



Hartlepool Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2024-25



Service	Hartlepool Youth Justice Service
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Foreword

Welcome to the 2024-2025 Hartlepool Youth Justice Strategic Plan. This plan sets out our ambitions and priorities for Hartlepool Youth Justice Service and the broader local Youth Justice Partnership for the next year.

The Safer Hartlepool Partnership, Community Safety Plan 2021-24 establishes a vision for the town:

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

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

In recent years Hartlepool has witnessed a significant reduction in youth crime. The local youth justice partnership has been particularly effective in reducing the numbers of children entering the youth justice system for the first time, but there still remains a need to drive down incidents of re-offending by children who have previously offended.

This will be achieved through a combination of robust interventions designed to manage and reduce risk of harm, support safety & wellbeing, restore interpersonal relationships, promote whole family engagement and achieve positive outcomes all wrapped around a “Child First” ethos. Encouragingly, Hartlepool Youth Justice Service alongside partners continues to maintain a strong health offer for all children and is constantly striving to build upon its restorative offer whilst ensuring that victims of youth crime also have a voice.

2023-2024 saw a continued increase in work placed upon the service, Turnaround continued to grow, the learning also continued around the new KPIs and the service continued to work alongside the OPCC and Community Safety partners with the Immediate Justice programme. Despite the added workload Hartlepool Youth Justice Service and the broader Youth Justice Partnership continue to help make Hartlepool a safe, prosperous and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.

In 2024-25 we will strive to continuously improve by:

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

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

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

On behalf of the Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board I am pleased to pledge my support to and endorse the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2024-25

TO BE SIGNED OFF

1. Introduction, vision, strategy & local context

Introduction

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

In summary, children who offend are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Creative strategies and services are in place locally to prevent children from becoming involved in crime or anti-social behaviour;

- Out-of-court disposals deliver targeted and bespoke interventions for those at risk of entering the Youth Justice System
- Assistance is provided to the Police when determining whether Youth Cautions should be issued and
- Restorative approaches are used, where appropriate, with victims of crime and ensures that restorative justice is central to work undertaken with children who offend.
- The Turnaround Programme continues to meet targets in line with Government criteria

The Hartlepool Youth Justice Plan for 2024-2025 sets out how youth justice services will be delivered, funded and governed in response to both local need, national policy changes and in line with the Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019, our most recent HMIP inspection findings, ongoing HMIP Thematic reports and the YJB Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027. It also highlights how Hartlepool Youth Justice Service will work in partnership to prevent offending and re-offending by children and reduce the use of remands and custody ensuring we put the "Child First" throughout all processes.

Vision & Strategy

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

Vision:

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

Priorities:

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

The Youth Justice Service, as part of the wider services for children, seeks to deliver on the vision and ambitions through a number of identified Youth Justice Service Strategic Priorities for 2024 - 2025.

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

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

Youth Justice Service Strategic Objectives and Priorities – 2024-2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Local Context

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) covers the local authority area of Hartlepool which is impacted upon by a range of social, economic and environmental factors.

Using the 2019 average score of the Indices of Deprivation, Hartlepool is the 10th most deprived area based on % of LSOA's in 10% of most deprived areas nationally. High levels of unemployment, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and substance misuse are all factors which provide significant challenges to the children we work with impacting on their behaviours and influencing outcomes.

According to the mid 2022 population estimates – ONS, the population of Hartlepool is in the region of **93,861** with approx.**9564** being between the ages of 10-17.

The BAME population in Hartlepool has seen an increase, however, continues to remain somewhat low in comparison to other areas locally, **4574** or **4.9%** of Hartlepool Population (Non-White ethnic groups, Census – ONS)
10-17 BAME population – **662**

Current number of Children in our Care (CIOC), all ages – **331** (as at 31 March 2023, Hartlepool Performance Team)

Current CIOC figures 10–17 – **213** (as at 04 05 2023, Hartlepool Performance Team)

****At the time of writing this Strategic Plan there are 7 children open to the YJS who are CIOC.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Again, as with the male cohort, young females who are offending are noted to have a higher prevalence of poor emotional well-being.

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

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

2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

Governance:

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

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

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

- Determining how appropriate youth justice services are to be provided and funded;
- Overseeing the formulation each year of the youth justice plan;
- Agreeing measurable objectives linked to key performance indicators as part of the youth justice plan;
- Ensuring delivery of the statutory aim to prevent offending by children and children;
- Giving strategic direction to Youth Justice Service Manager and Youth Justice Service Team;
- Providing performance management of the prevention of youth crime and periodically report this to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership;

- Ensuring that Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019 and the Child First ethos are embedded across the whole service and audits are completed within required timescales;
- Promoting the key role played by the Youth Justice Service within local integrated offender management arrangements;
- Advocate on behalf of the YJS within their own service areas and beyond, specifically supporting the YJS to overcome barriers to effective Multi-Agency working;
- Oversight of all data submissions to the YJB ensuring timeliness, especially conditions set out in the YJB grant;
- Ensuring the recommendations outlined in YJB papers and HMIP inspection reports/thematic reviews are addressed and monitored at board meetings

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

Members of the Board are knowledgeable, participate well in discussions and are members of other related boards, such as the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Health and Wellbeing partnerships as well as the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board, all of which contribute to effective partnership working at a strategic level. Board meetings are well structured and members are held accountable.

During 2023/24 board members attended an updated YJS Board Induction and interactive bite size sessions on the recently published Management Board guidance and Child First/Voice of the Child. These sessions will be reviewed and updated for delivery again this year alongside any further updates.

Leadership/Structure

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service has a total staff team of **29**, which includes 3 seconded staff, and 2 sessional workers (**Staffing structure attached at Appendix 1**). Within this figure the service benefits from a team of 5 active volunteers who are Referral Order Panel members. All staff and volunteers are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks which are renewed every three years.

There are also 3 external staff commissioned into the service 1 x PT (0.3) Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) (funded by the YJS), 1 x PT Clinical Psychologist (funded by the ICB) and 1 x PT (0.1) Educational Psychologist (funded by the YJS).

Via the Violence Reduction Unit (CURV) 4 x Custody Navigators have been employed, they are located in the central Custody Suite (Middlesbrough) and engage all children entering the Custody Suite, with a view to support, guide and direct them to further support and the relevant YJS. (These are not included in the total staff team numbers)

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

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

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

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

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

Partnership Arrangements

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

- Criminal justice services.
- Services for children and their families.

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

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

All high-risk cases can be escalated to either one or both of the Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) or the Strategic Risk Management Group, the Youth Justice Service has representation on both groups which meet monthly.

Discussions around serious youth violence, criminal exploitation and county lines are conducted within these forums ensuring tight plans are implemented and strategic management oversight is afforded

The YJS also has good links into the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), the VCS are represented on the Management Board.

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



3. Update on the previous Year 2023-2024

Progress on previous strategic priorities

Youth Justice Strategic Priorities 2023/24

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

Key Actions

- Undertake quality assessments of children at risk of re-offending, ensuring risks, desistance factors and needs are identified which inform effective intervention planning
- Continue to improve interventions delivered, through innovation and collaboration where appropriate

- Improve intelligence and timely information sharing relating to those children who are at risk of offending, to inform service-wide improvement activity or targeted work
- Continue to improve the 'Child First' approach and Health offer within the service and with partners
- Continue to undertake scoping activities in relation to retaining both the Speech & Language Therapist, Trauma Informed Care Pathway and Emotional Wellbeing pathways within the YJS beyond March 2023

Update

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

Concerns

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

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

Key Actions

- Maintain and enhance the YJS Early & Targeted Intervention programme "CHOICES" across Children's Services and the partnership
- Operate a targeted approach to supporting individuals and groups of children at risk of offending - based on intelligence and collaborative working with key partners (Police, ASB, Early Help, Voluntary Community Sector, Schools, etc.)
- Work with the Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) and partners to reduce and respond to Child exploitation
- Ongoing trend analysis of past and current FTE's to identify key themes and responses
- Ongoing briefings to key partners (such as Police and Social Care) to emphasise and promote the Prevention and Diversion agenda
- Continue to review and deliver our point of arrest diversion as a distinct and substantially different response to formal out of court disposals
- Continue to review the Diversion & Prevention strategy in place ensuring it includes how children are identified for diversion/prevention, how the services are delivered, by whom and how success is evaluated.

Update:

- All of the above actions were achieved
- Early & Targeted Intervention programme, CHOICES is continuing to receive referrals from within Children's Services.
- The service continues to work directly with children through our diversionary offer of Restorative Intervention and both Triage 1 and 2, all referrals are via the Police and Courts.

- The Turnaround programme continues to add a further offer alongside Preventions & Diversion
- Immediate Justice (Making Good) went live on the 25 Sept 23 and referrals are ongoing

Concerns

- There had been a significant amount of changes and increased workload placed on YJSs nationally with the introduction of Turnaround, Immediate Justice and the added KPIs. These changes took time to implement, however are now embedded within service delivery. The next challenge and concern is Turnaround ending in March 2025 and how as a service we will be in a position to look at alternatives with the resources to hand.

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

Key Actions

- Monitor and maintain the use of Compliance Panels to ensure continued effectiveness
- Ensure the Service provides intensive packages of supervision and support to high intensity orders and bail arrangements
- Ensure that the needs of children in custody and the factors relating to their offending behaviour are addressed in the secure estate to prevent further offending upon release
- Continue to review and evaluate the Resettlement Policy in place for children upon release from the secure estate (HMIP Youth Justice inspection framework, standard 4.1 Resettlement, May 2021)
- Regularly review capacity to deliver ISS, and resource appropriately, through a multi-agency approach

Update

- All of the above was achieved
- We continue to utilise and review our current Resettlement Policy.
- We continue to work closely with the courts and partners to ensure all children receive the best support available.
- The Teesside Court User Group is due to be re implemented in June 2024
- Hartlepool YJS are part of the YRO (ISS) pilot which commenced on the 3rd July 23.

Concerns

- There continues to be a national shortage of suitable regulated local placements for children remanded to local authority accommodation which places huge challenges both financially and operationally on the authority, service and most importantly the children and their families. There are ongoing strategic discussions nationally.

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

Key Actions

- Continued Asset Plus refresher training, ensuring robust assessment of a child's needs
- Work in partnership with other agencies to ensure there is a co-ordinated assessment and plan relating to a child's risk and safety & wellbeing
- Implement an audit cycle/performance clinic to ensure assessment and plans are meeting the appropriate quality standards through robust and transparent quality assurance and feedback.
- Ensure that desistance factors are identified and analysed in all assessments of every child subject to YJS supervision through quality assurance and staff supervision.
- Attendance and contribution to YJB Regional Effective Practice groups and peer collaboration with Tees Valley and North East YJS colleagues
- Ongoing internal staff training and workshops to benchmark quality standards in the management of risk and safety & wellbeing
- Continue to work alongside the partnership to identify suitable interventions and pathways for children and children criminally exploited and potentially being drawn into County Lines activity

Updates

- All above achieved with NO CONCERNS

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

Key Actions

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

Updates

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

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

Key Actions

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

Update

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

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

Key Actions

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

Update

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

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

Key Actions

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

Update

- We continue to advocate strongly on the "Child First" ethos embedded with the YJS

- Guidance clearly highlights what is expected throughout Assessment, planning, interventions, reviews and closures for all children within the YJS.
- The above is monitored by way of children feedback and evaluation as well as via supervision, QA, case audits and direct 1:1 with the child.

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

Key Actions

- Ensure Education is suitably represented on the Strategic Management Board
- Education reports are submitted by partners for each Strategic Management Board meeting and contain as a minimum, how many children are not receiving their education entitlement, how many are excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. This data should be analysed to identify any disproportionality and care status of the child. The number of children who have Education and Health Care plans (EHCP) who are open to the service should be provided.
- Encourage children's active engagement with their respective education provider
- Continue to build upon the monthly Education meetings with all education partners
- Continue working in collaboration regarding children with EHCP/SEN

Update

- Education reports are now presented at every quarterly management board meeting, data is provided on how many children are not receiving their education entitlement, how many are excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. This data is analysed to identify any disproportionality and care status of the child. The number of children who have Education and Health Care plans (EHCP) who are open to the service is also provided, analysed and discussed.
- Our education support is growing and our communication and challenge with education providers is vastly improving. We have recently secured the time of an Education Psychologist (1 day weekly) which is proving very beneficial for both children and staff.

Concerns

- There are still far too many children receiving exclusions/suspensions. There is a need for Schools, Academies and education providers to engage and where needed reach out to wider services in a more timely manner.

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

Key Actions

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

Update

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

Concerns

- We still don't appear successful as a partnership in disrupting and prosecuting potential perpetrators of CCE

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

Key Actions

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

Updates

- All of the above has been achieved
- Pathways into SM services are maintained with regular communication and their representation at board meetings
- 3 way introductory meetings are now held, where required with children, YJS and START to discuss and encourage engagement with the service.
- There will always be work to do in encouraging and maintaining a child's engagement with SM services, however we are seeing more creative methods being implemented.

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

Key Actions

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

Update

- Disproportionality is now an agenda item within the YJS managers report to quarterly management boards highlighting over representation. Discussions undertaken and all actions are formulated and monitored.
- Stop Searches and Strip Searches are monitored and all information/data discussed at Management Board meetings.
- Regular ongoing discussions with all partners including Police and Social Care are undertaken to address and look at potential actions for any areas of over representation within the service.

Performance over the previous year

Binary reoffending rate

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

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

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

The information below are local reports tracked through our MIS Child View and gives a timelier update on reoffending data. It's worth noting that the cohorts highlighted below are tracked from their start date for 12 months tracking and a further 6 months to ensure there is nothing outstanding, this is in line with the MOJ/YJB tracking model.

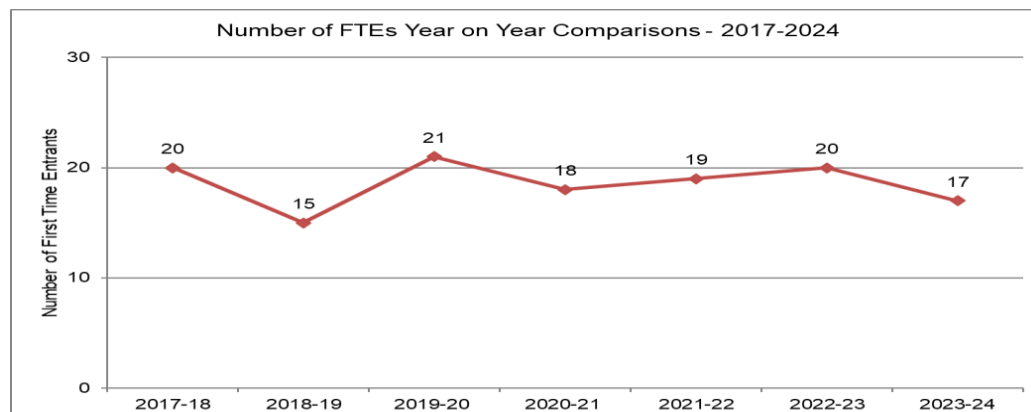
Latest last 4 Qtrs. reoffending Binary rates:

- Binary rate – Jan 22 – Mar 22 cohort – 24%
- Binary rate – Apr 22 – Jun 22 cohort - 28%
- Binary rate – Jul 22 – Sept 22 cohort – 47%
- Binary rate – Oct 22 – Dec 22 cohort – 28%

As can be seen from the figures above reoffending binary rates do fluctuate. It continues to be an area of priority for the YJS and partners to identify these YP earlier and offer suitable packages of support.

First time entrants

Hartlepool YJS continue to work hard in reducing and sustaining those reductions in FTE, the last 3 years have seen a bit of a levelling off of FTE and numbers have fluctuated minimally. 2023-24 has seen a reduction of **15%** in FTE compared to 2022-23. Our Early and Targeted Intervention programme – Choices, alongside Turnaround and our diversionary offer of Restorative Intervention (RI) and both Triage 1 & 2 ensure we have robust offers in place to intervene and divert children away from the criminal justice system. Furthermore we worked directly with 41 children last year across Triage (36), Triage 2 (1) and RI (4) who may have become FTE.



Use of custody

There has been 1 remand to Youth Detention Accommodation in 2023/24 and 2 custodial sentences, these are very similar to 2022/23.

Hartlepool YJS have a clear process for alternatives to custody through the offer of Bail/ISS packages and utilisation of pre-breach compliance meetings for those at risk of custody via non-compliance. Hartlepool YJS alongside other North East colleagues are also participating in the YRO (ISS) Pilot which commenced in July 2023, to date we have had 2 children use the pilot.

Year	Remands	Custody
2019-20	1	2
2020-21	0	2
2021-22	0	1
2022-23	2	2
2023-24	1	2

Additional key performance indicators (KPIs)

It is a requirement of the service to report on the following new key performance indicators, our first submission was August 2023 and quarterly thereafter (this is very much an ongoing learning process). The YJS have very recently purchased the KPI reporting tool from CACI for their MIS Child View, and are hoping to be in a position very shortly to provide more updated, accurate and in depth data on the below KPIs.

Suitable accommodation – *The proportion of children in suitable accommodation at the end of their order*

We know that access to safe and suitable accommodation reduces the risk of reoffending.

This KPI indicates how many children are in suitable/unsuitable accommodation.

This will allow us to understand and evidence the barriers in order to escalate with partners, and to target support when children are in unsuitable accommodation.

The YJS have senior representation on the local authority housing and accommodation panel. Attendance at all relevant Social Care meetings and ongoing communication will ensure we are able to identify suitable/unsuitable accommodation and challenge/address where needed.

Education, training and employment – *The proportion of children in suitable ETE at the end of their order*

There are established links between low educational engagement and attainment and the risk of childhood offending. This KPI will highlight where children are not in suitable ETE to help us to escalate concerns with ETE providers. At a wider level, this data will allow the MoJ and YJB to understand where the wider system acts as a barrier to a child's desistance and raise these with relevant other government departments if necessary. There is senior representation from the Virtual School and Post 16 service at management boards and a consolidated report is produced quarterly. There are also monthly internal education meetings.

Special educational needs and disabilities/additional learning needs – *The number of children with a formal plan in place as a proportion of children with identified SEND/ALN.*

Identifying SEND/ALN and providing support early is key to a child's educational engagement and attainment. This KPI should highlight where children are not receiving SEND/ALN support, to provide the evidence for us to escalate concerns with ETE providers.

Via the Virtual School, pathways have been implemented with the SEND team. Regular ongoing communication, attendance at meetings and suitable challenge should ensure we are able to monitor and record sufficiently.

Mental health care and emotional wellbeing – *The number of children with a screened or identified need for a mental health (MH) or emotional wellbeing (EW) intervention at the end of their order as a proportion of number of children with an order ending in the period.*

Rates of poor mental health are higher for children across all stages of the youth justice system than in the general population. We need to monitor access to mental health interventions so we can escalate concerns (at the appropriate level) where children are not receiving access to support for mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The YJS have a very good health offer via the YJS nurse specialist, Speech and Language therapist, Clinical Psychologist for the Trauma Informed Care Pathway (TICP) and Educational Psychologist. All have access to their own service systems and information and speedier (at times) processes for further referrals

Substance misuse – *The number of children with a screened or identified need for intervention or treatment to address substance misuse at the end of their order as a proportion of number of children with an order ending in the period.*

Children in the youth justice system are particularly vulnerable to substance misuse. We need to monitor access to substance misuse interventions and treatment so that we can escalate concerns where children are not receiving access to support for substance misuse.

The HOS Substance Misuse attends the management boards and produces a quarterly report. There are pathways/referral routes in place to ensure a speedy process and regular information sharing.

Out-of-Court Disposals – *The number of children who completed OOC intervention programmes in the period as a proportion of the number of children with an OOC intervention programme ending in the period.*

An increasing number of cases supervised by the YJS are now out-of-court-disposals (OOC). We need to ensure that interventions attached to these are completed and that children achieve a positive outcome.

We have a considerable amount of data and information available on all children engaging with the service via an OOC as well early/targeted intervention and Turnaround.

Links to wider services – *The proportion of children connected to or supported by wider care and support services at end of order.*

Real, effective multi-agency working is essential to reducing offending and reoffending. We need to engage consistently and proactively with other services to ensure holistic support and the early identification of risk. This KPI will help us to understand where we have good information sharing in place with social care and early help services etc.

The YJS are in a position to clearly highlight and indicate the links to wider services and outward referrals made

Management board attendance – *The number of senior partners attending management boards (MBs) out of five*

It is vital for YJSs to have strong leadership and consistent senior level representation at management boards. This KPI will indicate when there we have an issue in this area.

This will be monitored on a quarterly basis and board members politely reminded of attendance on an ongoing basis.

Serious violence – *The number of proven serious violence offences as a rate per 100,000 of the 10-17 population (2021).*

Serious Violence rates have increased and given the severity/ consequences of this particular form of crime, this is a high priority concern. Data on this will provide a more accurate picture and help to direct local, regional and/or national action to prevent and tackle knife and gang-related crime.

The YJS has an excellent ongoing working relationship with Cleveland Police and is well represented within CURV where regular ongoing meetings are held to identify, discuss and analyse all elements of Serious Violence.

Victims – *The number of victims engaged with on Restorative Justice opportunities as a proportion of total number of victims who consent to be contacted.*

All YJSs have a statutory duty to provide support to victims. YJSs need to ensure compliance with the Victims' Code to protect the rights of victims.

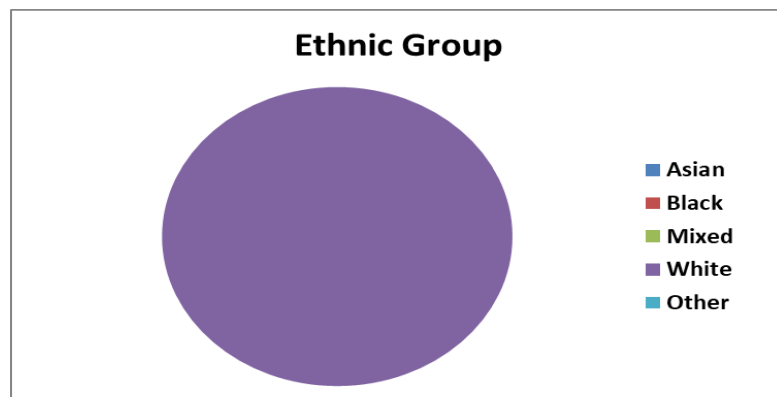
A lot of work is carried out with victims of crime, the YJS RJ worker contacts all victims ascertains their willingness to engage and follows very clear processes. All data is collected and stored securely on the MIS. We are in the process of updating our Victim Policy in line with the recently published Victims Code.

Local performance

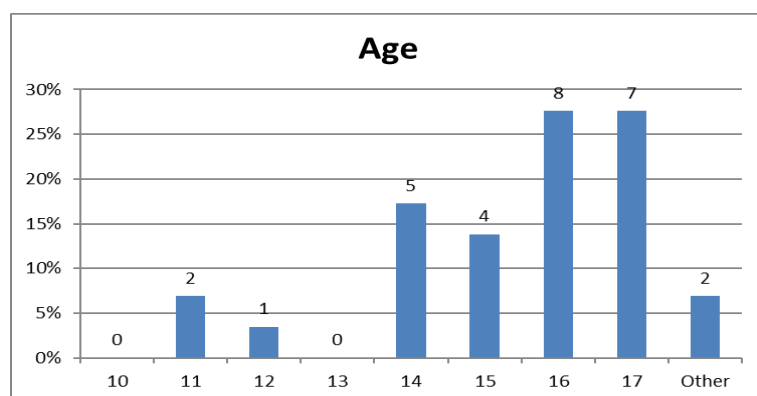
The service is dealing with smaller caseloads consisting of very complex individuals with multiple risks and vulnerabilities. Hartlepool YJS carry out a quarterly Needs Analysis of all children open to the service to ensure we thoroughly understand the collective needs of the children and ensure the service is able to respond to this. The Needs Analysis enables the service and partnership via Management Board meetings to have a good snap shot of the current cohort's complexities and potential gaps within delivery, services and areas of concern as well as any areas of over representation. Recent analysis reveals a cohort with many having very difficult home lives, they display much broader lifestyle choices i.e. substance misuse and the need to generate money to maintain this. This also reflects the national and regional picture in terms of caseload composition.

The information below was taken from the latest YJS Needs Analysis on the 08 05 24 and discussed at the management board on the 14 05 24.

The analysis was undertaken on 29 completed assessments.



Of the 29 CYP, all are white.



Ages are spread across the spectrum with the youngest being 11

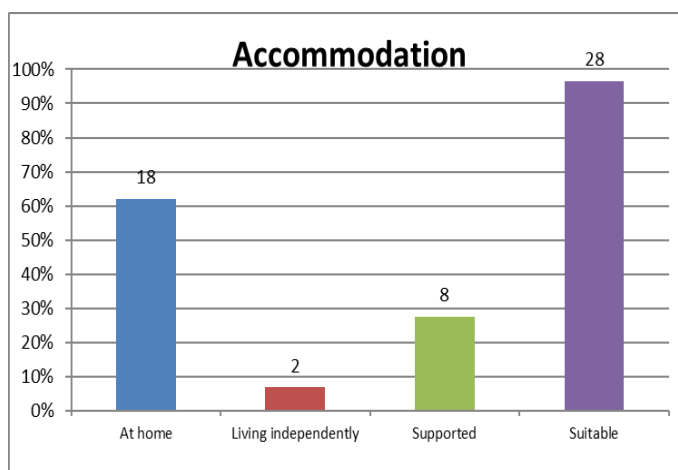
The majority of the cohort are made up of 16 and 17 year olds

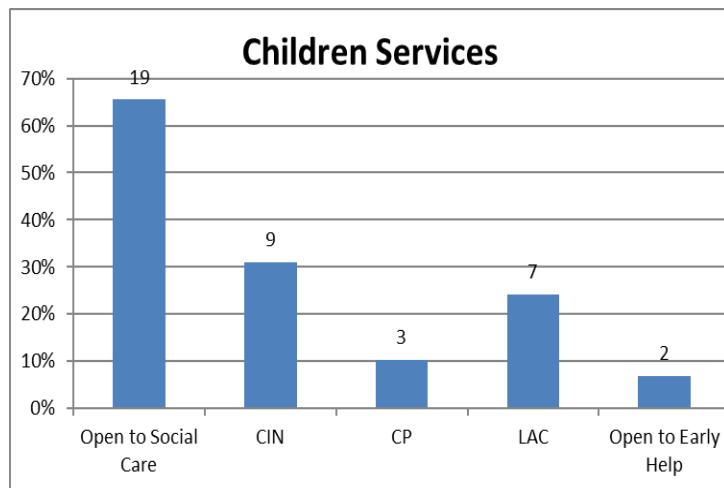
There are 5 Females within this analysis

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

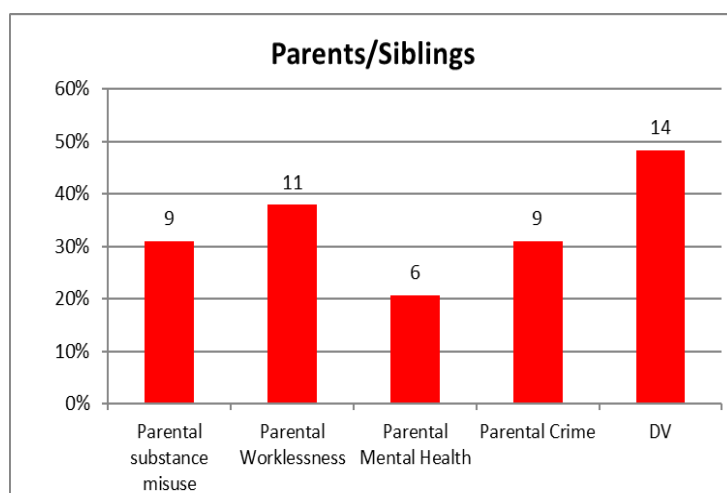
8 x YP are classed as living in Supported accommodation, 2 are placed out of area and 6 placed in Hartlepool.

2 children are living independently. Accommodation is currently deemed suitable for 28 of the 29 children assessed, 1 child is splitting time between parents and mates sofa.





*Of the 29 CYP 19 are currently open to Social Care.
 7 x CIOC
 3 X CP
 9 X CIN
 2 are also open to Early Help*

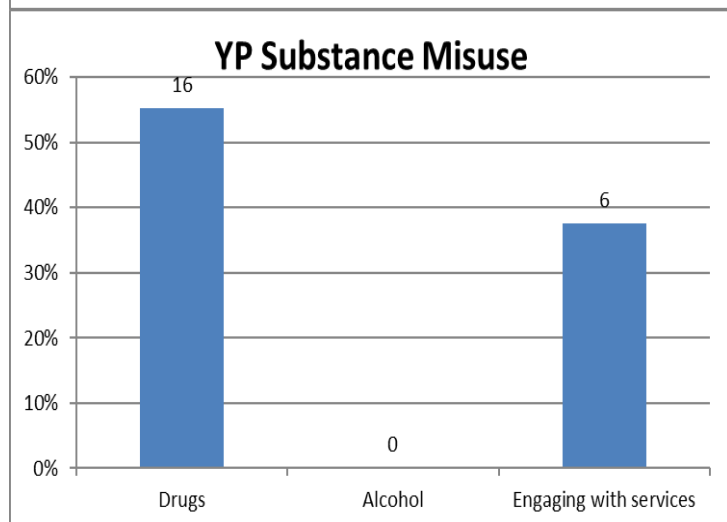


These figures equate to 15 CYP from the 29 assessed.

Of the 9 parents identified as using substances 2 are engaging with services

Of the 6 parents identified with MH issues 3 are engaging with services

9 CYP have witnessed DV, 3 have been perpetrators and 2 have been a victim

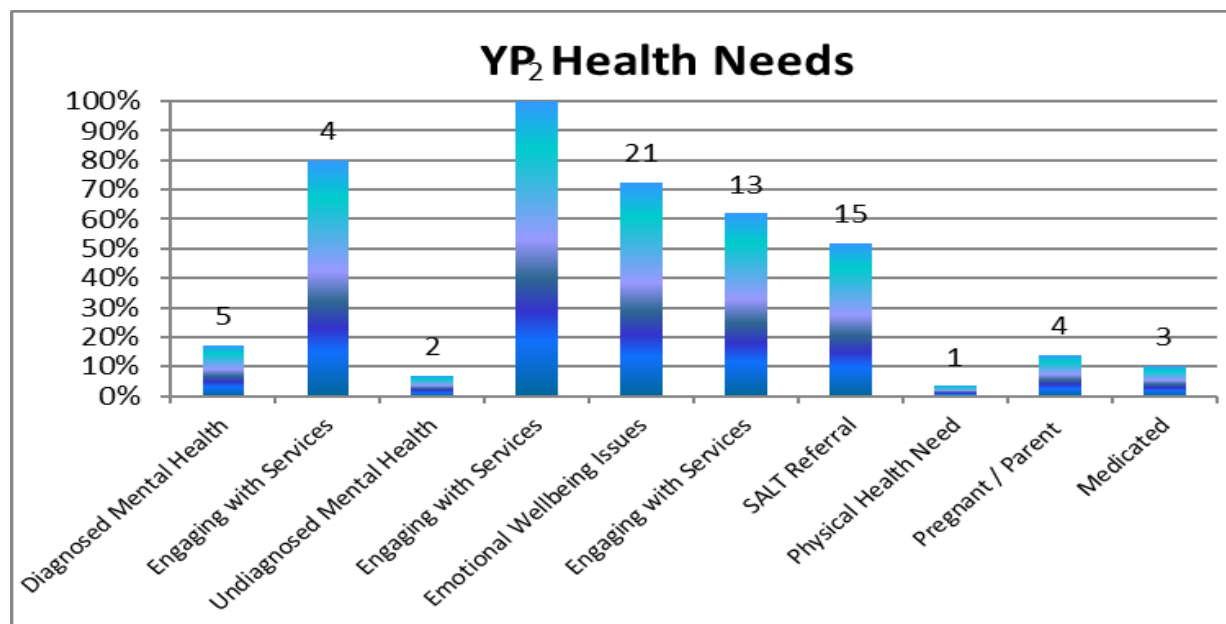


Of the 29 CYP assessed 16 have admitted using substances.

Of these 16, 6 are actively engaging with SM services.

YJS staff actively encourage all CYP to accept and engage with referrals to START

YJS staff do deliver level 1 SM work to all CYP refusing referrals.



Of the 5 CYP with a diagnosed MH issue 4 are actively engaging with services

Of the 2 CYP identified with undiagnosed MH issues both are engaging with services

A very high proportion of CYP have EWB issues of the 21 identified 13 are actively engaging with services

15 CYP have been referred into the SALT and all are engaging

There 1 Child identified as having physical health needs, Asthma

4 are parents (Dads)

3 CYP are currently medicated

****These graphs highlight a small snap shot of the Needs Analysis completed – May 2024**

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

Risks and Issues

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

Risks	Potential Impact	Control Measures
An increase in secure Remand Costs and children remanded to Local Authority Accommodation	The continued unpredictability associated with remand episodes and remand length has the potential to place significant financial pressure on the YJS and broader Local Authority. The increasing and significant lack of suitable regulated	It remains essential that the service can demonstrate to the courts that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands and custody. Coordinated Multi-Agency responses to children at risk of

	accommodation locally for children RLAA leading to children being placed out of area in unregulated placements at significant costs.	remand where safe and secure accommodation is the precipitating factor and is continuously monitored and further developed. Remand budget is incorporated within Wider Children's Services placement costs. North East YJSs piloting the YRO (ISS) since July 23.
Managing the potential for reduction in YJB grant and partnership financial and 'in-kind' contributions pre and post 2024/25	Consequential negative impact on performance. Reduced capacity to meet strategic and operational obligations and statutory requirements. Reduced capacity to continue to focus on early intervention and identification	Targeted resources to address need. Continue to administer and embed the current structure and practice. Regional collaboration with neighbouring YJS' such as coverage of Teesside Youth Court. Robust financial management and oversight from strategic board.
Continued concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines	The unpredictability in reoffending rates, serious youth violence and exploitation of vulnerable children. Ultimately leading to criminalisation and wider service involvement having an adverse impact on Remand, Custody and Looked After Children (CIOC) figures.	Continued regular communication, intelligence and information sharing via MACE/CURV and across all services. Ensuring a multi-agency approach is adopted with senior strategic oversight. Ongoing joint training and regular updates on the national and local picture enabling timely and relevant interventions. Ensure clear processes and pathways (known to all staff) are implemented to work with identified children. Continue working alongside the OPCC, Cleveland Police and partners to support the VRU (CURV).
Issues	Potential Impact	Proposed Controls/actions
The continued delay in receipt of the YJB grant (as at 11 June 24 we are still unsure as to the actual amount)	Slows down the process of budget planning/commissioning for the forthcoming year, services not in a position to implement a robust budget but having to plan on the previous year's amount. Restricts service creativity.	Communication is received early from the YJB highlighting the delays and at times we are informed that there won't be a reduction. This process needs to be smoother and more streamlined to allow YJSs to plan more robustly.

<p>Much more onus being placed on YJS nationally by YJB, HMIP etc. via research, thematic and HMIP inspections to ensure certain services are available for children open to the YJS i.e. Speech and Language, TICP.</p>	<p>Much more pressure being placed on YJS to ensure a more bespoke package of support is available for children entering the service i.e. SALT, Trauma Informed Care Pathways etc and YJS not being adequately funded, supported for these specialist services</p>	<p>Research has identified that 85% + children entering the youth justice system have a speech, language and/or communication need. Services need to be supported and funded to provide this offer to all children. Or more onus placed on education to identify and address these needs much earlier.</p>
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4. Plan for the forthcoming year 2024/25

Child First

In line with the Youth Justice Boards Strategic Plan 2024-27 Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) is committed to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Assessment/Planning

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

Interventions

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

Reviews/Closures

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

Example – Child is open to the service due to an assault on a teacher. Following this the child was struggling in school and his relationships with the staff was breaking down, so much so he was assaulting staff and causing damage on a regular basis. His YJS Officer used Education well-being cards to gain the child's views and feelings about how school felt for them on a daily basis and how this made him feel. We also explored how he acted out how he was feeling in school because he was unable to vocalise his feelings. A photo of the well-being cards and all the information was subsequently shared with a member of staff at school who stated how the barriers for the child could be broken down and what staff could do to support them in school.

We were able to take it one step further. The child, a member of staff and YJS Officer sat in school and discussed the information together and agreed the support and plan around his struggles in school. The child handled the situation really well and we were able to reinforce the positive interactions and the child not using violence or aggression to voice his feelings. The child has since said that he feels supported and listened to, especially in school.

Voice of the child

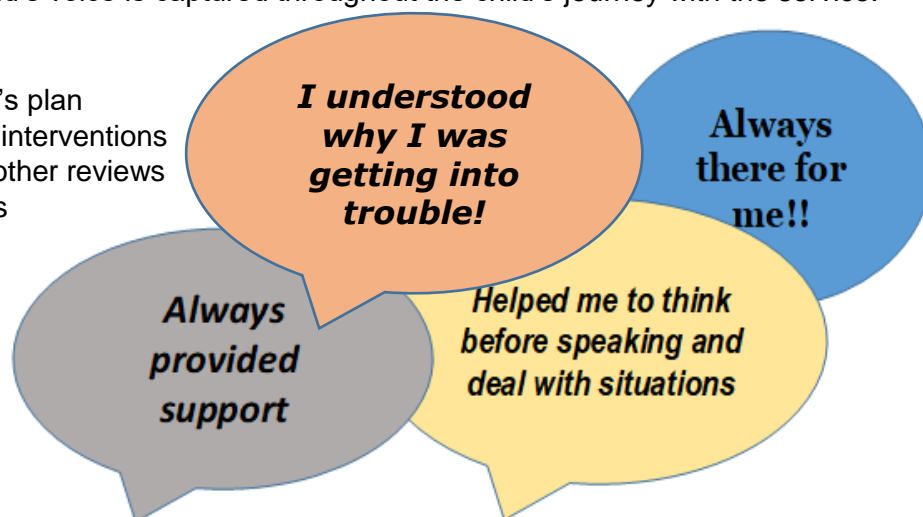
Hartlepool YJS work collaboratively with all Children/Parents/Carers to ensure their voice is heard, listened to and helps shape service delivery as required. We will continuously review and enhance our delivery, so that the views of children are sufficiently captured, central to our work, and lead to change in the system to support children into positive outcomes and successful adulthood.

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

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

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

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



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

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

Example – The YJS Educational Psychologist recently completed some work with a young person, where over the course of several sessions exploring her views on school, she reported some difficulties with reading and words “moving about”. Rather than dismissing this we explored the conditions where this happened for her, and how this impacted on her ability to access texts. Feeding this back to school, we were able to do some further work with her to identify changes to text to increase its readability, which school can adopt. Feeding this information back to mum through the Ed Psych and YJS Officer led to mum arranging an optician's appointment, where further assessment work is ongoing relating to a possible diagnosis of an eye condition.

This piece of work highlights the importance of drawing on successful positive relationships built with the young person (and staff) to feel comfortable sharing their difficulties, and the importance of sharing their voice with those around them to identify effective and timely support.

Resources and Services

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

****2024/25 budget costs and contributions are attached at Appendix 2**

As we write and produce this plan we are unfortunately still unaware of the amount of YJB grant we will be receiving for 2024-25, the YJB grant figures indicated in Appendix 2 have been based on last year's YJB grant amount.

The National Probation Service continue to provide funding (£5k) as well as a seconded PO. The ICB contribution is a non-cash contribution via the commissioning of the Trauma Informed Care Pathway and the YJS Nurse Specialist is funded from Public Health.

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

We use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver the strategic priorities highlighted in Vision & Strategy previously and via the services identified below to all children. In 2024/25 we aim to improve and maintain our performance across all areas of delivery ensuring a child first ethos is embedded throughout.

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

Board development

As highlighted previously effective integrated strategic partnership working and clear oversight by the Management Board are critical to the success and effective delivery of youth justice services in Hartlepool.

In line with the guidance provided by the YJB in 2021 "Youth Justice Service governance and Leadership" the following training was undertaken with all board members during 2023/24. This training is being reviewed/updated and will be delivered again in 2024/25.

	Board Development	Action Taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date/Completed
1	Board induction for all new members	Board induction to be undertaken with all new board members, utilising the template shared by the AYM	YJS Manager/Board chair	Ongoing throughout the year
2	Update and refresh all board members on YJ service	Utilising the YJB - YJ service governance and leadership document, Sessions designed for all	YJS Manager/Board Chair	Completed over 4 sessions April 24 - Mar 25

	governance and leadership	board members to attend and actively engage		
3	Child First/Voice of the Child	Sessions developed for all board members to attend and participate in Child First ethos/Voice of the child	YJS Manager/Board Chair	Completed over 4 sessions April 24 – Mar 25
4	Key Performance Indicators update	Presentation to all board members on progression of KPIs	YJS Manager	Sept 2024 Strategic Board meeting
5	Serious Youth Violence & Exploitation	Presentation & Discussion by Cleveland Police	Cleveland Police	Completed in May 2024

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

- Out of Court Disposals (OOCDD)
- Reparation
- Restorative Justice
- YJS Health Offer
- Court & Post Court offer
- Serious Youth Violence (Delivered by Cleveland Police)

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

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

Workforce Development

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

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

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

	Workforce Development	Action Taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date/Completed
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1	AIM 3 - All case managing staff to have attended AIM 3 Assessor and Intervention training	1. All staff to be booked on and complete AIM 3 Assessment/Intervention training 2. Managers to have completed AIM 3 supervisor training	YJS Manager	All current case managing staff are AIM 3 assessment trained
2	YJS refresher trg - All staff to attend YJS internal training sessions identified in training programme. New KPIs included for May 23	1. Internal training programme updated and circulated to all staff 2. Attendance monitored to ensure all staff are captured within the training	YJS Manager/Health team/Business Support	1. Internal training programme ongoing 2. Programme reviewed 6 monthly
3	Child View Clinic - All staff to have access to a fortnightly Child View clinic to upskill, refresh and ask questions, sort issues	1. Fortnightly Child View Clinic implemented and available for all staff to attend.	Business Support Manager	1. Fortnightly Child View clinic implemented and ongoing
4	YJS training needs analysis completed	1. YJS training needs analysis completed and shared with Workforce Development Team	Leadership Team	1. YJS Training needs analysis has been completed for 24/25 and shared with WD

Evidence-based practice and innovation

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

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

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

The following 2 recent examples of emerging practice and innovation below had a very positive impact on the children, Staff and board members.

Emerging Practice – Good trusting relationships between staff and children working with the service have always been identified as paramount and a very important part of service delivery.

Every child working with the service regardless of what level and what order are afforded ample time at the outset to begin to build a trusting relationship with all staff. This period of relationship building allows the staff and children sufficient time to get to know each other and hopefully highlight positive areas we can build and maintain and also areas where support and intervention are required. Staff utilise this period to help form the assessment and will include positive activities, getting to know the family and generally getting a better understanding of the child, their life and how best to work with them. Their voice is captured throughout this process and helps develop and create a much more personalised assessment and plan.

More recently this has proven very beneficial with Referral Orders whereby the service hold an initial panel meeting asap after the court outcome, the panel allow a further period of time for the worker and child to get to know each better, ensuring the child fully understands what is required of them and as a service we have a better understanding of the support the child needs throughout their order. At the following panel the contract is agreed and signed by all parties, however the order has started from the initial panel.

Innovation – Due to the rise in Serious Youth Violence the YJS have recently re vamped and implemented a new 6 week programme for weapons offences. We worked together with the Cleveland College of Art & Design to produce a locally created video. The video was filmed in Hartlepool and planned, designed and produced by students of the College. The students were able to access Hartlepool custody suite and local landmarks during filming which adds to the realism and authenticity. The 6 week programme (Life Changing) is based on 3 different scenarios with 3 different outcomes and offers the children lots of good discussion and educative opportunities throughout. During the 6 weeks the programme covers areas such as Law, Health, and Joint Enterprise etc. and to date has proven very beneficial with some very good feedback from the children.

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

5. Priorities

Standards for children in the justice system

Alongside the Strategic Priorities of the service we need to ensure that we deliver all of our services in line with the Standards for Children in the justice system (2019).

These standards being:

N1 OOC

N2 At Court

N3 In the Community

N4 In Secure Settings

N5 On Transition

In 2023 all services were required to report against Standard 2: At Court. The assessment must have been agreed by the management board prior to submission and signed off by the board chair as accurate.

There were 3 main Sections to the assessment, Strategy, Reports and Process containing a total of 22 individual questions. Evidence was to be provided for each question and scored Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate.

Hartlepool YJS had 13 Outstanding and 9 Good across the assessment, all evidence was checked and analysed by Management Board members who had to agree with the scoring.

There were no areas identified for immediate improvement within this standard, however the service will be carrying out an internal self-assessment of all National Standards again this year.

Service development

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

	Service Improvement	Action taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date/Completed
1	Ensure that the identified priorities for the service correspond to the needs of the children supervised by Hartlepool YJS to ensure these needs are met.	Strategic Priorities have been amended following the findings of recent HMIP thematic inspections and the YJB Strategic plan. These will continue to be amended and discussed at all future Management Board meetings to correspond with the needs of children supervised by the YJS and in line with the up to date Needs Analysis/Data presented at all board meetings. Individual meetings to continue with the Virtual School, OSS, MACE, CURV and Substance Misuse Services to strengthen this process – all are members of the YJS Management Board and will submit updates at board meetings.	YJS Management Team Management Board Chair/Members	Ongoing and monitored/reviewed at all Management Board meetings
2	Maintain the Child First ethos across the YJS and partners	1. Produce and implement a Child First operational guidance for all staff and board members 2. Carry out bite size sessions with all staff and board members on the guidance 3. Review and update the guidance at planned regular intervals 4. Audits, QA and Supervisions to monitor the progression of the Child First ethos identifying good practice	YJS Management team Management board members All staff	1. Operational guidance produced, implemented and shared 2. Bite size sessions continue to be carried out with board members and all staff 3. The guidance will be reviewed in Sept 24 4. Monitoring of the process is ongoing via QA, Supervision, case audits and feedback

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

6. National Priority Areas

The service continues to work towards achieving and improving their delivery and outcomes of the identified Strategic Priorities highlighted earlier in this plan which includes the National Priorities below:

Children from groups which are over-represented

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

However, it is not only Black and Mixed ethnicity children that are over-represented, and the YJS are aware and respond to any local concerns about all children from over-represented groups.

This includes but is not limited to children known to social care services, children excluded from school and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

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

Disproportionality is covered within the YJS managers' report at the quarterly management board meetings. The following information was presented and discussed at the board meeting held in May 2024.

Children in our Care (CIOC)

- As at 04 05 24 there were **7** CYP who are CIOC open to the YJS, 4 on statutory court Orders, 3 on a Triage.
- This equated to **9%** of the current YJS cohort – as at 04 05 24 (no change from previous quarter)
- Of the **7** CYP **6** were CIOC before becoming open to the service and **1** due to the nature of the offences.
- As at the 04 05 24 there were **213** CIOC 10-17 year old – information received from Data Team
- **3%** of the overall 10-17 CIOC are currently open to the YJS (no change from previous quarter)

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

Policing

Hartlepool YJS have excellent links and communication with Cleveland Police. Police representation at the management board is via a Chief Inspector whose input is invaluable. We are very fortunate to have a vastly experienced and knowledgeable seconded Police Officer who is located with the team and provides all daily information, data and intelligence as required. Regular meetings are held with Cleveland Police and within Local Policing Areas (LPA) that ensure we are always up to date with concerns, risks and challenges and more importantly what is being done about them. As with the majority of Police forces nationally staff do move around roles and appointments quite quickly and at times this can cause a certain amount of uncertainty, especially re inducting a senior Police Officer onto the management board. Good communication, good links and pathways and open to good, frank discussions as required.

Prevention

Hartlepool YJSs early and/or targeted prevention programme is known locally as “The **Choices** Programme”. Referrals are received from within Children's Services i.e. Social Care/Early Help for all children 10-17 displaying behaviours associated with offending, antisocial behaviour, or other vulnerabilities. All referrals are screened and discussed at management meetings

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

To date and in a short space of time we have engaged **42** children fully through a programme of interventions including positive activities, none of these children have had any further involvement with the YJS currently.

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

As with all other YJSs nationally Hartlepool YJS has been heavily involved in the **Turnaround Programme** since its inception.

To date we have screened over 300 children and directly worked with a total of 93.

The initial impact of the **Turnaround Programme** has shown promise in aligning youth justice partners with existing integrated early help models. It has led to a greater recognition by partners of the issues faced by children at risk of entering the youth justice system, including children missing school, those with neuro-diverse conditions, other speech, language & communications needs and their increasing need for mental health care. Prevention and diversion work, including out of court disposals, now accounts for a significant proportion of the YJS caseload, up to 70% at times, and we welcome the renewed focus on early help for children at risk of entering the criminal justice system. This needs to be viewed as an 'invest to save' model for our partners, which prevents the escalation into core statutory children's services and transition into adult criminal justice system.

Hartlepool YJS are currently part of the **Immediate Justice** pilot, this was introduced via the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan. The 3 Cleveland YJSs have worked together alongside their respective Community Safety teams to design and implement a suitable process for all children engaging with the programme. All children 12-17 having had 2 reported incidents of ASB are referred onto the programme. The YJS make contact with the family ASAP and encourage the child/family to engage with the offer. All children engaging receive educational sessions including victim awareness/empathy as well as hands on reparation via various projects. As with all prevention programmes this is voluntary. In Cleveland this programme for children is known as **Making Good**. To date Hartlepool has worked directly with 15 children on the programme.

Diversion

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

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

- Restorative Intervention (RI)
- Triage1 & 2

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

The child is allocated a worker who will gain consent and carry out a screening tool/assessment prior to jointly creating an intervention plan alongside the child, parent/carer. If the child fully

engages with either RI, Triage or Triage 2 the initial offence is closed under Outcome 22. If however the child disengages or further offends it may be returned to the Police where a Youth Caution etc can be imposed.

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

In 2023/24 Hartlepool YJS worked with **41** children via Triage **(36)**, Triage 2 **(1)** and RI **(4)**

Education

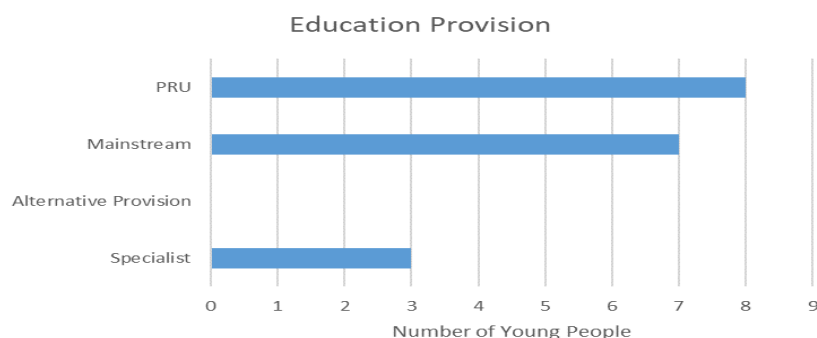
All YJS staff have direct access to a named Education worker within the Virtual School and a named worker within the One Stop Shop for all Post 16 children. The YJS have also commissioned time from an Educational Psychologist who has significantly added to our education support offer.

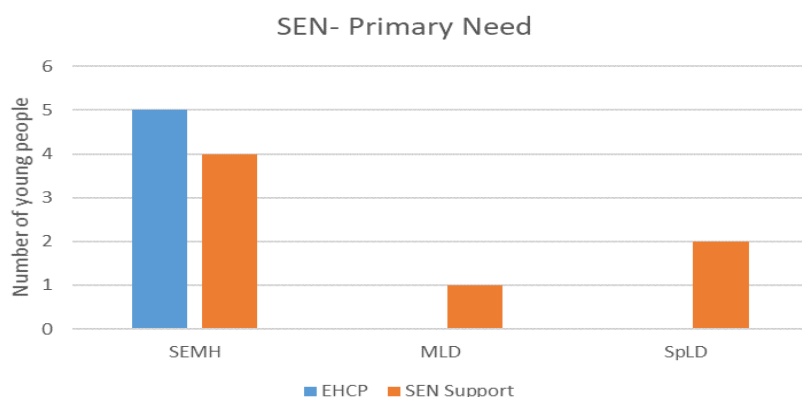
There are monthly education meetings held within the YJS with all partners in attendance where every child is discussed, actions raised and the education database updated. The YJS also have senior representation on the monthly Inclusion partnership meetings. The Virtual School Head Teacher and One Stop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

******The following is a snap shot of some of the data taken from the Education report produced for the Management board meeting held in May 2024.

As can be seen from the data below, education provides a clear and significant challenge to the partnership and one which we are working very hard to understand better and be in a position to support both the children and education provider.

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





Attendance Band %	Number of pupils
100-95	2
94-90	1
89-85	2
84-80	1
79-75	0
69-65	0
64-60	1
59-55	1
54-50	1
49-45	1
44-40	2
Under 40%	6

Number of days suspension	Number of young people
1-5	3
6-10	4
11-15	2
16-20	1

Number of Moves	Number of children
0	5
1	4
2	3
3	4
4	0
5	0
6	1
7	1

Restorative approaches and victims

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

In addition victims of youth crime are helped to access appropriate support pathways that enable them to move on from the impact of crime.

A personalised approach is taken to ensure that victims of crime in Hartlepool are placed at the centre. This includes ensuring that individual needs and wishes are fully taken into account. As a result we aim to visit all victims of crime so they are able to access pathways to support, including the option to participate in restorative justice. Across 2023/24 there were **58** contacts with direct victims of crime and where consented, a Victim Impact Statement carried out.

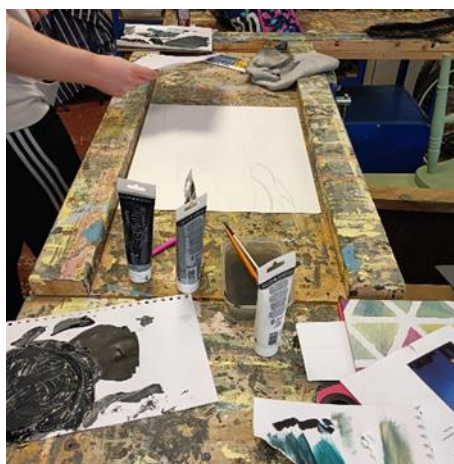
RJ is an important underlying principle of all disposals for children on YJS caseload, from Diversion to Detention & Training Orders.

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

All YJS staff have undertaken service-wide RJ training, many to level 3 and the RJ/Victim lead to Level 4. The previous decision to bring RJ and victim work in house has enabled Hartlepool YJS to have direct control and influence in shaping the direction and quality of this work, including the establishment of updated working policies, practices and procedures. In turn, this has already begun to result in better outcomes for both victims and children and is much more responsive to local need.

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

We aim where possible to ensure all children have a say in what they would like to do by means of practical reparation. We also have ongoing pieces of work which are individual bespoke projects and are planned to take place involving furniture restoration, bird boxes for distribution to local groups, working alongside the RSPB, Heugh Gun Battery and local community projects at well-known land marks/venues across the town.





Serious Violence and Exploitation

All 3 Cleveland YJS` have strategic representation within the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV). There are a number of meetings, boards and training events organised via CURV that the YJS attends. Improved data sharing and intelligence is evident and there are also much clearer links across the local authority and wider partners regarding Serious Violence. The YJS manager within his role as Secretary for the Association of YOT Managers (AYM) executive board led and produced the AYM national response for the consultation regarding the Serious Violence Duty.

The YJS Manager also has serious incidents within his quarterly report to the board and these are discussed and analysed for any lessons learned etc. During 2023/24 Hartlepool YJS reported **1** Serious Incident to the YJB.

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

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

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

The following data is correct as at May 24 regarding outstanding Police investigations/enquiries

48 offences

- 24 - RUI
- 24 - Unconditional/Conditional Bail
- 9 - with CPS
- 38 - Ongoing (including offences where CYP are open on Out of Court disposals)
- 1 - Charge authorised

- 21 - 0 to 3 months
- 13 - 3 to 6 months
- 6 - 6 to 9 months
- 2 - 9 to 12 months
- 6 - 12 to 15 months (all HSB offences, 1 Charge authorised and 3 with CPS for a decision)

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

Detention in police custody

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

The CURV funded 4 x Custody Navigators to engage, liaise and where needed support all children entering the custody suite. Management oversight is via South Tees YJS, however the Custody Navigators will engage all children and liaise directly with the home YJS, working across all 3 YJSs. This does speed up the process for children in the custody suite, and the Navigators also offer further support alongside the parent YJS outside of the Custody Suite.

Excitingly an area of the custody suite has been set aside for children only and after an extensive plan of works is now available as a Child custody area. There is a separate entrance and exit, and areas have been prepared with suitable reading materials, fidget objects, painted walls, breakout rooms etc.

Remands

There is constant dialogue locally, regionally and nationally re the use of remands, and we welcome the current shift in focus on remands, which has often been overlooked, to reduce the number, the length and seek community alternatives.

In 2023/24 Hartlepool YJS had 1 remand to YDA.

As a service we are constantly offering creative alternatives to the use of remands and custody. The changes to ISS and the current YRO (ISS) pilot with trail monitoring does enhance this offer and allow us the opportunity to offer a more creative and potentially robust alternative to custody with an improved process of oversight and management. In 2023/24 we had 2 children on the YRO (ISS) pilot.

Use of custody

Nationally the use of custody has decreased significantly over the past five years and this is rightly a success in the youth justice system. When children do go to custody it can have a damaging effect on their lives, disrupting education and straining family relationships. Children in custody are likely to be amongst the most complex and vulnerable children in society. Hartlepool YJS generally has relatively low numbers of children with custodial sentences, and every effort is made by the service to offer creative alternatives to a custodial sentence. The service has very good links to the local secure estate and ensures timely communication and planning is undertaken at all times.

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

In 2023/24 Hartlepool had 2 children serve custodial sentences.

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

There is regular management oversight of this via meetings, supervisions and QA. The guidance also highlights processes to be undertaken prior to sentence including Pre Sentence Reports (PSR) and the need for child/family involvement throughout. Actions to be undertaken at court after sentence and also in the first 10 days of sentence and then throughout their sentence planning for constructive resettlement.

7 Point Plan:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Working with families

The service works hard to include and work with families throughout a child's involvement. As highlighted throughout this plan the voice and input of parent/carers alongside those of the child are integral to successfully supporting children on their journey.

The YJS have staff trained to deliver the **Talking Teens** programme, this is based on the most recent research on adolescence, and consistent with the principles of the Nurturing Programme,

the groups provide a positive view of teenage development and focus on relationships within the family, communication, negotiating, decision-making and strategies to reduce conflict. To date engagement with parents has been very positive, we have delivered it as group work and 1:1.

Our quarterly internal **needs analysis** identifies parents/carers who may be suffering from MH/EWB issues, worklessness and substance misuse and have also been victims/perpetrators of DV. Staff work hard alongside partners and adult services to encourage parents to engage with the relevant services and pathways and do update on their progress via the needs analysis.

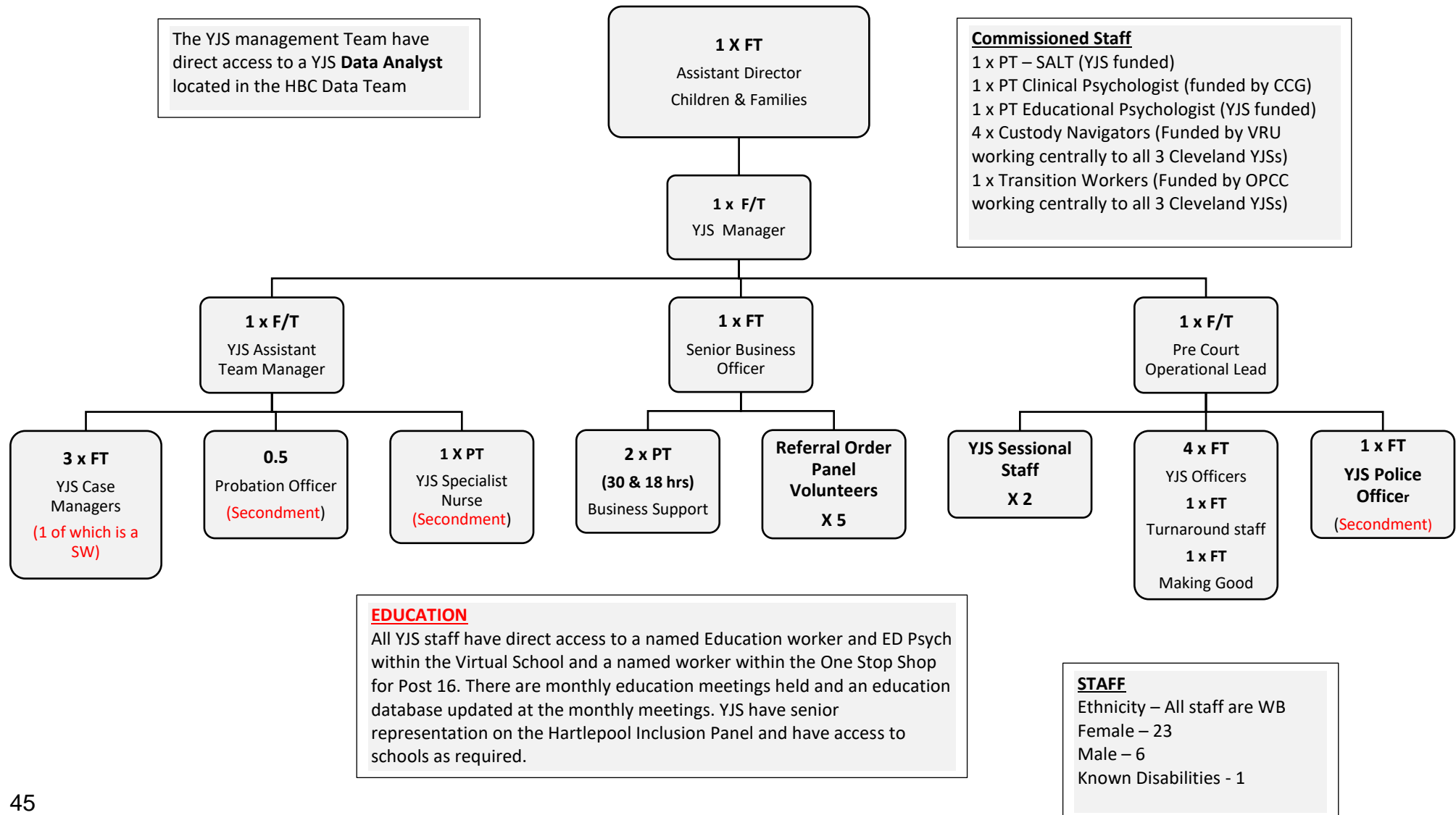
The YJS works alongside and in tandem with the **Supporting Families** programme. Checks are made with the SF lead at the outset of all work with children/families. Information is shared on the identified key worker, other service involvement, identified needs and any relevant plans in place. This speeds up the process and ensures a holistic approach as well as adding to an overall family plan.

The **Turnaround** programme has been invaluable with helping support and work with families. This is currently the only programme available to the YJS with specific funding available to offer families direct support. The benefits of this have been huge and have enabled and encouraged engagement from the outset. This needs to be viewed as an 'invest to save' model for our partners, which prevents the escalation into core statutory children's services and transition into adult criminal justice system. The initial multi-year funding for Turnaround has been very welcome, and we hope it can become permanent. There is always a worry that short-term initiatives come at the expense of investment in core service provision for the longer term, which requires sustained, multi-year settlements.

7. Sign off, submission and approval

Assistant Director Children & Families	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix 2 – YJS Service Structure, June 2024



Appendix 2 – Budget costs & Contributions 2024/25

B5: YOT budget
Costs and Contributions

Agency	Staffing Costs	Payments in kind	Other delegated funds	Total
Youth Justice Board	264,390		216,249	480,639
Local Authority	262,584	123,468	37,660	423,712
Police		51,789		51,789
Police and Crime Commissioner			37,950	37,950
Probation		30,204		30,204
Health		5,610		5,610
Welsh Government				0
Other			6,500	6,500
Total	526,974	211,071	298,359	1,036,404

Common youth justice terms

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

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

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

Fostering Service Annual Report 2023/2024



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Foreword

I am privileged to introduce this Annual Report for Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering Service. Over the last year the service has continued to grow and improve. The growth and improvements were recognised in our recent ILACS Inspection.

Hartlepool's first Mockingbird constellation launched back in November 2022, due to the retirement of the Hub carers, we have had to go back out to recruitment and have appointed new Hub Carers. Despite the retirement of the original Hub carers, the children and young people and their carers have continued to support each other within the constellation and this is testament to the model and how it works.

We are looking forward to working with our newly appointed Hub carers and we are excited for the future of Mockingbird in Hartlepool.

The continued development of the Special Guardian Offer continues to be a significant achievement for the service. It is very much welcomed by those holding Special Guardianship Orders. We have a new SGO lead who continues to build upon the support and the offer we have which includes supporting the group to continue to be self-sufficient. SGO carers can now attend bespoke training events which they have been grateful for.

The Connected Care team has gone from strength to strength ensuring that timely assessments and statutory checks are completed when children and young people are placed with people connected to them. This ensures that all of the children and young people cared for in Hartlepool are safe and in placements that are subject to appropriate assessment.

There are challenges that we are facing and we are working tirelessly to overcome those. Sufficiency is a main priority for the service area, we are currently planning to secure placement choice for bespoke groups of young people who could be supported by Supported Lodging Hosts. We are continuing with our recruitment drive across the town for mainstream carers.

Hartlepool's Foster Care family has shown tenacity in its response to the increased demand for caring homes for children, demonstrating massive dedication, commitment and often ingenuity in the service they have given.

The Foster Care Conference held in May 2023 was a huge success and the feedback was extremely positive. This year's conference will be held in September.

We continue to be determined that every child cared for by Hartlepool experiences the best quality care and positive, secure relationships.

I look forward to 2024/25 with confidence that the Fostering Service will continue to give its Foster Care families the opportunity to grow, get involved in service development and to strive for excellence in terms of caring for our children. Finally, I want to thank all our Foster Carers for their ongoing support and their commitment to providing the best possible care to our children and young people.







Lisa Cushlow
Head of Service

Introduction

The annual report of the Fostering Service for Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) provides information about the activity of and outcomes achieved by the service during 2023/2024. The report will reflect on the work of the team and service provided, identify changes that have taken place within the service and detail the statistical information in respect of the Fostering Service from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Finally, the report will set out priorities for service development during 2024/2025.

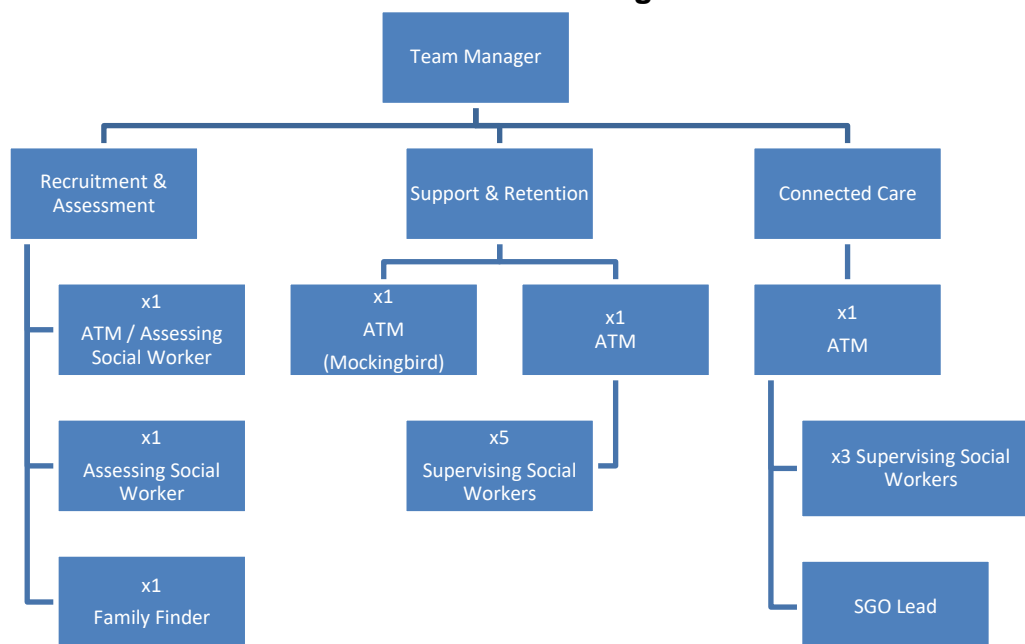
The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011 places a requirement upon Local Authority Fostering Services to ensure that the Executive side of the Council receive 3 monthly reports on the management and outcomes of the service. This Annual Report provides a full review of the service and interim progress reports will be presented to Children's Services Committee on a quarterly basis throughout the coming financial year.

The aim of the fostering service is to recruit, train and support foster carers to provide high quality placements for the children of Hartlepool. This is achieved through the following objectives;

-  The Fostering team works in partnership with children, young people, their families and other stakeholders involved in promoting positive outcomes for children and young people looked after by Hartlepool Borough Council in order to deliver a high quality foster care service.
-  The Fostering team actively seeks to involve foster carers, children and young people in our care, care leavers and children of foster carers in the development and continuous improvement of the service.
-  The Fostering team recruits, assesses, trains, supervises and supports a suitable and diverse range of foster carers to provide quality care and placement choice for children and young people.
-  The Fostering team provides stable placements and continuity of care for children by ensuring that carers and children and young people who are cared for receive appropriate support, leading to good outcomes;
-  Wherever possible and appropriate, brothers and sisters will live together.
-  Individual children's needs/wishes and feelings are paramount and taken into consideration in relation to their care.

Fostering Team Structure

The following table provides information relating to the staffing structure of the Fostering Service:



The fostering service over the last year has experienced a number of changes which has resulted in the recruitment of new staff members. In May 2023, a new Team Manager was appointed and additional staff members were recruited to cover long term sickness of existing staff members and additional staff appointments have been made to enable the team to respond to the significant increase in requests to carry out assessments of connected carers. Organisationally the team has also restructured has outlined above. This enables staff to work in three designated areas –Recruitment & Assessment; Support & Retention & Connected Care. The rationale for this this structure is support and underpin the three distinct areas of fostering. Alongside this, organisationally this enhances the level of managerial support available to practitioners in light of the increase in workloads and the increased size of the team and has built in capacity to support two social work apprentices within the team. Support from colleagues in Business Support is key to the smooth running of the service and the fostering Panel and this is currently provided by one designated worker.

Staff within the fostering service regularly attend practice forums co-ordinated by the Fostering Network and the Foster with North East hub with other professionals to build upon their existing skills and knowledge. The meetings also provide a forum to share good practice ideas and to consider bench marking in relation to recruitment, training and to reflect upon key issues/ trends in fostering.

Governance and Oversight of Fostering

Fostering Panel







Hartlepool Borough Council has established an appropriately constituted Fostering Panel which, in accordance with the Regulations, is chaired by an Independent Person and has established a 'central list' of persons who have the appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the Panel for consideration and recommendation. The service is currently actively seeking to expand the membership of the central list to further extend its membership and diversity. In preparation for joining the Panel members are required to complete an induction and have access to ongoing training to keep abreast of ongoing changes to legislation, regulations and departmental guidance in accordance with the National Minimum Requirements 2011.

During this reporting period members of the Panel attended an Annual joint training day with the Fostering Team on the 28th September 2023. This training session provided attendees with the opportunity to consider the learning from reflecting upon a Case Review and considered the implications for our Panel and the fostering service. Additionally members of the Panel also met with staff from the voluntary group 'Hart Gables' (which is a support service for those who identify as LGBTQ+ across Teesside) who provided training, and advice to members to increase their understanding and awareness of the issues concerned. The day also provided a valuable opportunity for members to spend time together to promote relationships and group working.

This central list (as set out in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards (Standard 14) includes an Independent Chair, two Vice Chairs, Agency Social Workers, an Education representative, an Elected Member and Independent Members. The Panel also receives advice when required from the Local Authority Legal Advisor, Medical Advisor and Panel Advisor. The Assistant Director of Children's Services, is the Fostering Agency Decision Maker, and as such, makes the final decision in relation to Foster Carer approval, Connected Person's approval, Extension Requests for assessments under Regulation 25 of the 2010 Care Planning Regulations, children's best interest decisions and matches. The Agency Decision Maker is robust in their quality assurance and decision making, ensuring that the best interests of children is always at the heart of everything we do.

Role and Remit of Panel (Fostering Regulations 2011 Reg 25)

The fostering Panel has several important functions which include:

-  To make recommendations about the approval of foster carers
-  To recommend terms of approval
-  To consider the first review of carers and other review if required by the fostering service to consider the continued approval of foster carers
-  To advise where appropriate on the procedure for reviews of foster carers to monitor their effectiveness
-  To oversee the conduct of assessments
-  To give advice and make recommendations on matters referred to it by the fostering service including terminations of approval

**The table below highlights Fostering Panel activity
for 2022/2023 & 2023/2024**

Year	2022/2023	2023/2024
Number of times Panel met	19	17
Number of matches considered the Panel	9	8
Number of recommendations for approval of Mainstream Foster Carers	10	6
Number of Reg 25 requests considered	14	36
Number of recommendations for the approval of Connected Person Foster Carers	15	13
Number of recommendations for the deregistration of foster carer considered by Panel	0	1
Number of Brief Reports considered by Panel	5	2
Number of Foster Carer reviews considered by Panel	13	23
Number of notifications concerning the resignation of foster carers noted by Panel	6	23
Number of recommendations to agree a plan for long term Foster Care for a cared for child (Best Interest Decision)	6	7

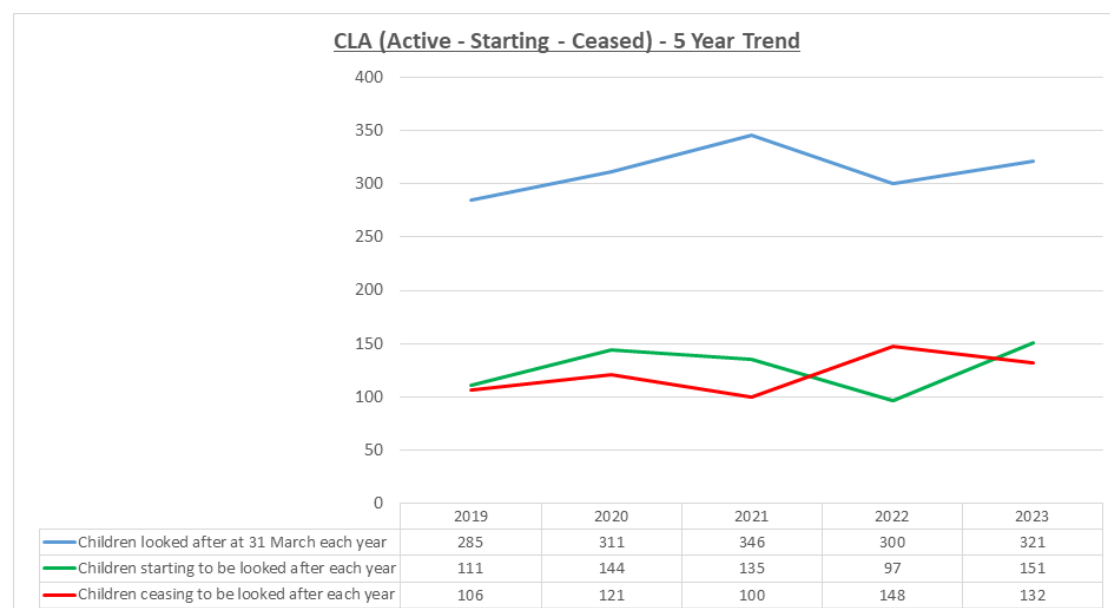
The above information captures the matters considered by Panel which reflects the nature of the work completed by the Fostering Service in respect to both mainstream and connected carers.

One of the key factors the above data highlights is the significant increase in carer resignations, which upon closer scrutiny appears to have resulted from a number of reasons. These includes carers who have moved on to provide permeance to some of our children they have cared for and have gone to secure an SGO order for the children concerned. Whilst this clearly represents a loss to the service, it is such a poistive outcome for the children and the fostering families concerned. Within the cohort of resignations a number where from carers who have not been actively involved in fostering for some time due to various reasons and have now made the decision to stop fostering .Whilst again this represents a further loss and reduction of carers approved with the service in realty the impact has been minimal has they have not been available to care for our children for some time.

In comparing our data of foster carer resignations with other Local Authorities, it is clear that this increase is an issue nationally. Recent data published by Ofsted this year indicates that during 2022 /2033 there were 5,125 resignations from foster carers which sadly outnumbered the number of foster carer approved in this time period which numbered 4,080. This has resulted in a net decrease fostering households nationally as well as locally in Hartlepool.

Sufficiency information

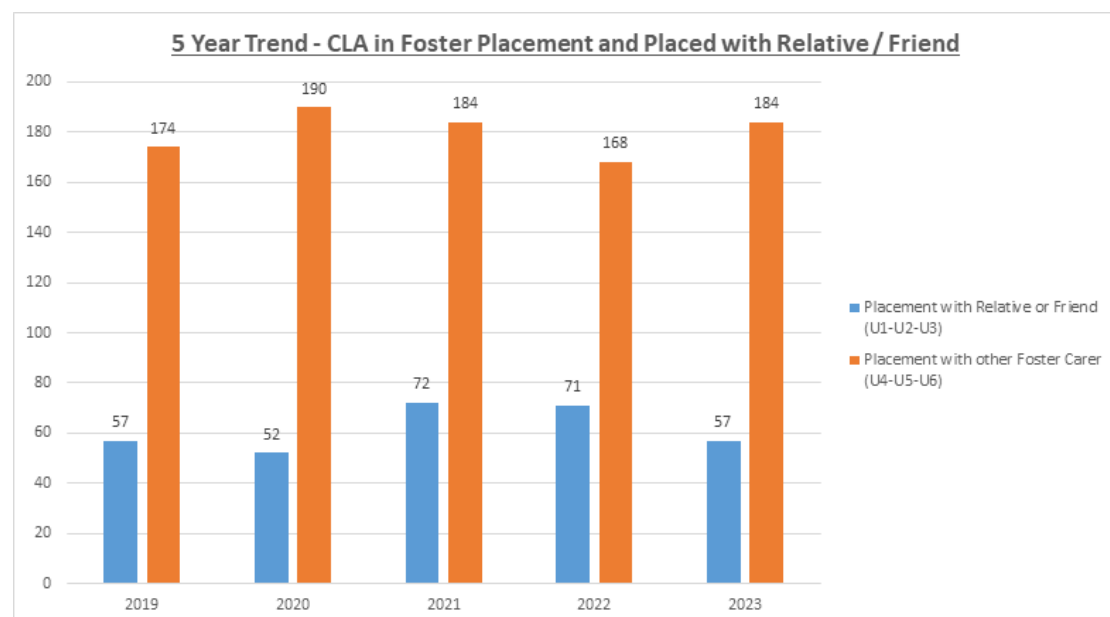
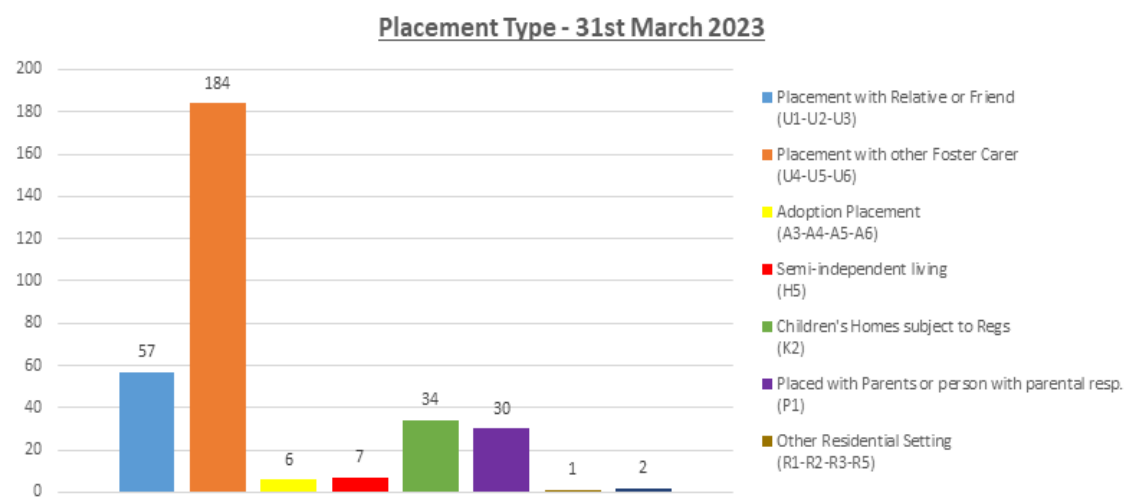
Data from the DFE (Department for education) for 2023 captures the increase of children looked after Nationally which totals 83,000 this represents a 2% increase on 2022 year's figures. Locally in Hartlepool our data reflects a similar picture and our local authority continues to have one of the highest number of cared for children per 10,000 children.



In terms of sufficiency the greatest challenge the service encounters is recruiting sufficient number of carers to meet the individual needs of our children and young people. At present the number of carers recruited falls far short of those required, which again is not unique to Hartlepool both regionally and nationally other Local Authorities face the same challenge resulting in external placements being commissioned.

The below table identifies the range of placements secured for our looked after children

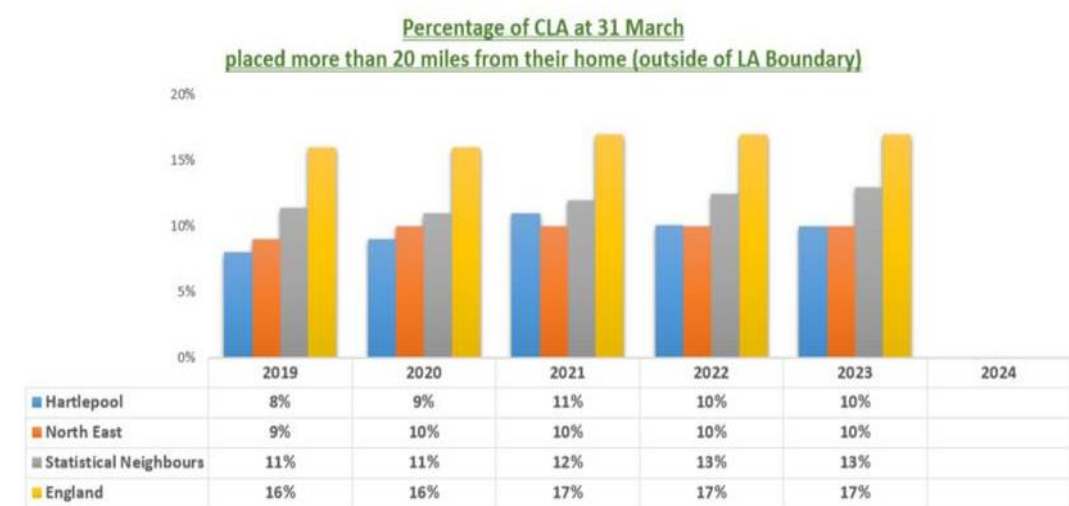
Placement Type and Provision



On a positive note has identified in the above table, the majority of our children who are looked after continue to be cared by our mainstream foster carers or by members of the children's families or network, who the service has formally assessed has foster carers (Connected Carers). In both cases this enables the service to work closely with the carers, the children and the children's social worker which is not always achievable when children are cared for with carers in the independent sector.

Profile of Children and Young People Cared for in Hartlepool

Percentage of children looked after as at 31 March 2024, placed more than 20 miles from their homes, outside Local Authority boundary.



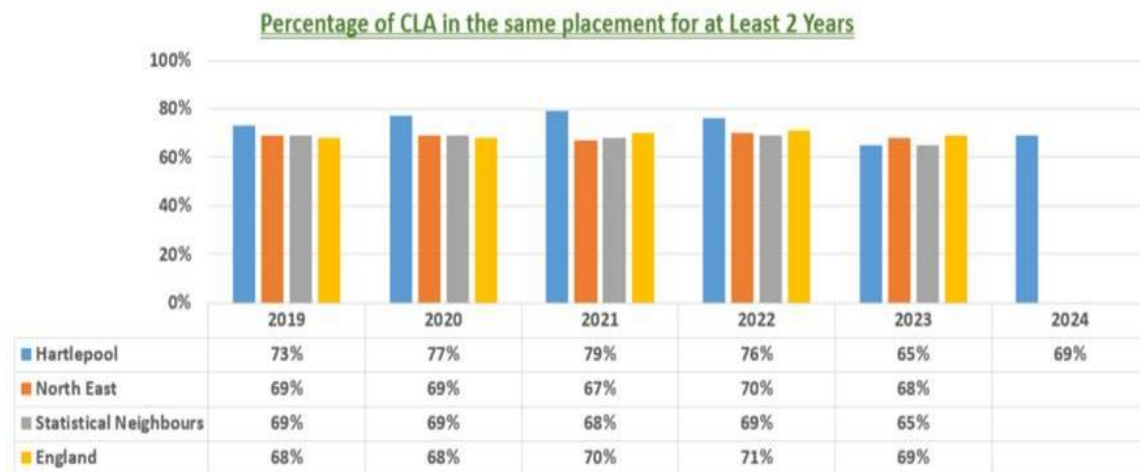
The above shows that the use of placements for our children and young people outside of Hartlepool is lower than our statistical neighbours and lower than the national average of 21% based 2023 figures. The service aims to keep its children close to home and will continue to strive to achieve this wherever it can.

STABILITY - Percentage of children as at 31 March 2023 with three or more placements during the year.

National data for 2023 highlights that 1 in 10 children experienced high placement instability (3 or more placements). The above chart highlights that, despite the increase in children becoming cared for in Hartlepool in 2023

performance in terms of securing children these children a stable and secure placement has been maintained.

STABILITY - Percentage of looked after children in same placement for at least two years, or are placed for adoption and their adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement, last for at least two years.



The table above demonstrates an increase in respect of placement stability to from 65 % in the previous year to 69% in this year (in placements of two years or more duration) for children and young people cared for by Hartlepool This stability figure is significantly higher than the National percentage of 55% for 2023. (Source DFE 2023)

Preparation for Children's Placements

The Fostering Service operates a duty system for responding to children who need Foster Care. Supervising Social Workers will liaise with the 'placing' Social Worker to ensure that there is a thorough understanding of the child's needs so that they are able to match him/her/them to the most suitable carer.

It is our usual procedure that children and young people requiring permanent placements are matched at panel prior to introductions taking place. For children and young people already in a foster placement and where a request is made for this placement to become permanent, the foster carers are considered within the family finding process. A thorough assessment of their suitability to meet the long term needs of the child/young person is undertaken and presented to panel.

In some instances it is necessary for a child to be placed at short notice to safeguard and promote their welfare. On these occasions a planning meeting is held as soon as is practicably possible following their placement.

The team takes into account the assessed needs of the child and his/her/their family's wishes, and wherever possible maintains sisters and brothers together in the same placement.

The service benefits from a 'family finder' role; that person becomes involved with children who have a plan for permanence through long term fostering, at the earliest opportunity. The family finder identifies appropriate fostering families for the children, looking firstly at internal provision before exploring independent fostering providers. Hartlepool continues to provide good placement choice and stability with our foster carers – see stability data above. In this year, 8 children were matched to live permanently with foster carers. The family finder attends a monthly permanency tracker meeting. The function of this is to ensure all children's plans are given careful consideration with input and oversight of the Assistant Director for children's services. The tracker meeting aims to resolve any potential barriers to children being placed with the best carers and that there is no delay or 'drift' in achieving that plan.








Recruitment

The task of recruiting foster carers continues to be a challenge locally, Nationally Ofsted report a similar scenario, in 2023, 125,195 initial enquiries were obtained from potential fostering households this was 9% lower than the previous year 2021-2022. 79% of these enquiries were made to fostering agencies in the independent sector which presents a further challenge to Local Authorities recruitment endeavours. The need to recruit new foster carers is a key objective of the service and planning around this forms the basis of the services recruitment policy.

In September 2023, Foster North East was the first regional support hub to be launched, the hub works to raise the profile of Local Authority foster care in the North East. The hub works in conjunction with the twelve Local Authorities it represents which includes Hartlepool, a key function of the hub is to utilise a variety of marketing initiatives in the public arena to increase awareness of fostering. A number of foster carers from Hartlepool have played a key roles in recruitment initiatives and have featured in case studies on the Hubs web site, whilst others are acting as Buddies to prospective carers providing support and guidance through from enquiry to approval .

Since the hub went live in September, the hub has referred on five enquiries on to our fostering service which have converted into two assessments. Alongside the work of the hub there is a recognition of the need for individual Local Authorities to continue to maximise recruitment activities within their own towns.

Throughout 2023/24 work continues to raise the profile of Fostering within our local community has outlined below;

-  The fostering services Recruitment Strategy has been reviewed and updated to strengthen and focus recruitment initiatives.
-  Dedicated staff members have been secured to work in the specific area of recruitment to fast track enquiries, assessments and to implement a monthly plan of recruitment events.
-  Foster with the North East Hub now publicise recruitment events in Hartlepool on their website to maximise coverage of local events in Hartlepool.
-  A variety of mediums have been utilised to raise awareness of fostering locally which has included featuring fostering on the radio, social media, and within local publications including Heartbeat a local community magazine.
-  Marketing materials have been updated to capture new branding logos to reflect membership of Foster with Northeast Hub.
-  Dedicated staff have worked in conjunction with foster carers to staff recruitment stands in a variety of locations and venues and will continue to do so throughout the year to capture carers experience and insight at the stands.
-  Monthly meetings established with colleagues in Marketing and Media to co-ordinate coverage of planned recruitment events.
-  Updates have made to the council web page to include video footage of interviews with carers have been well received and have attracted a number of viewings.
-  Recruitment initiatives were intensified during fostering fortnight and included electronic signage on local road highways into the town.



Fostering Fortnight 2024 - Middleton Grange Shopping centre recruitment stand



Fostering Social Workers chatting about Fostering on Radio Hartlepool 2024

The table below details captures recruitment activity for Mainstream foster carers 2021/ 22 & 2022/23 & 2023/24

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Number of enquiries obtained	24	7	18
Number of screening visits completed	17	6	15
Number of assessments instigated	3	3	8
Number of foster carer approvals	3	1	3

Connected Carer assessments

“Family and friends play a unique role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot for whatever reason live with their parents” (Family & Friends Care Dfe 2010). The Children Act 1989 places a responsibility on the Local Authority to assess family members, friends and persons connected to the children / young people to determine their suitability to care for children and young people. The last year has seen a significant increase in the volume of assessments undertaken by the fostering service since taking over responsibility for the completion of Regulation 24 assessments in 2023.

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Reg 24 Assessments (To consider temporary approval of foster carers in emergency situation)	16	50	102
Full Connected Carers Assessments progressed to Panel to consider full approval	13	15	13

Foster Carer Retention

Hartlepool Borough Council recognises the invaluable contribution that Foster Carers make to Children's Services, and as such views Foster Carer retention as a significant priority.

Post Approval Support and Participation

Each Foster Care family has an allocated Supervising Social Worker and receives a four to eight weekly supervision and support visits as well as telephone and e-mail contact. Supervising Social Workers also make a minimum of one unannounced visit per year to Foster Carers, this can be undertaken by a different member of staff to the foster carer's allocated Social Worker.

The Fostering team communicates regularly with carers; all carers have a council e-mail account so information can be shared securely and received between carers, the fostering team and the children's social workers.

The Fostering Team has a duty worker throughout the working week who is available to respond to any calls from carers. In addition to this, foster carers have access to the Emergency Duty Team, the commissioned out of hour's service and an out of hour's telephone support service provided by a Head of Service on a rota basis. Foster carers can contact the support phone line at any time.

The Fostering team also hosts a private Facebook group for approved foster carers, to communicate with each other, share experiences, advice and knowledge with other foster carers. This has proved to be an excellent communication tool and is an immediate means of letting the whole group know when we have children who are waiting for a suitable Foster Carer.

Our children and Foster Carers benefit from the support of trained Filial Therapists and Carers have access to support in relation to individual young people for whom they are caring.

Our two participation officers take a lead role in ensuring that children, young people and carers have time to spend together and to celebrate their achievements and there is an annual Celebration Evening for Carers and for children cared for and a Summer Barbeque for children and young people who are cared for and for the families who care. Annually the fostering service facilitates an Foster Carer conference and this year plans are underway for this to be held in September and will be focused on Reflective Fostering.

The table below details Foster Care capacity as at 31 March 2024

Number of fostering households	139
Number of placements possible if all in use	265
How many children in placement?	194
Number of vacant places	38
Number of not available places	36

Places not available account for various situations such as placements not available due to carers caring for young people under a Staying Put Arrangement; carers taking a break pending resignation; needs of children currently being cared for.

Feedback from Foster Carers

Foster carers are consulted on all aspects of the service and their views inform planning. In this year the views and the opinions of foster carers were sought and considered as part of the Ofsted inspection of our Children's Services and concluded that "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."

Foster Carers continue to be actively engaged in discussions around the review and development of the Mockingbird Model and the 'Reflective Fostering Study' completed by the Anna Freud Centre with our carers and staff. Despite carers being extremely busy caring for our children they have given their time and commitment to support both projects as part of plans to further develop the Fostering Service.

They, like the staff team, recognise that the quality of support and of self-awareness and indeed self-care (which the projects we are embracing aim to improve) are key to ensuring the safety and stability of the children we care for.

The Voice of our Children and Young People











During our recent ILACS inspectors concluded following discussions with children and young people “When it is not safe for children to stay with their parents, social workers act very quickly. Children living in foster care are settled, doing well and do not have many changes of carer. This is helping them to make good progress.” They told inspectors they felt safe, cared for and felt part of their new family.”

There are times when children tell us things that they are not happy with, which is of equal importance to making improvements. We gain all views from children in our care reviews and from ‘disruption’ meetings in which children and young people are actively encouraged to partake. Additionally, our children in our Care Council has grown and developed to the point that it has been separated into age groups so that their input and work is pitched where they need it to be.

The Participation Team is committed to ensuring the views and opinions of the children in our care and care leavers are heard and listened to; they act on the views of children and young people and take them to decision makers who will then revise the young people’s opinions and make positive changes to the services children and young people receive.

The Participation Team has identified the need for set groups for different age ranges to be able to work on projects, consultations that are relevant to their age range. The Care Leaver Group meets every Tuesday, 4.30 – 5.30pm at the One Stop Shop. The Children in Care Council meet every Wednesday, 4.30pm – 5.30pm. Both groups allow the young people chance to discuss and share their views in a safe space and also sit on the Corporate Parenting Forum.

The Participation Team will be working alongside the Fostering Team to support with;

-  Foster Carer coffee mornings
-  Foster carer training, including the annual Foster Carer Conference
-  Annual fostering events
-  Fostering documentation
-  Fostering recruitment
-  Mocking Bird
-  Foster Carer celebrations
-  Foster children events – children’s Christmas party
-  Children who foster group – to offer support
-  Reviewing the guide to Fostering for children and young people with the Children in Care Council.

Training

All of the Council's experienced foster carers have completed the DfE Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers and new carers are working on the standards and on target for completion within required timescales.

Prior to approval, all prospective carers undertake a 3 day preparation course facilitated by Foster with North East Hub following the BAAF Skills to Foster Programme.

Post approval training includes access to all courses available to the children's workforce in Hartlepool and mandatory training days for foster carers. The service is currently reviewing and refreshing the training available to carers and is seeking to utilise both on line training and face to face training to support individual carers learning preference and to secure bespoke training specific to the three distinct group of carers the service works with Mainstream carers, Connected Carers and Special Guardians.



Service Developments

Special Guardianship

The SGO service has secured a new Special Guardian lead during this reporting period who has strived to build upon the service and practice established. The primary aim of the role is to ensure that pre order preparation is robust and transparent to maximize children's opportunity to experience safe, stable and loving care into adulthood. The number of SGO's granted over the five years has doubled in this period rising from 19 in 2019 through to 33 in 2023.

The SGO lead has worked hard to raise awareness of therapeutic services available to children and in recognition of the individual needs of children and young people the worker has researched and secured the services of a number of specialist practitioners to support children and their carers.

Some of the key work undertaken:

-  Applications to the Adoption Special Guardianship Support Fund have increased from 16 in the previous year to 36 in this year.
-  The SGO support group is now well established and meets on the last Friday of every month. The Core Offer for all Special Guardians is established and introduced to all prospective special guardians in a pre-court home visit.

- ✚ A SGO support pathway has been established on LCS, meaning that all SGO work can be evidenced and correctly recorded using the secure system for children's information.

Plans for work in the coming year include:

- ✚ To develop a training programme for Special Guardians.
- ✚ To establish an online support group, including evenings.
- ✚ To further expand the therapeutic service providers list.

Mockingbird

Hartlepool's Mockingbird Fostering Programme was implemented in November 2022 following the appointment of hub carers and the development of a constellation. The programme has been subject to ongoing review from the Fostering Network and feedback from carers involved and from the Fostering Network has been positive about the support provided.

Unfortunately the hub carers unexpectedly choose to retire from fostering at the end of last year, on a positive note members of the constellation have continued to support each other whilst the service have sought to recruit replacement hub carers.

New hub carers have now been recruited and the service would like to expand into a further constellation once the new hub carers and the constellation has settled and is secure. The service will however need to evidence the impact and cost effectiveness of the project in order to develop more constellations and is currently awaiting data gathered by Fostering Network to evaluate the viability of this for the council.

Reflective Fostering Study



In April 2023, the fostering service embarked upon a 10 week training programme coordinated by the Anna Freud Centre as part of their research project. This important research is to support the lives of carers and of children in care. The programme has been developed by specialists at the Anna Freud Centre and aims to help carers look after themselves and therefore be able to build strong, supportive relationships with children in their care. The training programme was facilitated by a social worker within the service who played a key role in partnership with a foster carer in rolling out the course to carers.

Whilst the overall findings/evaluation of the National Study is anticipated next year, feedback from carers to date is extremely positive and the indicators are that it has had a positive impact on carer's stress levels, carer child relationships and the child's emotional well-being. The fostering service is keen to build upon the work undertaken and plans to focus the next Annual Fostering Conference around Reflective Fostering and practitioners from the Anna Freud

Center have agreed to support this day and our plans to roll this program out to other carers.



Children who Foster Group

Two members of the fostering service reinstated the group early in 2022 and to date the group continues to be popular with children and their families. The children have met quarterly and have enjoyed taking part in various activities and events facilitated and supported by the workers. The sessions also provide the children with an opportunity to talk about and share their experience of fostering which is invaluable to the staff to gain this insight. The sessions also provides the children with a safe space to have their views and feelings heard. The staff plan to work with members of the group to:

-  Develop an information leaflet about being a child in a family that fosters to share as part of our information packs and recruitment materials.
-  To review the existing 'child reference' form completed has part of the prospective carer applications.

Family Finding

The role of the Family Finding sits with a dedicated worker within the service who plays a key part in progressing children's plans for permeance by seeking to identify suitable long term carers for children and progressing the match to Panel. Work is currently been undertaken by the service to review the process around family finding and going forward plans to build upon current practice by;

-  Developing & delivering training to carers to increase their understanding and knowledge of long term fostering to underpin placement stability.
-  Increasing the level of support available to carers from the to support the induction period around long term fostering arrangements for children









Connected Care







A number of dedicated social workers work specifically in the area of Connected Care and complete the assessment of people connected to children /young people (predominantly family members) to consider their suitability to care for specific children /young people

Assessments in this area are often complex and undertaken in emergency situations when families are in crisis and require an assessment to be undertaken at the point a child or young person needs to cared for outside of their immediate family. Like all areas of fostering there is a clear regulatory framework around our practice and in this instance Regulation 24 of the Fostering Regulations 2011 requires the local authority to undertake an








assessment to ensure the safe, immediate placement of children. This process enables the temporary approval of foster carers in situations when we have been unable to complete a full assessment. Following the temporary approval of carers, the fostering team maintain their involvement and continue their assessment to progress a fuller assessment in tight timescales. This may result in a situations when an extension to the timescale is requested and considered by panel has a Reg 25 request (has captured in data table for Panel). A significant number of the assessments undertaken in this area do not progress to Panel for full approval, however the assessment work undertaken is utilized to support formal applications for court orders to support children's plans for permanence i.e. SGO or Child Arrangement Orders.





Priorities for 2023/2024 - How did we do?

-  Strive to improve the long term stability of our children who are placed with Foster Carers and Special Guardians on a permanent basis. Outcome – **Achieved**
-  Retain and if possible improve our children's short term stability figures. Outcome – **Achieved**
-  Improve the range and nature of support to carers to increase children's stability and security in their Foster placements by utilising the Support Workers (appointed in this year) to offer additional support to children and carers who are struggling. Outcome – **Partially achieved**
-  Identify and overcome any barriers to creating a second Mockingbird Constellation. Outcome - **Partially achieved**
-  Complete the Reflective Fostering Study research and measure impact for children (stability), individual carers, the team and the service. Outcome – **Partially achieved**
-  Uplift carer remuneration (Banding and Age Related Allowance) to recognise the increase in the cost of living. Outcome - **Achieved**
-  Review the Connected Care process to assess outcomes for children and families and impact for the Fostering Service. Outcome - **Partially achieved**
-  Increase children's placement choice and improve on recruitment by taking part in the DfE regional Pathfinder recruitment pilot. Outcome – **Partially achieved**

-  Act upon ideas from Foster Carers about raising our profile and recruitment e.g. foster care walk, information sessions, a presence in the town, shopping centres, and schools. Outcome – **Achieved**
-  Recruit and approve a minimum of 20 new fostering households. Outcome - **Not achieved - a total of 16 carer households were approved figure reflects combined numbers for mainstream and connected carers.**
-  Create additional management capacity to ensure robust oversight of service delivery, given additional duties within the service (Connected Care). Outcome – **Achieved**
-  Provide training to panel members in respect of gender identity and the impact for children in our care. Outcome - **Achieved**
-  Increase the number of Foster Carers who secure a Special Guardianship Order for children in their care where that is in the child's best interest. Outcome – **Achieved**
-  Strive to improve the long term stability of our children who are placed with Foster Carers and Special Guardians on a permanent basis. Outcome – **Partially achieved**

Priorities for 2024/2025

-  To recruit new panel members to build upon its current membership and diversity of experiences.
-  To recruit and approve a minimum of 20 new fostering households
-  To revise and update training available to all carers
-  To implement dedicated support group for Connected Carers
-  To secure bespoke training suitable the needs of Connected Carers and Special Guardians
-  To work proactively to improve placement stability for children /young people in both short term and long term care arrangements
-  To work collaboratively with the North East Hub to enhance recruitment regionally for foster carers alongside maintaining the services own recruitment initiatives

-  To review and update fostering policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the regulatory requirements
-  To launch and implement a new Foster Carer Handbook
-  To develop a supported lodgings scheme for young people
-  To complete training with Panel members in respect to Connected Care

Sue Mansell –Team Manager –June 2024

Fostering Service Statement of Purpose



WE CARE ABOUT OUR CHILDREN, YOU COULD TOO

Hartlepool Borough Council

Fostering Service

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This Statement of Purpose was initially approved by the Elected Members of Hartlepool Borough Council on 29 September 2003.

It was signed on behalf of the Elected Members by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

This Statement of Purpose was reviewed and updated in March 2024 and is to be approved by the Elected Members of Hartlepool Borough Council.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and revised as appropriate by the Team Manager of the Fostering Service no later than April 2025.

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Introduction

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, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that are provided. This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements and also how the service is managed and its fitness to provide fostering services. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and shows how the welfare of children will be met and good outcomes achieved for all children in its care. It also demonstrates the systems which we have set in place to recruit, train, supervise and support Foster Carers.

This statement is available to all members of staff, Foster Carers, children and birth parents and is available on the Hartlepool Borough Council Website. A copy of this statement is also to be lodged with Ofsted. The information contained is regularly updated, and will be amended annually.

A separate Children's Guide to the Fostering Service is given to all young people who are to be placed with Foster Carers. This is also available on the HBC website and Practice manual.

CHILDREN'S GUIDE

Subject to the child's age and understanding, the fostering service ensures the child receives the Children's guide at the point of placement and that the Foster Carer explains the contents of the Children's Guide in a way that is accessible. The Children's Guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Commissioner, or Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern. The fostering service will update this guide as required on an annual basis to ensure that information is current and reflects developments in the service. The service would seek to ensure that the guide is available in a format appropriate to the communication needs of the child

concerned and would access council resources such as language translation to achieve this.

Aims and Objectives, Principles and Legislative Framework for Standards of Care

AIM

The aim of the fostering service is to recruit, train and support Foster Carers to provide high quality placements for the children of Hartlepool. The service will support Foster Carers and Family Network Carers (Connected Carers) to value, support and encourage children and young people to grow and develop as individuals, to be physically and emotionally healthy and to aim high in their education so that they achieve the best possible outcomes.

OBJECTIVES

- To plan and implement effective recruitment campaigns and strategies in order to attract the number and range of carers identified to meet the complex and diverse needs of the Children cared for by Hartlepool and to ensure a choice of high quality foster placements.
- To ensure that wherever possible and appropriate sisters and brothers will be accommodated together.
- To ensure that the individual child's needs/wishes and feelings are paramount and taken into consideration in relation to their placements.
- To undertake effective, timely assessments of prospective carers including Connected Persons carers within specified timescales to ensure that children are afforded safe and effective care.
- To maintain and support the Fostering Panel to consider Foster Carer and Connected Persons assessments and make recommendations for approval of prospective Foster Carers, children's plans for long term foster care, and approval of the match of named children with Foster

Carers. The panel also considers the first reviews of Foster Carers and subsequent reviews where category changes are being agreed or there have been issues regarding children's care, along with any requests for extensions to Regulation 24 assessments.

- To provide pre and post approval training for applicants and carers, equipping them to meet the diverse needs of children and young people.
- To provide regular, recorded supervision and support contacts with carers by suitably qualified and experienced staff.
- To ensure that additional and flexible support is available to carers to underpin placement stability and improve outcomes for children in their care.
- To protect children and young people from abuse and neglect through safer recruitment practices and adherence to safeguarding policy and procedures in all areas of the service including for staff, carers and panel members.
- To create stability for children and young people in foster care through robust matching processes and a good standard of consistent and effective support.
- To have a Staying Put policy and procedure in place in order that young people are encouraged to remain in placements post 18.
- To achieve better life chances for children who are cared for, particularly in relation to health, education, employment and leisure activities.
- To promote the development of skills and expertise within the fostering community, to create a culture of aspiration for our children.
- To maintain and promote contact with family members, where appropriate, through creating opportunities for positive family time.

- To prepare young people adequately for when they eventually leave their foster placement.
- To create lifelong attachments with carers in order that children and young people continue to be supported into adulthood.
- To work in partnership with children and young people, their parents and carers and social workers.
- Provide an environment where each child and young person is helped to make the best of his or her abilities emotionally, physically, educationally and socially.

PRINCIPLES

The work of Hartlepool Fostering Service is based on the following principles:

1. **Child focus** – the child's welfare and needs are at the centre of the fostering process and their wishes and feelings are sought and taken into account about all aspects of their care.
2. **Partnership working** – the Fostering Service will work in partnership with children and their parents, Foster Carers and their families, and social work staff and other professionals when delivering the service.
3. **Anti-discriminatory practice** – the Fostering Service will respect human rights and will ensure that there is fair and equal access to all its services. The services it provides will be free from discrimination, prejudice and racism. The service will value diversity and promote equality.

STANDARDS OF CARE

The Fostering Service will support Hartlepool Children's and Joint Commissioning Services in meeting the child focussed standards which set out

what children in foster care need, as detailed in the **Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011**:

Standard 1: The child's wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them

- Children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases; and know how to obtain support and make a complaint.
- The views of any others who have important relationship to the child are gathered and taken into account.

Standard 2: Promoting a positive identity, potential and valuing diversity through individualised care

- Children have a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.

Standard 3: Promoting positive behaviour and relationships

- Children enjoy sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately.

Standard 4: Safeguarding Children

- Children feel safe and are safe. Children understand how to protect themselves and are protected from significant harm, including neglect, abuse and accident.

Standard 5: Children Missing from Care

- Children rarely go missing and if they do, they return quickly
- Children who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return

Standard 6: Promoting good health and wellbeing

- Children live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs.

Standard 7: Education, employment and leisure activities

- Children are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities
- Children are able to make a positive contribution to the foster home and their wider community

Standard 8: Promoting educational achievement

- The education and achievement of children is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children are supported to achieve their educational potential.

Standard 9: Promoting and supporting contact

- Children have, where appropriate, constructive contact with their parents, grandparents, siblings, half-siblings, wider family, friends and people who play a significant role in their lives.

Standard 10: Providing a suitable physical environment for the foster child

- Children live in foster homes which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development.

Standard 11: Preparation for a placement

- Children are welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued.
- Children feel part of the family. They are not treated differently to the Foster Carer's own children living in the household. The child's needs are met and they benefit from a stable placement.

Standard 12: Promoting independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care

- Children are prepared for, and supported into, adulthood so that they can reach their full potential and achieve economic well-being.

CHILDREN IN OUR CARE – OUR VALUES

In addition to the national standards, Hartlepool Fostering Service has adopted a vision and aspirations for children who are cared for, which underpin the Team's approach to service delivery. These include:

- The vision to ensure that every child we care for in Hartlepool experiences high quality care and stable relationships, is nurtured and grows up with a sense of identity and belonging.
- When a child becomes cared for, there must be sufficient range of accommodation options available to be able to match them with Foster Carers who will meet his/her/their needs.

The Service Provided

The services provided specifically by the Fostering Team fall into two main areas:

1) Those provided to registered Foster Carers and potential Foster Carers including Connected Persons Carers;

- Initial visits to people expressing an interest in becoming Foster Carers
- Preparation training for applicants
- Competency based assessments of applicants underpinned by the Secure Base model of care.
- Support systems for approved Foster Carers and Connected Persons carers including allocated Supervising Social Worker and regular supervisions
- Post-approval training and development for Foster Carers and Connected Persons Carers
- Consultation with Carers about the development of the service

2) Those provided to children requiring a foster placement;

- A duty social worker available during office hours Monday to Friday
- Provision of a range of foster care placements for children cared for by Hartlepool Borough Council
- Provision of carers for use by the Emergency Duty Team for children who need care during evenings, weekends and bank holidays.
- Consultation with children in our care on all aspects of the service.

The Fostering service also works in conjunction with a number of other agencies and professionals to ensure a cohesive and effective package of support is available to children who become cared for. The Child in Care Council plays a critical role in service development and has a valuable contribution to make in terms of feedback. The authority is committed to learning from the experiences of children in its care and to seeking improvements.

In addition to the above, The Fostering Service now includes a dedicated lead for Special Guardianship. Their role is to improve Hartlepool's SGO 'offer' and to ensure consistently good and robust practice in the planning process for securing Special Guardian Orders for children and young people. Special Guardians now have access to support groups and training sessions, are signposted to suitable services to support the child they care for and are supported to access the adoption support fund.

PROVISION OF THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

The Fostering Service receives a discreet service from the Therapeutic Social Work Team which provides therapeutic input to children and young people in foster placement, consultation to carers and other professionals.

In addition, the members of the Therapeutic Social Work Team work closely with carers and often work directly with them in conjunction with the child in their care. The key objective of the work is to provide a regular, easy to use guidance and support service to all Foster Carers and to improve placement

stability for our children. They also provide training to Foster Carers, Connected Persons carers, social workers and other professionals.

PROVISION OF HEALTH PROMOTION SUPPORT SERVICES

There is a named nurse identified for Children and Young People in our care who oversees Children's Annual Health Assessments and has a proactive role in health promotion for Young People. They will provide support to foster carers in addressing a range of health issues which may affect children. They also provide advice and support to young people on an individual basis on issues such as contraception and sexual health

A dedicated consultant paediatrician advises the Fostering panel on medical issues for prospective Foster Carers and children with a plan for permanence via long term fostering.

PROVISION OF EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

The Fostering service has strong links to the educational support services for children in our care and in particular works closely with the Virtual Head Teacher who has a strong commitment to cared for children and provides training and support to Hartlepool's Foster Carers.

PROVISION OF LEISURE, SPORT, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

Foster Carer training and supervision promotes the importance of leisure provision for looked after children and young people, and the expectation that carers will seek out and support new experiences and activities to enhance children's self-worth, social development and independence. The council has a leisure offer for all children in its care which is promoted by the supervising social worker and the foster carers and children have welcomed this.

We aim to support all young people in their religious and cultural beliefs and customs. We ensure that information is available to provide understanding of different cultures and religions. We provide resources that may be needed to ensure young people are able to practice their beliefs and customs.

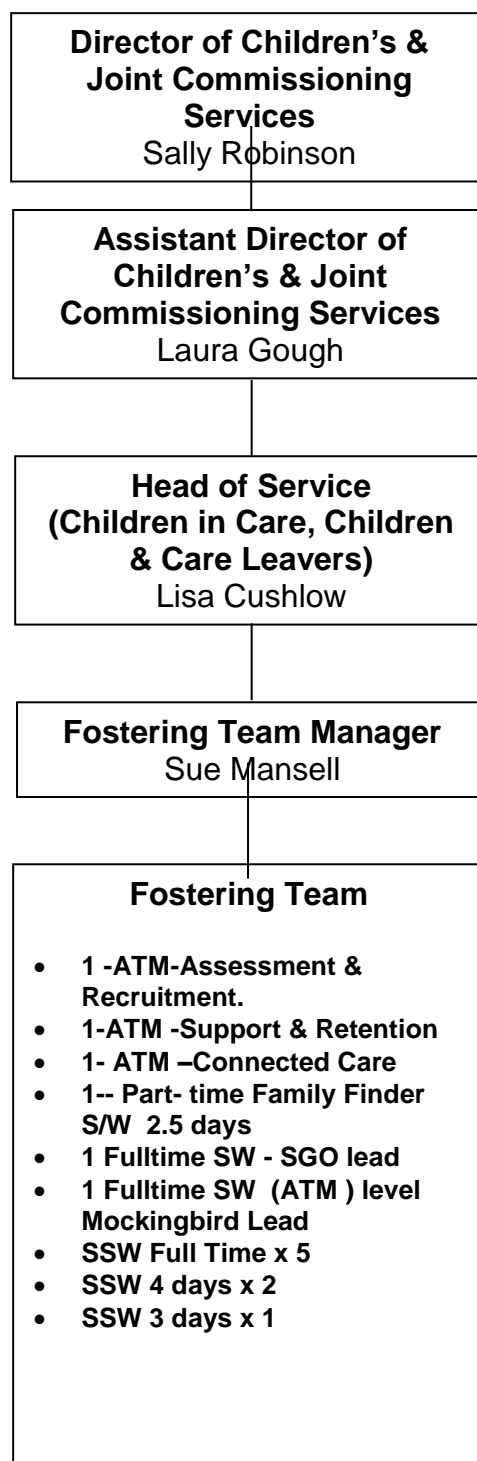
We are committed to directly challenging racism and ensure that all young people who access our services are treated with dignity and respect and aware that our practice is anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice. We will ensure that all people are treated equally, regardless of age, sex, sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, disability or religion. We have supervising fostering social workers to help carers with issues with trans-racial and unaccompanied asylum seeking placements.

PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD / PATHWAY PLANNING

The Through Care Team and the Fostering Service work closely with other professionals to provide a holistic approach to meeting young people's needs. Hartlepool is committed to supporting care leavers and ensuring that they are able to build the skills and ability to eventually live independently. The service is committed to the ethos of 'Staying Put'. We acknowledge that young people mature at different rates and we will support where possible young people to remain in their foster placement beyond 18 years of age in order to experience normal family life if this supports them more effectively.

Management Structure

The Fostering Service of Hartlepool Borough Council is provided by designated workers from the Fostering Team who are part of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services



Specific Service Information

NUMBERS OF FOSTER CARERS

The number of Foster Carer approvals achieved between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 was 19 comprised of 6 approvals of mainstream carers and the approval of 13 Connected Person Carers. In the period 2023 - 2024 the fostering service accepted the resignation of 23 was Foster Carers.

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN PLACED

The total number of children cared for by Hartlepool as at 31 March 2024 was 335 (as against 321 at the same time in 2023) of whom 190 were placed with Hartlepool's own foster placements. There were 18 young people in a Hartlepool staying put arrangement at this time.

DESIGNATION OF CARERS

The majority of carers are 'mainstream', offering either short term or permanent care to children and young people up to the age of 18 years and 'staying put' placements for those who are over 18.

A banded payment scheme is in place ranging from band 1 to band 4. Progression is based on experience, competencies and training. This scheme also includes the potential to make the payment of a specialist fee for placements for children with more complex needs, or for groups of brothers and sisters, or a parent with their baby.

Hartlepool currently has four carers who have experience in providing 'parent and child' placements and carers who have the capacity to provide such placements in very specific circumstances. This is an area which continues to require attention so that our resources are able to meet the demand for these placements in the most effective manner. Specific training has been devised and delivered to Foster Carers to support them in their care of parents and their child/children.

Safeguarding, Complaints & Allegations

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM HARM

Hartlepool Fostering Service operates a safer recruitment process for all staff employed by the agency and panel members. In addition, there is a rigorous

vetting and assessment process undertaken with all potential carers. Enhanced disclosure and barring checks are repeated every 5 years for all carers and in addition all staff and panel members are required to confirm that they have had sight of, and will adhere to, the General Data Protection Regulations, Data Protection Act 2018.

Hartlepool Fostering Service has policy and guidance underpinning its service on safe caring, health and safety, bullying, management of behaviour and Foster Carer agreements.

Our processes and procedures will ensure that any concern is addressed and monitored by the management team and will inform service developments, for example:

- Issues regarding standards of care,
- Breach of foster care agreement
- Child protection/safeguarding issues
- Allegations of abuse against foster carers; and
- Complaints made about a foster carer

Children will know about these procedures through their social worker and the Children's Guide. They also have access to an Advocacy Service independent of the service currently provided by National Youth Advocacy Services (NYAS).

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Hartlepool Borough Council Children's and Joint Commissioning Services operate a complaints service which is independent of the Fostering Service.

Foster Carers are given a Complaints and Compliments Leaflet at the outset of the assessment, detailing the process if they wish to make a complaint, and also when they sign the Foster Carer Agreement.

NUMBERS OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

In the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 there was one complaint made by Hartlepool Foster Carers regarding arrangements around finances following their transfer to the Local Authority. The complaint was investigated and the complaint upheld. The service has since reviewed its practice around carers transfer to the Local Authority and now formally sets out the financial arrangements formally in writing to prospective carers to inform their understanding.

ALLEGATIONS

All allegations in relation to Foster Carers are investigated and actioned using Child Protection Procedures and are reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), under the procedures for Managing Allegations against people who work with children or who are in a position of trust. Foster Carers are offered independent support during this process which can be accessed via their Fostering Supervising Social worker.

NUMBERS OF ALLEGATIONS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 there were a total of three allegations made against foster carers all of which were formally investigated.

Two of the allegations alleged physical harm and the third alleged sexual harm the former two allegations were raised by the children cared for and the third allegation came from an anonymous referrer.

All allegations were investigated under S47 safeguarding procedures and were referred to the LADO for their consideration. In all cases the allegations were not substantiated, and a foster carer review was convened to consider the allegation made against the carers concerned and the actions taken and the outcome achieved; which was then considered by members of the Fostering Panel and the ADM to determine the carers continued suitability to foster.

Procedures and Processes for Recruiting, Approving, Training, Supporting and Reviewing Carers

RECRUITMENT

PUBLICITY

Hartlepool's recruitment strategy is reviewed annually. Enquirers are asked where they obtained the contact details of the service and this information is analysed in order to target specific campaigns.

In September 2023, Foster with North East a regional fostering hub was launched which Hartlepool along with eleven other neighbouring Local Authorities part are of. The hub works to raise the profile of fostering in the North East region and uses variety of marketing strategies to do this and links all those who make enquiries about fostering to their Local Authority Fostering Service.

Alongside this the team has continued to work closely with the Public Marketing and Media Team and posters, roadside banners, business cards and leaflets are being displayed in council and public buildings in the town, local advertising and editorials in Hartlepool's 'Hartbeat' publication, 'Live Local' and the council's website. There have also been videos on social media featuring Foster Carers and young people previously cared for, sharing their experiences. Publicity materials reflect our brand, and the Mockingbird logo which we hope will assist in our efforts to attract new carers.

RESPONSE TO ENQUIRIES

Enquiries regarding fostering are responded to quickly. An Information pack is normally sent within one day of the enquiry being received. Once a response slip is received from the enquirer a home visit is normally made within three to five working days. Information about the assessment process is given and information about the family is gathered, including their motivation to foster. They are asked to make a formal registration of interest to proceed to stage 1 of the assessment process. If no response is received within 4-6 weeks then a further contact is made to ascertain their wishes and reason for delaying or withdrawing. If the potential applicants do not respond in a further 4 weeks then the record will be closed. In relation to Connected Carers, there is an additional

process which relates to immediate placement of children (under Regulation 24).

ASSESSMENT

STAGE ONE

Stage 1 of the process to become an approved Foster Carer can last 8 weeks. The registration of interest form is signed to give consent to proceed and for statutory checks to be completed for all relevant people in the household. Once this has been completed and returned, the applicants are required to undergo a number of statutory checks including an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, local authority checks and current employer. The purpose of these checks is to safeguard children to be placed. Personal references are also completed.

If an applicant has been a Foster Carer in the previous 12 months, a written reference from their previous fostering service is obtained.

A Medical examination is carried out by the applicant's doctor using the Coram BAAF medical form and returned to the Hartlepool Medical Adviser for comments and a recommendation regarding suitability to foster.

All applicants are required to attend a 3 day preparation course. The preparation training undertaken uses the Fostering Network's Skills to Foster programme including, Skills to Foster, Child Development, Separation and Loss, Attachment, Working Together, Safer Care, Moving On, Life Work, PACE, a description of the Secure Base Model of Foster Care and Mockingbird. There is an evaluation at the end of the course and applicants are requested to give feedback.

If it is decided not to continue with an assessment because of information collected as part of stage 1, the applicant must be informed that they can complain via the fostering service's complaints process. Once all statutory checks and references are completed and no issues have arisen stage two will

begin. Stage 2 of the process to become approved Foster Carers normally lasts 4 months.

STAGE TWO

Stage two assessment has seen the service develop and implement use of a template (for Connected Carers) which includes all stages of the potential placement a child or young person, with information to inform viability, regulation 24, Fostering and SGO processes. The Fostering Team completes the assessments of 'mainstream' carers using the Integrated Children's System (ICS). The topics covered for all assessments include; personal background, history and experiences; parenting experiences; birth children's views; the home environment, including dog/pet safety and; the applicant's own contributions. In addition to the assessment sessions with the applicants and their family, at least 2 personal referees are interviewed, as are the ex-partners of the applicants where it has been agreed that there was a 'significant' relationship. Children of the applicants living elsewhere will also be interviewed, with the agreement of their carer or their own agreement.

When all necessary material is available, the Form F is completed by the social worker using contributions from the prospective Foster Carer. The report is read and signed by the prospective Foster Carer and is presented to the Fostering Panel which usually meets once every 3 weeks. Prospective Foster Carers are encouraged to attend the Panel meeting when the application is discussed. The Fostering Panel considers the report and makes a recommendation regarding the application. This recommendation is then approved (or not) by the Agency Decision Maker. Prospective Foster Carers are then notified in writing of the outcome of their application

If an application is not recommended by Panel and the prospective Foster Carer/s do not accept this, they can choose either to make further representations to the Panel or to have their application referred to an independent body known as the Independent Review Mechanism. The IRM will review the recommendation made by the Family Placement Panel and make its own recommendation about the prospective Foster Carer/s suitability, which

the agency must then take into account when making the decision about the application.

SUPPORT

Once a Foster Carer has been approved by Panel they complete a Foster Carer agreement and are provided given access the policies and procedures relating to the service and to the Foster Carer Handbook. All Foster Carers are allocated a Supervising Social Worker from the Fostering Service. This person will visit the Foster Carers, provide formal supervision on a monthly basis or at an agreed level dependent upon the needs of the child/young person currently in placement and carer's experience and capability. They will also provide directly, or facilitate access to, any practical, emotional or professional support required.

Foster Carers are provided with equipment to enable them to care for a child. Foster Carers will be invited to attend a bi-monthly support group that is facilitated by the Fostering Team. The group is an opportunity to build networks of support with other carers, exchange ideas about fostering and to have the opportunity to hear guest speakers on a variety of relevant subjects. This provides a valuable forum for carers to be updated regarding service developments and to network with other professionals.

The Fostering Service operates a duty system within office hours which is staffed by a fostering service worker. Foster Carers can access support and advice from this worker if their allocated worker is not available. An out of hours telephone support service is also provided additional to the Emergency Duty Team arrangements which are in place. This telephone support is provided by the Heads of Service for Children's Services. .

All Foster Carers receive full membership of Fostering Network and access to an independent advice and mediation service should an allegation be made against them.

The Fostering Service liaises with the Foster Carers about any matters which may impact upon their role and consults with them about any necessary or proposed changes. Foster Carers contribute to any changes or developments within the service. The Fostering Service arranges a yearly Celebration event to recognise the efforts of the all carers and specifically to give thanks to the longest serving Foster Carers. Most importantly, the event aims to demonstrate our gratitude to all our carers for their dedication and commitment to the children of Hartlepool who are cared for.

The fostering service has a Foster Carer Charter and this sets out the local authority's responsibilities to approved Foster Carers and what it will provide to carers including all support and information. It also sets out the Foster Carers' responsibilities, detailing the expectation of Carers being committed to working in partnership with the local Authority to provide the best possible care for our children and to pursue learning and their personal and service development so that there is continuous improvement.

TRAINING

An annual training schedule details and supports the provision of sufficient and regular training opportunities for Foster Carers, during the approval process and throughout their Fostering career.

All Foster Carers will attend a preparation training course incorporating the Skills to Foster materials during their preparation and assessment.

Foster Carers are required to complete the Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) workbook and all new Foster Carers will be required to undertake this piece of work within the first twelve months of their approval, or 18 months for Connected Foster Carers. Foster Carers will have the opportunity to be supported on an individual basis to complete the workbook by their Supervising Social Worker. There is also the opportunity for carers to be mentored by more experienced carers.

Foster Carers are required to complete a training portfolio and their Supervising Social Workers supports each carer to ensure they have a Personal

Development Plan which is reviewed as part of the Foster Carer's annual review.

Foster Carers are given support and encouragement to attend all training events that are relevant to their role. Wherever possible Foster Carers and staff attend the same training to enhance partnership working and to ensure the best care is offered to children and young people. Carers are given information about training provided corporately, through Children's and Joint Commissioning Services.

REVIEW

The registration of all Foster Carers is reviewed on an annual basis. The views of the Foster Carer are sought, together with the views of children and placing Social workers via end of placement reports and within the review documentation. The supervising social worker is responsible for collating the information and adding their own views based on the experience of, and outcomes for, children and young people who have been placed with the carer during the review period. The Supervising Social Worker will also use their observations of the carer during visits and supervision to provide an analysis of, and recommendation about, the Carer's suitability to continue in the role.

The first review is normally held after twelve months and then annually thereafter. Reviews are chaired by Reviewing Officers who are independent of the Fostering Service. The review report is presented to the Fostering Panel by the supervising social worker for consideration after the first review and if there is a proposal to change the terms of approval or recommendation of de-registration, or after an allegation or complaint. Foster Carers have the option to attend panel.

The registration and approval of Foster Carers may be reviewed by Panel at any time if there are changes of circumstances or events which indicate that Foster Carers are no longer suitable to care for children.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Foster Carers are provided with full information about the children placed with them and are expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As an agency we maintain records on carers and looked after children, who are subject to National Standards and General Data Protection Legislation (Data Protection Act 2018) known as GDPR. Staff and Foster Carers are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest, as are panel members.

DE-REGISTRATION

Most Foster Carers voluntarily withdraw from the fostering task. The details of their resignation are placed before the Fostering Panel and their de-registration is formally recorded.

There are occasions when the registration of a Foster Carer is reviewed with a view to considering the options available, i.e. changes to terms of approval or de- registration. Foster Carers are offered the opportunity to submit a response or attend the Fostering Panel in these circumstances. If the Foster Carer is unhappy with the decision reached, they are also able to request a review of the decision or to have their case addressed by the Independent Review Mechanism.

THE FOSTERING PANEL

The Fostering Agency is required by the Fostering Services Regulations to establish a Fostering Panel. The membership, role and functions of the panel are prescribed within the Regulations. Panel membership is drawn from a central list of members and quoracy dictates that at least five members are present in order to conduct business. These members must comprise the chair or vice chair, 2 social work representatives and, where the chair is not present and the vice chair who is present is not independent of the Social Work Agency, at least one of the other panel members must be independent of the Agency. Panels must also have access to medical and legal advice as required.

Hartlepool's Fostering Panel normally meets once every three weeks and considers assessments of prospective Foster and Connected Persons Foster Carers, extensions to Regulation 24 assessments, annual reviews of carers, de-registrations and issues in relation to Foster Carers. Although not a

requirement within the regulations the Fostering Panel also considers the plan for a child for long term fostering and also matching children long term with carers. The business of the Panel is formally recorded.

The Fostering Panel makes recommendations that are presented to the Agency Decision Maker for consideration. These decisions are recorded and notified in writing to the prospective/existing Foster Carers.

Foster Carers who disagree with the Panel decision regarding their approval, de-registration or changes to category of approval will have the opportunity to request a review of the decision made by the Fostering Panel either through the agency or through the Independent Review Mechanism, which is provided by Coram Children's Legal Centre on behalf of the Department for Education.

The Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering Panel policy and procedures document provides additional information regarding the constitution and running of the panel.

APPENDIX 1

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS AND STAFF

The work of Hartlepool Fostering Service is delivered within the following legal framework and in accordance with the following standards:

- Fostering Service Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 from section 23 of the Care Standards Act 2000
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for local authorities 2010.
- GDPR April 2018.

This Statement of Purpose is produced in accordance with the following standards and regulations;

NMS 2011 STANDARD 16

- 16.1 The fostering service has a clear statement of purpose which is available to and understood by Foster Carers, staff and children and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility.
- 16.2 The aims and objectives of the statement of purpose are child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.

THE CHILDREN ACT 1989 GUIDANCE AND REGULATIONS VOLUME 4: FOSTERING SERVICES (2011)

- 4.1 The Fostering service provider must compile a Statement of Purpose, which sets out the aims and objectives of the service as a whole, and the services and facilities which are provided (including the provision of any 'parent and child arrangements'). The statement must be reviewed and updated as necessary , but at least annually and published on the provider's website (if they have one), with a copy provided to Ofsted. Copies must also be available upon request to anyone working for the purposes of the fostering service, any Foster Carer or potential Foster Carer of the service, and to any child placed with one of the service's Foster Carers and their parents.
- 4.2 The Statement of purpose is a key document which sets a framework for all of the business of the fostering service. It must be consistent with relevant legislation, Regulations, NMS and statutory guidance, be child focused and show how the fostering service will help children achieve positive outcomes. The manager of the fostering service must ensure

that the service is at all times conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose.

APPENDIX 2

NUMBERS, RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF STAFF AS AT 1 APRIL 2023

The staff of Hartlepool Borough Council's Fostering Service consists of:

NAME & STATUS	DATE OF APPOINTMENT in Fostering Team			QUALIFICATIONS	RELEVANT EXPERIENCE
Lisa Cushlow Head of Service	01	09	20	DIPSW – 2006 BA – Specialist Social Work (children and families) 2013	Team Manager – Safeguarding Assistant Team Manager Safeguarding Social Worker – safeguarding Social Worker Fostering Family Support Worker
Sue Mansell Team Manager	22	5	2023	CQSW 1990 PQSW Specialist Award Family Placement 2006	Social Worker –Family placement Team Social Worker children's services –Hospital Team Social Worker –Mental Health services –Dual Diagnosis Social Worker –Fostering Assistant Team Manager Fostering Team Manager Fostering
Jane Lane ATM –Assistant team manager- Recruitment & Assessment	14	03	16	DIPSW (2003) HCPC Registered	Early help Safeguarding Family Placement Social Worker Children & Families Supervising social worker

Helen Mitchel Social Worker and SGO Lead	15	01	24	POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA (PRE- REGISTRATION HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	SGO Lead Social Worker Permeance Team
Charlotte Austin Social Worker	07	10	13	BSC Hons in SW and LD Nursing 1:1 Practice Educator	Fostering Social Worker Children and families/children with disabilities
Leanne Johnson Social Worker	01	10	17	BA (Hons) in Social Worker July 2011	Children's Safeguarding Drug and alcohol practitioner Family Placement Social Worker
Alison Bousfield ATM –assistant team manager - Connected Care	01	07	17	MA in Social Work BSc (Hons) Sociology	Fostering Social Worker Children & Families Social Work Safeguarding Senior Practitioner Safeguarding Team
Jolene Lyons Support Officer	25	06	19	NVQ 1, 2 and 3 in Business Administration – July 2016 Foundation Degree in Business Management 2021	Fostering - Children's and Commissioned Services
Emma Howarth Social Worker – Family Finder Currently on a two year secondment to ATV	01	10	11	BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies degree	Social Worker Family Finder Family Resource Worker
Joanne Colledge Social Worker	08	06	18	BSc in Social Work 2013	Fostering Social Worker Safeguarding SW Family Support Worker
Suzanne Rayment Social Worker – Connected Care Lead	04	05	21	BA (Hons) Social Work 2010	Social Worker Fostering Safeguarding SW
Ellie Woolliss Social Worker	04	01	22	BA (Hons) Social Work June 2022	Social Worker – Fostering Supported Living and fostering placements

Moira Spencer Social Worker	03	08	20	BA (Hons) Social Work (2012)	Social Worker – Fostering Social Worker – cared for, care leavers Lead n UASC Personal Advisor – Care Leavers Sessional Worker for Care Leavers
Amanda Watcham Social Worker	09	09	19	BA (Hons) Social Work (2013)	Fostering Social Worker Social Worker Children with disabilities
Paul Reynolds Social Worker –ATM level - Mockingbird Lead	19	08	19	Masters in Social Work (2013)	Fostering Social Worker Social Worker children with disabilities Looked After children's SW Social Worker- safeguarding Adult Mental Health Social Worker
Beth Burnside Social Worker	10	08	21	BA Hons in Social Work (2012) Masters Credits (2016)	Safeguarding Social Worker 4 years Throughcare 5 years Fostering 1 year
Claire Gibbon ATM –assistant team manager –Support & Retention	11	10	22		Safeguarding Social Specialist Social Worker (Families Forward) Assistant Team Manager Fostering

Important names and numbers

My social worker's name and phone number:

My foster carers' names and phone number(s):

My Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) name and number:

Childline (information, support and someone to listen to you):

0800 11 11 www.childline.org.uk

NYAS (help and advice for young people):

0300 808 1001 www.nyas.net

OFSTED (the official body for inspecting children's social care):

0300 123 1231 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Children's Commissioner – 0800 528 0731

About this booklet

We worked with our Children in our Care Council to write this booklet. It gives some quick information about foster care in Hartlepool.

Quick guide to fostering

- *for children and young people*





What is fostering?

Fostering is a way of looking after a child or young person who is not able to live with their parents for any reason.

When you are fostered, you live with **foster parents** or a **foster family** in their home. Foster carers are people who have been specially chosen and trained to look after children who cannot live at home. Your foster carer(s) may be someone you already know, such as an aunt or uncle, or a family friend. All foster carers are

different: your **social worker** will talk to you more about your own foster carers.

Being fostered is not the same as being adopted. Your birth parents will still have **legal responsibility** for you, but we (Hartlepool Borough Council) have legal responsibility for you, too. This means we have some say in where you live and how you are looked after.

Being fostered is sometimes called “being looked after” or “going into care” or “becoming cared for”

Seeing family and friends

When you are living with your foster carers you can still see your family and friends, but only if:

- you want to see them, and
- it is safe for you to see them.

Your social worker, parents and foster carers will help you to make plans about when and where you see your mam, dad, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents and other people who are important to you: everyone you would usually see if you were living at home. This is called **'family time'**. Your social worker will write down these plans so that everyone knows what they are.

If you have brothers and sisters who are also being fostered, we will try our best to find a foster home where you can all live together.

Your brothers and sisters

Sometimes, no matter how much we want to keep you and your brothers and sisters together, we can't find a suitable foster home. If we cannot keep you and your brothers and sisters together in foster care, we will make sure that you can stay in touch with each other and see each other regularly. You can talk to your social worker and foster carers about this.

Things you need

Your social worker and foster carers will make sure you have everything you need when you are living with foster carers, including toiletries, pocket money and things for school or your hobbies.

FOSTER CARER TRAINING PROGRAMME

2024 -2025



WE CARE ABOUT OUR CHILDREN, YOU COULD TOO



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Introduction to Training, Banding and Progression

Keeping up to date with training and committing to your continued professional development is an important part of your responsibilities as a registered foster carer / connected carer. As your career in fostering progresses you will be required to revisit certain mandatory training courses at regular intervals and complete a certain number of recognized training courses in order to maintain your registration and level of banding.

“Foster Carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service” – National Minimum Standards, STANDARD 20.

Induction and Mandatory Training

Carers who are new to fostering will have completed **Skills to Foster Training** with Foster North East as part of the application process. *Connected carers (also known as ‘kinship’ or ‘family and friends carers’)* ...

As well as induction training, newly approved foster carers and connected carers are also expected to complete a specified number of mandatory training courses. Mandatory training should ideally be undertaken soon as possible after approval and in time for the carer’s first Foster Carer Review at the very latest. Foster Carer Reviews are held on an annual basis.

All registered foster carers are expected to keep the following mandatory training courses up to date by accessing refresher courses- either in person or online- every three years. The list includes details of websites where online training can be located, but more information on how to register can be found on page -----

MANDATORY TRAINING

To be renewed every three years...

Emergency First Aid for Foster Carers

Face to face training available throughout the year. See page

First Aid Emergency and **First Aid Paediatric** are available online via the **Foster Carer Training Hub**.

Safeguarding Children

Safeguarding Children (Foundation), **Safeguarding Children (Intermediate)**, **Safeguarding Children Refresher** and **Safeguarding Children with Disabilities** courses are all available online via the **Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board** website.

Online Safety

Online Safety – Risks to Children is available online via the **Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board** website.

Internet Safety training is also available online via the **Foster Carer Training Hub**.

Attachment / PACE / **Trauma Informed Approaches**

Attachment in the Early Years is available online via **OpenLearn**.

PACE is delivered face to face by Emma Rutherford (Virtual School Head) See...

Medication – Foundation / Advanced

Medication – Foundation and **Medication Advanced** are available through the **Foster Carer Training Hub**. Newly approved carers should focus on completing **Medication – Foundation**.

TSDS

Newly approved foster carers also have twelve months in which to complete the **Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS)** workbook for Foster Carers. Newly approved connected carers – also known as kinship carers- are expected to complete the equivalent **Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS)** for family and friends foster carers within eighteen months of approval. All carers *must* have been fostering for a minimum period of six months before completing the TSDS.

Electronic versions of both documents and accompanying guidance are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-support-and-development-standards-for-family-and-friends-foster-carers>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-support-and-development-standards-for-foster-care-evidence-workbook>

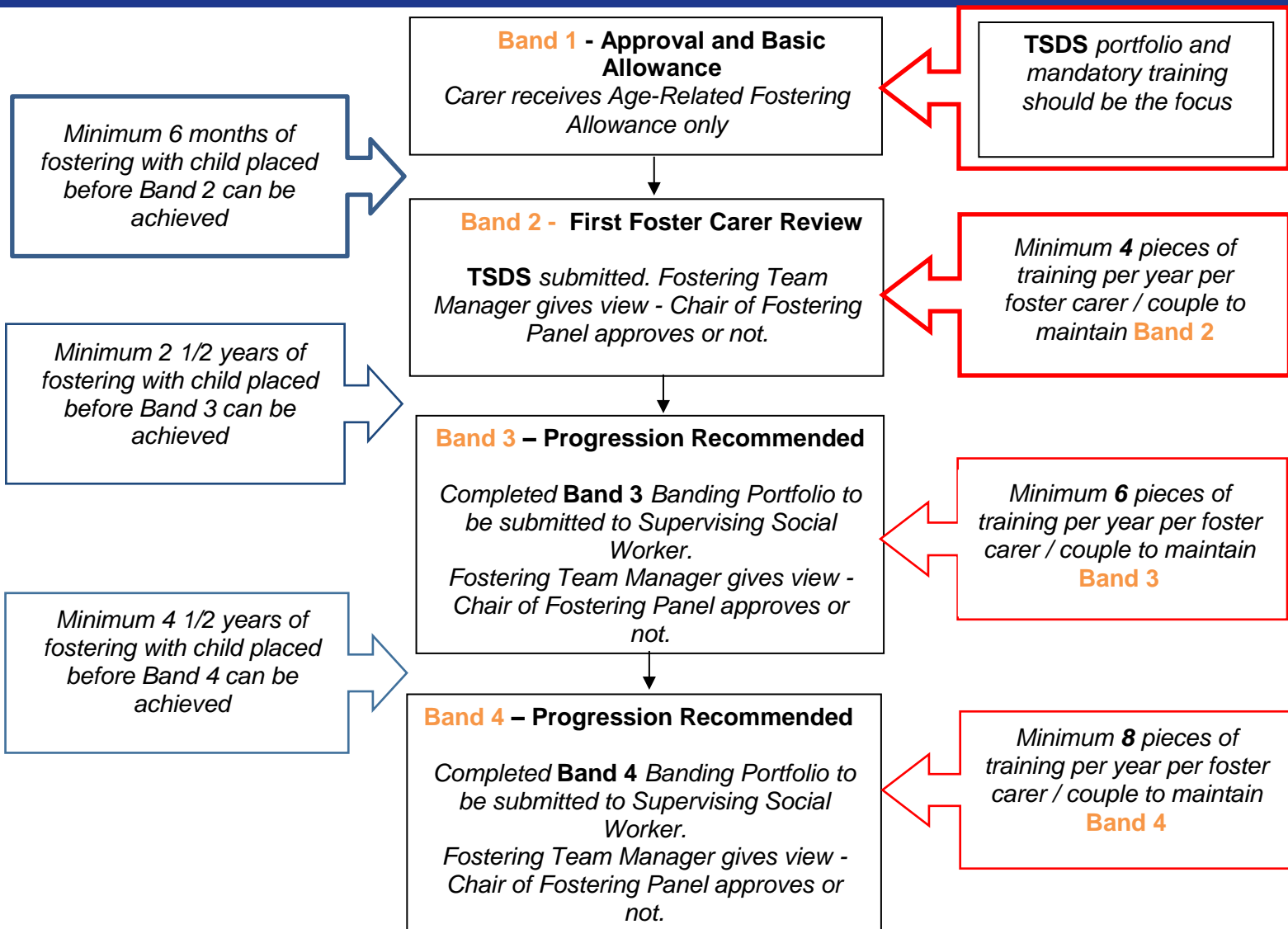
Failure to complete the TSDS can impact on your continued registration. Should you need support to complete either workbook please speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

Completed TSDS workbooks should be submitted to your Supervising Social Worker before being assessed by the Chair of Fostering Panel. Foster carers and connected carers who successfully complete the TSDS immediately progress to Band 2 status which also attracts an additional banding payment.

Band 2

Band 2 foster carers / fostering couples must evidence a minimum of **four** items of training per year, inclusive of any mandatory training / mandatory training refresher courses completed. Fostering couples should note that they **each** have a responsibility to keep their **own** mandatory training up to date.

Training includes attending face to face or online courses, reading a relevant article, watching a documentary, or listening to a podcast amongst others. Speak to your Supervising Social Worker.



Specialist Banding – To be agreed by Team Manager and authorised by Head of Service

Paid in recognition that some carers have specialist skills or provide care that meets the needs of some of our most complex children and young people who:

- Are aged 12+ and where the alternative might be residential, specialist or crisis provision.
- Have complex needs arising from a physical or learning disability or emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Are fostered alongside two or more **siblings / other children**.
- Are placed with a foster carer under Parent and Child arrangements.
- Need urgent support and stability after repeated placement breakdowns.
- Present with other complex or challenging behaviours such as physical violence or aggression, self-harm, are at real risk of criminal or sexual exploitation.

*Carers / couples in receipt of **Specialist Banding** should:*

- Ordinarily (but not exclusively) be at **Band 4** level of be actively towards meeting those requirements.
- Be able evidence extensive skills and knowledge in working with children, young people and their families in maintaining the placement and accessing relevant specialist training if required.
- Ensure that one carer is available to supervise and act as main carer *at all times* when the child is in their care.
- Be able to work positively and proactively with the team around the child to progress their plans.

Band 3

Band 3 foster carers / fostering couples must evidence a minimum of **six** items of training per year, inclusive of any mandatory training / mandatory training refresher courses completed. Fostering couples should note that they **each** have a responsibility to keep their **own** mandatory training up to date.

Training includes attending face to face or online courses, reading a relevant article, watching a documentary, or listening to a podcast amongst others. Speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

Band 4

Band 4 foster carers / fostering couples must evidence a minimum of **eight** items of training per year, inclusive of any mandatory training / mandatory training refresher courses completed. Fostering couples should note that they **each** have a responsibility to keep their **own** mandatory training up to date.

Training includes attending face to face or online courses, reading a relevant article, watching a documentary, or listening to a podcast amongst others. Speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

There is also an expectation that **Band 4** foster carers / fostering couples should be accessing more self-directed learning and taking an active part in assisting fellow foster carers and the Fostering Team by taking part in activities including recruitment, service development and review, mentoring and training.

Maintaining your Banding

Every year foster carers / connected carers and their Supervising Social Workers should reach an agreement as to what training they need to complete over the coming twelve months, as well as identifying any gaps in knowledge, training they would like to complete or other opportunities for learning and development. This should be captured in the foster carer's **Personal Development Plan (PDP)**.

Personal Development Plans (PDPs)

You should update your **Personal Development Plan** each year alongside your Supervising Social Worker and preferably soon after each Foster Carer Review. The contents of your PDP and any recent training you have completed should be discussed at every supervision. The PDP and any progress you have made against it should then be recorded in your Foster Carer Supervision Record. Your Supervising Social Worker must share a copy of your Supervision Record with you each time so you can be confident it is an accurate reflection of the conversations you have had during supervision.

Your PDP will look like this:

Recommended Training

As well as mandatory training courses there are several subjects which the *National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services* states that all carers should have access to. Because of their importance we strongly recommend that all carers should prioritise training in the following areas upon completion of their mandatory training. They should also aim to refresh these courses every five years.

RECOMMENDED TRAINING

Carers should complete these and aim to refresh these every five years...

Risk Management and Safer Caring

[Risk Management and Safer Caring](#) is available online via the [Foster Carer Training Hub](#).

Information Governance for Foster Carers / GDPR

[Information Governance for Foster Carers](#) is periodically delivered face to face by HBC staff. See page...

[General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#) training is available online via the [Foster Carer Training Hub](#).

Foster Carer Recording

[Foster Carer Recording Training](#) is periodically delivered face to face by members of the Fostering Team. See page...

[Reporting and Recording](#) and [Reporting and Recording Advanced Level](#) are both available online via the [Foster Carer Training Hub](#).

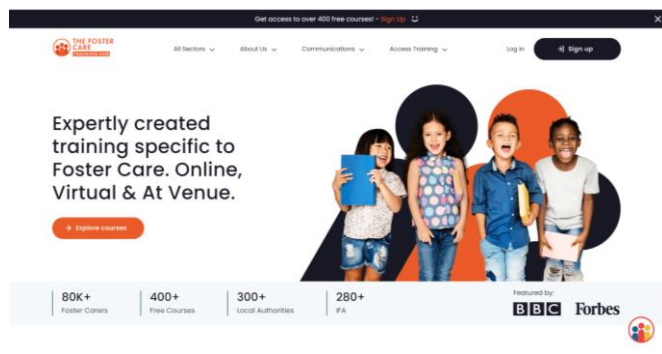
Managing Allegations

De-escalation / Behaviour Management

----- are both available online via the [Foster Carer Training Hub](#).

How to access / apply for courses

Foster Carer Training Hub

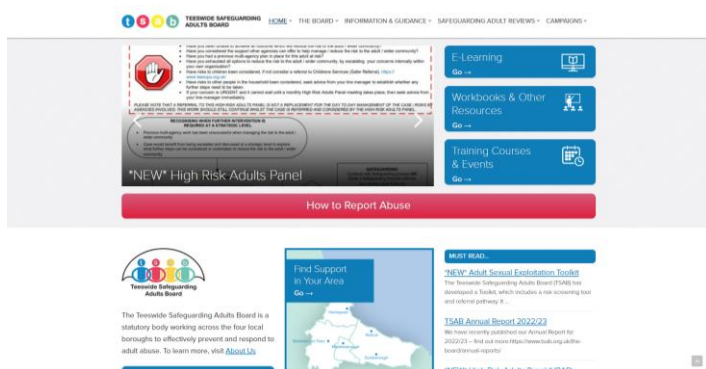


The Foster Carer Training Hub can be accessed via <https://thefostercaretraininghub.com/>.

In order to access mandatory and specialist training through HBC our Workforce Development team should have sent a link to you via email with details of how to register. *If you haven't received this, please contact your Supervising Social Worker.*

For monitoring purposes and to evidence the training you have completed each foster carer in a household should set up their own individual account with the Hub using a separate email address.

Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board



The Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board website has now replaced the Teeswide MeLearning site and contains all the same training as MeLearning, including Safeguarding Children and Online Safety - Risks to Children.

Carers will need to register / re-register at <https://www.tsab.org.uk/> in order to access these courses for free.

Again, for monitoring purposes and to evidence the training you have completed each foster carer in a household should preferably set up their own individual account with the Hub using a separate email address.

How to Apply

Please email CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk or HSSCP@hartlepool.gov.uk to apply for a place stating the course title with date/time and your name, payroll number, post title, contact telephone number and email address (your manager's should be cc'd into your email request). Please reserve the course date in your diary. Once your application has been processed and if a place is allocated to you, you will be notified via the email address you have provided as confirmation of your booking.

Joining instructions and confirmation of your place will be sent by electronic meeting invite to the email address provided. **Only attend a session if you have applied for a place and received an invitation or confirmation of place – do not share course details with others.**

Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
Adult and Community Based Services

FOSTER CARER INFORMATION

For training purposes

Hartlepool Borough Council
Level 4, Civic Centre,
Hartlepool, TS24 8AY

Tel: 01429 523051

Email: CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk



We will process the information you provide on this form in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Hartlepool Borough Council currently processes your personal information for the purpose of the administration and monitoring of training provision and for statistical and evaluation purposes. The information you provide will be stored securely and will only be used for the purposes identified. For further information on how the Council process your information please see our privacy notice at www.hartlepool.gov.uk/privacy-notices. It is important that you read our privacy notice so that you are aware of how and why we process your personal information. If you have any questions on how we process your data please contact the Data Protection Officer, Hartlepool Borough Council, Civic Centre, Hartlepool TS24 8AY tel:01429 523087 or email dataprotection@hartlepool.gov.uk

Once this form is completed and returned you can book onto any training provided by CAS Workforce Development (CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk) or HSSCP (HSSCP@hartlepool.gov.uk) using your HBC email address.

Name(s)	
Address	
Postcode	
Contact Tel No:	
HBC Email: (Please note: this email will be used for all correspondence regarding training)	
Special requirements we need to be aware of (eg. Access, learning support, communication, etc):	
Supervising Social Worker:	

SIGNATURES

Signature(s):		
Date:		
Please post your completed form and return in the SAE provided		
<p>Please note: A recharge of £50 is in place for cancellations less than 5 days/non-attendance.</p> <p>Recharge waivers will be considered on an individual basis.</p>		

Emergency First Aid (Mandatory)

Dates

Times

TBC

Overview:

Delivered by:

Orangebox Training Solutions

Applications should be sent to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

PACE for Foster Carers Training

Dates

Times

TC

Overview:

Delivered by: Emma Rutherford (Virtual School Head)

Applications should be sent to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

Information Governance (Security) for Foster Carers Training (Mandatory)

Dates

Times

These sessions will be held over Teams. The link will be provided on application. Please do not share the link, you need to apply for a place individually.

Overview:

These Virtual sessions will take no more than 1 hour and will include the following content:

- Information security policies and the GDPR;
- Holding, transferring and sharing information;
- Secure emailing and encryption;
- Paper records and minimum document approach;
- Data losses and fines;
- Laptops, data sticks and mobile phones;

There will also be an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the session concerning any queries you may have in relation to information security

Face to face refresher period is every 2 years – online refresher will be available soon and will be alternate year to the face to face

Delivered by:

Departmental Childrens Information Governance Lead – Kay Forgie

Applications should be sent to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

Foster Carer Recording

Dates

Times

TBC

Overview:

There is an expectation that all foster carers regularly complete either written or electronic recording for each child in their care. This is a requirement under both the Fostering Regulations and the National Minimum Standards.

Recent years have also seen a renewed focus in research and policy on the impact upon care experienced children, young people and adults of choosing to access their own social care records. This has led to a greater recognition of the vital role social workers and foster carers play in ensuring that the child's voice is heard, their lived experience captured and their sense of identity maintained.

By exploring the topics below we hope that Foster Carer Recording Training will help you to understand your responsibilities as foster carers and encourage you to think about the long-term significance your records could have for the children in your care:

- *Why we record*
- *What we record*
- *How we record*
- *Messages from research*
- *Legal Matters / Information Governance*
- *Relevance, Language choices and types of statement*

Delivered by:

Paul Reynolds – Assistant Team Manager / Mockingbird Lead

Applications should be sent to CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

Autism: All you want to know but never dare ask!

Dates

Times

Overview:

The trainer offers up an interesting first person perspective and insight into some of the areas that are little talked about by many people in mainstream society. The trainer, Steve has a 15 year old son; both he and his son are both on the autistic spectrum and high functioning.

On completion of the course participants will develop an understanding of:

- Difficulties experienced by individuals on the autism spectrum – facial recognition
- Being literal – say what you mean, mean what you say
- Sensory integration awareness
- Behaviour that challenges

Target Group:

All Child and Adult Workforce (Multi-agency) and Parents/Carers

Delivered by: Steve McGuinness – MSITUA – Autism Consultancy

Applications should be sent to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

Supporting Children experiencing Bereavement/Grief and Loss

Dates

Times

TBC

Overview:

The course is run by the Jo and Mya Education Project. Adults are often worried about saying the wrong thing. The course aims to help you:

Develop confidence by providing both knowledge and resources
To identify children and young people who require more specialist intervention and make appropriate referrals.

On completion of the course participants will develop an understanding of:

- How children grieve
- The role attachment plays in this process
- Murder, manslaughter, suicide and the impact this can have
- Special Educational Needs
- Cultural differences in loss and grief

Delivered by: Alice House Hospice (Jo and Mya Project)

Please book your place by discussing with your Supervising Social Worker.

Note to Supervising Social Workers – please take full details of Foster Carer who wishes to book a place and email CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

Safer Caring, Understanding Allegations and Standards of Care

Dates

Times

TBC

Aims:

- Understand what safer caring is
- Understand how your role fits into the wider context of safeguarding children
- Know how to develop strategies, knowledge and understanding that ensures safer caring in a 'risk sensible' way
- Have an understanding of delegated authority
- Be able to weigh up risks in a variety of circumstances
- Develop strategies for keeping all members of the family and extended network safe
- To explain the differences between allegations and complaints and why they are made
- An understanding of the child's view in making an allegation
- Roll of the SSW
- Sources of further assistance and independent support
- Advice on what to do if an allegation is made against you
- Reflection on the impact on the whole family
- Identify good practise in minimising the risk of allegations

Delivered by: Andy Limbert, AML Training Solutions

Applications should be sent to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

Advanced Blended Trauma Informed Practice and Attachment Disorder

Dates

Times

TBC

Aims:

- Understanding the national profile of trauma
- Understand the workings of the Secure Base model and how that is key when working with attachment challenges
- Be able to identify critical biological and psychosocial implications of experiencing trauma
- Understand the roots of negative behaviours in young people and how this should be seen as communication
- Understanding the impact of childhood trauma on the body and the brain
- Consider how trauma and our response to adrenalin will change our personalities
- Understanding how the brain and body adapt to cope (Dissociation and hyper-vigilance)
- What does each state look like, and why it occurs?
- Understanding the window of tolerance model and how to support children to widen their window so they can engage in the therapeutic process
- Consider how we can plan to rebuild resilience
- Understand the importance of the "window" and that the child is prevented from participating in the therapeutic process if it remains limited
- Identify evidence-based tools and techniques to support this journey

Delivered by: Andy Limbert AML Training Solutions

Applications should be sent to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

Managing Placement Breakdown

Dates

Times

TBC

Aims:

- Understand the common causes of placement breakdown
- Recognise the underlying triggers within both parties that can lead to a placement breaking down
- Identify the events and behaviours that can make placement breakdowns more likely
- Identify actions that can be taken to minimise the chances of a placement breaking down.
- Identify by action planning support needs and networks in the event of a placement breakdown.

Delivered by: Andy Limbert AML Training Solutions

Applications should be sent to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

Caring for Larger Sibling Groups

Dates

Times

Aims:

- To understand the importance of siblings
- To understand sibling relationships in abusive or neglectful families
- To be aware of the benefits of placing siblings together
- To be aware of the barriers to placing siblings together
- To know the practices for keeping siblings together in placement
- To know what to do when siblings cannot live in the same home
- To know how to maintain ties between separated siblings
- To recognise sibling issues within care

Delivered by: Andy Limbert AML Training Solutions

Applications should be sent to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

De-Escalation

Dates

TBC

Times

Aims:

- Understanding aggression
- Understand how feelings drive behaviour
- Identify general psychological signs of anger
- Recognise the levels of anger in young people

Delivered by: Andy Limbert AML Training Solutions

Applications should be sent to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk

Group Interventions

Reflective Fostering Programme

The RFP aims to support foster carers to provide the best possible care for the children they look after by improving the quality of carer-child relationships. (Anna Freud, 2024)



Thanks to our brilliant carers getting involved with the Reflective Fostering Study in 2023 -2024 we will be able to offer the **Reflective Fostering Programme** to groups of ten carers at a time from autumn 2024...

What is it?

The **Reflective Fostering Programme** has been developed by specialists at the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families. The main aim of the programme is to promote 'reflective fostering': that is, helping carers to take a reflective stance towards both themselves and their foster child. This stance enables carers to step back from situations and take a different perspective, by reflecting on their own internal states and those of the child. Unlike a lot of existing foster carer training, Reflective Fostering focuses more on the foster carer themselves, their journey to becoming a carer and their relationships.

What does it involve?

Carers will attend ten sessions over ten weeks during term-time only. Sessions will be held in person or- if necessary- on Teams and will be delivered by a member of the Fostering Team alongside an experienced foster carer who will have received specialist training on the model from the team at Anna Freud.

Our ambition is for all Hartlepool foster carers to complete the **Reflective Fostering Programme** at some stage during their fostering career so that We also hope that each training group will remain connected to each other and potentially attend group supervisions together thereafter two or three times a year.

How do I get involved?

If you've not already been invited to take part in the **Reflective Fostering Programme** by your Supervising Social Worker and are keen to get involved please let them know. Don't worry though – as explained we are keen for all carers to have an opportunity to attend and you will be approached at some stage. Completion of the **Reflective Fostering Programme** may be included as an action in your PDP.



Child-Parent Relationship Therapy (CPRT)

Do you feel you've lost touch with your child? / Wish things were how they used to be?

Do you find yourself raising your voice to your child more than laughing with them? / Don't feel as close?

Feel frustrated with saying the same things over and over with no results? / Feel you've lost control?

CPRT Training (also called Filial Therapy) is a research-based, ten week parenting course that teaches parents how to use some of the same skills that play therapists use to help children experiencing social, emotional or behavioural problems. *Research shows that motivated parents can be as effective as a professional...*

How can CPRT help?

In ten weeks you will learn how to:

- Regain control as a parent
- Help your child develop self-control
- Effectively discipline and limit inappropriate behavior
- Understand your child's emotional needs
- Communicate more effectively with your child

In ten weeks you should see a noticeable difference in:

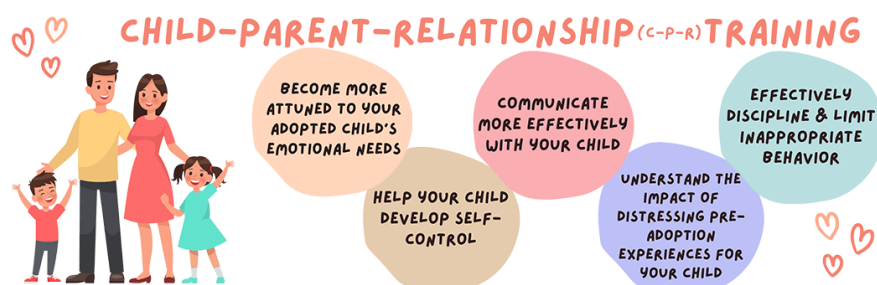
- Your relationship with your child
- Your child's behavior
- Your ability to respond effectively

How does it work?

Each group of around ten carers will meet weekly for a minimum of ten sessions during term times. Sessions are held face to face last 1 ½ to 2 hours

How do I get involved?

You may be referred to the CPRT programme by your Supervising Social Worker or by the child's social worker, particularly if it is felt this would be beneficial for both you and for the child in your care. However, if you are keen to give CPRT a go and feel it would help please speak to your Supervising Social Worker who will discuss your suitability with the Therapeutic Team.



Additional Training / Useful Resources

Open University

[Free courses - OpenLearn - Open University](#)

Sign up for an account at: [IAM - Open University](#)

For further information please contact:

- 1) For OpenLearn account creation issues email OU-computing-helpdesk@open.ac.uk.
- 2) For all other OpenLearn queries email openlearn@open.ac.uk

Middlesbrough College

[Course Search | Middlesbrough College \(mbro.ac.uk\)](#)

For further information please contact: distancelearning@mbro.ac.uk.

Please forward any certificates to
CASWORKFORCEDEVELOPMENT@hartlepool.gov.uk
so they can be added to your CPD record.

National Association of Therapeutic Parents

Free resources and training including a range of podcasts on therapeutic parenting.

Being a Parent

For Parents and Carers of Children aged 2 – 11 years

Being A Parent is a very popular course and highly recommended by parents. Being A Parent has been demonstrated to transform parents' knowledge and skills, family resilience and relationships, children's outcomes and development.

Being A Parent aims to improve child development and outcomes, parenting, family resilience and social capital. Being A Parent courses combine the latest developmental science and theory with well-evidenced parenting strategies and methods involving:

- *Attachment and parent-child relationships.*
- *Understanding and managing children's feelings and parents' emotional regulation.*
- *Parenting roles, expectations and culture.*
- *Parent listening, communication, play and interaction skills.*
- *Positive behaviour management and discipline strategies.*
- *Managing parent and family stress.*

Being A Parent is delivered by local parents who have undergone training, supervision and support provided by parenting specialists. The courses successfully integrate behavioural change with adult learning, with each course session consisting of interactive involvement and an engaging and creative blend of small and large group discussion, role play, demonstrations, information sharing and reflection. And all of this delivered by local parents who are able to remove barriers and engage with parents who are usually reluctant to take part in groups.

The course is delivered over an 8 week period and each session lasts for 2 hours.

If you are interested, please speak to your Supervising Social Worker or contact parenting@hartlepool.gov.uk





Talking Teens Programme

For parents and carers of young people aged 11 – 17 years.



Talking Teens is based on the most recent research on adolescence and consistent with the principles of the Nurturing Programme. The groups provide a positive view of teenage development and focus on relationships within the family: communication, negotiating, decision-making and strategies to reduce conflict.

The programme consists of four sessions, developed with Dr. John Coleman, to increase parents' understanding of teenagers' feelings and behaviour, and deliver key strategies for maintaining and improving relationships.

Key topics:

- Exploring the importance of parents for teenagers
- Developing parents' understanding of teenage development and the influence of brain development on behaviour
- Developing parents' understanding of the importance of listening, verbal and non-verbal communication
- Promoting positive approaches to boundary setting and problem-solving
- Providing an opportunity for parents to share their experience with others

Results of the Pilot Group:

- Parents getting on better with their teenagers
- Reduced stress in the family
- Increased confidence in talking about difficult issues
- Increase in understanding of teenagers' feelings

The course is held over 4 weeks, with each session lasting 2 hours.

If you are interested, please speak to your Supervising Social Worker or contact parenting@hartlepool.gov.uk

Foster Carer Support Groups

Date/ Time	Venue	Speaker	Date/ Time
	CETL		
06.02.24 5.30 – 7pm	CETL	Julie Taylor safeguardin g	06.02.24 5.30 – 7pm
05.03.24 10-11.30am	CETL	Jill Coser Talking Teens	05.03.24 10-11.30am
02.04.24 5.30 – 7pm	CETL	Hart Gables	02.04.24 5.30 – 7pm
30.04.24 10-11.30am	CETL	Jill Blackett Hart Drug Services	30.04.24 10-11.30am
28.05.24 5.30- 7pm	CETL	Wendy Cooper Transitions	28.05.24 5.30- 7pm
25.06.24 10-11.30am	CETL	TBC	25.06.24 10-11.30am
03.09.24 5.30 – 7pm	CETL	TBC	03.09.24 5.30 – 7pm
1.10.24 10- 11.30am	CETL	TBC	1.10.24 10- 11.30am
29.10.24 5.30 – 7pm	CETL	TBC	29.10.24 5.30 – 7pm

Training Log

Training	Date attended
Mandatory:	
Emergency First Aid	
Attachment / PACE / Trauma-Informed Approaches	
Online Safety- Risks to Children (E Safety) or Internet Safety	
Safeguarding Children Level 1 Foundation	
Safeguarding Children level 2: Intermediate	
Recommended:	
Foster Carer Recording	
Information Governance for Foster Carers	

*Training and Development Team, Quality and Review, Hartlepool Borough
Council, Level 4, Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, TS24 8AY*



