

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

AGENDA



Thursday 14 March 2024

at 4.00 pm

**in Committee Room B,
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 date 23 January 2024 (*previously circulated and published*).

4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS

None.

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.

5. KEY DECISIONS

- 5.1 Schools Capital Works Programme 2024-25 – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 5.2 Dedicated Schools Grant – Early Year's Block 2024/25 – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Finance, IT and Digital*
- 5.3 Dedicated Schools Grant – High Need Block 2024-25 – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Finance, IT and Digital*

6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

None.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 7.1 School Attendance and Absence – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – to be confirmed



CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

14 MARCH 2024



Subject: SCHOOLS' CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2024-25

Report of: Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning

Decision Type: Key CJCS 142/23

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- 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 seek approval to the 2024/25 Schools' Capital Works Programme, as detailed in confidential **APPENDIX A**, in order to progress the design and detailed costing exercise in time for the majority of projects to be carried out during the summer holiday period. **This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Each Spring term, the Department for Education (DfE) announces capital funding allocations, these being School Condition Allocations (SCA) – formerly known as Capital Maintenance and Devolved Formula Capital (DFC), for the school estate in Hartlepool.
- 3.2 At the time of writing this report, capital funding allocations had not been communicated to the LA. The DfE have previously stated that SCA

allocations for a current year would be indicative of the funding that responsible bodies will receive in future years and further stated that SCA will be revised annually to reflect any schools moving to a different responsible body e.g. converting to academy status, opening or closing. One school has very recently converted to academy status (1 March 2024), however, it is not expected that this conversion will affect the funding allocation.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The proposed programme of school condition works has been compiled on the basis of those areas/sections of school buildings which are showing clear signs of failure and those aspects which will prevent possible loss of school days due to emergency school closures.

5. FUNDING

- 5.1 School Condition Allocation is a grant to the LA for all maintained community schools and is aimed at addressing condition needs in existing school premises, but does not include academies who receive funding from a Condition Improvement Fund, direct from the Education & Skills Funding Agency.
- 5.2 Devolved Formula Capital is a relatively limited capital allocation made directly to schools via the LA to support small scale projects and ICT development. Schools often use this allocation to fund their 10% contributions to larger capital schemes
- 5.3 This report is seeking approval for the schemes proposed in confidential **APPENDIX A** and will be funded from all available funding. Schools are also expected to contribute a minimum of 10% towards the condition schemes.
- 5.4 Detailed in Table 1 below is the total funding available for works. Table 2 details the total costs of schemes proposed, the contingency sum for 2024/25 and the total funding required. Members are asked to approve the works and contingency sum totalling £1,175,000. The programme will be carefully managed to ensure there is no risk of overspending the funding available.

Table 1

24/25 SCA Funding*	613,992
24/25 Change of Use	370,000
23/24 Unallocated	57,415
23/24 Unused Contingency	45,765
10% School contributions	107,500
Total Available	1,194,672

*anticipated allocation

Table 2

Condition schemes	1,075,000
Contingency	100,000
Total Required	1,175,000

6. CONTINGENCY

- 6.1 As in previous years, the overall programme recommended to Committee for approval includes a separate contingency fund which has been allocated from the SCA. This will continue to ensure that urgent but unforeseen items can be addressed, should the need arise.
- 6.2 Other than in response to an emergency situation, there will be no significant variation to the programme of works as detailed in confidential **APPENDIX A**.
- 6.3 Within the 2023/24 programme there was a contingency sum of £90,000. Two projects were carried out and the remaining has been brought forward to 2024/25.

7. PROCUREMENT

- 7.1 All works of a non-specialist nature will be offered to the in-house Construction Team. If they decline, then the works will be externally procured in accordance with the Council's procurement rules.
- 7.2 All in-house work that utilises subcontractors and suppliers or work of a specialist nature will be procured in accordance with the Council's procurement rules

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	The proposed programme of school condition works has been compiled on the basis of those areas/sections of school buildings which are showing clear signs of failure and those aspects which will prevent possible loss of school days due to emergency school closures.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	If the schemes detailed in the attached confidential APPENDIX A are approved, funding can be met from the 2024/25 Schools Condition Allocation and current unallocated capital funding.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	There are no legal considerations
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	There are none

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	There are none
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	There are none
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	The report is concerned with the condition, protection and development of Council assets i.e. school buildings.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	There are none
CONSULTATION	A draft list of condition priorities detailed in confidential APPENDIX A were noted at Schools Capital Sub Group meeting of the 25 th January 2024.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members are recommended to:

- a) Approve the schedule of 2024/25 capital works programme as summarised in confidential **APPENDIX A**, subject to the LA agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum;

These items contain exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

- b) Allow the Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services, in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, dispensation and discretion to authorise works where an emergency (eg risk of school closure) or a significant health and safety risk is exposed;
- c) Allow the Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services, in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, dispensation and discretion to add or remove a project(s) as a result of an increase or decrease in the 2024/25 SCA funding allocation;

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure schools are safe and operational and to enable the majority of works to be carried out during the summer holiday period.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 There are no background papers.

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

Amanda Whitehead
Children's & Joint Commissioning Services
Email: amanda.whitehead@hartlepool.gov.uk
Telephone: 01429 523736

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 22 February 2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 22 February 2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 22 February 2024

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

14 MARCH 2024



Subject: DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT –
EARLY YEAR'S BLOCK 2024/25

Report of: Executive Director of Children's and Joint
Commissioning Services and Director of Finance, IT
and Digital

Decision Type: Key Decision – CJCS 143/23 tests (i) and (ii) applies

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- 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.
- with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To present the indicative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding allocation for Early Years Funding in 2024/25 and propose the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) that sets hourly rates for providers for 2024/25.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The 'Early Years Block' (EYB) is issued to local authorities specifically for the delivery of the early year's offer. Funding and associated entitlements are expanding significantly in 2024/25, with the introduction of 2 year old

entitlements for working parents from 1 April 2024 and new entitlements for children aged from 9 months to 2 years from 1 September 2024.

- 3.2 As this is a year of significant change, this brings a greater level of uncertainty to budget planning for the local authority. As such, careful consideration of proposed hourly rates for providers is required, along with an appropriate amount that should be centrally retained to fund the effective management of expanded entitlements by the authority.
- 3.3 Local authorities are required to consult providers on proposed annual changes to local early year's funding formulas, although the final decision rests with the local authority. Consultation with providers was open between the 2 January and 16 January 2024.
- 3.4 Schools' Forum received the results of provider consultation and gave their own feedback on the hourly rate proposals at their meeting on 15 February 2024.
- 3.5 The Council has consulted on proposed hourly rates for the following provisions in 2024/25:
- 3 to 4 year old provision;
 - A combined rate for 2 year old provision – available to both eligible disadvantaged pupils and the new working parent entitlement;
 - A 9 months to 2 year old provision (effective from 1 September 2024).

4. 2024/25 EARLY YEAR'S BLOCK FUNDING

- 4.1 The table below provides the provisional early year's funding for Hartlepool provision in 2024/25. Funding for the new entitlements is on the basis of estimated take-up. These estimates have been completed by DfE (Department for Education). Owing to the uncertain nature of the estimates, DfE have introduced additional census points for the new entitlements during 2024/25 so that the estimates can be adjusted based on actual take-up.

Early Years Block 2024/25	Indicative Funding
	£
3 to 4 Year Olds – Universal	4,204,563
3 to 4 Year Olds – Additional	1,322,439
3 to 4 Year Olds – Pupil Premium	194,099
3 to 4 Year Olds – Disability Access Fund	83,720
2 Year Olds – Disadvantaged	1,752,355
2 Year Olds – Working Parents	1,150,485
2 Year Olds – Pupil Premium	114,843
2 Year Olds – Disability Access Fund	21,840
Under 2 Year Olds	940,555
Under 2 Year Olds – Pupil Premium	6,785
Under 2 Year Olds – Disability Access Fund	5,460
Total Indicative Funding 2024/25	9,797,144

- 4.2 Alongside the expansion of entitlement in 2024/25, DfE has introduced changes to the structure of hourly rate payments to providers. Local Authorities must take the funded hourly rates (Hartlepool rates shown in the table at section 4.1) and decide how the hourly rate should be split and used.
- 4.3 Local authorities need to consider the following in proposing an hourly rate structure for each provision:
- At least 95% of the funded hourly rate must be passed to providers. This will move to a minimum of 97% once the expanded entitlements are embedded. There is no agreed date for this as yet;
 - The level of funding needed to effectively administer and manage the expanded early year's offer by the Council. This can be up to 5% of the hourly rate in 2024/25;
 - An appropriate level of contingency in case payments to providers during the year exceed census funding levels. [It must be noted that we have historically made payments to providers for 2 year old placements where, owing to census numbers, sufficient funding has not been received to cover payments, resulting in a deficit position];
 - A Special Educational Needs (SEN) Inclusion fund to support individual children with low level and emerging needs;
 - Additional financial support for those children living with a greater level of deprivation.
- 4.4 The local authority can choose whether to introduce a single rate that covers all 2 year old provision – whether provision relates to existing disadvantaged children or to new 2 year olds of working parents or two different rates for the two categories of children. A single rate is proposed under the Hartlepool formula for 2024/25 to avoid the unnecessary complexity that separate hourly rates would add.
- 4.5 In 2023/24, DfE added funding for Teacher pay and pension increases into the 3 to 4 year old hourly rate. This was previously a separate grant paid to schools and academies. This amount is currently managed as a supplement in the hourly rate formula for Hartlepool.
- 4.6 Additional funding is being provided by DfE in 2024/25 to help support the Teacher's pay award from September 2023, along with employer pension contribution increases. Local Authorities can choose whether to add this new funding to the existing Teacher's Pay Supplement (to benefit those settings with a qualified teacher only), or to add it to the base rate (to benefit all providers of 3-4 year old provision).

5. PROPOSALS / OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

5.1 This section includes proposals for hourly rate splits for each type of provision in 2024/25:

- 3 to 4 year old provision;
- A combined rate for 2 year old provision – available to both eligible disadvantaged pupils and the new working parent entitlement;
- A 9 months to 2 year old provision (effective from 1 September 2024).

5.2 Key principles within the proposed hourly rate splits are:

- In order to provide adequate funding to the local authority for administration and management of the extended offer, the Council proposes to retain 4% of hourly rate funding across all types of provision, in previous years the Council has requested a 5% retention;
- A supplement for deprivation should be included against 3 to 4 year old provision only, where this remains a mandatory requirement. For the other types of provision, the authority believes that a higher base rate to all providers as opposed to a small deprivation supplement is preferable;
- A contingency amount should be included across all provisions because of the greater uncertainty surrounding budgets in 2024/25, alongside the expansion of provision, see explanation in 3.2. A higher contingency rate is proposed against the new entitlements, linked to the levels of uncertainty;
- A SEN Inclusion fund should be set aside across all provisions in order to support increasing numbers of children with low level and emerging need.

5.3 Proposed hourly rate payments for 3 to 4 year old provision are shown in the table below. The funded hourly rate for 3 to 4 year old provision is £5.63. This includes 49p for the Teacher pay and pension funding. Without this extra funding, the DfE hourly rate is £5.14.

3 to 4 Year Old Provision	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£5.63	100%	£5,527,001
Retained by local authority	£0.23	4%	£221,080
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£5.10	90.6%	£4,765,983
Deprivation Supplement	£0.01	0.2%	£9,817
Teacher Pay / Pension Supplement	£0.24	4.3%	£481,036
Contingency	£0.02	0.4%	£19,634
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.5%	£29,451

- 5.4 The authority is proposing to add the 25p new funding for Teacher's pay increases to the overall base rate, instead of adding it to the existing 24p supplement. This would provide equity across all Providers. As school settings provide over 86% of 3-4 year old provision, the increase of 25p on the base rate would continue to largely benefit schools as opposed to private providers.
- 5.5 Providers employing a qualified teacher would continue to attract the Teacher pay and pension supplement funded at 24p on both universal and additional hours.
- 5.6 Proposed hourly rate payments for a single 2 year old provision rate are shown in the following table. This mirrors the 3 to 4 year old hourly rate proposal except for:
- No deprivation supplement – this funding has been allocated to the base rate instead;
 - No Teacher pay and pension supplement – this only applies to 3 to 4 year old funding as per DfE guidance
 - Increased contingency rate to reflect the greater uncertainty of new entitlement funding

2 Year Old Provision (disadvantaged and working parent)	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£8.02	100%	£2,903,129
Retained by local authority	£0.32	4%	£116,114
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£7.57	94.4%	£2,739,962
Deprivation Supplement	-	-	-
Contingency	£0.10	1.2%	£36,195
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.4%	£10,859

- 5.7 Proposed hourly rate payments for the new under 2 year old provision rate are shown in the following table. Provision under the new entitlement starts from 1 September 2024. The splits mirror the 2 year old hourly rate proposal.

Under 2 Year Old Provision	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£10.95	100%	£940,555
Retained by local authority	£0.44	4%	£37,622
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£10.38	94.8%	£891,646
Deprivation Supplement	-	-	-
Contingency	£0.10	0.9%	£8,465
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.3%	£2,822

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The consultation with providers ended on 16 January 2024. A summary of the responses is provided in the table below. 21 Providers (or 25%) responded to the consultation.
- 6.2 After the consultation window closed, a further option became evident that Officers were not aware of and that has been considered by regional authorities. This affected use of the new 25p per hour funding on 3 to 4 year old provision only to support Teacher's pay increases from September 2023. The local authority has a choice on whether to increase the current supplement from 24p to 49p, or whether to apply the new 25p to the base rate. In response, an additional question was sent to all providers on 30 January 2024 asking for their view.
- 6.3 Consultation with Providers demonstrates overall strong support to the planned hourly rates, with percentages of providers in agreement ranging from 67% to 92%.

Early Years Consultation 2024/25 - Responses	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total	% Agreed
1: A pass-through rate of 96% (the minimum is 95%) is proposed. This proposal is expected to provide the budget required to effectively administer and manage the extended offer. However, the resources needed to maintain the expanded service are unclear at this stage so may cost more than expected. Do you agree that 96% should be passed through to providers across all hourly rates in 2024/25?	16	4	1	21	76%
2: Do you agree that funding for deprivation should be part of the base rate for 2 year old and under 2 year old provision instead of setting a separate deprivation supplement? Please note that deprivation remains a mandatory supplement for 3 and 4 year old provision.	15	6	0	21	71%
3: The new entitlements in 2024/25 bring a greater degree of uncertainty to funding levels and payments to providers for the local authority. This is why the Council is proposing to set aside a contingency amount within each hourly rate split, with a larger contingency rate on the new entitlements. Do you agree that a contingency should be set aside to help manage the uncertainty?	19	0	2	21	90%
4: A greater level of Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is emerging within the early year's sector. The Council believes it is important to use some of the hourly rate funding for a SEN inclusion fund across all provisions. Do you agree with this approach?	18	0	3	21	86%
5: The Council is proposing to simplify 2 year old payments by adopting a single rate that includes the existing disadvantaged provision, along with the new working parent entitlement. Do you agree that a single rate should be set?	14	5	2	21	67%
Supplementary question following close of main consultation					
Supplementary: Do you agree that the 25p is applied to the base rate instead of via the existing supplement?	23	2	0	25	92%

- 6.4 At their meeting on 15 February 2024, Schools' Forum reviewed the hourly rate proposals, alongside results of the consultation with providers.
- 6.5 Forum voted unanimously to approve the retention of 4% by the local authority to deliver the extended early year's entitlements.
- 6.6 Forum voted unanimously to support the hourly rate proposals across all areas of provision – the 3 to four year old rates shown at paragraph 5.3; the combined 2 year old rates shown at paragraph 5.6 and the 9 months to 2 year old rates shown at paragraph 5.7.
- 6.7 Should Committee agree with the recommendations of Schools' Forum, providers will be paid a minimum of £5.10 per hour for 3 to 4 year old provision, £7.57 per hour for 2 year old provision and £10.38 per hour for 9 months to 2 year old provision.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 With the significant increase in funded entitlements, 2024/25 is a year of greater uncertainty within the early year's sector. Funding of places in 2024/25 would usually be based on the two January census points – January 2024 and January 2025. However, in recognition of the greater uncertainty, government have introduced two additional census points in 2024. This reduces the financial risk of significant underfunded places for the Council in 2024/25.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The 2024/25 allocations are subject to adjustment following the May 2024 and October 2024 and January 2025 census points. Therefore, the figures provided in the table shown at paragraph 4.1 are subject to change during 2024/25, although the hourly rates will not vary.
- 8.2 All of the proposed hourly rates for early year's provision reflect the continuing need within the regulations to pass through at least 95% of the NFF to providers.

9. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The local authority is required under the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations to consult providers on annual changes to their formula. This has been completed, with the outcomes reported at paragraph 10 of this report.

10. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	There are no specific equality and diversity considerations.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	There are no specific equality and diversity considerations.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	There are no staff considerations,
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	There are no asset management considerations.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	There are none.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 It is recommended that Members:

- a) note the contents of this report and the outcomes from the consultation with providers and Schools' Forum;
- b) note the recommendation by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of 4%;
- c) approve the hourly rate funding formula for three to four year old provision in 2024/25 as shown in the table at paragraph 5.3, including the new teacher's pay increase of 25p in the base rate to all providers;
- d) approve the single hourly rate funding formula for two year old provision in 2024/25 as shown in the table at paragraph 5.6 of this report as recommended by Schools' Forum;
- e) approve the hourly rate funding formula for under two year old provision for 2024/25 as outlined at paragraph 5.7 as recommended by Schools' Forum.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to consult and agree the EYNFF annually.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 Schools' Forum Report 15 February 2024.

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

Sally Robinson
Executive Director of Children's and Commissioning Services
sally.robinson@hartlepool.gov.uk
01429 523914

James Magog
Director of Finance, IT and Digital
james.magog@hartlepool.gov.uk
01429 523003

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 22 February 2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 22 February 2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 22 February 2024

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

14 MARCH 2024



Subject: DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT –
HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2024/25

Report of: Executive Director of Children's and Joint
Commissioning Services and Director of Finance, IT
and Digital

Decision Type: Key Decision – CJCS 144/23 tests (i) and (ii) applies

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- 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.
- With a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the funding allocation for the High Needs Block in 2024/25 and to seek approval for the 2024/25 budget. The High Needs Block forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Updated High Needs Block funding allocations for 2024/25 were published on 19 December 2023. As with other areas of the DSG, funding for the High Needs Block is via a National Funding Formula (NFF).

- 3.2 Along with many other authorities, Hartlepool is continuing to experience spending pressures against the High Needs Block. Despite significant increases in funding during financial years 2019/20 to 2023/24, meeting the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) continues to exceed available funding.
- 3.3 A detailed review of high needs spending was completed in 2023 with the aim of creating a whole system change to ensure that mainstream schools consistently offer “ordinarily available” provision for pupils with SEND, thereby reducing the need for specialist support and ultimately avoiding the use of costly independent school provision where feasible.
- 3.4 In recognition that such a wide scale review takes time to implement and embed, Committee agreed a High Needs Block budget in 2023/24 that exceeded funding available by £2.146m. This agreement was predicated on the establishment by Schools’ Forum of a three-year recovery plan to bring back spending in line with funding. Financial year 2024/25 represents year one of the three year recovery plan
- 3.5 During 2023/24, regular reports have been provided to Schools’ Forum that project the in-year outturn against the High Needs budget. The last projection expects an overspend of £3.376m as opposed to the budgeted overspend of £2.146m.
- 3.6 Investment in group agreements for pupils requiring Individual Pupil Support in mainstream schools is exceeding the 2023/24 budget, however, these changes are not yet seeing a reduction in Independent School placements, thus leading to a greater overspend.
- 3.7 The budget requirement proposed for 2024/25 exceeds the High Needs Block funding allocation by **£2.171m** (£2.146m in 2023/24). This report outlines funding available and the proposed year 1 recovery plan savings that make up the budget requirement.
- 3.8 A discussion took place at the Schools Forum meeting of 23 November and officers presented a number of options to reduce the projected overspend within the 2024/25 budget. Members of Schools Forum did not feel they could support these options as they felt that demand continues to increase and disinvesting at this time will be detrimental to children with SEND.
- 3.9 Officers reported back to Schools’ Forum on 7 December 2023 to explain that savings proposals amounting to £0.600m would be taken forward to this Committee for decision as officers reminded Schools’ Forum that they committed to a three-year recovery plan. The savings proposals included within the 2024/25 budget requirement presented in this report are shown in the following table.

Proposal	Potential Budget Gap Reduction £m
Aim to limit new independent school placements to 5 places	£0.227
Aim to limit new Out of Area school placements to 5 places	£0.220
Uplift IPS top-up ranges by 3% (budget assumption was 4%)	£0.022
Uplift ARP top-up ranges by 3% (budget assumption was 4%)	£0.012
Uplift Special School cost models by 3% (budget assumption was 6%)	£0.119
Total Proposals	£0.600

4. 2024/25 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING

4.1 The High Needs Block allocation for 2024/25 is shown in the following table.

High Needs Block	2024/25 Funding £m
DSG High Needs Block Allocation	19.511
Growth Funding Transfer 2024/25	0.334
Total High Needs Block Funding 2024/25	19.845

4.2 Members are asked to note that final allocations remain subject to change, from amendments known as import/export adjustments, during 2024/25 depending on volumes of pupils accessing provision outside of their home authority. These updates take place during summer 2024.

4.3 To assist with the recovery plan, Schools' Forum agreed to a transfer of growth funding from the Schools Block of DSG to the High Needs Block in 2024/25. Committee approved this transfer at their meeting of 23 January 2024 (report item "Indicative Schools Block Budgets 2024/25"). The transfer increases available funding by £0.334m as shown in the table above.

5. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK PLANNED SPEND 2024/25

5.1 The planned High Needs budget for 2024/25 is shown in the table below. As outlined in paragraph 3.7, the budget requirement proposed for 2024/25 exceeds the High Needs Block funding allocation by **£2.171m**.

High Needs Block Budget Requirement 2024/25	£m
Place Funding - Academies (Recoupment)	3.324
Place Funding – Units in Maintained Schools	0.822
Independent School Fees	5.141
Out of Authority Top-ups	0.452
Alternative Provision (including Horizon School)	1.192
Top-ups and Support	8.571
Post-16 Top-ups	1.508
High Needs Services	0.726
Hearing and Visually Impaired Services	0.205
Loan Repayment	0.075
Total Budget Requirement	22.016

5.2 Each budget area is outlined in more detail in the paragraphs that follow.

5.3 Place Funding – Academies

5.3.1 ESFA deduct place funding for academy Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) places and special school places from our starting High Needs Block allocation. Provision of places in academies is shown in the table below. Place funding is prescribed by ESFA at £10k per place, or £6k where the school already receives per pupil funding via the Schools Block NFF.

Provision	Places	Funding per Place £'000	Recoupment 2024/25 £'000
Primary ARP places	17	10	170
Secondary ARP places	19	6	114
Primary Special School places	88	10	880
Secondary Special School places	134	10	1,340
Post-16 Special School places	46	10	460
Post-16 College places	60	6	360
Total academy recoupment	364		3,324

5.3.2 ESFA will make changes to the recoupment volumes and amounts during 2024/25 to reflect the conversion of one primary school to academy status and also to reflect approved place change numbers for our primary special school and college places. These changes will be budget neutral across the High Needs Block budget.

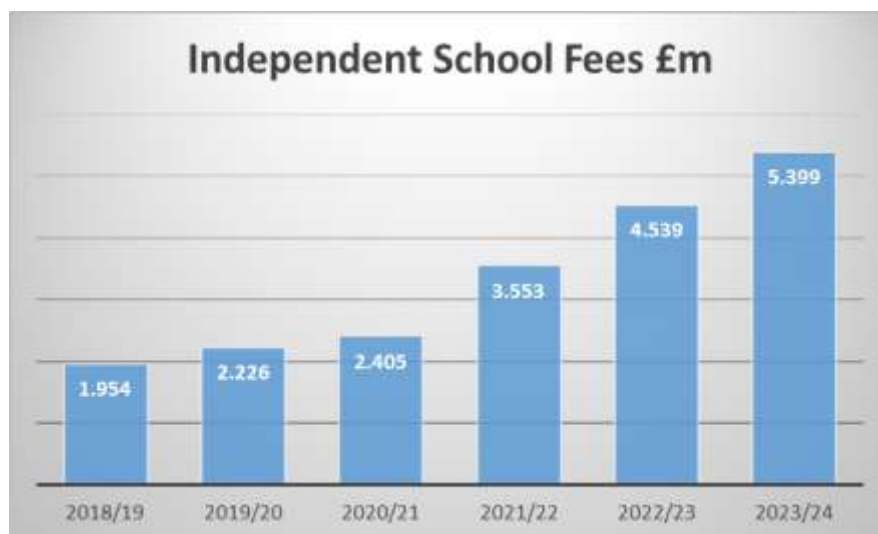
5.4 Place Funding – Units in Maintained Schools

5.4.1 Funding of places within maintained schools sits within the High Needs budget after recoupment. Provision of ARP places in maintained schools is shown in the table below.

Provision	Places	Funding per Place £'000	Place funding (maintained) 2023/24 £'000
Primary ARP places	71	6	426
Secondary ARP places	66	6	396
Total place funding - maintained			822

5.5 Independent School Fees

5.5.1 Where it is not possible to place pupils with SEND within Hartlepool provision and where there are no places available in Out of Authority schools, a place is sought within an independent school. Independent provision is costly and the demand for provision has increased over recent years as shown in the graph below. Please note that spend of £5.399m in 2023/24 is a projection at this stage.



- 5.5.2 The strategy to ensure that mainstream schools consistently offer “ordinarily available” provision for pupils with SEND, thereby reducing the need for specialist support and ultimately avoiding the use of costly independent school provision where feasible directly affects this budget head. Reducing the significant cost of independent school fees over the next three years is critical in order to bring high needs spending back into line with available funding.
- 5.5.3 The budget requirement for 2024/25 takes planned school age leavers (eight leavers) into account and in line with the strategy explained at paragraph 5.5.2, includes a target of only 5 new placements during 2024/25. Clearly, this is considered a target only as officers would continue to place pupils in specialist independent provision where the needs of the pupil required this.
- 5.5.4 The planned spend for 2024/25 is based on 68 placements at an estimated average annual cost of £75.6k per placement. This provides a budget requirement of **£5.141m**.
- 5.6 Out of Authority Top-Ups
- 5.6.1 An Out of Authority placement may be sought where a child is unable to be placed in Hartlepool provision. Out of Authority placements are with either maintained schools or academies within the North East. Out of Authority placements are less expensive than independent school fees. However, demand is usually high and new placements are not usually available. Most of the growth in Out of Authority provision occurs when a family moves into Hartlepool and a child is already placed in an Out of Authority school. In these instances, the provision is usually continued at the existing school but funded from the Hartlepool High Needs Block.
- 5.6.2 The budget proposal for 2024/25 is based on 27 placements at an estimated average annual cost of £16.8k per placement. This provides a budget requirement of **£0.452m**.

5.6.3 The budget requirement for 2024/25 takes planned school age leavers (eight leavers) into account and in line with the strategy explained at paragraph 5.5.2, includes a target of only 5 new placements because of potential moves into area during 2024/25. Clearly, this is considered a target only as officers would continue to place pupils in Out of Authority provision where the needs of the pupil required this.

5.7 Alternative Provision (including Horizon School)

5.7.1 The Council currently commissions 28 places for permanently excluded pupils at Horizon School (Hartlepool's Pupil Referral Unit), along with 12 places at Haven for those pupils needing support outside of a larger school environment. In addition, the Executive Head Teacher manages a budget of £0.076m to fund permanently excluded pupils outside of Horizon that require external alternative provision.

5.7.2 At their meeting on 15 February 2024, Schools' Forum recognised the significant growth in permanent exclusions as illustrated in the following table. Whilst work to reduce the growth in permanent exclusions is planned and undertaken, Schools' Forum agreed to funding growth of £0.250m for Horizon School in 2024/25.

Academic Year	In-Year PEXs
2020-21	5
2021-22	19
2022-23	37
2023-24	27 (as at week 18 of school year) Estimated total for year: 63

5.7.3 The budget growth recommended by Schools' Forum is reflected in the budget requirement of **£1.192m** shown in the table at paragraph 5.1 of this report.

5.8 Top-Ups and Support – Individual Pupil Support

5.8.1 A change to the model of funding for Individual Pupil Support (IPS) is being implemented from April 2024. This will devolve the IPS application process to school clusters. Similar approaches in other local authorities have realised benefits. The advantages of this approach are:

- Enables moderation across schools to ensure that there is a consistent approach to schools receiving additional funding (report indicated schools did not feel this was currently happening);
- Allows for more solution focused approaches with schools working together with one pot of funding to enable children's needs to be met better locally;
- School staff to support each other to increase SEND expertise across the system.

5.8.2 IPS payments are based on a set of top-up ranges through pupil assessment. The planned spend for IPS in 2024/25 is based on existing commitments in 2023/24 plus a proposed uplift of 3% to the top-up ranges. Prior year uplifts have been applied at 4%. The reduction to 3% is a year one recovery plan saving proposal shown in the table at paragraph 3.9 of this report.

5.8.3 The existing and proposed new top-up ranges are shown in the table below.

Top-up Range	Current	Proposed
4i	£3,470	£3,575
4ii	£4,650	£4,790
5i	£6,950	£7,160
5ii	£11,600	£11,950
6i	£16,250	£16,740
6ii	£22,020	£22,680

5.8.4 If the proposal is approved, the 3% uplift will result in a total budget requirement of **£2.535m**.

5.9 Top-Ups and Support – Additionally Resourced Provision (ARPs)

5.9.1 This budget funds top-up payments relating to pupils placed in ARPs – these payments cover both academies and maintained schools. The places in each ARP are shown in the two tables at section 5.3 and 5.4 above.

5.9.2 ARP top-up payments use the same ranges and prices as IPS. Therefore, it is proposed that ARP top-ups are also uplifted by 3% and that the top-up rates shown in paragraph 5.8.3 are implemented from April 2024.

5.9.3 Prior year uplifts have been applied at 4%. The reduction to 3% is a year one recovery plan saving proposal shown in the table at paragraph 3.9 of this report.

5.9.4 If the proposal is approved, the 3% uplift will result in a total budget requirement of **£1.254m**.

5.10 Top-Ups and Support – Special Schools

5.10.1 Following approval by this Committee, both Springwell and Catcote Special Schools moved to a new cost-based funding model in 2023/24. This has provided greater certainty over funding for the two schools, both of whom are critical in the Council's provision for pupils with SEND in the town.

5.10.2 In line with inflation proposals for IPS and ARPs, an uplift of 3% to the cost models for special schools is proposed effective from 1 September 2024. The effective date is linked to the start of the academic year as opposed to financial year as this aligns with the basis of the cost arrangements.

5.10.3 During the planning for the new cost arrangements, a year 2 uplift of 6% was originally assumed – linked to the rate of inflation at the time. The reduction to 3% is a year one recovery plan saving proposal shown in the table at paragraph 3.9 of this report.

5.10.4 If the proposal is approved, the 3% uplift will result in a total budget requirement of **£4.599m**.

5.11 Top-Ups and Support – Small Steps

The Small Steps Team within the Council's Education Psychology Service provides support to younger pupils with SEND. The Team plays a key role in early intervention. An increase of 3% is proposed to the service in 2024/25 to contribute towards the cost of the NJC pay award. The expected cost in 2024/25 is **£0.182m**.

5.12 Top-Ups and Support – Total Planned Spend

The total planned spend across Top-Ups and Support, encompassing paragraph 5.8 to 5.11 of this report, amounts to **£8.571m** as shown in the table at paragraph 5.1.

5.13 Post-16 Top-Ups

This budget area funds the cost of educating pupils with SEND who choose to continue their education after age 16. The planned spend in 2024/25, is **£1.508m**.

5.14 High Needs Services

This budget area includes the local authority costs for providing support and management of high needs services. An uplift of 3% is proposed in 2024/25 to contribute towards the NJC pay award. The expected cost in 2024/25 is **£0.726m**.

5.15 Hearing and Visually Impaired

A service level agreement is in place with Middlesbrough Borough Council for support to hearing and visually impaired pupils. The expected cost of provision in 2024/25 is **£0.205m**.

5.16 Loan Repayment

The loan repayment relates to the extension of Catcote Special Academy in 2021. Annual loan repayments are **£0.075m**.

6. RISK AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Demands on the service to provide education for pupils with SEND are exceeding the financial resources allocated. For the second consecutive year,

officers are proposing a budget to Committee that exceeds available funding - by £2.146m in 2023/24 and £2.171m in 2024/25. This is despite a funding transfer of £0.334m from the School's Block growth funding and after including ambitious saving targets of £0.600m.

- 6.2 Against this background, government have extended the "statutory override" regulations to 2025/26 which means authorities do not have to charge these deficits to their General Fund budget. This means that where authorities have a HNB deficit, this is carried on the balance sheet as a negative reserve and does not affect the Council's own reserves available to fund local priorities and commitments. The Council is required to "cash-flow" the deficit, leading to loss in potential investment income.
- 6.3 The government has not indicated what they will do from 2025/26, although it seems inconceivable that they will require authorities to write off HNB deficits against General Fund reserves as this would either require authorities to stop using their own reserves as planned, or for those authorities with low reserves is likely to trigger section 114 notices.
- 6.4 Alongside these arrangements, the government operates a "safety value" system and a "delivering better value programme" whereby the Department for Education (DfE) provide "support and challenge" to authorities with significant HNB deficits. This support requires authorities to draw up a financial recovery plan to address the recurring deficit within three years. It is our understanding that two thirds of authorities have triggered the criteria for one of these arrangements.
- 6.5 Up until 2022/23, the Council has successfully managed HNB costs within the available annual grant allocation and HNB reserves. This has been achieved despite a significant increase in demands on this service, including the impacts arising from COVID-19.
- 6.6 As outlined in paragraph 3.5 of this report, demands on the service in 2023/24 are forecast to exceed the grant allocation of £18.6m by £3.376m (budgeted deficit was £2.146m) – a deficit of 18.1% (budget was 11.5%). The budget requirement presented in this report shows a second year funding gap of £2.171m in 2024/25 – a deficit of 11.1%.
- 6.7 The increase in cost is considered necessary to invest in Hartlepool provision and so avoid placement of pupils with SEND outside the town wherever possible. In time, this approach is expected to reduce costs for independent and out of town provision and provide an improved outcome for Hartlepool children.
- 6.8 Based on experience from other authorities the Council will not trigger EFA intervention until the deficit is 25% of the annual grant – which for Hartlepool equates to £4.9m. It is likely that a deficit exceeding £4.9m will be reported as at 31 March 2025.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	There are no specific child and family poverty considerations.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	There are no specific equality and diversity considerations.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	There are no staff considerations,
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	There are no asset management considerations.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	There are none.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 All schools have been consulted on budget proposals for the High Needs Block for 2024/25 via Schools' Forum. Progress with the High Needs Block Review was a standing agenda item for each Forum meeting during 2023.
- 9.2 Schools' Forum receive quarterly reports on projected High Needs budget outturn projections in-year.
- 9.3 Schools' Forum did not feel able to recommend the year one recovery plan savings shown at paragraph 3.9 of this report. At their meeting on 23 November 2023, Forum stated that 'the proposals to be taken forward within the budget requirement to Children's Services Committee be recognised but that Forum needed to express that they are concerned that such disinvestment would mean that some of the budget proposals do not meet the educational needs of our children'.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 It is recommended that Members:
- a) note the contents of the report;

- b) Approve the proposed year 1 recovery plan savings listed in the table at paragraph 3.9 of this report;
- c) Approve the High Needs Block budget requirement shown in the table at paragraph 5.1 of this report.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To ensure that that we can meet the educational needs of children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities in Hartlepool.
- 11.2 To ensure the local authority establishes an appropriate budget for High Needs in 2024/25 that meets expected demand.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Schools' Forum reports of
 - 23 November 2023 – High Needs Block 2024/25;
 - 7 December 2023 – High Needs Block Update;
 - 15 February 2024 – Permanently Excluded Pupils.
- 12.2 Schools' Forum minutes of 23 November 2023.

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

Sally Robinson
 Executive Director of Children's and Commissioning Services
sally.robinson@hartlepool.gov.uk
 01429 523914

James Magog
 Director of Finance, IT and Digital
james.magog@hartlepool.gov.uk
 01429 523003

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 22 February 2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: : 22 February 2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: : 22 February 2024

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

14 MARCH 2024



Subject: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE

Report of: Executive Director of Children and Joint
Commissioning Services

Decision Type: For information

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- 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 provide Members with an update on pupil attendance and absence in Hartlepool and share what actions are being taken to support improvements in school attendance.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 School attendance is not only important for academic achievement and wellbeing but supports the holistic development of young people as citizens within their community.
- 3.2 The report highlights pupil attendance and absence data for the previous 3 academic years (which is published by the Department for Education annually in October).

4. Secondary School and Academy Attendance

- 4.1 The table below displays attendance rates across the local authority for all secondary schools and academies compared with national data figures.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
School All	91.2%	90.1%	89.3%
School Boys	91.1%	90.3%	89.4%
School Girls	91.4%	89.8%	89.1%
National All	95.4%	91.4%	91.0%
National Boys	95.4%	91.7%	91.4%
National Girls	95.4%	91.0%	90.6%

*attendance was not collected Spring/Summer 2020

5. Primary School and Academy Attendance

- 5.1 The table below displays attendance and absence rates across primary schools and academies in Hartlepool compared with national data figures.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
School All	94.7%	93.6%	93.9%
School Boys	94.6%	93.5%	93.8%
School Girls	94.9%	93.7%	94.0%
National All	96.7%	93.8%	93.7%
National Boys	96.6%	93.7%	93.6%
National Girls	96.9%	93.9%	93.8%

*attendance was not collected Spring/Summer 2020.

- 5.2 The tables below displays the level of persistent absence across the local authority for both primary and secondary schools and academies compared with national data figures.

Secondary						
	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
School All	1521	26.1%	1786	29.6%	1942	31.7%
School Boys	781	26.4%	885	26.4%	983	26.4%
School Girls	740	25.8%	901	30.3%	959	32.0%
National All	-	11.7%	-	26.7%	-	27.7%
National Boys	-	11.7%	-	25.5%	-	26.3%
National Girls	-	11.8%	-	27.8%	-	29.2%

Primary						
	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
School All	1098	15.5%	1347	19.2%	1143	17.2%
School Boys	579	16.1%	706	19.7%	609	17.9%
School Girls	519	14.9%	641	18.8%	534	16.5%
National All	-	8.1%	-	18.2%	-	17.7%
National Boys	-	8.6%	-	18.5%	-	18.1%
National Girls	-	7.6%	-	17.9%	-	17.3%

- 5.3 A pupil is defined by the Department for Education (DfE) to be persistently absent if they have an attendance rate of 90% or less (missing 10% of possible sessions). For example if a pupil misses 3.5 days in the first half term they will be considered to be persistently absent. Over subsequent terms this level of absence needs to be consistently at or above this threshold to be considered as persistent absence (e.g. missing 21 days or more over the academic year).
- 5.4 The above tables show Hartlepool primary schools and academies are close to the national average for attendance and persistent absence. However the gap between our secondary schools and academies for attendance is almost 2% below the national average attendance and 4% greater than the national average for persistent absence. In the academic year 2022-23 two of our secondary academies only accessed our universal statutory service and not our traded service. The Attendance Team received eight referrals from these two academies in relation to attendance compared to over 400 referrals received from secondary schools or academies who opted into a traded service with the team.
- 5.5 The disappointing gap between national and local data is not just an issue in Hartlepool but with authorities across the country. Many Local Authorities and schools are reporting a societal change in parental attitude toward school attendance and have observed a decrease in attendance levels. This has been attributed to the change in working patterns of parents and carers following covid.
- 5.6 The reasons for non-attendance are multiple and there is usually no single cause for poor attendance. The main reasons for absence across the school age population in Hartlepool are outlined in the tables below.

Secondary Schools and Academies Absence Codes

Reasons for absence					
Code	Description	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	National
C	Other Authorised	25.6%	6.7%	6.6%	6.4%
E	Excluded	3.9%	4.6%	6.2%	2.1%
I	Illness	35.0%	40.2%	30.1%	59.9%
O	Other Unauthorised	27.0%	37.8%	45.3%	23.1%

Primary Schools and Academies Absence Codes

Reasons for absence					
Code	Description	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	National
I	Illness	46.5%	46.5%	46.5%	46.5%
G	Family Hol (Not Agreed)	6.3%	12.0%	15.4%	5.3%
O	Other Unauthorised	14.9%	12.1%	15.6%	11.4%

- 5.7 Illness, unauthorised holidays in term time, unauthorised absence and suspensions are the main reasons for absence.

6. The Attendance Service

- 6.1 The Attendance Team currently consists of an Inclusion Coordinator, an Assistant Inclusion Coordinator, 4 Attendance Officers and 1 Attendance Assistant. The team undertakes the statutory duties in relation to:

- School Attendance;
- Children Missing or Not Receiving a Suitable Education;
- Child Employment and Licensing; and
- Suspensions and Permanent Exclusion from school.

- 6.2 The Attendance Team offers both a universal statutory service and a traded service to all schools and academies within the Authority area.

- 6.3 The universal statutory service is available to all schools and academies and includes the following:

- The Team accepts referrals from schools and academies if attendance is 50% or below. All absences must be unauthorised in the 20 school weeks prior to the referral. Schools and academies must be able to

demonstrate that they have attempted to address the attendance issue prior to referral.

- The Team accepts a referral if a pupil has had an unauthorised absence for a period of two continuous weeks or more and school have been unable to make contact with the parent/carer.
- The Team issue a code of conduct for Penalty Notice to parents/carers when the referral threshold is met.
- On receipt of a Children Missing from Education referral, the Team will attempt to locate a pupil who is missing from education, or has failed to start school when a child has reached compulsory school age.
- All schools and academies can contact the Team via the attendance team email service for support and guidance.
- A targeted support meeting with all schools and academies is held once per academic year.

6.4 The traded service point of referral is 90% or below in the eight weeks prior to referral. Schools and academies who opt for this service are allocated a named officer who provides support across the academic year consisting of:

- Half-termly register checks for students with attendance of 90% or below, including whole-school register review.
- Telephone advice and guidance on attendance and inclusion issues.
- "Fast Track" approach for attendance below 90% and challenging authorised absences.
- Targeted intervention for individual students, involving family-oriented plans and a multi-agency approach.
- Monitoring attendance and punctuality on an individual basis for those below 90% and at risk of more persistent absence.
- Monitoring non-statutory school-aged pupils at reception age and conducting home visits.
- Addressing punctuality concerns by raising awareness using letters to parents/carers, late gates, and home visits.
- Providing escorts to school to improve attendance patterns.
- Termly reporting on actions taken, including officer hours used.
- Regular updates issued to school staff regarding ongoing referrals.

6.5 72% (27 out of 37 schools and academies) purchase additional traded services from the Attendance Team. The additional services purchased ranges from 3 days across an academic year to 3 days per week, depending on circumstances.

6.6 The Local Authority Attendance Team has access to a number of legal actions for the offence of irregular school attendance. These include:

- School Attendance Order;
- Parenting Contract;
- Education Supervision Order;
- Fine (Penalty Notice); and
- Prosecution under section 444 and 444 (1a) of The Education Act 1996.

- 6.7 During the academic year 2021-2022 the Attendance Team issued 118 Penalty Notices and prosecuted on 109 occasions.

In the academic year 2022-23 the Attendance Team issued 187 Penalty Notices and prosecuted on 96 occasions. The use of legal sanctions is only to be considered as a last resort.

7. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 7.1 In May 2022 The Department for Education (DfE) issued new guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. The guidance says that it should no longer be a single agency responsibility and now places emphasis on improving school attendance by use of a multi-agency approach and that barriers to attendance can be removed with the right support from the most appropriate agencies.
- 7.2 The 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance is not yet statutory. It remains a priority for the Department for Education and Royal Assent will be pursued at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.3 The Department for Education attendance data system, known as "Wonde" was introduced post-Covid and is a portal through which schools and academies share their daily attendance. Wonde will allow the Local Authority to access all schools and academies attendance and absence data in a timely manner. Prior to the introduction of Wonde some schools refused to share their attendance data with the local authority. The DfE has outlined its intention to make it a statutory requirement for all schools and academies to share their data with Wonde by April 2024.
- 7.4 The agreement of schools and academies in Hartlepool to share their daily data through Wonde is excellent. 100% of primary schools and academies and 80% of secondary schools and academies share their data daily with Wonde. This level of support is not replicated across the country with some local authorities having less than 50% of their schools and academies sharing data with Wonde. 100% of schools and academies in Hartlepool now share their data with the local authority as they can see the benefit of this system.
- 7.5 The Local Authority, schools and academies in Hartlepool are working closely with the DfE Attendance Adviser, looking at the barriers preventing school attendance and what action can be taken to improve attendance.

- 7.6 The Local Authority is promoting the DfE campaign “Moments Matter, Attendance Counts” together with all key stakeholders. This reinforces that all parents/carers and children’s workforce understand the serious implications of poor school attendance on long term life opportunities.
- 7.7 The Attendance Team is working closely with schools, academies and stakeholders to implement the changes within the “Working together to improve attendance” guidance.
- 7.8 The Local Authority is reviewing current policies and procedures in relation to new legislation in regard to the offence of irregular school attendance.
- 7.9 The Local Authority will be supporting the co-production of a town wide strategy to address attendance.
- 7.10 The Local Authority has been announced by the DfE as an additional area participating in the DfE attendance mentoring pilot scheme. This has been offered as part of the Priority Investment Area programme. Details are yet to be provided but it is intended that this will begin in September 2024.

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	There are no risk implications arising from this report.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	There are no financial considerations contained in this report.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	There are no legal considerations contained in this report.
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	Missing school can significantly impact upon a child’s education, achievement and consequently future life chances. Supporting children to attend school regularly will promote their achievement, wellbeing and wider development.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	There are no equality and diversity considerations arising from this report.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	There are no staffing considerations contained in this report.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	There are no asset management consideration contained in this report.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	There are no environment, sustainability and climate change considerations contained in this report.
CONSULTATION	No consultation was required in the production of this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Committee is asked to note this report and the work of the School Attendance Team in delivering the Local Authority statutory functions in relation to the offence of irregular school attendance as well as the work of the team to promote and improve school attendance.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The recommendation is to ensure the Local Authority is compliant with statutory duties in relation to the offence of irregular school attendance.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

Jackie Webb
Inclusion Coordinator
Children's & Joint Commissioning Services
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: (01429) 522352
Email: jackie.webb@hartlepool.gov.uk

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 19 February 2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 16 February 2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 16 February 2024