding for adopted children, including education, and life story work.

### *13.3 Adoptive Parents- the Adopter Partnership Forum*

The Adopter Partnership Forum has recommenced following covid. A survey via the ATV newsletter was sent to adoptive parents to seek expressions of interest for the forum, and a good response was received. The forum has now reconvened, with a monthly meeting, joined by the Service Manager and one of the Team Managers. Attendance is still relatively low, however, is increasing gradually, and the group is forming ideas for involvement of more adopters, and how the voice of adoptive parents can influence the service delivery.

The forum has considered the adopter survey (see below) feedback, and some changes have been made as a result of the feedback and discussion. For example, a new matching agreement, to enable newly approved adoptive parents to tell the service how they want to be kept informed of potential matches.

The ATV Board has decided that the Adopter Forum will be asked to select the next ATV Non-Executive Director for the ATV Board. This has been discussed and will be progressed in the next 3 month period.

A further benefit of the Forum is that one adoptive parent has been able to generate positive links with the Tees Valley museums, who are now considering ways in which adoption and adopted people can be given support through the Museums network.

ATV Board continues to hold 2 Non-Executive Director seats for Adoptive parents in the ATV community. Currently, Pete Kirby Bowstead holds one position. Pete is also a headteacher in a primary school in the region and has been a voice and support of adoptive parents in Tees Valley. Pippa Turner



has decided to step down from her position as NED after 3 years on the board. ATV is grateful to Pippa for her contribution on behalf of adoptive parents.

#### 13.4 Adopter Survey

An adopter survey was undertaken with adoptive parents, circulated through the ATV mailing list. There were 44 respondents- all adoptive parents at different stages of their journey.

The survey mirrored a previous adopter survey undertaken at the end of 2021, and much of the feedback is encouraging.

87% were satisfied or very satisfied with ATV response to their initial enquiry.

87% were satisfied or very satisfied with the adoption process through ATV.

88% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their preparation training.

81% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the linking and matching process.

90% were satisfied or highly satisfied with the plan of introductions to their child.

72 % were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the adoption support provided in the last 18 months, and 79% were satisfied or extremely satisfied that adoption support was offered in a timely manner. This is a huge and positive development with this figure being much lower at the last survey. As detailed above, ATV has restructured how adoption support initial contacts and assessments are undertaken, and the improved adopter satisfaction is encouraging.

Similarly, the survey tells us that many adopters are aware of the Adoption Support Fund, that they find the CATCH on line training platform valuable, and that they value the monthly ATV newsletter.

*Where do we need to pay most attention?*

58 % were satisfied or very satisfied with the education support offered, which appears lower than expected. We believe this may reflect some families who have not needed or taken this up, and therefore are not providing a positive response.

29% of those replying said that they experienced some mental health problems, sadness and/or depression following the child joining their family.



Taking these issues forward, all of the areas for reflection and improvement are tabled for discussion, or have been discussed with the adopter forum, and have been included in the ATV 2023-25 Service Plan.

#### **14. Adoption Panel**

Within this year ATV Board has agreed additional funding for a 3 day per week Panel Manager and Agency Advisor to the adoption panel. This has enabled improved performance, quality assurance and consistency in relation to all panel matters and has brought a dedicated focus to panel from one single panel manager. This has brought an improved quality assurance feedback process, with Local Authorities and ATV receiving evidence based quality feedback in a more focussed way. The Panel Manager has provided training on key aspects of adoption panel related work, including production of quality Child Permanence Reports (CPR's).

Panel Business meetings with panel chairs and the Agency Service Manager, who is also ADM for adopter approvals have continued, and are now convened by the Panel Manager. These are supported by 6 weekly business meetings between the Panel manager, Chair, and vice Chairs. The panel now has an improved QA function in relation to feedback forms for applicants, attending social workers, and panel members, and feedback is acted on.

The panel members have all undertaken annual appraisal, using a new more efficient and effective 360 approach, which has been positively welcomed. Panel members have undertaken training on a number of key aspects of adoption related business including early permanence. Panel chairs, vice chairs and the panel manager have undertaken training on Cultural humilities, and a session for all panel members is planned.

The panel chairs 6 monthly reports have been produced and presented to the ATV Board. This details in full the work of panel, including timescales, and quality issues and themes.

In this year, there have been:

- 56 adoption panels convened.
- 71 matches presented, including 79 children.
- 9 cases presented where the child was already placed in an early permanence placement.
- 1 consensual adoption case (previously known as relinquished)
- 55 approvals presented.
- 1 brief report presented.



Panels have remained largely virtual in this year. A survey has been undertaken with all parties to seek views on the question of virtual or face to face panel meetings. The feedback received indicated that a significant minority would value some opportunity for face to face panels again. This has been incorporated into a new plan, with one face to face panel per month, which any applicant who wishes for it can ask to be booked on to.

The agency continues to seek to increase diversity into the Central List, and this year a new panel member who is a young adult with lived experience of being adopted has joined. There are now more male members of panel also. The agency continues to strive to find more panel members from ethnic minority communities, with the aim of having at least one non white panel member wherever a child or family from a minority ethnic background is presented. We have heard nationally from black adoptive parents who feel very disempowered when an all-white panel hears their case, and ATV is placing a priority on this issue. Currently there are 2 black central list members, however, the service is currently seeking to increase this number.

Feedback from panel:

- Quality of matching documentation good
- Child's trauma timeline is appearing in most matching documentation
- Number of children having life appreciation days is increasing
- Quality of CPR's is improving
- The need for continual workforce training in LA's is noted
- PARs are generally good quality.

As part of their role, all 5 Local Authority ADM's have now observed the adoption panel, to be assured of the practice and approach of the RAA adoption panel. Feedback from ADM's has been positive.

The ATV Board has considered the full Panel Chairs report.

### **15. Staffing**

As noted above, the service has appointed a 0.6 FTE Panel manager and Agency Advisor, which is a new post. 2 further social workers (2FTE) have been agreed and are now in post.

The service has 18.85 FTE Social Workers, which includes 12.85 in recruitment, assessment and Family Finding and 5 in Adoption Support. 1 FTE is dedicated to partner adoption assessments.

Within the current year, the service will be undergoing a temporary change in structure, for succession planning for the future. The current Service Manager will be reducing to 3 days per week, a new temporary post of



Deputy Service Manager has been created, which is now recruited to, and the service has moved from 2 Team managers, and 2 Assistant Team managers, to a 3 Team manager structure. All appointments are temporary secondments and have been internal.

This will be further reported on in the Bi Annual report, 2023-24.

Overall staff retention remains good. In this year, 1 permanent part time business support staff member retired. This post has been filled by the apprentice, who was successful in gaining a position.

### **16. Quality Assurance**

ATV operates from a position of continuous improvement, across all areas of the work. The service continually develops and seeks to improve through alignment with wider sector influences, changes, and developments; its own feedback mechanisms; audit; research; inspection; self-assessment.

Quality assurance is carried out through a variety of mechanisms. Key means of assuring quality are outlined below, and the service plan 2023-25 is underpinned by a cross cutting platform of continuous improvement and quality assurance.

The ATV Board has a role in being assured of quality of the service delivery, and a risk register is in place around key areas of risk for delivery, and/or quality concerns.

- *Service Plan*

There is an updated service plan, which has been developed through work with managers and staff, and is reflective of local development, and the national strategy and agenda on adoption. This plan will be updated quarterly and presented to the ATV Board with monitoring of progress against target measures, and outcomes.

- *Practice Model*

The service adopts elements of several key practice models in delivery of the adoption service.

The **Secure Base Model** (Schofield and Beek) is an operational model of attachment for children placed with alternative care givers and is used in preparation training and in assessment of adopters, and adoption support.

The **UEA Moving on to Adoption** is adopted in practice in many cases and is adapted dependent on the needs of the child, and family.





As detailed above, the service has adopted the **Trauma Timeline**, and is promoting trauma informed practice, within the RAA's own work, and across partner agencies.

Aspects of **Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and Practice (DDP)** ( Dan Hughes) are supported through the service delivery, including PACE parenting.

The Education Support worker is trained in the **Thrive** approach and adopts this within work with families and across schools.

ATV adopts a relational based approach throughout its work, both with families and children, and with staff in the service.

- *Performance Monitoring*

The RAA collates detailed adoption performance data, as required by the (former) ASGLB for quarterly returns. ATV has a key role in co-ordinating with partner LAs on adoption performance data. A quarterly balanced scorecard (BSC) is produced, which details performance measures, as set out within this annual report. There is a quarterly meeting with each Local Authority adoption service lead, to review each individual LA performance, key practice themes, and also for the LA to be assured about the adoption service. The BSC is presented quarterly to the ATV Board.

- *Panel*

Panel forms a key QA function for the work of ATV and partner agencies. In this year a separate Panel Quality Assurance Action plan has been developed, which is shared and reviewed by the Panel manager, Service Manager, and panel chairs.

- *Surveys and Feedback*

An adopter survey has been undertaken, as reported on above. Changes have been made as a result of feedback and will continue to be made.

Children and Young people have fed back on the groups that have been run. The voice and Influence group will have a role in seeking children and young people's views more widely.

- *Policies*

ATV policies are in a process of review. These are being reviewed to ensure that they reflect current and most up to date practice and expectations. The Adoption Support procedure has been implemented to reflect the shared responsibilities across all 5 agencies with respect to assessment and support of adoptive children and their families.





Policies will be available on the ATV website.

- *Supervision*

All staff receive monthly supervision in ATV, which includes reflective practice.

All staff have an annual appraisal which sets out their further personal development plan for the year ahead, aligned to their own career and role, and service planning.

- *Workforce development*

The service offers and supports workforce development, aligned to service and sector development, and learning needs of staff. Workforce development may be through attending a training event, shadowing, or through group reflective sessions.

Examples within this year are:

- Early permanence training- national
- Whole team reflection on the LJC Safeguarding review.
- ADM training day facilitated by RAA leaders/Coram BAAF.
- National Adoption Support Conference, focussing on trauma informed practice.
- Team day -developing trauma informed practice and the trauma timeline.

3 managers are currently undertaking level 5 management qualification. This will strengthen the management capacity in ATV and support overall succession planning.

- *Audit*

Audits have been regularly carried out with staff involved in individual cases. The audit process has been LA specific in this year, due to a number of partner LA's undergoing full ILACS inspections by Ofsted. The ATV Board has had one overview report presented, following audits within the service. A further overview report is planned.

Audit has helped the service reflect on quality of case records and ensuring that records reflect what an adopted person may need in the future. It has also informed practice standards and implementing these within the team.

- *Ofsted*

4 of the 5 partner LA's have been inspected by Ofsted, which includes inspection of the RAA- Adoption Tees Valley, through the lens of the Local



Authority. These are- Redcar and Cleveland; Darlington; Stockton; Middlesbrough.

While a lot of preparation goes into being ready for each Ofsted inspection, reports only include a single short paragraph on the Adoption Agency. In each Ofsted inspection, the report on ATV was positive, with strengths being the experience of adoptive parents, timeliness of adoption, and the adoption panel.

Ofsted is planning for inspection of RAA's as a single inspection in 2023-25.

### **17. 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.

#### *17.1 General Running Costs*

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Budget 2022/23</b>	<b>Outturn 2022/23</b>	<b>Variance 2022/23</b>
Employees	1,640,000	1,596,000	(44,000)
Running Costs	244,000	377,000	116,000
Support Service Costs	113,000	114,000	1,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1,997,000</b>	<b>2,087,000</b>	<b>73,000</b>
Interagency Fees	500,000	652,000	152,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,497,000</b>	<b>2,739,000</b>	<b>225,000</b>

Employee costs underspent due to delays filling vacant posts in year and savings in staff mileage.

Running costs overspent due to additional utility costs of premises and additional adoption support and post adoption costs.

Excluding interagency fees, additional contributions from each Local Authority are:

	<b>New % contributions</b>	<b>Additional 22/23</b>
Darlington	14.6%	11,000
Hartlepool	14.9%	11,000
Middlesbrough	28.1%	20,000
Redcar & Cleveland	15.5%	11,000
Stockton	26.9%	20,000
		<b>73,000</b>



### 17.2 Interagency Fees

Interagency fees exceeded the budget figure by £152,000. Additional contributions from each Local Authority are as follows as follows:

	Percentage	Budget 22/23	Actual 22/23	Additional 22/23
Darlington	15.95%	80,000	104,000	24,000
Hartlepool	14.22%	71,000	93,000	22,000
Middlesbrough	27.16%	136,000	177,000	41,000
Redcar & Cleveland	15.95%	80,000	104,000	24,000
Stockton	26.72%	133,000	174,000	41,000
	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>500,000</b>	<b>652,000</b>	<b>152,000</b>

### 18. Service Development Plan

The service developments planned at the end of 2021-22 were:

Development Planned	Progress	Forward Plan
Strengthening voice and involvement of adopted children in ATV	Positive progress- V&I group in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to develop the group, with dedicated staff to support</li> </ul>
Strengthening preparation and assessment of adopters, to support more adopters taking more children with additional needs	Preparation strengthened through the Trauma Timeline – trauma Informed Practice, and addition of virtual reality headsets. Challenges remain in ATV adopters providing sufficiency for children with additional needs	Strengthening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopters waiting group.</li> <li>Ongoing training and support to adopters waiting.</li> <li>Clear information on profile of children from the outset of the adopter journey</li> </ul>
Strengthening sufficiency of adopters, through increased marketing	More adopters approved in 2022-23.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to focus marketing on the needs of children ATV needs to find families for</li> </ul>
Taking early permanence strategy to the next stage – phase 2	Pan regional Project-funded for 2 years in place. 2 ATV social workers dedicated to EP lead roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicated recruitment plan for EP carers- Autumn 2023</li> <li>Full range of information for all</li> </ul>

	Work ongoing with fostering services LFJB discussions on EP	<p>stakeholders about EP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LFJB development session on adoption to include EP</li> <li>• Target increase of 20% EP carers, and 20% more children accessing EP</li> <li>• Attendance at legal gateway- all LA's, to jointly plan for early permanence</li> </ul>
Strengthen partnership working, including with early help, to strengthen support to adopters when they need it.	<p>New model of assessment has significantly reduced waiting times.</p> <p>Ongoing work with early help/CHUBs across TV to strengthen understanding of adoptive families, and challenges.</p> <p>MDASS team is in progress for more multi-disciplinary adoption support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider multi-agency representation on ATV Board</li> <li>• Develop shared approach of ATV involvement with any child referred to LA CHUB, to prevent child/YP prematurely leaving the family home/return to care.</li> </ul>
Continuing to address life story book model.	Now with LA SW's LA's are responding to any LSB's identified as not being completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor for completion of LSB's and liaise where not provided to plan for completion</li> </ul>
Continuing to address timescales for adoption support assessments	New model embedded, and survey indicates more satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New staff to be trained in early response, and assessment</li> </ul>
Taking forward Panel improvements to maintain a streamlined approach to panel, and quality CPR's	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversify membership of Panel</li> <li>• Quality feedback to individual LA's.</li> </ul>
Continue to develop a focus on children's diversity needs, and welcoming/increasing prospective adopters	More adopters have been recruited. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds are placed with ethnically and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed a dedicated focus on ATV approach to valuing and strengthening</li> </ul>



from ethnic minority backgrounds	culturally matched adopters.	diversity including access to adopting for adults and understanding children's racial, religious, cultural and ethnicity needs for the future, and in matching
<b>2023-25 – Key new Developments Planned</b>		
Planned Development		Target timescale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restructure for future resilience in adoption activity, and for succession planning.</li> </ul>		September 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a dedicated EP team.</li> <li>ATV attendance at Legal Gateway - more children identified for potential EP, reducing moves for children, and releasing pressure on fostering resources.</li> <li>Recruit more carers for EP</li> </ul>		October 2023 – March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase sufficiency of adopters, able to take ATV children, including siblings and children who have more complex health and development needs.</li> </ul>		April 2023-March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen adopters' family and friendship network support</li> </ul>		By December 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to early medical assessments for adoption for children, and for adult health reports by appointment of dedicated adult health Medical Advisor</li> </ul>		By October 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce development across Tees Valley on adoption, early permanence, and CPR</li> </ul>		By December 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement and test new outcomes framework in adoption support</li> </ul>		By March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on developing post adoption direct and indirect contact plans to maintain relationships, and promote life long identity and connections</li> </ul>		By March 2024

Vicky Davidson Boyd

Service Manager Adoption Tees Valley

July 2023



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 SEPTEMBER 2023



**Subject:** STAYING CLOSE  
**Report of:** Executive Director, Children and Joint Commissioning Services  
**Decision Type:** For information

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## 1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

<b>Hartlepool will be a place:</b>
- Where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- Where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.
- Of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To provide members of Children's Services Committee with information regarding the successful bid to deliver Staying Close for young people leaving our care.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Staying Close is a model which provides an enhanced support package for young people leaving care from children's homes and is designed to be a comparable offer to the option to Stay Put, which supports young people in foster care to remain with their former foster carers until age 21. Staying Close provides an offer of move-on accommodation, alongside a package of practical and emotional support, provided by a member of staff from their former children's home or from someone who they know and trust. These

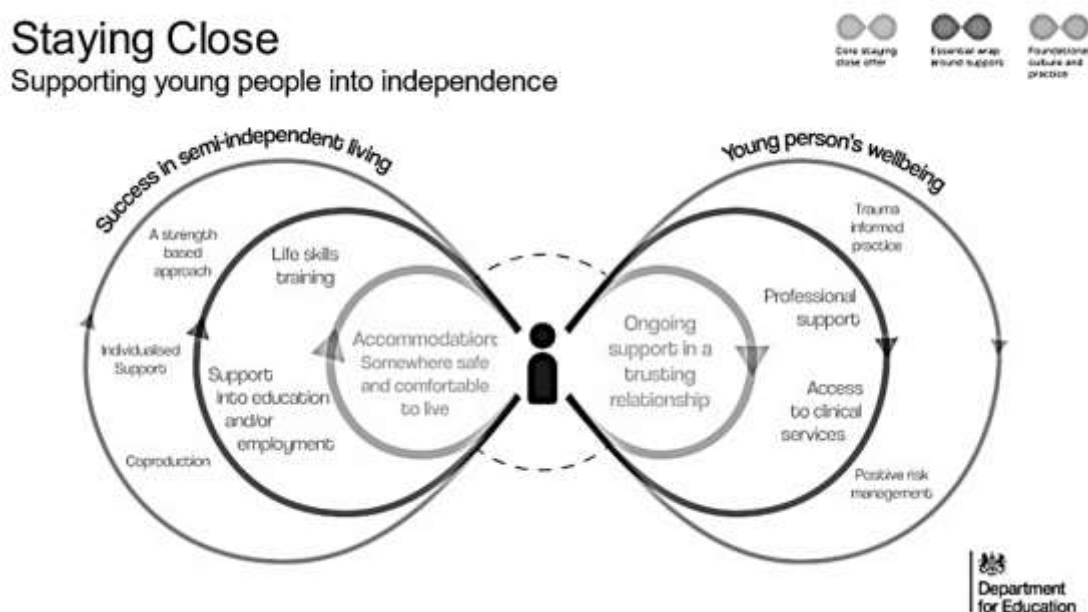
packages of support help develop their confidence and skills for independent living, and for their emotional health and wellbeing.

3.2 Since 2017/18, the Government has been piloting Staying Close programmes and gradually increasing the number of local authorities included in the pilot. Each Staying Close offer should deliver the following benefits for young people leaving care from children's homes:

- Accommodation stability – including access to improved housing options, reduced rates of evictions and fewer placement moves;
- Wellbeing – positive changes in both mental and physical health and reductions in antisocial behaviour, episodes of going missing and criminal activity for young people at risk of these behaviours;
- Education, Employment and Training (EET) – increasing numbers of young people in EET, including through support gaining work experience, with application forms and advice and guidance;
- Strong relationships and support network – an increase in social connectedness and developing healthy relationships; and
- Independent living skills – including improvements in cooking, budgeting, time management and practical skills.

3.3 The Department for Education developed a Staying Close Framework as illustrated by the figure below. The diagram puts a trusting relationship and safe and secure accommodation at the core of a Staying Close offer and should be the minimum offer of support to care leavers. All local authorities participating in the pilot are expected to utilise this framework to support a local adaptation of Staying Close for their young people leaving care.

Figure 1. Staying Close – Supporting young people into independence





#### 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 Hartlepool Borough Council bid to join the Staying Close pilot and was notified in May 2023 that this bid had been successful. Since this time, officers have attended several webinars regarding the programme with the Department for Education and confirmed agreement to the conditions of the grant funding.
- 4.2 The Hartlepool Staying Close offer will reach 25 care leavers in 2023/24 (the whole cohort of young people who fall within the scope of the programme) and a further 10 young people will join this group in 2024/25 making a total cohort of 35.
- 4.3 The Hartlepool Staying Close model will consist of the following components, the details of which are currently being co-produced with our Staying Close cohort:
- A place to call home and developing life skills – to have the right homes in the right places for care leavers with pathways and smooth transitions plans for moving on. There will be a strengthened Housing offer through the development of a 'taster flat' where we can deliver intensive life skills training to care leavers, including amongst other things, budgeting, cleaning, cooking and being a good neighbour. Young people will be supported by a dedicated staying close team working with young people in residential care and through their transition to independence journey. The Staying Close team would be made up of workers with a variety of skills and experience.
  - Building trusting relationships and tackling loneliness – Care leavers tell us their greatest need is support with their emotional and mental health and wellbeing as they leave care. We will enhance the existing core offer through specialist help and support for care leavers, including employing a dedicated psychologist to deliver trauma informed interventions and support addressing the impact of trauma and managing conflict and unpredictable situations.
  - Learning and working – In addition to the existing offer, there will be a wider range of entry to work learning opportunities, including, but not limited to, working with anchor organisations in the town to deliver internships, work experience, mentoring and volunteering opportunities to secure experiences across a range of employers and develop essential skills for the world of work. A dedicated employability worker will create opportunities and oversee an employability programme. In addition commissioning of a Life Coach will support young people to develop coping strategies and skills to improve their careers, relationships, and day to day lives including taking and managing positive risks.
- 4.4 A Programme Manager is currently being recruited to lead the delivery of the programme in Hartlepool and work is underway to develop a delivery plan. It is anticipated that the programme will start in earnest in September 2023.

## 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	As part of the bid to the Department for Education, a risk assessment and mitigation plan was developed and this was approved. The opportunity to deliver the programme offers significant benefit for care leavers. The funding is for a two year programme and no indication that further funding will be available which creates risk that the model implemented will not be able to be sustained beyond the funding availability.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	A Department for Education Section 31 Local Government Act 2003 grant of £1,270,989 has been received to deliver the programme until March 2025. Hartlepool Borough Council will be required to comply with the conditions of the grant in delivering this programme.
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	Hartlepool Borough Council has a responsibility to provide support and services to care leavers under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and this programme is compliant with the legislation.
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	Care leavers are an identified group vulnerable to child and family poverty. A poverty impact assessment is attached at <b>Appendix 1</b> to this report.
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	An equality and diversity impact assessment is attached to this report at <b>Appendix 2</b> . Care leavers are identified by HBC as having protected characteristics.
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Care leavers will be engaged in the co-production of the delivery plan that underpins the Staying Close Programme in Hartlepool.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members of Children's Services Committee are asked to note the participation of Hartlepool Borough Council in the DfE Staying Close Programme and the strengthened support and services this will provide for those leaving residential care and supported accommodation.

**7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The provision of care, support and services to children in our care and care leavers in Hartlepool falls within the responsibilities of Children's Services Committee.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 None

**9. CONTACT OFFICERS**

Sally Robinson  
Executive Director, Children and Joint Commissioning Services  
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01429 523910

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 30 August 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 16 August 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 16 August 2023

**1. Is this decision a Budget & Policy Framework or Key Decision? No**

If YES please answer question 2 below

**2. Will there be an impact of the decision requested in respect of Child and Family Poverty? YES**

If YES please complete the matrix below

GROUP	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT	NO IMPACT	REASON & EVIDENCE
Young working people aged 18 - 21	Yes			The Staying Close Programme invests in the support and services provided to those young people who are care experienced and are leaving residential care and supported accommodation. This group is vulnerable to poorer outcomes when compared to their peers who have not been in the care of the local authority. The delivery of this programme to this cohort of young people will increase their life chances and reduce the likelihood of them experiencing poverty.
Those who are disabled or suffer from illness / mental illness	Yes			
Those with low educational attainment	Yes			
Those who are unemployed	Yes			
Those who are underemployed	Yes			
Children born into families in poverty	Yes			
Those who find difficulty in managing their finances	Yes			
Lone parents	Yes			
Those from minority ethnic backgrounds	Yes			

**Poverty is measured in different ways. Will the policy / decision have an impact on child and family poverty and in what way?**

Participation in the programme will enhance the life chances of care experienced young people leaving residential care and supported accommodation.

Poverty Measure (examples of poverty measures appended overleaf)	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT	NO IMPACT	REASON & EVIDENCE
Care experienced young people aged 18 plus.	Yes			The Staying Close Programme invests in the support and services provided to those young people who are care experienced and are leaving residential care and supported accommodation. This group is vulnerable to poorer outcomes when compared to their peers who have not been in the care of the local authority. The delivery of this programme to this cohort of young people will increase their life chances and reduce the likelihood of them experiencing poverty.
Overall impact of Policy / Decision				
POSITIVE IMPACT	X	ADJUST / CHANGE POLICY / SERVICE		
NO IMPACT / NO CHANGE		STOP / REMOVE POLICY / SERVICE		
ADVERSE IMPACT BUT CONTINUE				
Examples of Indicators that impact of Child and Family Poverty.				
Economic				
Children in Low Income Families (%)				
Children in Working Households (%)				
Overall employment rate (%)				
Proportion of young people who are NEET				
Adults with Learning difficulties in employment				
Education				
Free School meals attainment gap (key stage 2 and key stage 4)				

Gap in progression to higher education FSM / Non FSM
Achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils (key stage 2 and key stage 4)
<b>Housing</b>
Average time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council tax benefit claims
Number of affordable homes built
<b>Health</b>
Prevalence of underweight children in reception year
Prevalence of obese children in reception year
Prevalence of underweight children in year 6
Prevalence of obese children in reception year 6
Life expectancy

## Equality Impact Assessment Form

Department	Division	Section	Owner/Officer
Children and Joint Commissioning Services	Children and Families	Social care	Sally Robinson
Service, policy, practice being reviewed/changed or planned	Implementation of Staying Close offer for Care Leavers		
Why are you making the change?	Grant funding from Department for Education to implement Staying Close pilot.		
How might this impact (positively/negatively) on people who share protected characteristics?			
		<i>Please tick</i>	
		<b>POSITIVELY</b>	<b>NEGATIVELY</b>
<b>Age</b>		<b>X</b>	
<i>Young people leaving care will benefit from the additional support provided by the programme</i>			
<b>Disability</b>		<b>X</b>	
<i>Young people leaving care including those with SEND will benefit from the additional support provided by the programme</i>			
<b>Gender Re-assignment</b>		<b>X</b>	
<i>Young people leaving care will benefit from the additional support provided by the programme</i>			
<b>Race</b>		<b>X</b>	
<i>Young people leaving care including those from minority ethnic communities and those who were unaccompanied asylum seeking children will benefit from the additional support provided by the programme</i>			
<b>Religion</b>		<b>X</b>	
<i>Young people leaving care will benefit from the additional support provided by the programme</i>			
<b>Gender</b>			
<i>Young people leaving care will benefit from the additional support provided by the programme</i>			
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>			
<i>Young people leaving care will benefit from the additional support provided by the programme</i>			
<b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b>			
<i>Young people leaving care will benefit from the additional support provided by the programme</i>			
<b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b>			
<i>Young people leaving care will benefit from the additional support provided by the programme</i>			

## 7.2 APPENDIX 2

<p><b>Has there been consultation /is consultation planned with people who will be affected by this policy? How has this affected your decision making?</b></p>		<p>In the development of the bid to department for Education and the delivery plan to implement the programme, consultation has taken place with care leavers to co-produce the programme offer. This will mean that the roll out of the programme will be shaped by those who will receive it.</p>	
<p><b>As a result of your decision how can you mitigate negative/maximise positive outcomes and foster good relationships?</b></p>		<p>The programme maximises positive impact for vulnerable young people leaving care whom the council has recently recognised as having protected characteristics.</p>	
<p><b>Describe how you will address and monitor the impact</b></p>		<p><b>1. No Impact - No Major Change</b> <i>Please Detail</i></p>	
		<p><b>2. Adjust/Change Policy</b> <i>Programme will be rolled out and impact evaluated</i></p>	
		<p><b>3. Adverse Impact but Continue as is</b> <i>Please Detail</i></p>	
		<p><b>4. Stop/Remove Policy/Proposal</b> <i>Please Detail</i></p>	
Initial Assessment	00/00/00	Reviewed	00/00/00
Completed	00/00/00	Published	00/00/00