

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

## AGENDA



**Tuesday 9 July 2024**

**at 5.00 pm**

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

**MEMBERS:** CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillors Creevy, Dunbar, Harrison, Holbrook, 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 Allen, 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 14 March 2024 (*previously circulated and published*).

**4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS**

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

**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 Out of School and Holiday Care – *Executive Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*

**6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**

- 6.1 Approval of School Term and Holiday Dates 2025-26 – *Executive Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 6.2 Annual Fostering Report 2023 - 2024 and Statement of Purpose March 2024 – *Executive Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- 7.1 Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services – *Executive Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 7.2 Inspection of HBC Children’s Homes – *Executive Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*

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

**9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006**

**EXEMPT ITEMS**

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

**10. EXEMPT ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**

- 10.1 To Re-Appoint a Local Authority Representative to Serve on the Governing Body of Kingsley Primary School – *Executive Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*

**FOR INFORMATION**

Date of future meetings

Tuesday 10 September, 2024 at 5.00 pm in the Civic Centre.  
Tuesday 19 November, 2024 at 5.00 pm in the Civic Centre.  
Tuesday 4 February, 2025 at 5.00 pm in the Civic Centre.  
Tuesday 18 March, 2025 at 5.00 pm in the Civic Centre.



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

9 JULY 2024



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

## 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 present the Council with the Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2024 - 2025 (**Appendix 1 – [click here to download](#)**) and gain approval from Children's Service Committee to begin a consultation process for the approval of this plan which will be presented to Safer Hartlepool Partnership on 15 July 2024 and Audit and Governance Committee on 16 July 2024. 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 final plan will be presented to Children's Service Committee on 10 September 2024 to seek approval for the presentation to Full Council on 3 October 2024 to seek adoption of the Youth Justice Plan 2024 – 2025.
- 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; and
  - Improve outcomes for young people, victims and the broader community.

### 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Youth Justice Service adopts the following Strategic Objectives and Priorities for 2024-2025 Plan.

**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 2024/25</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>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	There are no specific additional consideration relating to child and family poverty arising from this report , however such considerations are included in our assessment into the circumstances for children and young people and will, if necessary, have actions working alongside partners in place to seek to limit the impact upon children and families as a consequence of child poverty
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	Equality and Diversity is considered within the report in relation to specific individual and groups of young people

<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no specific staff considerations arising from this report
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no specific asset management considerations arising from this report
<b>ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no specific environmental, sustainability and climate change considerations arising from this report
<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 2024 – 2025 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 2024 – 2025 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 2024 – 2025 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**

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Tel 01429 523957. E-mail [laura.gough@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:laura.gough@hartlepool.gov.uk)

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date:
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 14/06/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 19/06/2024 (Neil Wilson)



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

9<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024



**Subject:** OUT OF SCHOOL AND HOLIDAY CARE

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

**Decision Type:** Key Decision - tests (i) and (ii) applies. General Exception Provisions apply.

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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 seek a decision from Children's Services Committee regarding the future provision of OSCAR's out of school and holiday care.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under the Child Care Act 2006 the local authority has a legal duty to ensure there is sufficient provision of childcare within their area for working parents. The childcare available needs to meet the needs of the community in general and also those that have lower incomes with children with a disability. Local authorities need to establish current levels of childcare and then assure themselves of their plan for childcare that meets local needs. While local authorities will not be expected to provide childcare they will be expected to

work with the local private, voluntary and independent sector to meet local demand. Local authorities should be providers of childcare as a last resort. Local authorities also have a duty to provide the free minimum amount of learning and care for all children aged 9 months to four-year-olds whose parents request it.

### 3.2 The Childcare Act 2016 adds the following to the Childcare Act of 2006:

- A duty on the Secretary of State to secure 30 hours of free childcare over 38 weeks of the year for qualifying children. Children in England will qualify if they are under compulsory school age and their parents meet the criteria.
- A duty on English local authorities to secure free childcare for qualifying children.
- Further guidance issued in 2018 strengthened the need for local authorities to secure, as far as possible, sufficient childcare places for working parents or parents studying or training for employment.
- Parents should be made aware of the 15-hour free places for two-year-olds, the universal 15-hour free entitlement for three and four-year-olds, and the extended 30-hour free entitlement for working parents of three and four-year-olds, and the eligibility criteria for these entitlements.

These duties include before and after school and holiday care.

### 3.3 In 2023, the Government announced an expansion of free childcare provision where eligible working parents in England could access up to 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks of the year (although parents can use fewer hours over more weeks of the year), from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school This would be rolled out in stages:

- From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2 year olds were able to access 15 hours per week
- From Sept 2024, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3 year olds can access 15 hours per week
- From Sept 2025, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3 years old can access 30 hours free childcare per week
- From September 2026, all schools able to offer 8am to 6pm wraparound on their own or in partnership.

All child care provision must be registered with and regulated by Ofsted.

### 3.4 OSCARS was established over 15 years ago. Over the years it has established the current model of out of school/holiday provision and currently operates out of Golden Flatts Primary School.

### 3.5 Oscars is registered with Ofsted to deliver child care from its current premises and is a regulated service. In November 2023 Rossmere Youth Centre

closed in order to begin a large scale refurbishment project as a result of £1.27m funding from the Youth Investment Fund. This meant that Oscars needed to move to a new location and Golden Flatts Primary School was identified. OSCARS moved to Golden Flatts at Easter 2024. Current out of School take up as a daily average was 11 children in April, 13 in May and 12 (to date) in June. Current average daily numbers for holiday care are April (Easter Holiday) 21 and May half term at 15 children.

- 3.6 The 2024/25 net budget for OSCARS is £18,000, consisting of £167,000 expenditure and an income target of £149,000. As detailed in Table 1 below, this budget has overspent each year with a total net cost of £46,000 last financial year (2023/24).

**Table 1 - OSCARS Net Outturn / Budget Position**

	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
	Budget	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals
OSCARS	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Staffing	138	122	115	112	110	116
Transport	17	5	5	8	6	14
Premises	9	9	9	9	9	9
Other Expenditure	3	1	2	2	2	3
Income	(149)	(77)	(68)	(61)	(47)	(90)
Income - Day Nursery *	0	(14)	(36)	(21)	(32)	(32)
<b>Total Net Cost / Budget</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>20</b>

\* - OSCARS day nursery provision ceased in Summer 2023 due to insufficient numbers of children

- 3.7 The annual overspends are mainly the result of the service not being able to generate the required budgeted level of income. As detailed in Table 1 above, the highest amount of income received from fees was £90,000 in 2019/20 however the 2024/25 income target is £149,000. Based on existing service users the fees would need to double in order for the service to achieve the required income.
- 3.8 It is currently anticipated that the net cost of the service in the current financial year will be £48,000 i.e. an 'overspend' against the budget of £30,000.
- 3.9 Since the relocation of the service to Golden Flatts School there has been no additional uptake of the service so numbers attending the provision have not increased. This is despite significant marketing of the service to all the parents in the surrounding area and putting the offer to the local schools.
- 3.10 When based at Rossmere Youth Centre the service was able to reduce transport costs by using 'walking buses' for children attending from the local schools. Additional taxi costs to transport these children to Golden Flatts school are now required which will put further pressure on the existing budget.

- 3.11 Other similar provision across the town has been explored and it would seem current prices for OSCARS provision is in line with or higher than other providers as indicated below. However, parents/carers receive 80% of costs and therefore fees are not seen as an indicator of choice.

### **Holiday Provision**

- OSCARS - £38.00 per day (additional fees are requested for activities that incur costs)
- Provider A - £28.00 per day
- Provider B - £26.25 per day
- Provider C - £38.00 per day

### **Afterschool Provision**

- OSCARS £14.50 (includes pick up from school)
  - PVI Providers charge between £8 and £17.
  - A significant amount of schools charge from £2.50 - £6.
- 3.12 The government has begun a roll out of the new National Wraparound Programme( NWP) with an offer to working parents of children aged 5 – 11 years of 8am to 6pm childcare, term time only, on school site or near to their school. Unlike the new early year's childcare offer, this wraparound care is to be paid for by parents and not subsidised by the government. Hartlepool has been set an aspirational target of 350 **new** wraparound places by the government by September 2026, albeit locally this has been assessed by the early years and childcare team as unnecessary in context of current levels of demand and sufficiency. The national grant can only be used to fund **new provision**.
- 3.13 A parental demand survey conducted in winter 2023 confirmed that those parents that want wraparound childcare are already using it and those that predict they will need it would prefer it on school site. Over 500 parents of early years children responded to the survey; these parents are the future service users.

The below table relates to the survey question "Thinking about your childcare provision, would you prefer this to be...?"

Close to my home	16.9%
Close to my work	3.2%
At my child's school	64%
At a local community centre	0.4%
I don't mind	14.1%
Other (please specify)	1.3%
Comments from 'Other (please specify)'	
1. My current child minder is very close to school and my home.	
2. At the school where my child studies.	

3. Near my child's school but would consider anywhere accessible to myself or my work as I don't drive...their school is near my home and not far from my work place either.
4. Somewhere locally with reasonable prices remembering some parents have more than one child and still need to earn a wage after childcare.

- 3.14 Our sufficiency assessment tells us clearly that there are vacant places in existing provision, not least in OSCARS, so the need for generating so many new places as outlined at paragraph 3.12 is questionable. That being said, the childcare team are working with a number of schools and Voluntary and Community Sector providers to develop and test a North, South and Central wraparound model which includes some expansion of existing provision. The Voluntary and Community sector providers, who are engaging with the Wraparound Programme, are close to schools who do not have provision and the plan is that they will create transport to pick children up and take them back which makes their costs affordable.
- 3.15 A review of early years provision across Hartlepool shows that there is sufficient breakfast, nursery and after school provision in the town if OSCARS were to cease being a provider. The main issue would be around holiday provision particularly for the over 8s.
- 3.16 A mapping exercise of current childcare provision in each ward has been undertaken by the early years' team matched to the postcode of the children in OSCARS to see if the need can be met within other provision.

Analysis has confirmed:

- Sufficient before and after provision and available spaces.
- Limited holiday provision is available in North, South and Central areas.
- PVI day care will run provision (if they do not already) based on demand.
- Childminders are available in all wards and new government incentives promoted to become a childminder

The National Wraparound Programme is creating new provision (on or near to school sites), and existing early years providers (daycare and childminders) are keen to expand their age range to cater for the 5 – 11 year old children.

Information regarding available provision is accessed in a variety of ways, including:

Contacting [earlyyearschildcare@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyearschildcare@hartlepool.gov.uk) or via the Hartlepool Now website [Hartlepool Now :: Childcare Providers](#) or by calling 01429 284881.

- 3.17 Solutions have been explored in order to keep OSCARS open, including:
- Fees have been increased as much as possible, keeping in mind not to outprice OSCARS out of the market;
  - Exploration of Outsourcing including In January and March 2024, briefings to Head Teachers and cluster forums to explore a model where OSCARS would deliver new childcare duties for schools (if needed). Heads have not taken up the opportunity to explore this option further as

they feel they are either meeting the demand themselves, or the need is not there.

- Sufficiency work across the town has been carried out that shows that existing provision can meet need.
- Promotion of the service to all parents within the new premises at Golden Flatts and the schools in the surrounding areas has been carried out, this had very little impact on take up of places.

#### 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

##### 4.1 Option 1: Continue to deliver Oscars Childcare Service

Pros	Cons
Continuing to deliver a local authority service, with ownership over governance and operating model. Jobs are protected. The services can be delivered out of a local school. This offer may not be available if the service was outsourced.	This goes against statutory guidance, local authority is not expected to deliver childcare. Prices will need to be increased, which will be unpopular with customers as there are cheaper providers available. Possibility that any further increases will price OSCARS out the market given the deficit to fill. OSCARS continue to run a budget deficit as all options for a sustainable model have been explored. Depending on the level of fee increases, an additional £30,000 of funding will be required on a recurring basis in order to ensure that the service can be delivered.

##### 4.2 Option 2: Close the Oscars Childcare Service

Pros	Cons
Current burden on budgets and resources will be completely removed – annual budget saving of £18k, but will also reduce overspends at outturn. Sufficiency assessment has identified that there are places available across the town to meet demand and need.	Likely to be some opposition as the Oscars service has operated for some time. Redundancy process would have to be initiated.

## 5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The child care market has changed significantly over recent years and it is likely to continue to change over coming years given the planned child care reforms. These changes mean that schools have moved into the space of delivering out of school hours provision and thus demand for OSCARS has reduced. Where schools do not currently deliver their own provision, the Voluntary and Community Sector providers are stepping in to fill that gap in their locally based centres. The child care sufficiency assessment has concluded that if OSCARS ceased to deliver provision, there would continue to be sufficient provision in the town to meet need.
- 5.2 The majority of children who access the out of school childcare come from a limited number of schools based in a cluster area of the town. Due to the delivery of OSCARS, these schools have not developed their own offer as other schools have but we have started to see developments. Ceasing to provide the service it could be expected that schools would develop their own provision to meet demand and future childcare expansion proposals.

## 6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	<p>The provision of OSCARS creates a financial risk for the local authority as the income received from the provision does not meet the cost of providing the service and thus the service is subsidised by the council.</p> <p>Careful consideration has been given to the risk of closing the service and the impact on the wider childcare market. Analysis of the data has concluded that if OSCARS were to close, there would be sufficient after school provision at various locations across Hartlepool to meet the demand for childcare. The provision of holiday care is more limited and work would need to be undertaken with the childcare market to ensure the sufficiency of provision is increased. Recent changes such as the delivery of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme during the long school holidays has started to build capacity in the system and the childcare team would work with providers to increase and enhance their offer.</p> <p>For some families who currently use OSCARS, there will be some disruption and a required change of service provider. The childcare team would work with these families to identify alternative provision suitable for their child/ren.</p>
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<p>Closing OSCARS would generate an annual budget saving of £18,000 and would also mitigate against the additional annual overspends incurred each year within the service (currently forecast to be £30,000 above the annual budget).</p>

<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	Under the Child Care Act 2006 the local authority has a legal duty to ensure there is sufficient provision of childcare within their area for working parents. The childcare available needs to meet the needs of the community in general and also those that have lower incomes or children with a disability. These duties include before and after school and holiday care.
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	A Child and Family Poverty Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached at <b>Appendix A</b>
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None.
<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are five members of staff who are affected by the proposals contained in this report. Formal consultation will be undertaken with staff following the decision making process alongside Trade Unions.
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no asset management considerations arising from this report
<b>ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	No specific issues arising from this report.
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Consultation with staff currently employed to provide OSCARS will be undertaken.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to consider the option appraisal regarding the future provision of OSCARS child care.
- 7.2 It is recommended that Option 2 is approved in the context of the net cost to the Council of providing the service and future projection do not identify financial sustainability can be achieved.

## 8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The provision of OSCAR's childcare is at a cost to the local authority and despite changes to make the service financially viable, this has not been



achieved. An analysis of the childcare market has concluded that there is sufficient provision of childcare to meet demand should OSCARS close enabling the council to meet its statutory duties.

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

## 10. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Children's and Joint Commissioning Services  
Civic Centre  
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Email: [amanda.whitehead@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.whitehead@hartlepool.gov.uk)

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 13/06/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 13/06/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 13/06/2024

## POVERTY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1

<b>1. Is this decision a Budget &amp; Policy Framework or Key Decision? YES</b> If YES please answer question 2 below				
<b>2. Will there be an impact of the decision requested in respect of Child and Family Poverty? NO</b> If YES please complete the matrix below				
GROUP	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT	NO IMPACT	REASON & EVIDENCE
Young working people aged 18 - 21			✓	
Those who are disabled or suffer from illness / mental illness			✓	
Those with low educational attainment			✓	
Those who are unemployed			✓	
Those who are underemployed			✓	
Children born into families in poverty			✓	
Those who find difficulty in managing their finances			✓	
Lone parents			✓	
Those from minority ethnic backgrounds			✓	

## POVERTY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1

Poverty is measured in different ways. Will the policy / decision have an impact on child and family poverty and in what way?				
Poverty Measure (examples of poverty measures appended overleaf)	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT	NO IMPACT	REASON & EVIDENCE
1. Childcare is an essential factor in alleviating poverty.		✓		Potentially would impact negatively but access to childcare is mitigated in relation to sufficiency across the town.
2. Childcare is an essential component in reducing and eradicating poverty. .		✓		As above
3. Childcare supports parents and carers so that they can train and work, childcare supports children to learn, enjoy and experience opportunities that can shape their future.		✓		As above

Overall impact of Policy / Decision			
POSITIVE IMPACT		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)	
Housing	
Average time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council tax benefit claims	
Number of affordable homes built	
Health	
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	

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

9 JULY 2024



**Subject:** APPROVAL OF SCHOOL TERM AND HOLIDAY DATES 2025-26

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

**Decision Type:** Non-Key

## 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 To seek agreement of the Children's Services Committee to the pattern of school term and holiday dates for the school year 2025-26 for Community Schools.
- 2.2 To seek agreement of the Children's Services Committee in recommending these dates to governing bodies of Foundation schools and Academies in Hartlepool.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As the local authority (LA), the Council has the responsibility for setting the school term and holiday dates for Community schools in Hartlepool. Foundation schools' governing bodies and Academies are responsible for setting their own school holiday pattern within the agreed national framework of working days. Traditionally the LA and the governing bodies of all of the Foundation schools and more recently, Academies, work together to ensure a consistent pattern across the town in respect of school term and holiday dates. Although some variation has occurred in the case of Academies.

- 3.2 Five professional development (PD) days are provided for in the teachers' conditions of service and can be taken in combinations of part-day "twilight" sessions at the direction of individual schools. The pattern proposed for 2025-26 provides for an "envelope" of 195 days.
- 3.3 For a number of years, local authorities have, with some success agreed a unified calendar of term dates across the northern region.

#### 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 In the spring term 2023-24 the Tees Valley region and a number of other north east representatives consulted on a pattern for 2025-2026 based on the guiding principles as shown in **Appendix 1**. The proposed pattern enables schools to begin the academic year on Monday 1st September 2025 and end the year on Tuesday 21st July 2026.
- 4.2 Following discussions, arrangements were made to consult all head teachers in Hartlepool and also the relevant associations / unions on the school year pattern for 2025-2026. On the completion of local consultation in the region, the general consensus from the local authorities within the Tees Valley and other regional authorities is to adopt the model attached as **Appendix 1**.

#### 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	None.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None.
<b>SUBSIDY CONTROL</b>	None.
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None.
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	None.
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None.
<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None.

<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None.
<b>ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None.
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Neighbouring local authorities and Hartlepool Headteachers have been consulted.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 To approve the scheduled term and holiday dates for the academic year 2025-2026 for Community schools shown in **Appendix 1**.
- 6.2 To recommend the schedule of term and holiday dates for 2025-2026 to governing bodies of Foundation Schools and Academies in Hartlepool.

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The proposals seek to achieve common term dates across the north east based on guiding principles enabling continuity for parents, carers, other schools, local authority staff and other agencies.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 There are no background papers.

## 9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 10/06/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 10/06/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 10/06/2024

HARTLEPOOL SCHOOL TERM AND HOLIDAY DATES - ACADEMIC YEAR 2025 - 2026

	AUGUST 2025	SEPTEMBER 2025	OCTOBER 2025	NOVEMBER 2025	DECEMBER 2025	JANUARY 2026
Monday	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26
Tuesday	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27
Wednesday	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28
Thursday	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25 26	1 8 15 22 29
Friday	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30
Saturday	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24 31
Sunday	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25

40

35

	FEBRUARY 2026	MARCH 2026	APRIL 2026	MAY 2026	JUNE 2026	JULY 2026
Monday	2 9 16 23	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27
Tuesday	3 10 17 24	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28
Wednesday	4 11 18 25	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29
Thursday	5 12 19 26	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30
Friday	6 13 20 27	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31
Saturday	7 14 21 28	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25
Sunday	1 8 15 22	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26

35

24

24

37

Bank Holiday	
School Holiday	
PD Days	

40  
35  
35  
24  
24  
37  
195

The number of term days shown is 195. Up to five of these should be taken as professional development (PD) days for teaching staff when pupils will not attend and will be determined by the individual schools. Schools should inform parents accordingly.



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

9 JULY 2024



**Subject:** ANNUAL FOSTERING REPORT 2023 - 2024 AND  
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE MARCH 2024

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

**Decision Type:** For Decision (non key)

## 1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

### Hartlepool will be a place

- 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 Children Service's Committee with information relating to the activity of the Fostering Service for the year 2023/24. The provision of foster care is a regulated activity and as such there is a requirement to provide the executive side of the Council with performance information on a regular basis. Children's Services Committee receives the annual report of the fostering service and quarterly update reports are presented to the Corporate Parent Forum.
- 2.2 This report also presents to Children's Services Committee the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide for the fostering service.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The work of the Fostering Service is subject to National Minimum Standards applicable to the provision of Foster Care for our children in care and care leavers. The National Minimum Standards, together with Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review, form the

basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Fostering Agencies.

- 3.2 The Annual Fostering Report (**Appendix 1 – [click here to download](#)**) provides details of the staffing arrangements in the service, training received by both staff and foster carers and the constitution of the Fostering Panel. The report also explains activity in relation to the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective foster carers and the progress in relation to the priorities for the service in 2023/24.
- 3.3 The Fostering Services Minimum Standard 25.7 requires Fostering Services to ensure the executive side of the Local Authority:
- Receives a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency once every 3 months;
  - Monitors the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for children;
  - Satisfies themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of the registration.

#### 4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The Fostering Service Annual Report provides details of the service's full activity in respect of the following:
- The team;
  - An explanation regarding governance and oversight of Hartlepool's fostering service and Hartlepool's fostering panel activity over the year;
  - An understanding around how children's placements are made and our success around stability;
  - Information about our recruitment drive to encourage new foster carers to come to Hartlepool, the places where we advertise for new carers and the successes and issues we face;
  - Information about how we reward our carers and how we recognise their contribution to a child's life;
  - Information about Hartlepool's training programme for foster carers;
  - Information relating to the support and services Hartlepool foster carers can expect from the fostering service after they have been approved;
  - Our priorities for 2024-2025;
  - The voice of Hartlepool foster carers and children and young people who are cared for; and
  - Service development; Mockingbird, Special Guardianship Offer and Family Finding.
- 4.2 It is a requirement of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services that each fostering agency produces a Statement of Purpose, outlining its aims and objectives, a

description of the services and facilities that are provided, how the service is managed and its fitness to provide fostering services. The Statement of Purpose for Hartlepool's Fostering Service is attached at **Appendix 2** ([click here to download](#)) to this report. Additionally there is the Children's Guide to Fostering **Appendix 3** ([click here to download](#)) and the Annual Schedule of Training for Foster Carers, **Appendix 4** ([click here to download](#))

## 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	The fostering service needs to adhere to the Statement of Purpose and provide the executive side of the council information relating to the fostering service on a quarterly basis.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<p>There are no financial implications arising from this report. The Fostering Service has a set budget to support the year's activity. This also supports the recruitment of potential carers. The annual budget covers the cost of the Fostering Service, including social workers, fostering allowances and the recruitment of potential carers.</p> <p>For 2023/24 the service budget was £4.7m and the outturn was £4.6m, resulting in an underspend in this service area of £0.1m.</p>
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no legal considerations arising from this report. The Fostering Team and Service adhere to the National Minimum Standards, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, and the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Fostering Agencies. The Fostering Service is inspected by Ofsted as part of its Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services.
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	There are no specific child and family poverty implications arising from this report.
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	The Fostering Service practices in a sensitive and responsive way towards Foster Carers and children in our care. The Fostering Service works with carers from any ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, identity, language, race and sexual orientation. This is detailed within the Statement of Purpose. ( <b>Appendix 2</b> – <a href="#">click here to download</a> )
<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no staff implications arising from this report.

<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Foster carers are regularly consulted and their views and comments are reflected in the Annual Report. Foster carers are subject to annual reviews chaired by an independent reviewing officer. As part of this process children and young people, and their social worker, provide feedback on their experiences of foster carers.
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## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to note the report in relation to the work of the Fostering Service in the Annual Report for 2023/24.
- 6.2 Children's Services Committee is asked to approve the Statement of Purpose (**Appendix 2**) and the Children's guide to Fostering (**Appendix 3**).

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Fostering Service is required to fulfill its statutory responsibilities to children in its care by the local authority and provide regular reports to the Children Services Committee to enable the Committee to satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of its registration.
- 7.2 Children's Services Committee has an important role in the scrutiny of activities of the Fostering Service to ensure that performance in this area is of good quality, caring and robust and relates to the statement of purpose.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None

## 9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date:
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 17/06/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 15/06/2024

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

9<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024



**Subject:** INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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

**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.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To report to Children's Services Committee the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) which took place in March 2024.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Ofsted is the regulatory body for children's social care. The inspection framework outlines the process by which local authority children's services are inspected focusing on the effectiveness of services and arrangements:
- to help and protect children, and enable families to stay together and get the help they need;
  - the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home;
  - the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, in stable, loving homes, including adoption; and

- the experiences and progress of care leavers.

The inspection also evaluates:

- the effectiveness of leaders and managers;
- the impact they have on the lives of children and young people; and
- the quality of professional practice delivered by a workforce that is equipped and effective.

3.2 Hartlepool Borough Council Children's Services received its last ILACS inspection in July 2018 when the service's overall effectiveness was judged to be good and outstanding for children in our care and care leavers. Since this time, the service has received two focused visits in accordance with the framework and participated in five annual conversations with Ofsted.

3.3 The inspection was undertaken over a two week period with the first week taking place off-site. On 18 March 2024 the short inspection commenced on site and was undertaken by five social care inspectors plus a regulatory social care inspector who attended for two days and a schools inspector who attended for one day.

#### 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

(include here recommended option as well as and alternative options/proposals considered and rejected)

4.1 The report of the inspection is attached at **Appendix A** to this document and details the judgements made by Ofsted and their reasons for these. The table below summarises these judgements.

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children in care	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding

4.2 The report was published on 16 May 2024. The above judgements demonstrate an improvement on performance from previous inspection and places Hartlepool as one of the top performing children's services in the

country. This is particularly significant in the context of the recognised increase in complexity of need and demand on services.

## 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	There are no risk implications arising from this report
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no financial considerations arising from this report.
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no legal considerations arising from this report.
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	The delivery of high quality children's services to children and families in Hartlepool supports families who are experiencing poverty and promotes improved life chances for children.
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no specific equality and diversity considerations arising from this report.
<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	The report recognises the strengths of the workforce in children's services and the 'compassionate work with children and families across all service areas'.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members of Children's Services Committee are asked to note the outcome of the inspection of children's services.

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Children's Services Committee is responsible for ensuring quality of performance and practice to support vulnerable children in Hartlepool.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Ofsted 2024 Inspecting local authority children's services  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-from-2018/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services>

**9. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 11/06/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 11/06/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 11/06/2024



# Inspection of Hartlepool local authority children's services

**Inspection dates:** 18 March to 22 March 2024

**Lead inspector:** Louise Walker, His Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children in care	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding

Since the last ILACS judgement inspection in 2018, senior leaders in Hartlepool have continued to develop and improve services for children and families. Senior leaders have not only sustained the good practice and leadership seen at the last inspection, they have been relentless in driving further progress and improvements. This is in the context of continuing to provide an effective service to children and families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and a significant increase in complexity of need and demand on services.

Inspectors saw consistently good practice across all parts of the service with exceptionally strong management oversight and a leadership team with an unwavering commitment to children and the workforce.

There are many examples of positive practice with families seen during this inspection. The key practice strengths include consistent responses to concerns about the most vulnerable children in the borough in a very strong 'front door' service, and compassionate work with children and families throughout all service areas. Children come into care when they need to, and they are thriving. This means that the overwhelming majority of children who need help, protection or care in Hartlepool receive an outstanding service that helps to improve their lives.

## What needs to improve?

- Clarity for care leavers about their rights and entitlements through the care leavers offer.
- The support and responses to care leavers in custody.

## The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: outstanding

1. There is a very strong and effective focus on providing help early to children and their families and a preventative approach across all the levels of need, vulnerability and risk. When children are identified as needing help and protection, staff and managers consistently make the best decisions for them to ensure that help and support are provided for children at the earliest opportunity and children's lives improve as a result.
2. There are effective relationships between early help and statutory services and children's cases are appropriately stepped up and down when their needs or risks change. Strong, well-coordinated multi-agency support is provided through the family hubs, which means that children receive the right help and support at the right time for them.
3. The quality and timeliness of referrals from partners are consistently strong. Parental consent is routinely recorded by most professionals. Workers in the front door are clear about when to dispense with parental consent to safeguard children and the rationale for this is recorded and has clear management oversight. The initial screening by the children's hub (CHub) workers is very effective, which means that children and their families are directed to the right service at the earliest opportunity.
4. Thresholds of need and risk are thoroughly understood and consistently applied. Referrals are consistently and appropriately prioritised to ensure timely responses for children and their families despite a substantial increase in demand at the front door. Experienced and skilled social workers in the CHub are professionally curious. They gather and analyse historical information clearly and effectively and consider the complexity of each family's needs. This leads to robust decision-making for children and their families and has contributed to a reduction in repeat contacts about children and provides a really strong base for subsequent assessment work to build on. Consistently strong managerial oversight results in children receiving timely, proportionate and appropriate responses. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
5. Partnership working is a significant strength in the CHub because of the co-location and seamless joint working of partner agencies. There is a very strong culture of help and protection being 'everybody's' business. This ensures that information is gathered quickly, is specific and is analysed appropriately.

Immediate responses to domestic abuse in the CHub are prioritised and appropriate action is taken to safeguard children and adults. This work is strengthened by the training that staff have received to highlight the effects of domestic abuse on children.

6. When safeguarding concerns are identified, strategy meetings are held swiftly. They include key partners and lead to effective decision-making to safeguard children. Child protection enquiries are thorough, with effective actions taken to help reduce harm to children.
7. When children are at risk of exploitation or have been missing, effective systems in the multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) service ensure that prompt action is taken. Longer-term risks are being reduced for children because of the strengths-based relationships and determined intervention of workers across all teams. When children go missing, workers in the MACE service ensure that children's views are captured through timely, high-quality return home interviews. The coordinated information is captured and used effectively to contribute to the highly effective multi-agency work undertaken to disrupt exploitation activity.
8. Responses to children and families who require help and support at evenings and weekends are appropriate. Immediate action is taken when needed, including holding strategy discussions to manage risk effectively and improve children's situations.
9. Social work assessments of children's needs are exceptionally thorough and child centred. They are timely and lead to proportionate responses to risk and need. Creative and sensitive engagement with children and their parents ensures that assessments focus on the lived experiences of children. Child-in-need and child protection plans support parents to understand what needs to change and how they will be helped and supported. Plans are focused on children's needs and address risk factors. They contain relevant interventions to help children and adults, and the majority have clear timescales set. This means that all parties are clear about what needs to happen and by when, which is helping to improve children's situations in a time frame that is meaningful to them.
10. Multi-agency review meetings for children in need of help and protection are attended by a relevant range of professionals who are involved with children and their families. These meetings are effective forums for timely information-sharing, planning and decision-making for children and their families.
11. Children are visited regularly in line with their needs, and they are seen alone when appropriate. Children benefit from a range of creative and bespoke direct work to help gather their wishes and feelings. Social workers' recording of visits to children is clear and purposeful. This will help to provide clarity and explanations of interventions should children access their records in later life.

12. When risks to children are not reducing, they benefit from timely decisions to escalate into pre-proceedings and care proceedings. Senior managers maintain a thorough and effective overview of the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline (PLO). Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the tracking of the PLO to ensure that children are not subject to pre-proceedings for longer than necessary. Letters before proceedings are detailed and thoughtfully written and identify the individual risks to children effectively. Parents are clear about what is expected of them and what support they will get to enable their children to stay safely living with them whenever possible.
13. The constant focus on strengths and risks for children across all areas of their lives is underpinned by the local authority's chosen restorative model of practice. Social workers are very skilled at identifying risk, balanced with a strengths-based, child-centred approach which has improved the circumstances of many children and families, enabling them to remain living together safely.
14. Workers routinely include members of family networks and the focus on family engagement is extensive and impressive. Workers consistently ensure that wider family members and those important adults in children's lives are central to delivering support, reducing risks and improving situations for children.
15. There is detailed management oversight and recording when key decisions are made in children's lives. Informal manager and peer discussions take place outside of formal supervision, but these rich conversations are not always recorded.
16. Disabled children are supported by skilled and caring practitioners who are working with children with highly complex needs. Staff expertly support children to have a say in what is important to them. The relationship-based model of practice is embedded and shines through in children's records.
17. There are a very small number of children in private fostering arrangements. When children live in these arrangements, appropriate assessments and checks are undertaken, and regular oversight is in place. Visits to this group of children are carried out regularly and their views about their living arrangements sought.
18. The local authority designated officer provides a highly effective and responsive service. Designated officer records are detailed, with clearly recorded rationale for decision-making and appropriate links made to safeguarding individual children in their records. The local authority designated officer fulfils a range of functions, including providing training and advice, which is particularly valued by schools.
19. The local authority closely monitors children who are missing education. Positive professional relationships with schools and academies ensure that there are clear and well-established systems in place to identify, check and manage

children who are missing education. They maintain a sharp focus on ensuring the safety and welfare of individual children.

20. The local authority has developed specialist teams in response to the significant increase in children who are electively home educated. This is helping to ensure clear oversight of these children.
21. Children aged 16 and 17 who are at risk of becoming homeless, or present as homeless, receive a responsive service. They are quickly supported to remain at home when it is safe to do so. When it is not, they are advised of their legal rights to enable them to make informed decisions about options available to them, including the right to become a child in care.

### **The experiences and progress of children in care: outstanding**

22. Children come into care in Hartlepool when this is the most appropriate plan for them. Inspectors saw very effective use of family network meetings to deliver edge of care work and to identify other family members to care for children when they cannot safely remain at home.
23. Feedback from the local judiciary and Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) is extremely positive. Social workers in Hartlepool produce high-quality evidence and assessments for court, which helps to ensure that legal proceedings are concluded in a timely way. This results in swift plans being secured for children's future care.
24. Most children benefit from living in suitable permanent homes, with the vast majority of children thriving and being cared for in their home area. Most children make notable and sustained progress. A very small number of cared for children live at a distance from their home area. This is due to a lack of local placements to meet their needs. These decisions are not taken lightly, and placements are made based on a child's risk assessment and level of need. Leaders have active plans in place to bring children back to Hartlepool as soon as they are able. Children living at a distance receive a high level of support and regular contact from their social workers wherever they live.
25. The majority of children in care live with foster carers. Many have been with the same carers for a number of years and have formed secure attachments and are making good progress. When children live in children's homes, they receive good-quality care and support. A very small number of children with complex needs experience too many changes in placement. Senior leaders maintain close oversight of these children's care to ensure that appropriate wraparound help is implemented to support the child during and after moves. Leaders go the extra mile to appropriately challenge poorly performing providers who do not provide an appropriate level of care and support to Hartlepool children. A very small number of children are living in unregistered provision. Managers and leaders have clear and regular oversight of these children's circumstances and are working to progress registration.

26. Children in care enjoy strong and positive relationships with their social workers, who are consistent and trusted adults in their lives. Workers are clearly proud of 'their children' and talk with affection, commitment and care about them. Some children have had the same social worker for many years. The continuity in relationships is heartwarming and is instrumental in supporting children to form strong attachments with key adults in their lives.
27. A very high proportion of children attend their children in care reviews and are fully supported to have a purposeful say in their plans. Independent reviewing officer footprint in children's case recording is evident, showing regular visits in between reviews to ensure that children's views on their care informs their plans. This area of practice has improved considerably since the last inspection.
28. There is a detailed and considered response to children's cultural identity. There is a clear focus on ethnicity and religion and on the community in which children grew up. This enables children to have a good understanding and sense of who they are.
29. Children live with their brothers and sisters when this is right for them, informed by thorough assessments. When this is not appropriate, there is well-considered planning about how and when they should see one another, and every effort is made to maintain safe relationships and family identity. Social workers understand the importance of family time for children and promote this in line with children's wishes, feelings, safety and emotional needs.
30. Cared for children typically make good educational progress from their starting points. Since the previous inspection, there has been further investment in the virtual school, which has increased the capacity to support children in care and their educational engagement and outcomes. The virtual school works in close partnership with schools and demonstrates the role of a corporate parent effectively. They advocate for children in care to ensure that decisions made are in the best interests of individual children. Consideration is given to the academic outcomes as well as the broader development of children in care. As a result, children are well supported to engage with, and participate in, learning.
31. Children's physical and mental health needs are well addressed in care planning. Social workers have oversight of children's health needs, particularly routine health appointments, which are up to date.
32. Disabled children in care benefit from workers who understand their complex health needs. Workers skilfully coordinate a number of professionals to ensure that children and their carers are well supported. Strong partnership working is supporting children's needs to be promptly met.
33. Those children who go missing from care are quickly identified and supported to enable risks to reduce. Return home interviews are effective and enable

managers to monitor themes and trends, which are fed into the MACE, where appropriate. The information gathered helps to better safeguard children.

34. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in care are supported by committed social workers who are sensitive to their cultural needs and to their experiences. They receive a good balance of practical and emotional support that caters to their individual needs. Social workers show a good awareness of their histories, the risks arising from the journey that unaccompanied young people have made, and the trauma experienced by them.
35. The voice of children is valued and threaded throughout the service. Children have a solid influence in shaping the local authority's provision of services through a range of groups and participation events. Children's achievements are enthusiastically celebrated through success events every October half term and an annual awards ceremony. Children say that they thoroughly enjoy these events.
36. Considered and thoughtful planning ensures that children live with the right foster carers. Impressively, inspectors saw examples of some children attending panel when decisions are made about their long-term care when it was right for them to be there. Children benefit from having their permanence secured swiftly through adoption when this is the plan for them. The strong focus on early permanence helps to avoid delay in deciding a child's future, at a time in their life when days and weeks really matter. There are strong relationships between the Regional Adoption Agency (Tees Valley Adoption) and the local authority. This ensures that there is good oversight of children who may need adoption through the early notification process. This allows time for prospective adopters to be considered and reduces delay for children. The quality of assessments provided by Hartlepool is good; there is clear information about children, which supports the panel in making timely, safe recommendations about matching. Plans for children to move to their adopters' care are thoughtful and give children and their adopters the best chance of bonding and supporting these relationships to thrive.
37. Foster carers spoken with gave exceptionally positive feedback about their experiences both before and throughout the assessment process. They feel well supported by the service, which helps them to provide high-quality care to children. Adopters also speak highly about the excellent support and advice provided by their social worker from the beginning to the end of the assessment process.

## **The experiences and progress of care leavers: good**

38. Young people leaving care are well supported by committed staff, multi-agency partners and political leaders, who collectively take their corporate parenting responsibilities very seriously. There is a palpable culture across children's social care and among council leaders and members that care leavers are 'their' children. This is exemplified by the high numbers of care leavers either being

permanently employed, in apprenticeships or in social care roles in the council. Their voice, influence and experiences are benefiting other care leavers and modelling what they can achieve with the right support.

39. Most pathway plans are co-produced and shared with care leavers. These plans are detailed, effective and regularly reviewed and provide specific actions to meet the individual needs of care leavers. Care leavers have access to key documents and understand how to access their records should they wish to. Sensitive consideration is given to how best to emotionally support the young person with this.
40. Care leavers have effective and trusting relationships with their personal advisers (PAs), who are highly skilled and go above and beyond to support the care leavers they are working with. Most PAs visit young people frequently and in line with their needs and wishes.
41. Care leavers live in suitable, good-quality accommodation that meets their needs. The recently developed 'staying close' offer provides intensive support for a small number of children and young people. Most young people spoken to said they felt supported emotionally and felt ready to move on to independence. Most care leavers receive individual support with independence skills, including group sessions from the pathfinder hub, to help them with wider life and practical skills.
42. For the very small number of care leavers in custody, attempts to keep in touch by their PA are inconsistent, with significant gaps in visits and contact. The pathway plans for these care leavers are not completed with them, nor shared with them, and multi-agency plans supporting their impending release are not visible in their records.
43. Transition planning is embedded for most care leavers. Pathway plans are created from age 16 by social workers in the through care team with consideration of what services will meet the child's needs when they are adults. Social workers remain involved with young people beyond 18 when this is the right decision for them.
44. Capacity constraints have impacted on the ability to allocate PAs before a child reaches 18. However, this is the aspiration moving forward as leaders have secured additional PA resources. Some children who are staying close or have higher needs meet with their PA earlier, which is positive.
45. Care leavers are actively encouraged and supported practically to maintain important safe links with family, friends and previous carers subject to their wishes.
46. Care leaver participation in service development is actively encouraged through involvement in panel interviews for senior leadership roles. The care leavers forum meets weekly at the new hub development. This is providing a safe and community-based environment for care leavers to meet and access crucial



support and develop independence skills to help them navigate their path to adulthood.

47. PAs are highly attuned to care leavers' emotional well-being and health needs, and these are captured in their pathway plans and regularly reviewed. Most care leavers have access to their health passports. For a small number of care leavers, accessing emotional and mental health support can be more challenging, with few available bespoke services locally. PAs are accessing creative resources to help them to support young people's emotional well-being and this is mitigating the long waits for formal assessments for young people.
48. Care leavers who are unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people are receiving sensitive and individualised support to meet their cultural, faith and emotional needs. PAs support them emotionally and practically through their asylum application process.
49. Efforts to engage and work with vulnerable care leavers who are parents are robust and persistent, which means that young people and their children receive the support and services they need.
50. PAs are very alert to risks for their care leavers. They work effectively with multi-agency partners, including police, health and probation, to support care leavers to be safer.
51. Most care leavers are encouraged and practically helped to access employment and training opportunities. The virtual school and senior leaders are committed to increasing care leavers' opportunities to engage in further education, employment or training (EET) but recognise that the numbers not in EET remain too high. The local authority has meaningful plans in place to further support young people to gain employment.
52. The local offer is well established in Hartlepool. Most care leavers understand their rights and entitlements, including access to independent advocacy, but not all know how to make a formal complaint. Not all PAs have fully understood the local offer, which has affected the experiences of a small number of care leavers. This relates mainly to council tax exemption for young people living outside of Hartlepool. As a result, a small minority of care leavers have not been able to benefit fully from the support that is available.
53. When young people reach 21, they have an opportunity to maintain regular visits by their PA. If they choose not to have visits, the offer remains up to the age of 25 to opt back into services if they choose. Lines of communication are kept open between the local authority and the care leaver whenever possible. Until very recently, this has not been widely understood by all PAs. This shortfall had been identified by senior managers in recent audit work. Senior leaders recognise there is more to do to ensure that the offer is fully understood by all staff. They have effective plans in place to make the

improvements needed so that they can support all care leavers effectively to understand their rights and entitlements.

## **The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: outstanding**

54. Children's social care is led very effectively by an experienced and credible director of children's services (DCS). Working with the senior leadership team, she has created a genuine ethos across the service where children are seen as, and valued as 'our children', and this permeates through the workforce and the multi-agency partnership.
55. The culture created by the DCS and the senior leadership team shines through all conversations and practice. This small, but confident, ambitious and influential leadership team models expected behaviour, which sets clear expectations for staff. They are highly visible and inspire staff to perform well for children in Hartlepool. The grip they have on children's social care and individual circumstances is exceptional.
56. The demand at the front door has increased significantly and the degree of child and family need is increasingly complex. Leaders thoroughly understand this profile and capacity has been increased where possible. The wider council and partner agencies are actively engaged, taking collective responsibility to help and support children and families. This is key to the success in driving change and continual improvement from an already strong base. The quality of the leadership and strive for innovation and improvement is exemplified in their involvement in pilots around the social care reforms and sector-led improvement.
57. The lead member and the managing director of the council are strong advocates for children's services and have a clear understanding of their corporate parenting role. The senior leadership team ensures that elected members are sighted on the performance data, what it means, and the key challenges facing children's services and the wider council. There is unwavering support from political leaders across the council, who have faith in the social care leadership. This is reflected in corporate decision-making and is helping to secure investment to increase capacity in the workforce and placement sufficiency.
58. The enthusiastic corporate parenting lead member knows of most children in care and care leavers by their names. They actively promote children and young people's attendance at board meetings and their involvement in the development sessions to look at service improvements. This has resulted in children and young people being actively involved in the development of services and the offer to children leaving care.
59. Effective arrangements and mechanisms are in place for respectful challenge across the council and across partners through a shared safeguarding

partnership. Partnership working is a real strength in Hartlepool at both a strategic and practice level. Strong positive feedback was provided from the family courts and Cafcass. Work in the court arena is described as 'well managed and well led'.

60. Leaders have a clear overview of staff performance and practice quality, all of which is driven by the clear expectation that children's lived experiences and outcomes are the overriding priority. Management oversight at all levels is very strong, with a clear line of sight and challenge. This ensures that when concerns are identified, decisions and actions are swiftly taken.
61. Senior leaders know their service very well. The self-evaluation accurately reflects the service, and inspectors found very little that leaders are not already sighted and acting on. The inconsistency in the support to care leavers has already been identified by senior leaders and plans put in place for it to be strengthened. Learning from audit activity is used well to inform and improve service developments and practice. Throughout the inspection, leaders reflected on inspection findings and were responsive to these.
62. Leaders are well sighted on the recent decline in longer-term placement stability and understand the range of reasons for this. Some are beyond their control and indicative of the sufficiency challenges in the sector. Effective use of monitoring data and regional discussions are informing work to develop plans to address these challenges.
63. There is a relentless focus on the ongoing recruitment and retention of frontline managers and social workers, resulting in a stable workforce with very limited use of interim workers. This means that children are benefiting from enduring and trusting relationships with a consistent worker.
64. The workforce has access to an extensive training offer. The local authority is investing well in 'growing their own' social workers with investment in national recruitment and step-up programmes. Students are well supported to 'flourish safely'. There has been an improved focus on family networks and children's voices. Newly qualified social workers are well supported through a well-established assessed and supported year in employment programme.
65. Staff have challenging but manageable caseloads that allow for meaningful engagement with children. The close working relationships across the teams support the management of peaks in activity well. The quality of supervision records is generally strong. The vast majority of social workers said that they receive regular case supervision alongside almost continuous informal and peer supervision, which supports their practice and ensures that plans are progressed for children.
66. Workers told inspectors that they are proud to work for Hartlepool and staff morale is very good. Like the children in Hartlepool, the workforce is listened to, cared for and cared about by senior leaders. The words and actions of

senior leaders convey to staff a genuine sense of belonging and trust in their roles and in the organisation. One worker said, 'It's an amazing place to work.' Workers across the whole service articulate a shared vision that 'we do right by our children'. This culture created by senior leaders is having a positive impact on staff retention.

Pre-publication

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# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

9<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024



**Subject:** INSPECTION OF HBC CHILDREN'S HOMES

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

**Decision Type:** For Information

## 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 to Children's Services Committee the recent full Ofsted inspection reports of Stockton Road, Exmoor Grove, Wilton Avenue, Park Rd and St David's Walk Children's homes.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Ofsted inspections are carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF); this applies to inspections of residential settings for children amongst other settings such as adoption support agencies.

The Social Care Common Inspection Framework means that:

- There is the same judgement structure across the range of settings inspected;
- The experiences and progress of children and other service users, wherever they live or receive help, are central to inspections;

- There are key areas of evidence that are usually reported on at each inspection.

3.2 The Social Care Common Inspection Framework is not a 'one-size-fits-all' framework. Where necessary, it reflects and addresses the unique and distinct aspects of each type of setting. However, the evaluation criteria used to make judgements and the accompanying guidance are, wherever possible, consistent across settings. OFSTED has a duty to inspect children's homes twice a year under the Children's Homes Regulations 2015, if judged as outstanding, this can be moved to annual cycle.

#### 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Appendices one to five of this report provides the most recent Ofsted inspection report of the children's homes ran by Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC). Members will note that although unique to each individual home, all of the homes have achieved a judgement of good, overall and across all sub judgements. This external regulation and the judgments achieved provides assurance for Elected Members and enables them to be confident that children in our care residing in our children's homes are cared for very well and are cared about by staff teams dedicated to promoting the very best outcomes for them.

#### 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	Our children's homes are highly regulated, we strive to have good quality children's homes, if not the care of the children is compromised.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no specific financial considerations for this report.
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no legal considerations for this report.
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	There are no child and family poverty considerations required for this report.
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	We recruit and train a variety of staff to provide choice with a range of skills, life experience and knowledge which reflect the needs of the children we care for.

<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<p>Despite having excellent retention within or residential units for staffing, we have vacancies in each of our homes leading to the current staff teams working over and above contracted hours. The recruitment drive continues to seek and employ skilled, experienced staff.</p> <p>We are delighted to share that we have recently recruited our second Care Experienced young person into a casual post.</p>
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no asset management considerations.
<b>ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no environmental considerations arising from this report.
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	During the children's home inspection process, consultation takes place with parents, education, social workers and independent reviewing officers. Inspectors communicated with and observed the young people within each of our homes and this informed their findings.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the positive inspection reports of children's homes ran by HBC which are all judged to be good. The inspections of four of the homes were all carried out between January and March 2024. Wilton Avenue Inspection was carried out September 2023.

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Each of our children's homes are regulated statutory services providing care for children and young people and Members must be kept informed of the judgements of Ofsted in relation to each of the provisions.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Ofsted Report – Wilton Avenue, dated – September 2023 (**Appendix 1**)  
Ofsted report – Stockton Road, dated – February 2024 (**Appendix 2**)  
Ofsted Report - Park Road, dated - February 2024 (**Appendix 3**)  
Ofsted Report – Exmoor Grove, dated – March 2024 (**Appendix 4**)  
Ofsted Report – St David's Walk, dated – March 2024 (**Appendix 5**)



**9. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 13/06/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 13/06/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 17/06/2024 (Neil Wilson)

# 2710606

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to two children with social and emotional difficulties. The home is owned and operated by a local authority.

The home was registered with Ofsted on 15 December 2022. This is the home's first full inspection since registration.

### Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** not applicable

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children benefit from a homely and nurturing environment. Staff are attuned to the children's individual needs and provide care that is meaningful and helpful. As a result, children have built trusting and secure relationships with the staff.

Children's emotional well-being is at the centre of the care that they receive. Staff use the expertise of the clinical therapist to ensure that children are receiving support. This helps children to make progress and understand their emotions and past experiences.

Children help to plan their own care. Their views are regularly sought by the staff and, where possible, plans are developed to accommodate the children's requests. When their requests cannot be met, staff explain why and help children to understand their decisions, for example when computer games or social media platforms are not allowed due to children's ages.

Staff support children to attend school regularly and, consequently, they are making good progress in their education. Staff work collaboratively with school to resolve any problems or concerns quickly. One child's behaviour at school has improved so much that they are now able to attend a residential trip.

Children are encouraged to invite their friends to their home for tea and activities. Clubs and group activities in the local community provide opportunities for children to develop friendships and explore new interests. This helps children to learn new skills and develop their confidence.

Staff understand the value of relationships with children's families. When children are ready, the staff support them to visit their families and develop positive relationships. Staff recognise that this can be difficult for some children and additional support is provided to help children understand their feelings.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Children's vulnerabilities are understood by the staff, who balance keeping children safe with positive risk-taking to promote age-appropriate independence. Staff teach children about risks such as online safety and stranger danger. This helps children to develop a greater understanding about making safer choices.

Staff have a good knowledge of the home's safeguarding procedures and the actions that they would take following a safeguarding concern. There are positive working relationships between the staff and other agencies. This also provides opportunities for additional learning through bespoke training sessions. For example, the home is part of a child safety strategy group led by the police.

Children and staff benefit from clinical consultations and supervision delivered by play therapists. This helps children to explore their emotions and feelings during direct sessions. This provides staff with opportunities to learn about the children's needs and seek advice when new needs emerge.

Positive behaviour is promoted by staff in a way that is meaningful to children. For example, the staff write notes and put them in the children's positivity jars. The notes can be about nice things the children have done or their achievements. There is also a rewards system where children can collect points to gain a prize. This helps children to build their self-esteem.

Staff occasionally hold children when they become upset to keep them safe from harm. Records of holds do not always contain enough detail about the hold used. Furthermore, the manager's review does not evidence robust evaluation of the effectiveness of some holds. This could impact on the manager's ability to recognise patterns or themes, and result in opportunities to review practice being missed.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The manager has developed positive relationships with her new staff team and other professionals who support the children. As a result, children's care planning is collaborative and effective in promoting positive outcomes.

The manager balances her administrative duties with time spent with the children. She has a good understanding of the children's needs, wishes, views and feelings and uses this to advocate on children's behalf. This has helped children to develop a trusting relationship with the manager.

The manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. She uses an effective monitoring system to assess the quality of care that children receive and the progress that children are making. When shortfalls arise, the manager responds quickly to reduce the impact on children.

The manager provides a range of training opportunities to ensure that staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to meet the children's needs. She uses a 'theme of the month' to develop the team's understanding in areas such as safeguarding, positive relationships and health. This helps staff to consolidate their learning from training and better meet the needs of the children.

Team meetings take place regularly and are well attended by the staff. They are reflective in nature and provide a platform to explore and review children's progress. There is a strong focus on providing consistency in the care and support that children receive.

Staff have monthly supervision with their line manager. Supervisions vary in quality and they do not consistently offer an opportunity for the staff to reflect on their practice. This is a missed opportunity for staff development.

## **What does the children's home need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are fully recorded and include a detailed description of the hold and any actions taken by the staff to avoid the hold. Records of restraint should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure that it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

### **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 2710606

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Hartlepool Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY

**Responsible individual:** Jane Young

**Registered manager:** Lindsay Cummins

## Inspector

Beth Forster, Social Care Inspector

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# 10273164

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2022.

### Inspection dates: 13 and 14 February 2024

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 8 March 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none



## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/03/2023	Full	Good
10/11/2022	Full	Inadequate
25/08/2021	Full	Good
13/08/2019	Full	Good

## **Inspection judgements**

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The children live in a home that is warm and welcoming. Children who are moving to the home are supported with a thorough transition plan prior to moving in. Children get to know staff, the environment and the other children in advance, which helps them to feel welcome and start to develop a sense of belonging.

Staff invest their time in getting to know the children. Children feel listened to and able to speak to staff if they have a concern. Staff understand children's views and help children to feel that their views are valued and important.

Not all children are engaging with education, training or employment. However, staff recognise the importance of learning, and when children do not attend their provision, staff are persistent in seeking alternative arrangements. Staff liaise with other professionals to address the barriers that children face. For one child, this has enabled them to sit their GCSE exams.

Children are registered with their local health services. Staff support children to attend their appointments and meet their health needs. When children do not feel able to attend, staff make new appointments and continue to encourage them to attend.

Staff support children to plan and enjoy a range of activities, hobbies and trips. This supports their emotional well-being and helps them to build confidence. These memories are captured in a memory book for children to keep, helping them to understand their life journey.

Young people who leave the home do so with a thorough and sensitive plan for their transition to independent living. Staff continue to maintain relationships with the young people and support them after they have moved on. This demonstrates to the children in the home and those young people who leave, that they can rely on the relationships they have built during their time in the home.

Staff recognise the important relationships that children have with their family and friends. Staff communicate effectively with the children, their families and professionals to ensure that those relationships are protected. As a result, children develop their sense of identity and are able to maintain those close bonds.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

The staff team know the children's individual risks and needs well. Staff regularly update risk assessments and follow children's plans. Staff work as a consistent team to better protect children. Children can identify a trusted adult who they can turn to if they are worried or need guidance. This helps children to trust that staff will keep them safer.

Key-work sessions are creative and varied. Children are supported to think about the things they see and do, and the people who they associate with. Children are able to develop their ability to make safer choices and better protect themselves.

Staff are alert to the risk of bullying and when this is identified, work is undertaken with the children to help them to understand the impact of their actions and prevent further incidents.

Staff understand and recognise the signs that children may be at risk of exploitation and take immediate action to protect them. These interventions are effective in keeping children safer. Staff's vigilance in identifying that a child was at risk of abuse resulted in that child being protected from harm.

Staff know what action to take when children go missing from home. Staff are proactive in searching for children and assess when to contact the police. Detailed records are kept of the steps that staff take to make sure that children return home safely. This enables the manager to maintain oversight of practice and evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken to safeguard the children.

Staff encourage children's positive behaviour with feedback about the things they do well. Children are helped to understand the impact of their actions through natural consequences. This helps children to think about their behaviour and the decisions they make.

Children's bedrooms are fitted with door alarms that are used to oversee their movements following bedtime. This measure is not routinely reviewed to ensure that it is still required to safeguard the children. Consequently, children may be subjected to unnecessary monitoring and surveillance.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home is run by an enthusiastic and passionate manager. The manager and staff are committed to giving children opportunities to reach their full potential. The staff team feel well supported by leaders and managers.

The manager has processes in place to monitor the functioning and progress of the home. This means that she can maintain oversight of practice and assess where changes may be needed. As a result, children continue to be given the opportunity to develop and make progress.

Staff receive regular supervision with their line manager and attend team meetings. This contributes to ensuring that children receive consistent care. In addition, clinical reflective supervision provides staff with a safe space to discuss their practice. This means that staff can better understand their own emotional responses and how these can impact on the care they provide.

Staff follow a programme of mandatory and additional training that is specific to the individual needs of children. This means that the staff are suitably trained to safeguard children and meet their needs.

Leaders and managers understand the importance of staff well-being. When difficult incidents occur in the home, the manager arranges group supervision to allow staff to explore how this has affected them. Additional support can also be offered on a one-to-one basis to those staff who need it. This means that staff feel valued and protected in their role.

The manager completes a report evaluating the care given to children. The review considers the children's views about the care they receive. The manager also considers what is needed to develop the home and improve the service. The report is not submitted to Ofsted within the necessary timescales. This hinders Ofsted's oversight of the quality of care provided to children.

## What does the children's home need to do to improve?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children;</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(d))</p>	15 April 2024
<p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) (4)(a))</p>	1 May 2024

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC472417

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Hartlepool Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY

**Responsible individual:** Jane Young

**Registered manager:** Zoe Davin

## Inspector

Lisa Gordon, Social Care Inspector

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# 2745434

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is operated and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There were three children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

### Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** not previously inspected

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** not applicable

## **Inspection judgements**

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children live in a warm and inviting home with a family atmosphere. Children have their own bedrooms that are individualised and decorated to the same high standard as the rest of the home. This shows children that they are valued.

Children are welcomed to the home and given a colourful children's guide about how the home runs. This is written in a child-friendly way that they will understand. This helps children to feel comfortable about where they will be living and be prepared for the move.

Children enjoy trusting and consistent relationships with staff who respond to the children in an empathetic way. Staff model tolerance, patience and acceptance, which helps the children learn how to get along with others. This helps children to develop a stronger sense of self-worth and identity.

Staff ensure that children's health needs are met and encourage them to attend their routine appointments. As children get older, staff support them to manage their own health needs. This contributes to children developing the skills they will need when approaching adulthood.

Staff work with other education professionals to develop each child's individual education plan. This ensures that decisions made about education are child-centred. When plans for children are not appropriate, staff ensure that this is challenged and that the child's voice is heard. This helps to ensure that a more-suitable alternative is explored, and children receive an education that meets their individual needs.

Staff encourage the children to take part in a range of activities that reflect each child's unique likes and dislikes. This helps children to explore their interests and what they are good at, such as swimming, go-karting and going to museums. This helps children to feel a sense of achievement and develop their talents.

Staff talk positively about the children and recognise their individuality. The manager and staff invest time and care into capturing important memories in each child's own memory book. This means that children have a record of their time at the home that they can take with them when they move on.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Children are cared for by staff who know them well. Staff understand the risk posed to the children and how to keep them safe. Children identify trusted adults they can turn to for support, and this makes them feel safer.

Children's plans and assessments are reviewed and promptly updated. This helps to ensure that staff are working to the most up-to-date information and are able to respond effectively.

Children have consistent routines and boundaries and know what to expect from staff. Staff encourage positive behaviour through a rewards system and reflection on the children's achievements. Staff give the children a written daily comment that is inserted into a positive experience book. This provides children with a permanent record to be proud of, contributing to the development of a stronger sense of self-worth.

Staff support children to recognise and understand risks through targeted key-work sessions. Discussions take place with children about risks, unsafe adults and staying safe online. Staff are sensitive and creative in exploring these situations. This supports children to make better choices about the people they spend time with and how they use social media.

Staff know the procedure to follow when a child is missing from home. Staff follow each child's individual plan and make a search of the local area and known addresses. However, not all records are sufficiently detailed to show what was done during that time to keep children safe. This restricts the manager's oversight of how staff have responded when children are missing from home.

Children are cared for by adults who are selected using a robust and consistent recruitment process. This helps to ensure that the adults caring for children are suitable and skilled at meeting the needs of children.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home is led by an experienced registered manager. There is a stable staff team that shares the manager's high aspirations for the children in their care.

Leaders and managers make child-centred decisions about where children will live. When the manager identifies that the home is no longer meeting the needs of a child, discussions are held to carefully consider the next steps. This helps to ensure that decision-making and planning are consistent with each child's needs.

The manager and staff work proactively with other professionals to ensure that children are central to plans for their care. When the manager recognises that decisions are not in a child's best interests, they challenge those decisions appropriately.

New staff are supported through an induction programme and probation period. Staff complete essential training as part of their inductions. The manager also ensures that staff complete, or are enrolled on, additional training specific to the needs of the children. This helps to ensure that staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide consistent care to the children.

Staff participate in monthly supervision with their line manager. This includes opportunities to discuss each child. However not all records demonstrate reflection on staff practice or how well they are meeting the needs of children. This restricts the manager's oversight of the development needs of the staff team.

## **What does the children's home need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that records are kept that detail all individual incidents when children go missing from the home (regulation 36 (schedule 3(14))). An evaluation of missing-from-home incidents should be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.31)

### **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** 2745434

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Hartlepool Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY

**Responsible individual:** Jane Young

**Registered manager:** Brian Thwaites

## **Inspector**

Lisa Gordon, Social Care Inspector

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# SC030967

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides short-breaks and three longer-term residential placements for children with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2021.

### Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 22 November 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none



## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/11/2022	Full	Outstanding
08/06/2021	Full	Outstanding
30/07/2019	Full	Outstanding
06/11/2018	Full	Outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The home provides residential care for three children and short-break services for children from the local authority. This is a valuable service for the children and their families.

Children who live and stay in the home make good progress. This is because staff know the children they care for well. Children's care plans and risk assessments are detailed. This ensures staff know how to provide children with continuity of care.

Children develop trusting relationships. These relationships flourish due to the staff's understanding of each child's preferred way to communicate. Children are therefore helped to express themselves. Staff speak fondly and passionately about the children they care for. Observations of children showed they are confident and comfortable in the care of staff.

Children are engaged in positive and new experiences in the home and community. This is because staff take time to support children to engage in activities to enhance and broaden their experiences.

Families feel confident in leaving their children for short stays. Staff communicate well with parents to ensure they are kept up to date about their child. A newsletter is provided to parents to update them about any changes or upcoming events.

The children who live in the home are supported by staff to access education. Staff are strong advocates for children to ensure they receive the learning and support they need. One child has made considerable progress in his education since living in the home.

Children receive well-planned introductions to the home for short breaks. Staff take time to meet with children's families and speak with professionals involved before the children visit. Children attend the home for short visits to familiarise themselves with the home, other children and staff before staying overnight.

Staff prepare memory books for children. Photos are taken of children to capture their special occasions, achievements and activities. This captures children's memories of their time living or staying at the home.

Children are helped to learn new skills and work towards being more independent. When children make progress, they are rewarded with certificates for their achievements. Children are learning new life skills such as road safety and stranger danger.

Children do not have access to all areas of the home. This is because one child who lives at the home has their own spaces that other children do not freely access.

Other rooms, such as the kitchen, are locked, although children can access them with staff support if needed. However, some restrictions in the home are not assessed or reviewed regularly to decide if they are necessary for each child.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Children have detailed risk assessments. This ensures that staff understand children's vulnerabilities and behaviours and how to respond when children need extra support.

Children are rewarded for positive behaviours, such as being kind to others. The children can earn points for good behaviour and use those points towards rewards. The reward system is visual, so children can see the progress they are making. Children's achievements are celebrated and recorded so that staff can track their progress.

Staff are trained to intervene and physically hold children to keep them and others safe. This only happens as a last resort, as staff engage and distract children to help reduce any incidents that may be upsetting for them or others. After a child is physically held, staff give them an opportunity to communicate about what has happened.

The staff record when children have injuries and complete a body map. However, information recorded on the body maps did not provide enough information to understand how a child may have been injured. The manager's oversight of injuries to children was not evident on the body maps completed. This could hinder the manager's ability to identify any concerns and ensure children are safeguarded effectively.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home is managed by an experienced manager who knows the children well. Staff said they are well supported by the leaders and managers. Professionals and family were consistent in their praise about the management of the home.

The registered manager promotes an environment for staff to focus on children and learning. Staff regularly attend team meetings and group and individual supervision sessions. This provides staff with an opportunity for reflective practice and for the manager to explore any training and development needs.

The manager has not fully considered the impact on children who are living in the home alongside those who attend for short breaks. This includes not responding effectively to address issues as they arise, such as one child who lives in the home struggling with sharing their home with other children visiting. As a result, the child has made changes to their usual routine to avoid areas of the home where other children are present.

Not all staff who work in the home have an appropriate qualification. Three staff members have passed their relevant date to gain a qualification to work with children in a residential setting. Leaders and managers were aware of this shortfall.

The home's statement of purpose is out of date. It does not accurately reflect the arrangements for how the staff will care for children who live there alongside those who attend for short breaks.

## What does the children's home need to do to improve?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(ii))</p>	26 April 2024
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; and</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(f)(h))</p>	26 April 2024
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and</p> <p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises—</p>	26 April 2024

<p>is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and</p> <p>allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p>	
<p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children’s home;</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p> <p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.</p> <p>The relevant date is—</p> <p>in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home.</p> <p>(Regulation 32 (2)(a) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a))</p>	<p>26 April 2024</p>

## **Recommendation**

- The registered person should be responsible for ensuring that the home's statement of purpose is child-focused, indicating how the home provides individualised care to meet the Quality Standards for the children in their care. In particular, it should accurately reflect the care arrangements for all children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, para 3.5)

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC030967

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Hartlepool Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY

**Responsible individual:** Jane Young

**Registered manager:** Natasha Salmon

## Inspectors

Joanne Wallis, Social Care Inspector

Lisa Gordon, Social Care Inspector



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# 2490894

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is operated and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to two children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2024.

There was one child living in the home at the time of the inspection.

### Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 11 October 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/10/2022	Full	Good
25/05/2021	Full	Good
25/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
17/09/2019	Full	Good

## **Inspection judgements**

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The property is decorated and furnished to a good standard, making it feel warm and welcoming. Photos of the child are displayed throughout the home, and their bedroom is personalised. Staff are swift to repair any damage that is caused to the home, which maintains the homely feel.

Children's moves to and from the home are well considered and well planned to ensure that the child feels as safe and as comfortable as they can. When a child moves to a new home, staff who are known to the child move with them. This provides the child with continuity of care and familiar faces. Staff know and understand the child well, which means the child has been able to make positive relationships with those who care for them.

The child is not currently attending their education setting, but staff are working tirelessly with education colleagues to make sure the child continues to learn while at home. Staff, the virtual school and care team are working in partnership to identify an alternative provision that can meet the child's needs.

Staff help the child to attend their routine health checks and more specialist appointments. Staff provide key-work sessions to explore all areas of the child's health, including areas such as sexual health and emotional well-being. This helps the child to develop the skills needed to keep themselves healthy.

The child understands how to share their views and make a complaint. Staff respond quickly and sensitively to complaints. This means that the child's voice is heard, and their feedback brings about change.

Staff support the child's relationships with their family and important people. Staff work directly with the family to ensure that these relationships are safe. Staff organise activities for the child and their family, both inside and outside of the home. This supports the child to maintain those important links.

Staff talk with pride about the child's achievements and make sure that this is shared with them. These achievements and other special moments and events are captured in a memory book, which will give the child a permanent reminder of their time at the home.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Staff know the child and their risks well. When new risks are identified, staff take robust action to try to understand each situation and what they can do to reduce the risk in the future. This helps to keep the child safer.

Staff know what to do when a child goes missing from the home. They follow the child's risk assessment and the missing-from-home procedures. Staff try to locate the child and look for them at known addresses and locations. When they return, staff check on their well-being and provide comfort and care.

Staff have a good understanding of child exploitation and contextual safeguarding. They work collaboratively with multi-agency professionals to share information about risks in the local community. This means that the child in the home and other children in the wider community are better protected.

Staff will safely hold a child only when they pose a risk to themselves or others. The manager reviews all records to ensure that staff practice is proportionate and effective. This helps to ensure that the child is only held to make sure they are safe and protected.

The home's fire risk assessment contained recommendations regarding fire doors being changed. This action remains outstanding, which means that the fire doors do not meet the required safety standards in order to protect the child in the event of a fire.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The manager is enthusiastic and passionate about providing care to children and supporting the staff team. Staff talk positively about working in the home and feel greatly supported by leaders and managers. Staff are committed to making a positive difference in the child's life.

Staff are recruited using a robust process that ensures that new staff are safe to work in the home. Once recruited, all staff undergo a robust induction and mandatory training programme. This means the child is cared for by staff who have the necessary skills to provide good-quality care.

Staff supervision takes place each month. Staff say that they value the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing and how they can improve. Team meetings and development sessions help staff to build on their existing knowledge. As a result, staff practice continues to develop, driving up the quality of care for the child.

The manager is proactive in establishing and maintaining strong working relationships with professionals, who speak highly of the care provided to the child. This ensures that there is a joint approach to care planning which meets the child's evolving needs.

The manager makes decisions about who lives in the home from a child-centred perspective and considering the impact of change. The manager has currently assessed that it is best for the child to be the only child living in the home. This ensures that staff give the child the best possible opportunity to make progress.

## What does the children's home need to do to improve?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must—</p> <p>take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home. (Regulation 25 (1)(a))</p> <p>In particular, the recommendations made in the fire risk assessment must be addressed promptly.</p>	10 May 2024

### Recommendation

- The registered person should produce a children's guide. The children's guide must be made available to all children when their placement in the home is agreed, or on arrival at the home if the placement is made in an emergency. It must be age-appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure they understand it. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)

### Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 2490894

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Hartlepool Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY

**Responsible individual:** Jane Young

**Registered manager:** Ailisa Williams

## Inspector

Lisa Gordon, Social Care Inspector

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