

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

## AGENDA



**Tuesday 10 September 2024**

**at 5.00 pm**

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

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillors Creevy, Dunbar, Harrison, Holbrook, Little, Sharp and Vacancy.

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

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

Parent Governor Representative: Martin Pout

Six Young Peoples Representatives

Observer: Councillor Allen, Chair of Adult and Community Based Services Committee

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

**3. MINUTES**

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 (*previously circulated and published*).

**4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS**

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

**CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE**

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

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

**5. KEY DECISIONS**

No items

**6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**

- 6.1 Short Breaks Services Statement – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- 7.1 2023/2024 Annual Report of Adoption Tees Valley – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 7.2 Children's Social Care Annual Complaints Report – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 7.3 Holiday Activity Fund Programme (HAF) – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 7.4 High Needs Provision Capital Allocations 2020-2025 – *Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

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

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – Tuesday 19 November at 5.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

10 September 2024



**Subject:** YOUTH JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN

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

**Decision Type:** Budget and Policy Framework

## COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

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

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is gain approval for the Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2024-2025 (**Appendix 1**) to be presented to full Council on the 3 October 2024 to seek adoption of the Youth Justice Plan 2024/2025.
- 1.2 The report has been presented to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Audit and Governance Committee for consultation; there were suggested changes.
- 1.3 The final Plan will also be sent to the National Youth Justice Board.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The national Youth Justice System primarily exists to ensure that children and young people between the age of 10 and 17 do not engage in offending

or re-offending behaviour and to ensure that where a young person is arrested and charged with a criminal offence, they are dealt with differently to adult offenders to reflect their particular welfare needs as children.

- 2.2 Local Youth Offending Services were established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to develop, deliver, commission and coordinate the provision of youth justice services within each Local Authority.
- 2.3 Hartlepool Youth Justice Service was established in April 2000 and is responsible for youth justice services locally. It is a multi-agency service and is made up of representatives from the Council's Children's Services, Police, Probation, Health and Education.
- 2.4 The primary objectives of Youth Justice Services are to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people and reduce the use of custody.
- 2.5 There is a statutory requirement for all Youth Justice Services to annually prepare, a local Youth Justice Plan for submission to the national Youth Justice Board.
- 2.6 The annual Youth Justice Plan provides an overview of how the Youth Justice Service, the Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board and wider partnership will ensure that the service has sufficient resources and infrastructure to deliver youth justice services in its area in line with the requirements of the National Standards for Youth Justice Services to:
  - Promote performance improvement;
  - Shape youth justice system improvement;
  - Improve outcomes for young people, victims and the broader community.

### 3. PROPOSALS/ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The final draft of the Youth Justice Plan for 2024 – 2025 is attached at **Appendix 1**. This outlines the Strategic Objectives and Priorities for the service as follows:
  - **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.

#### **4. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The strategic plan identifies key risk to future delivery as detailed in Section 15 of the plan these are:

- The unpredictability associated with secure remand episodes and secure remand length has the potential to place significant financial pressure on the Youth Justice Service and the broader Local Authority;
- Managing the potential for reduction in YJB grant and partnership financial and 'in-kind' contributions pre and post 2024/25;
- Ongoing recruitment issues within the Probation Services having a direct impact on YJS Seconded Probation officer;
- Continued concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines.

#### **5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### **6. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, a local authority must submit a youth justice plan annually to the Youth Justice Board setting out (a) how youth justice services are to be provided and funded in their area and (b) how the YOTs established by them are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate and what functions they are to carry out. The plan must be published in such manner and by such date as the Secretary of State may direct.

#### **7. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE.)**

7.1 There are no specific child and poverty impact from the report, the cohort of young people are across a wide spectrum of socio- economic backgrounds, all young people receive an assessment of need which includes consideration of poverty.

#### **8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE.)**

8.1 There are no specific equality and diversity considerations arising from the report. The Youth Offending Service works in an anti-discriminatory way with all young people who access the service.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 To note the progress made in delivering the local Youth Justice Plan (2023/2024).
- 9.2 To approve the Youth Justice Plan to be presented to full Council on the 3 October 2024 to seek adoption of the Youth Justice Plan 2024/2025.

**10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The development of the Youth Justice plan for 2024/2025 will provide the Youth Justice Service with a clear steer to bring about further reductions in youth offending and contribute to improving outcomes for children, young people and their families alongside the broader community.
- 10.2 The local Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2024/2025 will establish responsibility across the Youth Justice Service and the Youth Justice Strategic Board for taking each improvement activity forward within agreed timescales.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

**12. CONTACT OFFICERS**

- 12.1 Laura Gough, Assistant Director, Children and Families,  
[laura.gough@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:laura.gough@hartlepool.gov.uk)  
 01429 525380

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 29/07/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 30/07/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 14/08/2024



# Hartlepool Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2024-25



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



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7. Sign off, Submission & Approval

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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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

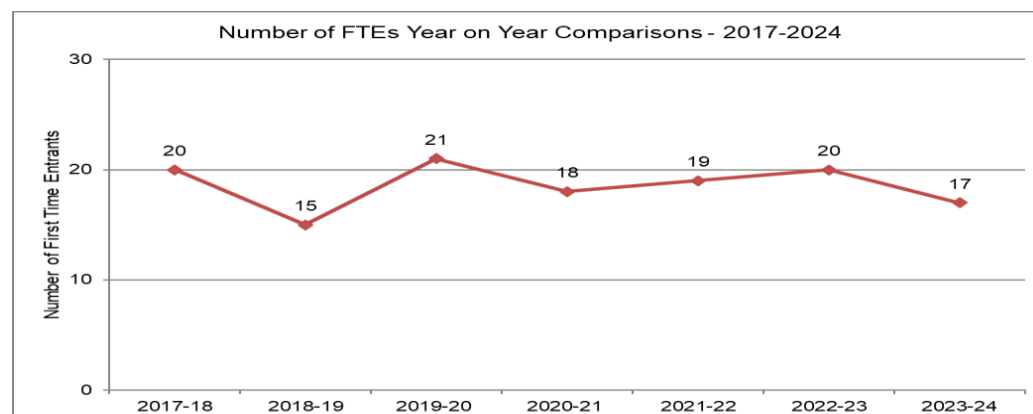
Latest last 4 Qtrs. reoffending Binary rates:

- 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.

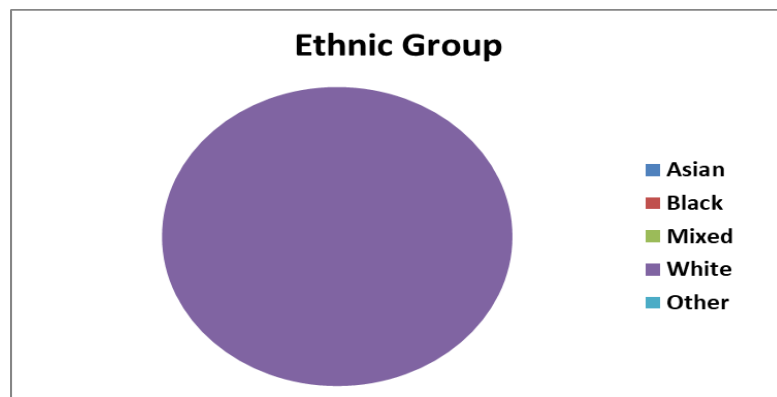
A lot of work is carried out with victims of crime, the YJS RJ worker contacts all victims ascertains their willingness to engage and follows very clear processes. All data is collected and stored securely on the MIS. We are in the process of updating our Victim Policy in line with the recently published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

**Local performance**

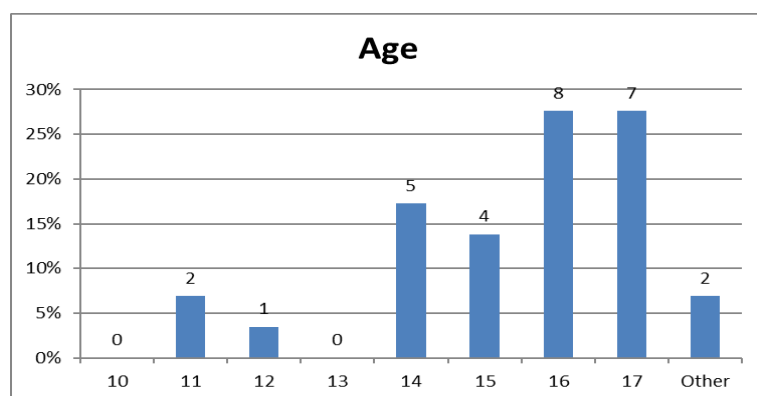
The service is dealing with smaller caseloads consisting of very complex individuals with multiple risks and vulnerabilities. Hartlepool YJS carry out a quarterly Needs Analysis of all children open to the service to ensure we thoroughly understand the collective needs of the children and ensure the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

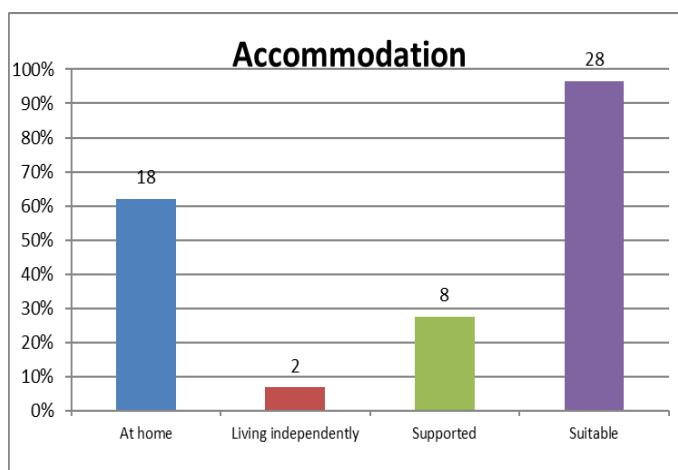
*There are 5 Females within this analysis*

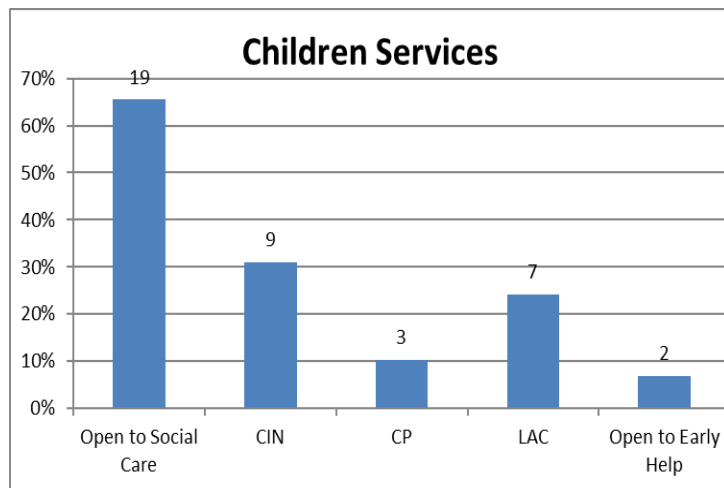
*18 CYP are classed as living at home, this is either with parents or an extended family member i.e. Auntie/Uncle, Grandparents etc.*

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

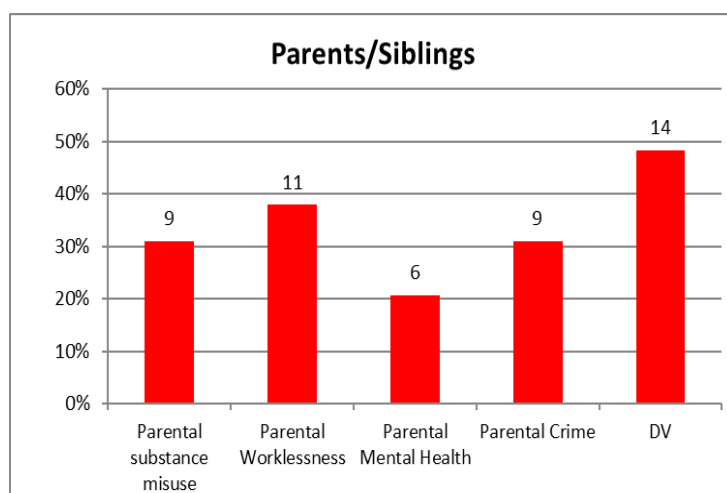
*2 children are living independently.*

*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*

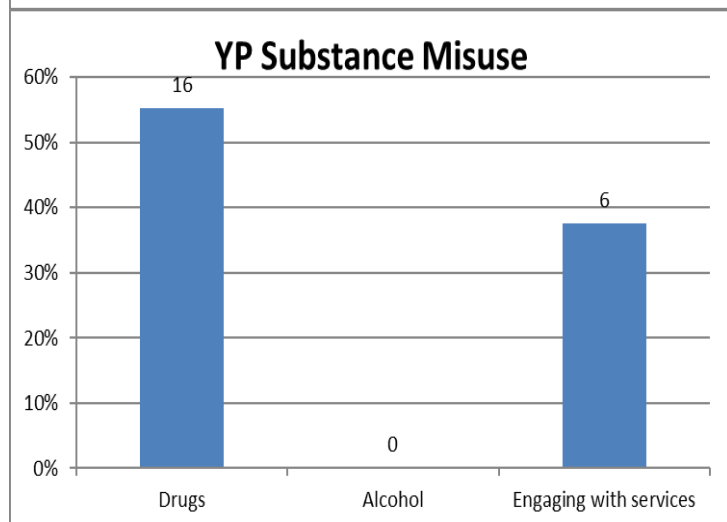


*These figures equate to 15 CYP from the 29 assessed.*

*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*



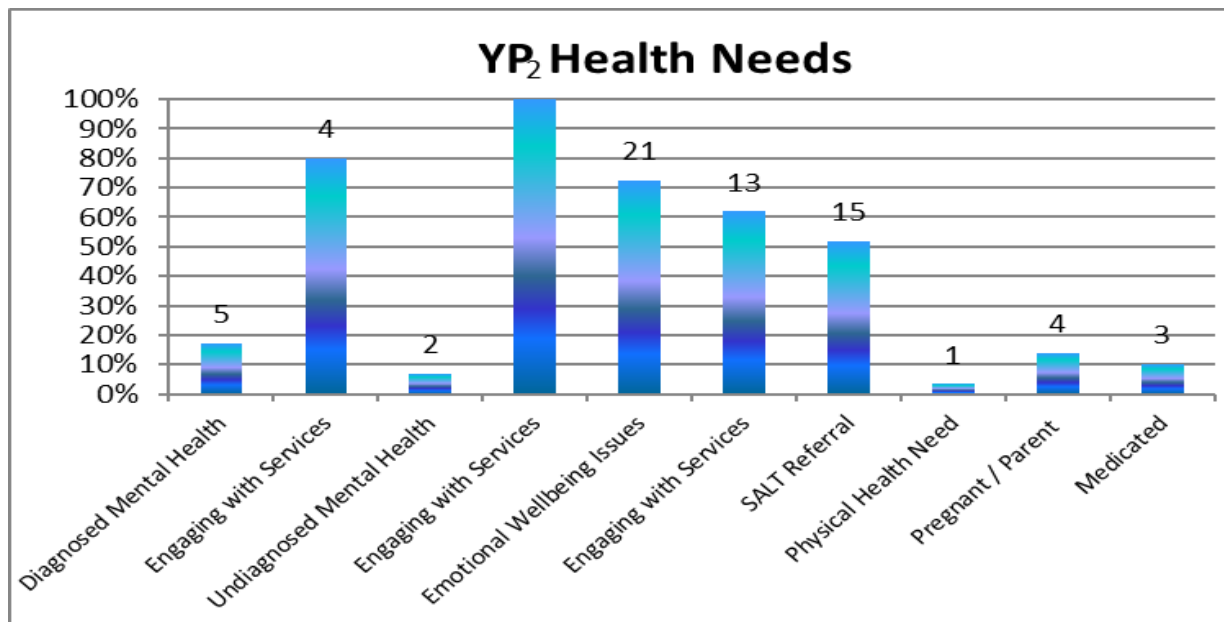
*Of the 29 CYP assessed 16 have admitted using substances.*

*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
<b>An increase in secure Remand Costs and children remanded to Local Authority Accommodation</b>	The continued unpredictability associated with remand episodes and remand length has the potential to place significant financial pressure on the YJS and broader Local Authority. 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.
<b>Managing the potential for reduction in YJB grant and partnership financial and 'in-kind' contributions pre and post 2024/25</b>	Consequential negative impact on performance. Reduced capacity to meet strategic and operational obligations and statutory requirements. Reduced capacity to continue to focus on early intervention and identification	Targeted resources to address need. Continue to administer and embed the current structure and practice. Regional collaboration with neighbouring YJS' such as coverage of Teesside Youth Court. Robust financial management and oversight from strategic board.
<b>Continued concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines</b>	The 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).
<b>Issues</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>	<b>Proposed Controls/actions</b>
<b>The continued delay in receipt of the YJB grant</b> (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><b>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.</b></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.

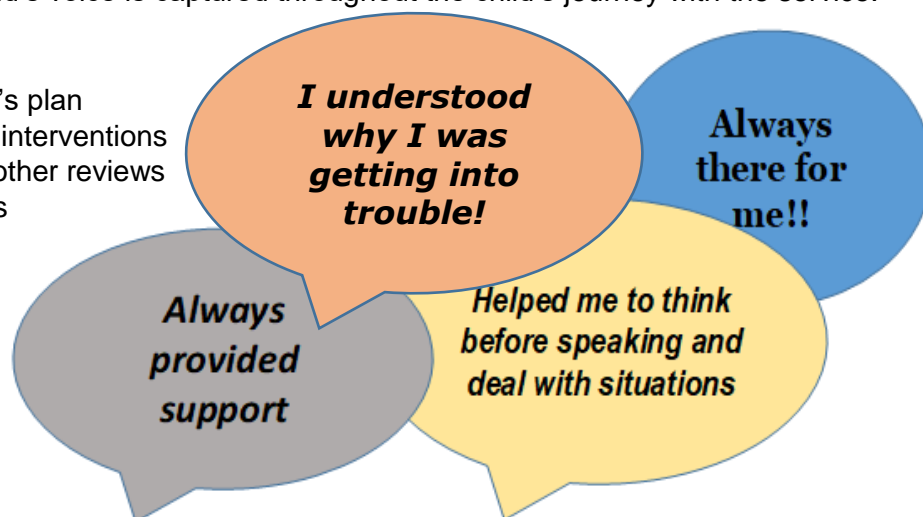
We will continuously review and enhance our delivery, so that the views of children are sufficiently captured, central to our work, and lead to change in the system to support children into positive outcomes and successful adulthood.

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.

	<b>Service Improvement</b>	<b>Action taken/Planned</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Target Date/Completed</b>
<b>1</b>	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
<b>2</b>	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**

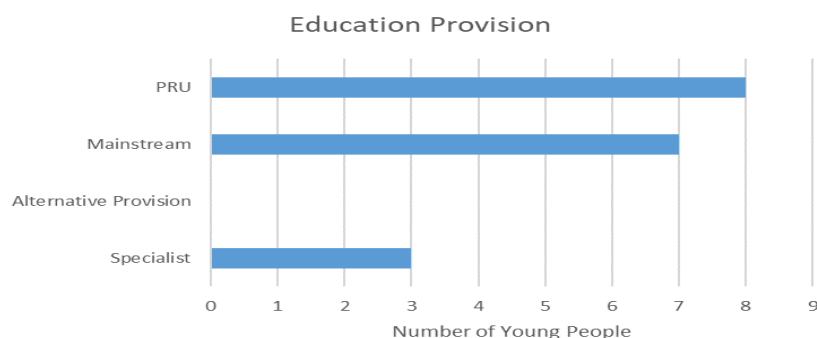
All YJS staff have direct access to a named Education worker within the Virtual School and a named worker within the One Stop Shop for all Post 16 children. The YJS have also commissioned time from an Educational Psychologist who has significantly added to our education support offer.

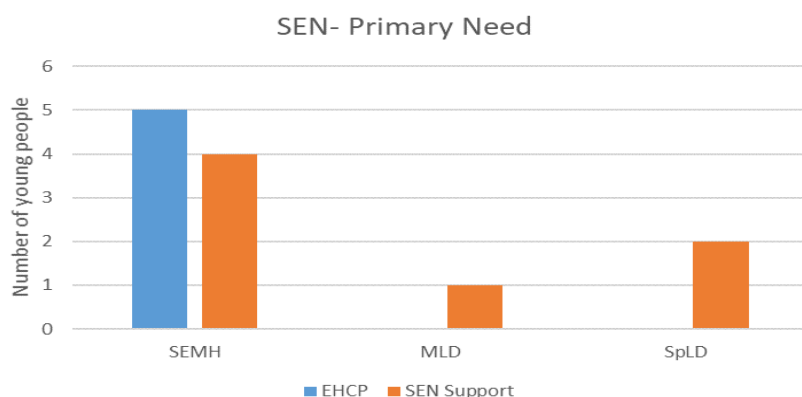
There are monthly education meetings held within the YJS with all partners in attendance where every child is discussed, actions raised and the education database updated. The YJS also have senior representation on the monthly Inclusion partnership meetings. The Virtual School Head Teacher and One Stop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



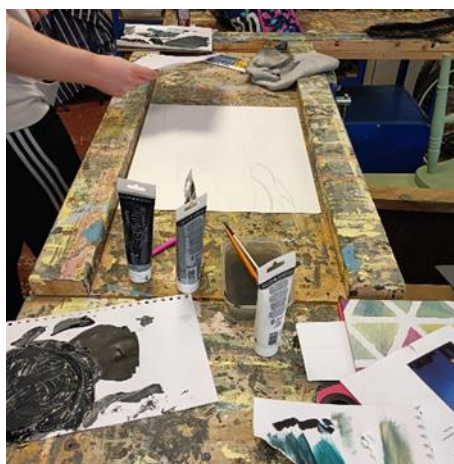
RJ is an important underlying principle of all disposals for children on YJS caseload, from Diversion to Detention & Training Orders.

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.

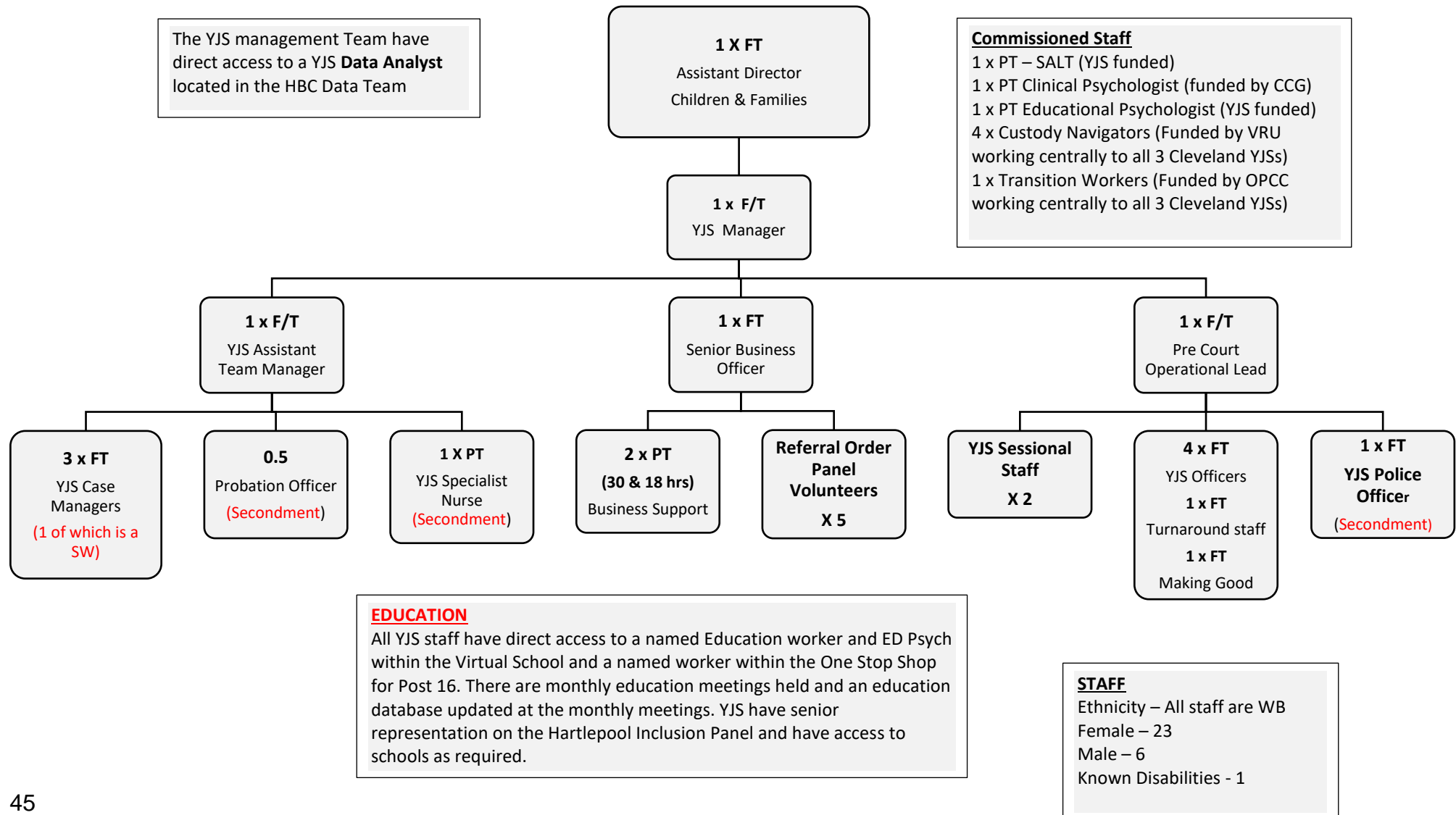
The YJS works alongside and in tandem with the **Supporting Families** programme. Checks are made with the SF lead at the outset of all work with children/families. Information is shared on the identified key worker, other service involvement, identified needs and any relevant plans in place. This speeds 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

<b>B5: YOT budget</b>
<b>Costs and Contributions</b>

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>526,974</b>	<b>211,071</b>	<b>298,359</b>	<b>1,036,404</b>

## Common youth justice terms

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

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

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



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

10 SEPTEMBER 2024



**Subject:** SHORT BREAKS SERVICES STATEMENT 2024

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

**Decision Type:** Non-Key

## 1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- where people will be safe and protected from harm.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 For members to approve the Short Breaks Services Statement.

## 3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide a short break service designed to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children. The duty and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. The regulations require each local authority to produce a short break services statement so that families know what services are available, the eligibility criteria for those services, and how the range of short breaks is designed to meet local needs for children with disabilities and their families. It is a requirement that the Statement be reviewed on an annual basis.

3.2 Short Breaks provide children and young people with disabilities with the opportunity to spend time away from their parents, relaxing and having fun with their friends. They also provide families with a break from their caring responsibilities.

#### 4. SHORT BREAKS SERVICES STATEMENT

- 4.1 It is important that children, young people and their families know what short break services are available. The attached short break service statement (**Appendix A**) sets out the different types of short breaks available which includes universal, targeted and specialist. It also sets out the eligibility criteria for specialist short breaks.
- 4.2 The Short Break Service Statement has been developed in consultation with the Parent Carer Forum (1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future).
- 4.3 The Statement forms the foundation for the delivery of short break services for children with disabilities and their families. It will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis ensuring that any provision is reflective of local need. Parents, children and young people will continue to be involved in the process and the Parent Led Forum (1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future) will continue to be the driving force behind the shaping of short break services.
- 4.4 The Short Breaks Services Statement needs to be published and made available to the general public. Once approved, the Statement will be published on the local authority's website and the SEND Local Offer of Services website. The Statement will also be made available in paper format upon request.

#### 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	There is a risk that if the council is not clear about the provision available that families will not be able to cope and needs will escalate.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	Nothing specific for this report - the council commissions short break activity programme.
<b>SUBSIDY CONTROL</b>	None
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	The council must adhere to the Children Act 1989 (as set out in section 3)
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	All children with additional needs are supported as required.
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	All children with additional needs are supported as required.

<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	The attached statement is a requirement under the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011. It has been developed using these regs and the Parent Carer Forum have been consulted as part of the process.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 For members to approve the attached Short Breaks Services Statement.

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 There is a requirement for the council to produce a short break service statement under the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None

## 9. CONTACT OFFICERS

Sally Robinson, Executive Director, Childrens and Joint Commissioning,  
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Laura Gough, Assistant Director, Children and Families,  
[Laura.gough@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:Laura.gough@hartlepool.gov.uk), 01429 525380

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 16/08/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 15/08/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 15/08/2024

**1**hart  
mind  
future

Hartlepool's Parent Carer Forum

# SEPTEMBER 2024 SHORT BREAK SERVICE STATEMENT



**Family Hubs**  
HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL  
IN HARTLEPOOL



**HARTLEPOOL**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Introduction

Welcome to Hartlepool's Short Breaks Statement. The aim of this statement is to provide parents and carers with information about:

- How we design short break services to meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities aged 0 – 18 years in Hartlepool and their parents/carers
- Who is eligible to receive short breaks
- The range of short breaks available in Hartlepool and how to access them

## Hartlepool's Vision

"All children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will enjoy a happy, safe and healthy childhood that prepares them for adult life and enables them to be the best they can be."

## Better Outcomes for Families of Disabled Children

The delivery of the short break priorities are designed to improve the outcomes for children with disabilities and their families. As part of our service delivery the outcomes below are designed to make a difference for children and families.

- Short Breaks aim to support parents and carers in their caring role and reduce levels of stress and anxiety due to the demands of caring;
- They will aim to support children and young people with disabilities to access activities whereby they can make friends, have fun and support the development of their social, communication and independence skills;
- When young people with disabilities are leaving school and making the transition to adulthood that they will be supported and are able to express their wishes and make appropriate choices; and
- Short Breaks will provide opportunities to enable families to spend time, relax together and for parents and their children to get to know other families and to build up a network of support and develop friendships

## What is a Short Break?

Short Breaks are activities for children and young people with SEND that enable them to have fun, spend time with friends and build their confidence and skills in a safe environment. As well as promoting best outcomes for the child, the Children Act 1989 Schedule 2 requires Local Authorities to provide services designed to assist family carers of children with disabilities 'to continue to [provide care], or to do so more effectively, by giving them breaks from caring'.



There are a variety of Short Breaks available to children and young people in Hartlepool:

- All Short Breaks take place outside of the school day. This means that activities could happen in the evening, at a weekend or during school holidays.
- Many Short Breaks take place outside of the family home; for example in local leisure centres or community spaces, although some Short Breaks may be within the family home with specialist support, such as Personal Assistant, depending on the need of the child or young person and their family.
- Short Breaks can also include overnight stays, depending on the need of the child or young person, their family and the type of activity. This may be at the home of an approved Short Breaks Foster Carer, a Specialist Residential Home.
- Some Short Breaks can be for a child or young person with SEND to attend independently of their families, giving parents and carers the opportunity to have a break from their caring role.
- Some Short Breaks give siblings and/or families the opportunity to take part in activities together.

### Who are Short Breaks for?

Short Breaks in Hartlepool are available to children and young people who:

- Have a special educational need and/or disability
- Are aged 0 to 18 years old
- Ordinarily reside in Hartlepool

Eligibility decisions are based on individual need including to what extent a child or young person's disability or impairment affects their lives and the lives of those who live with and care for them.

### Why do we need a Short Breaks Service Statement and what is it for?

The Local Authority is guided by 'The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011' and 'Disabled Children Regulations 2011'. This means that all Local Authorities must:

- Prepare a statement that explains the range of Short Break Services it will provide;
- Make information available and accessible;
- Have a clear criteria for eligibility for Short Break Services; and
- Say how the services will meet the needs of families

## How has this statement been prepared and who was involved?

Hartlepool Borough Council has worked with Hartlepool's Parent Carer Forum – 1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future to develop this statement.

1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future is the Parent Participation Forum who work closely with the council to represent views and opinions of parents and carers across Hartlepool. They support the ongoing development and reshaping of services to support families.

## What types of Short Breaks are available in Hartlepool and how are they accessed?

Many children or young people with SEND will access a mixture of services. Some children will be able to access Universal Short Breaks services with or without support. Some of these may be Specialist Services provided through an assessment, and some will be accessed through Targeted Services commissioned from voluntary or independent providers.

Short breaks can be described in the following three categories;

- Universal Short Breaks;
- Targeted Short Breaks;
- Specialist Short Breaks.

The information below describes what is available within each of these categories and how different types of Short Breaks can be accessed.

### Universal Short Breaks

Universal Services offer Short Breaks opportunities that are open to ALL children and young people in Hartlepool who choose to use them whether or not they have SEND. There are lots of Universal Services available in the community which all children and young people can access such as libraries, youth clubs, family hubs, leisure centres, Scouts, Brownies, after school clubs and sports clubs. Most children or young people's needs can be met within Universal Short Breaks services and they do not require Targeted or Specialist Short Breaks.

The underlying principles of Universal Short Breaks are:

- To be preventative and to increase the inclusion offer for all children, enabling them to access their community, doing activities of their choice.
- To improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

Family Hubs act as a hub for families in their local community. Hartlepool Family Hubs are a one stop shop for all families of children 0-19 (25 with SEND) for universal and targeted support. Parents, carers and young people can access advice, guidance and support from professionals in line with their needs, access a safe space and activities for younger children.

Universal Services offer activities that enable ALL children and young people to have fun and make friends and children with SEND should be able to access these if they want to. The people who run these activities have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure children and young people with SEND can access these services, for example, accessing additional training to meet behavioural or medical needs.

### **How do I access Universal Short Breaks?**

Many Universal Services advertise their activities within libraries, schools, Family Hubs, and community hubs. You can access Universal Services by contacting organisations directly to discuss the activities they offer.

Some of these activities may be free. Some may have costs for all children and young people who access them. Children and young people with SEND should not be charged more than other children or young people.

Though we recognise that children and young people with SEND may have specialist support requirements, we encourage parents and carers to access Universal Services and discuss with providers the support that their child needs. This will help providers to increase their knowledge and skills in regards to supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Information about activities for children and young people can be found at [www.hartlepoolfamilyhubs.co.uk](http://www.hartlepoolfamilyhubs.co.uk), Hartlepool Family Hubs Facebook page or pop into your local Family Hub.

### **Targeted Short Breaks**

Sometimes Universal Services cannot meet the needs of children and young people with additional needs, even when reasonable adjustments have been made.

Targeted Short Breaks are designed specifically to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, and include weekend, holiday activity schemes, residential and evening activities.



The underlying principles of Targeted Short Breaks are to:

- Supplement the universal provision available locally.
- Be preventative and provide targeted support – not just as a crisis intervention.
- Enable families to access Targeted Short Breaks without assessments.
- Improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

Some Targeted Short Breaks are funded by Hartlepool Borough Council while others are provided by voluntary groups and charities. Details of Targeted Short Breaks that are currently commissioned by Hartlepool Borough Council can be found at [www.hartlepoolfamilyhubs.co.uk/send-local-offer](http://www.hartlepoolfamilyhubs.co.uk/send-local-offer). The current commissioned services include:

Hartlepool families First North East

<https://www.hartlepoolfamiliesfirst.org.uk/>

Hartlepool Junior Funability and a Saturday Multi-Sports session

Families can book on to sessions either e-mailing [participation@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:participation@hartlepool.gov.uk) or calling (01429) 402896 / 07790809677.

### How do I access a Targeted Short Break?

Families can use Targeted Short Breaks without an assessment of need. Families can directly contact the service they are interested in and arrange for the child or young person to attend.

Families can also get support to identify short break opportunities from Family Hubs. They can offer you support and guidance about what is available. Contact your local Family Hub on 01429 292444 or [familyhubs@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:familyhubs@hartlepool.gov.uk).

If parents feel they need more support there are services available to children/young people with some support needs but may not meet the threshold for specialist social care support. In this case, the family will have an Early Help Assessment which has been completed by any practitioner involved with your child/family such as a teacher, health visitor, parent support advisor or a family support worker within the Early Help teams.

Following assessment, a plan is drawn up outlining the support needed, which may include a short break. Plans are reviewed regularly to check what progress is being made and to decide whether less or more support may be needed.

## **Specialist Short Breaks (which includes Direct Payments)**

These are highly specialist or bespoke services which are available to children and young people with high support needs. They can only be assessed as a result as a Child and Family (C&F) assessment which will be carried out by a social worker from the Children's Disability Team. Specialist short breaks can only be accessed if specified in a child's plan.

The Social Worker has 45 days to complete the Child and Family assessment which looks carefully at the child's development needs, the parents'/carers' specific needs, any parenting issues and the wider family circumstances and environment. They will also gather relevant information from professionals involved with your child.

A support plan is devised following the assessment, which includes the services and short breaks that may be appropriate to be provided and how this will meet the child's/families' needs. The plan will need to be approved by SEND Commissioned Placement panel before the short break is approved. All plans are reviewed at least six monthly to make sure they respond to the needs of a child and family.

To be provided with a direct payment, the child must meet a specific eligibility criteria (see Appendix A).

## **How do we know that Short Break services are meeting needs of children and young people?**

In Hartlepool we have a very proactive Parent Led Forum that works in partnership with the Local Authority Officers, other relevant agencies and groups to ensure that service delivery meets the need of families of disabled children.

There is also parent representation on a number of strategic and operational groups, which provides a platform for parents to contribute and influence change. Parents are also actively involved in the commissioning of non-assessed short break provision and continue to play a very active role in the development of the local offer of services.

Children and young people are actively engaged in having their say about things they like to do. This is carried out in a number of ways, including: questionnaires, face to face discussion and group work within the short break sessions. This information is also gathered to plan for future delivery.

All of our commissioned services are required as part of their terms and conditions of funding to engage service users in evaluating services on a quarterly basis. It is expected that this helps providers to adapt their services as required.

### How does the council support transition to adult services?

The 0-18 Children's Disability Team and the Adults 18 – 25 Disability Team will work together in partnership with a young person and the people that are important to them to explore if support needs to continue or be in place in preparation for the young person turning 18 years old. Children's and Adult Social Care work together in carrying out assessments of need under the Care Act 2014 to ensure that effective arrangements are in place which enhances the quality of life for all young people with a disability and their family as they move forward into adulthood.

The children and adult disabilities teams also work closely with the SEND education team to ensure that young people can access education and training.

### Where can families get more information about Short Breaks?

There are a number of places where you can find Information regarding Short Breaks in Hartlepool:

- Hartlepool's Local Offer of services for families of disabled children website: [www.hartlepoolfamilyhubs.co.uk/send-local-offer](http://www.hartlepoolfamilyhubs.co.uk/send-local-offer)
- Hartlepool's Parent Carer Forum - 1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future Contact: 07896 054361 or via their email address: [HartMindFuture@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:HartMindFuture@yahoo.co.uk) or join their face book page: 1Hart, 1Mind, 1Future Group Forum
- Contacting the SEND Social Worker - [Hayley.wrigley@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:Hayley.wrigley@hartlepool.gov.uk) 01429 402899

### What do parents/carers do if they want to register a complaint or compliment?

If the Short Break is either delivered or commissioned by Hartlepool Borough Council, then the Comments, Complaints and Compliments Procedure should be followed. For further information you can complete an online form by going to:

[www.hartlepool.gov.uk](http://www.hartlepool.gov.uk) or via email to [cascomplaints@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:cascomplaints@hartlepool.gov.uk) or by calling: 01429 284020.

### How can people access the statement?

Hartlepool's Short Break Service statement will be available in the following places:

- Hartlepool's SEND Local Offer of Services published on: [www.hartlepoolfamilyhubs.co.uk /send-local-offer](http://www.hartlepoolfamilyhubs.co.uk/send-local-offer)
- Hartlepool's Parent Carer Forum: 1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future: [www.1hart1mind1future.co.uk](http://www.1hart1mind1future.co.uk)



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mind  
future

Hartlepool's Parent Carer Forum

# SEPTEMBER 2024

## Short Break Service Statement

# APPENDICIES



## Criteria for short break or direct payment

### **Short breaks provide opportunities for children and young people:**

- To spend time away from their parents carers;
- The chance to develop new friendships;
- To develop their independence
- To take part in new experiences and to have fun doing positive activities such as swimming, youth clubs, day trips with friends and much more.

### **Short breaks aim to provide their parent carers with:**

- A necessary and valuable break from their caring responsibility;
  - A chance to rest and unwind;
  - To spend time with other members of the family.
- Short Breaks provision can range from a few hours a week to an allocated number of overnight breaks per year and anything in between.

**Hartlepool Borough Council Short Break Offer is provided under three categories, Universal Services / Local Offer, Targeted Services and Specialist Services –**

### Universal Services

Some families are able to get a Short Break by using free or low cost local services. These services are not funded or commissioned by the Local Authority. Examples of these are; school clubs, youth clubs, Scouts, Brownies, Guides, sport clubs and charity funded club provision and parents can access independently.

Services have a duty to make reasonable adjustments and must not treat a disabled person less favourably. Some universal services offer sessions specifically for children and young people with additional needs, however, not all universal services will be suitable for everyone.

## Targeted Services

Our self-referral clubs take place after school, on weekends and during school holidays and are specifically for children with additional support needs and/or disabilities. These clubs are commissioned and funded by the Local Authority.

The clubs take place in and around Hartlepool, providing children and young people with an opportunity to meet new people and try a wide range of activities such as sports, arts and crafts, cooking, music and much more. Whilst also providing parents with a break from their caring role.

Families can refer themselves to this service without the need for a social care referral or a diagnosis but must be able to evidence to the club their child/young person has additional support needs.

## Specialist Services

Sometimes a child or young person may have more significant or complex needs due to their disability and/or family circumstances and will need more specialist support.

Support may include one or more specialist services such as a personal assistant, overnight care in or away from the home, care in the home or in the community.

The level of support needed will be identified by a Social Worker assessment and a request for services will be presented to the Children with Disabilities Multi Agency panel for consideration. This is called the SEND Panel

These services will be commissioned specifically for the child's/young person's needs or alternatively a family may prefer to request a **Direct Payment** to arrange the services themselves.

We have a number of different providers who are commissioned to deliver Social Work Referral Short Breaks.

To be provided with a direct payment or a short break, the child must meet the below eligibility criteria.



Over all criteria that the child **HAS** a diagnosed disability and the social work assessment completed has identified that without intervention or specialist service, the child will not develop and the need cannot be met with Universal Services, Early Help Support or the Local Offer

- The Child has to be either know to SEND Support within school or have an EHCP Plan.
- The child has to attend either a mainstream school – with a SEN package or a specialist educational provision.
- The child will not meet need for a short break or direct payment with a diagnosis of Autism, ADHD, Learning Difficulty, mild or moderate learning disability or other neurological development condition **unless** also diagnosed with at least one of the following; Learning Disability - as determined through a recognised cognitive assessment, by relevant professional, severe physical disability, hearing impairment, vision impairment or multi-sensory impairment that will last longer than 12 months, life limiting illness, complex medical needs or a severe communication difficulty.

When considering entitlement to a direct payment worker or short break service the young person will be measured against the following criteria that can be managed on the direct payment pathway

### **Eligibility Criteria**

#### **Multi-Agency Professionals involved**

The child or young person must have consistent access to two or more of the following professionals

- LD CAMHS or CAMHS consultant or ongoing therapeutic/behavioural support (not for medication only)
- Educational Psychologist for longer term intervention
- Consultant Paediatrician or other specialised Doctor for medical intervention that will last longer than six month
- Ongoing Occupational Therapy intervention that will last longer than six month
- Ongoing SALT Therapeutic Intervention that will last longer than six month
- Teacher of visually impaired whose intervention will last longer than six month and where vision is profound
- Teacher of the deaf whose intervention will last longer than six month and where hearing is profound

## Personal Care

- The child or young person needs lifting or carrying and specialised equipment to support personal care
- The child or young person needs total or a high level assistance, compared to peers similar age with toileting, bathing and dressing for a child of school age upwards
- The child or young person needs total or a higher level of assistance with feeding. For children of school age upwards, compared to peers of a similar age

## Supervision

- Child's sleep pattern is regularly interrupted with long levels of adult supervision, to ensure the child or young person's safety needed during this period. This disturbed pattern of sleep is having a detrimental impact upon adult sleep pattern and causing severe sleep deprivation. Impacting on parent's ability to function and care.
- The main carer has very few people apart from themselves who are both able and willing to look after child or young person. A Family Network Meeting must have been held to consider who is in the family network and if any support can be given to adults within the network, to offer care over and above their current involvement in the child or young person's care.
- The main carer must be constantly available, over and above a child of a similar age for crisis that may occur whilst the child is away from their care, impacting upon ability to manage through the day
- The child has limited perception of danger to self or others and requires 1:1 supervision most of the time that cannot be managed with support of universal or specialist services both within the community and at home.
- The child must need constant care, supervision and monitoring from an adult to constantly ensure their safety, which is over and above that similar to peers their age
- The child requires supervision to perform daily tasks that cannot be managed under the support of Universal or Specialist Services
- There is a need for specialist safety equipment in the home to keep the child safe, which is allocated by a specialist provision and supervision is still needed, despite the safety equipment.

## Sleep

- The child's sleeping is interrupted on a regular and prolonged basis, and they need significant adult intervention during these waking periods, impacting upon sleep deprivation for the main carer
- The child's sleep routine must have been managed or supported by the sleep clinic and despite intervention, continues to cause a detrimental impact upon both/either the child, young person and/or main carer



- The main carer has limited support network to support with sleep routines with a chance to have a break

### **Education or Employment**

- The child or young person must have SEND Support within their education provision or an Educational Health Care Plan
- The child or young person must access an education provision within a specialist setting, whether this be a specialist school or base within education provision, without a plan or expected move back into mainstream provision
- The child or young person requires a significant support within education environment and would not be able to attend without intense level of support.
- The child or young person is receiving at home tutoring as their disability means they cannot attend or be supported within an education environment and there is no planned move for this to move into a mainstream education provision. This does not include elective home education (EHE).

### **Behaviour and Communication**

- The child or young person is unable to communicate their needs by any method, despite intervention and not able to use communication aids
- The child or young person's disability means that they are unlikely to develop comprehensible verbal communication.
- The child or young person is unable to understand language used around them without direct support.
- The child or young person is unable to join in with social activities without direct support with communication.
- The child or young person may have some processing difficulties which affect their social use of language and ability to understand things in context.
- A child or young person's behaviour pose a significant risk to their safety and/or others and that it cannot be managed by universal or targeted services. The child or young person would place themselves at constant risk of harm, without constant supervision during the day

- The child or young person behaviour, which challenges the people around them impacts upon all aspects of the child's functioning and their ability to participate in social activities. A specialist provision is needed to allow for the child or young person to function socially and allow for main carer to have a break from their caring role.
- The child has no ability to perceive danger to themselves or others, which impacts upon the child's ability to participate in social activities
- The frequency or severity of child's behaviour requires some specialist advice or provision over threshold of the Local Offer i.e CAMHS and not Daisy Chain

### Whilst in the community

- A wheelchair, prescribed or other movement aid is needed to allow for the child or young person to access the community safely
- A level of supervision is needed for all outings in the community, which, would be over and above what would usually be expected for a child or young person of a similar age and cannot be met under universal or targeted services

### Management of Disability

- The child or young person needs daily assistance with administering drugs, taking oxygen, giving physiotherapy, giving injections, using medical equipment etc.
- The child or young person needs to attend frequent appointments and the main carer must attend with them. The main carer must liaise with many professionals.
- The child or young person is fed via a Nasogastric feeding tube, Nasojejunal feeding tube and Gastrostomy tube.
- The child or young person has had or is about to have major surgery and a lengthy period of recuperation is expected.
- The child or young person is receiving invasive therapy for conditions such as cancer e.g. chemotherapy, radiotherapy.
- The child or young person has frequent hospital admissions or needs frequent emergency medical intervention for conditions that are not well controlled by medication e.g. asthma, epilepsy.

- The child or young person receives daily input of therapy by family members following programmes devised by professionals.
- A child or young person with autism may require their home environment to be maintained in a specific way e.g. low stimulus, need to follow strict routines as set out with plans and regular reviews from specialist provisions such as CAMHS

### Access to Social Activities

- The child or young person needs physical support to access social, leisure and recreational activities and/or where additional equipment or specialist access is required to facilitate activities, that cannot be met under universal or targeted services
- The child or young person requires supervision for safety issues beyond that usually needed for a person of a similar age, that cannot be met under universal or targeted services
- Support is needed to enable the child or young person to have appropriate friendships or where family relationships are replacing peer friendships due to their disability, that cannot be met under universal or targeted services
- The child or young adult's leisure activities are limited to the home environment due to their disability. This may also affect the opportunity of the wider family to enjoy day to day activities and opportunities, that cannot be met under universal or targeted services

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE UNLIKELY TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR  
SERVICES FROM CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TEAM:**

- Children/young people with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) who have no other impairments.
- Children/young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties who have no other impairments.
- Children/young people with learning difficulties who have no other impairments.

**\*PLEASE NOTE – An assessment can be completed and support package/ plan can be offered by an alternative team within Children’s Social Care/ Early Help.**

Children and young people who are not eligible for short break services from the Children with Disabilities Team may be eligible to receive services from other sources within Social Care, Education, Health or Housing Services. An assessment of need can be completed to understand the child’s needs and family dynamics to support with appropriate signposting to relevant services. It is important that every child and young person receive the right support, at the right time by the most appropriate services.

## ALLOCATION OF SERVICES

It is the responsibility of parents and extended family to provide care for their children. If children meet the criteria for the service we will work with other agencies to provide services to support children within the family/extended family, unless children meet the criteria for being a Child In Our Care.

Local Authorities has a general duty to provide a range and level of services to meet the needs of the children within its area. Children can be eligible for these services but do not have an absolute right to them. Services are limited by the level of resources made available to us.

Access to services is determined by an assessment which considers the above factors by looking at the needs of the child, the strengths and needs of the parents/carers and how looking after the child impacts on their lives. As well as the environment within which the child is living and how safe and suitable that is, and the support networks for the child and the family.

The decision on the provision of services and the allocation of resources is made on the basis of this assessment. Decisions about the allocation of services are made by the SEND Panel to ensure that we are as fair as possible and that we provide the best support that we can for each child or young person.

Services may be provided on a short-term basis only during a time of crisis, or to achieve a particular outcome. If services are provided on a longer-term basis they will be reviewed and may be reduced or increased according to assessed need and/or priorities.

Reviews will take place on at least an annual basis but can take place sooner at the Local Authority's discretion.

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

10 SEPTEMBER 2024



**Subject:** 2023/2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF ADOPTION TEES VALLEY

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

**Decision Type:** For information

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## 1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

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

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Children Service's Committee with information relating to the activity of the Adoption Service for the April 2023-March 2024 (**Appendix 1**).

## 3. BACKGROUND

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

- 3.2 The work and performance of Adoption Tees Valley is overseen by a Governance Board chaired by a Director. It is made up of senior managers in children's social care representing all five local authorities and non-executive members including adoptive parents.
- 3.3 The 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance and Adoption National Minimum Standards places a requirement upon adoption services to ensure that the Executive side of the Council receive an annual report which demonstrates the management and outcomes of the agency.
- 3.4 ATV is managed in accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2004, the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 and Care Standards Act 2000.
- 3.5 The aim of ATV is to recruit, train and support adopters within the region to ensure children can live locally with families who understand the children's individual backgrounds and can provide a good quality of life for children previously in our care.

#### 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 The vision for Adoption Tees Valley is to be a centre of excellence and resource for adopted children and their families throughout the period of their childhood, and beyond where necessary. The Annual Report at **Appendix 1** provides a comprehensive overview of the work of ATV throughout 2023/24.

#### 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	There are no risk implications arising from this report. Adoption Tees Valley effectively discharges the duties of Hartlepool Borough Council as an adoption agency.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	As set out in the report, the service overspent in 2023/24 by £25,000, associated with the cost of inter-agency placements, of which Hartlepool's share is £4,000. This was funded from 2023/24 outturn.
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no legal considerations within this report. Adoption Tees Valley operates within the legal framework of the Adoption and Children Act 2004, the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 and Care Standards Act 2000.
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Adopters and children who have been adopted are supported by ATV to ensure their voices are heard, that they can shape the service and also be part of work that improves the adopter / adoptee journey. The Annual

	Report includes feedback directly from adopters and adopted children.
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## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to note the annual report in relation to the work of the ATV Service during the financial year 2023/24.

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Adoption Tees Valley fulfils the council's statutory responsibilities to children requiring permanence through adoption and also the recruiting of adopters. This report is provided to Children Services Committee to enable the Committee to satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of the registration and agreement.
- 7.2 Children's Services Committee has an important role in the scrutiny of activities of the ATV to ensure that performance in this area is of good quality, caring and robust.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None

## 9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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01429 523910

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 14/08/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 14/08/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 14/08/2024



# Adoption Tees Valley

## Annual Report 2023-2024



ATV – a community of adoption

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## **1. Executive Summary**

Adoption Tees Valley has continued to thrive and develop as a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), with this year seeing a greater degree of pan regional partnership working with our neighbouring North East RAA's- Adopt Coast to Coast and Adopt North East. We have also progressed the partnership with the North East Integrated Care Board (ICB) through our innovative work together in developing the Multi Disciplinary Adoption Support Service- MDASS. Regional partnership working has enabled the RAA to draw funding from Adoption England for development and positive impact, aligned to the objectives in the National Adoption Strategy. Adoption England has recently published its own strategic plan for the forthcoming 3 years, and ATV, overseen by the Board, has continued to develop in line with national strategic priorities.

### **1.1 Adoption Nationally**

Nationally, the numbers of children being placed for adoption and numbers adopted has been falling, although for the year of 2023-24 there has been a small upturn. The numbers of adopters recruited has reduced, and there is some concerns around the gap growing between the numbers of children requiring adoption, and numbers of available families to adopt. We know nationally that adoption provides a stable and secure childhood for many children, however, there is an increasing awareness that adopted children have many complex long-term emotional, social, learning and health needs arising from early trauma, neglect, and harm. Their needs must be understood in the context of early care experience, and their adoptive parents need support to meet these needs and provide nurturing family life. Adoptive parents, and young people themselves, tell us they need services provide continuing support, available as and when needed throughout childhood and into adulthood.

### **1.2 Culture Change in Adoption**

So, what is the future of adoption, and what will adoption look like for children and their families in years to come? Adoption England (AE) – the national collaboration of Regional Adoption Agencies, has implemented a programme of culture change in adoption- a long-term objective to change thinking and practice, underpinned by social and adoptee drivers for change. Key to the culture change agenda is to increase the understanding of the importance of maintaining significant relationships in adoption, for adopted people and their birth families.

The President of the Family Division, Sir Andrew McFarlane, made a significant speech on this matter at the POTATO (Parents of Traumatised Adolescents and Teenagers Organisation) conference in May 2024 referencing the research work of the University of East Anglia (UEA), around the importance of maintaining lifelong links for adopted children. We recognise the continued importance of the need to remain open to birth family contact, and investing our professional care, effort and resource into maintaining those relationships, whether directly, or indirectly. Through the research undertaken by UEA, and the Adoption Barometer (Adoption UK) we know that for adopted adults and young people there is a huge importance in understanding their families of origin, reasons for being adopted, and maintaining those lifelong links. ATV has engaged with the national programme and through discussion with the Board and partners, will be developing ethos and culture which promotes a greater understanding and opportunity for maintaining significant relationships.

### 1.3 Early Permanence

Early permanence in adoption continues to be a key priority nationally, and for the region and ATV has continued to focus on early work with the 5 partner Local Authorities, to consider early permanence planning, pre-birth and pre-care in some instances. There remain challenges to creating the opportunity for more children to access an early permanence placement, however, there is good evidence over this year of significant strengthening of practice and understanding. ATV believes that early permanence is aligned to culture change in adoption, whereby early contact between carers who may go on to adopt, and the child's birth family takes place during the fostering period. We know this builds relationships between adoptive parents, and birth relatives, which has importance for potential future contact, and identity needs.

Unfortunately, ATV has continued to have lower numbers than hoped for of carers who will undertake EP, however, we know that where EP is planned, there is a significant strength of practice, with a stronger preparation course, more information and high-quality support for carers undertaking this route. ATV is offering a dedicated Early Permanence Support Group, and it is well received and well attended by all EP carers. Through the pan regional funded Concurrency Project, now in its second year, we have worked more closely with the regional fostering services, to embed a shared understanding of the role of EP, and the roles of professionals supporting these placements.

#### 1.4 Voice and Influence

During this period, we are proud to have strengthened the mechanisms by which young people and adopters can influence the direction of the RAA, and have their voice heard. Young, adopted people have a strengthened opportunity to meet with other adopted children, through the monthly “Youthy” group, which is now held in a local youth club. There is also a dedicated Voice and Influence group, Adoptbats, which is focused on young people having a say about what its like to be adopted, and how they think the system should change to improve the lives and experience of adopted young people.

Adoptbats are currently making a film about what its like to be adopted, supported by Blue Cabin, a local creative therapy charity.

#### 1.5 Multi-Disciplinary Support to adopted children and families- MDASS

During this period Adoption Tees Valley has worked closely with Adopt North East, Adopt Coast to Coast and the NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) to develop a multi-disciplinary adoption support service, across the NE region. This is a funded project and is 1 year into the funding period of 2 years. This project sits under the national strategy to strengthen support to adopted children and their families. The new MDASS project is now staffed with a Service Manager, Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, and 3 social work consultants. The Service Manager has begun to work with the team to develop the service specification, which will be offering a consultancy and therapeutic service to adopted families, and professionals across the region working with them. The model of support is Dyadic Developmental Psychology (DDP) which focusses on attachment, for children who have had early experience of trauma, neglect and harm. It is planned that service delivery will start from the summer of 2024, and the longer-term plan for sustainability is to draw funding from the Adoption Support Fund (ASF).

The aim of MDASS will be to significantly strengthen the support to families, from a multi-disciplinary therapeutic perspective, providing access to psychological consultation, assessment and intervention, for children with multiple and complex needs. This service will be aimed at getting more quickly to delivery of a therapeutic plan which will help children. It will aim to reduce the pressures of children's needs, improve quality of family life and outcomes, and prevent family breakdown.

## 1.6 The work of ATV

Recruitment of prospective adopters has been a challenge for the agency over this year, a challenge also for many other regional and national RAA's. It is thought that the cost-of-living crisis, alongside the effects of the pandemic seeing a rise in adult mental ill health and increasing awareness of the complex needs of adopted children has impacted on the numbers of people wanting to consider adoption. We want to continue to show the public that ATV, and partners are there to support children and families in the short and longer term.

The numbers of children placed has been largely stable over this past year and is comparable with the previous year. However, we have seen a significant rise in the number of children who have had disruptions and have left placement, most of whom have had a change in plan for permanency. These disruptions are uncharacteristic of the pattern for children placed through ATV and have been considered at every level, including during a Board development session, to learn from the disruption meetings and reports. This matter will be considered in the chapter relating to children's placements, needs and outcomes.

During this year, ATV has restructured to strengthen management of the core areas of the adoption service, and to strengthen leadership for the future of ATV. This means that each of the areas of recruitment, matching and placements, and adoption support are led by a team manager, and the operational activity is overseen by a Deputy Service Manager.

## **2. Governance**

Adoption Tees Valley is overseen by the Board of Directors, which is comprised of Directors, or Assistant Directors of the 5 Local Authorities; an adoptive parent; a Virtual School Head. The ATV Service Manager attends all Board meetings. The ATV Board provide strategic direction, oversee finance and overall governance of the RAA.

Each LA Council oversees the work of the RAA through presentation of the Annual and Bi Annual reports at Scrutiny, and/or Corporate Parenting Boards, and in some cases, representation of elected members on the ATV Panel.

### 3. Key Performance Indicators for the period 1.4.23-31.3.24

Key Indicator	ATV 2022-23	ATV 2023-24	Current c/w previous	National Govt Target where applicable
Adopter Approvals	55	38	Dec 31%	N/A
Children referred to ATV	223	138	Dec 38%	N/A
Children with ADM -BID (Best interests' decision)	100	87	Dec 13%	N/A
PO	87	79	Dec 9%	N/A
Matches	81	75	Dec 7%	
Placed	76	78	Inc 2 %	N/A
Early Permanence	11	8	Dec 27%	
Adoption Orders	84	76	Dec 10%	N/A
Disruptions – pre order	1	12		N/A
Timescale – A2 (PO to match)	146 days	130 days	Improved	121 days
Timescale A10 – BLA-Moved in with Adopters	411	392 days	Improved	421 days

The above data will be referred to in each section, to provide a base line for discussion and review of the year's performance.

Where applicable, data for each Local Authority will be detailed within the report.

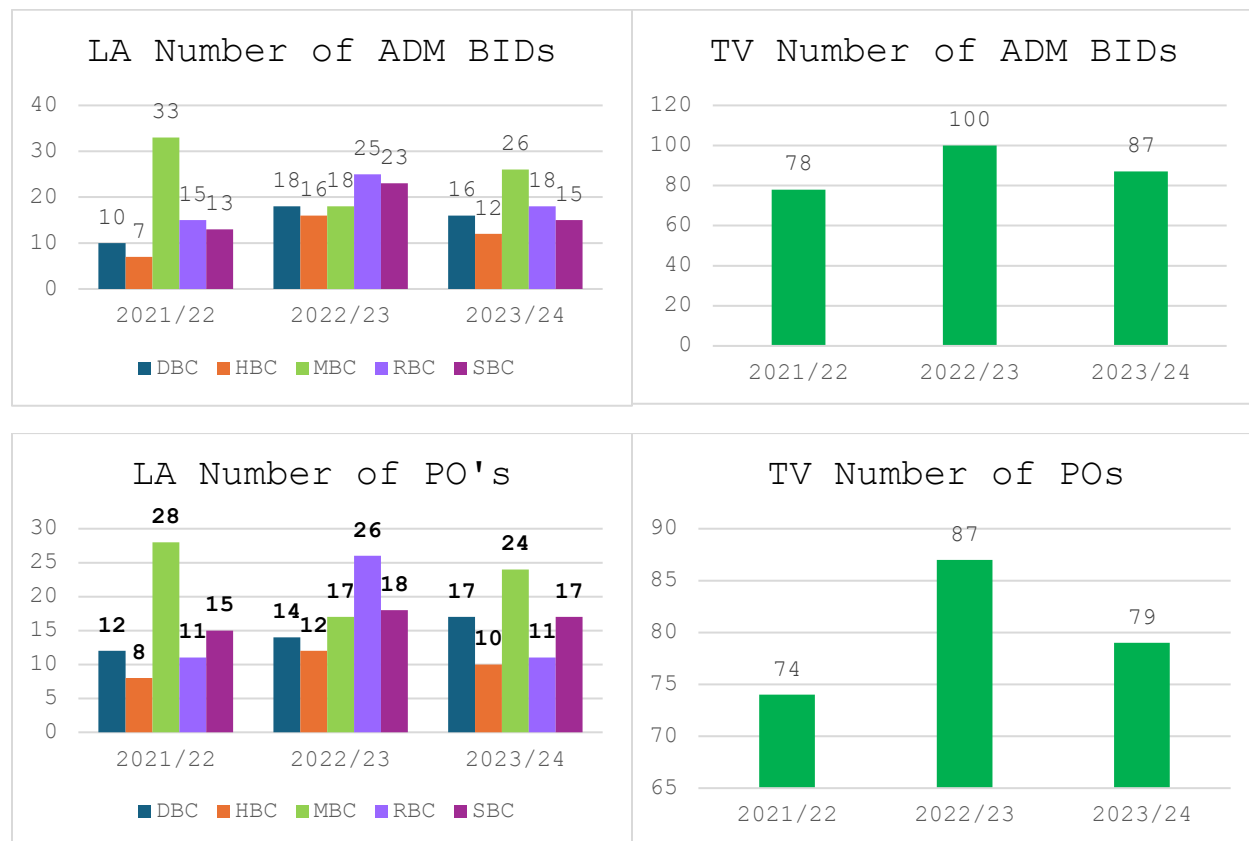
### 4. Children Referred, Permanence Planning, Matching and Placements

#### 4.1 ATV and Local Authority Data

The numbers of children referred to ATV has significantly decreased within this period, compared with previous years. We don't know why this is, as numbers of children with a LA decision on a plan for adoption and Placement Orders granted has reduced, but not by the same level as referrals. The LA's may be improving the earlier planning, and referring children who are more likely to go on to an adoption plan.

In the previous year the conversion from referral to ADM was 45%, while in this year the conversion rate was 63%. This means the children referred are more likely to go on to have an adoption plan.

The numbers of children where the Local Authority has made a Best Interests plan of adoption (ADM BID) has decreased by 13% to 87, and the numbers of children who have gone on to Placement Order (PO) is 79, a decrease of 9% on the previous year.



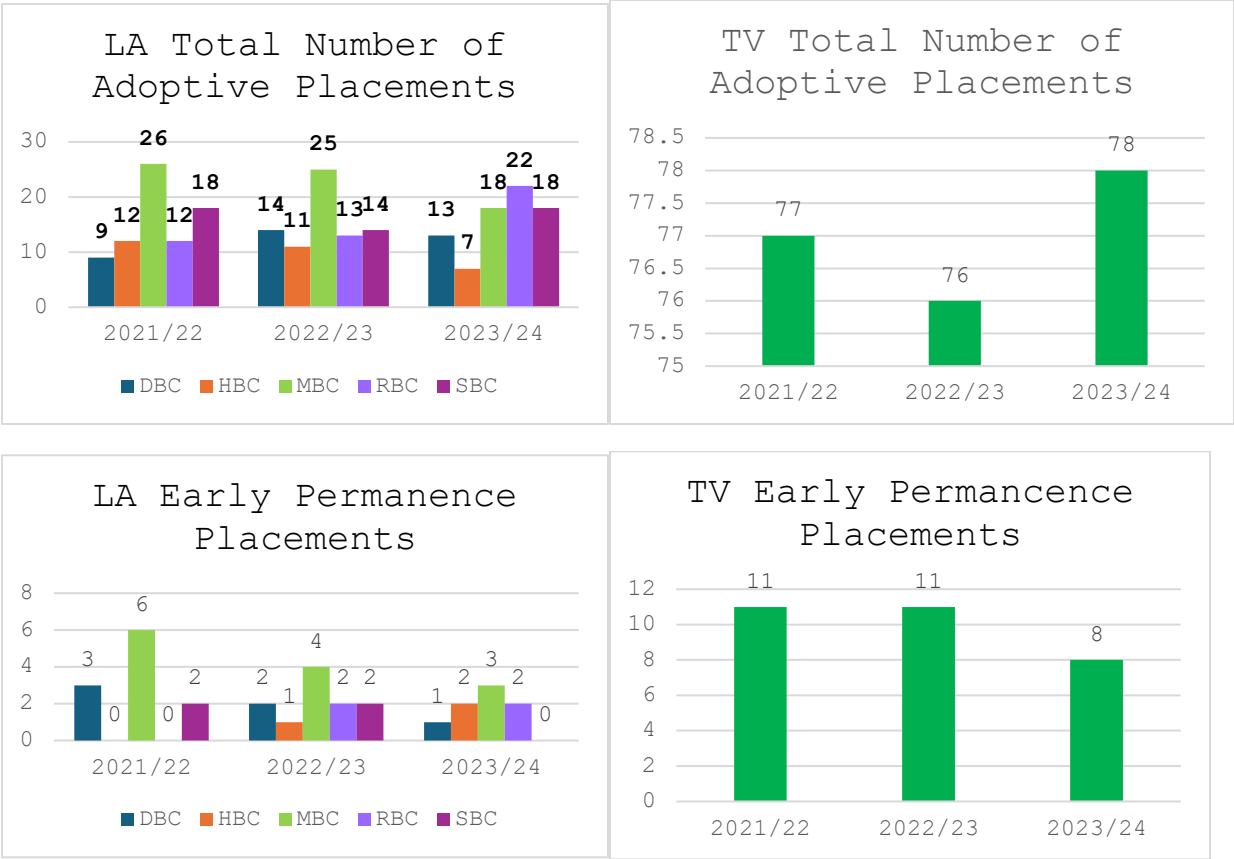
For individual Local Authorities, Middlesbrough has returned to the numbers of ADM's and PO's that is more consistent with previous years after a dip in adoption plans last year.

Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton have reduced the numbers of ADM's compared with the previous year, and Redcar and Cleveland had a significant drop in Placement Orders, from 26, to 11.

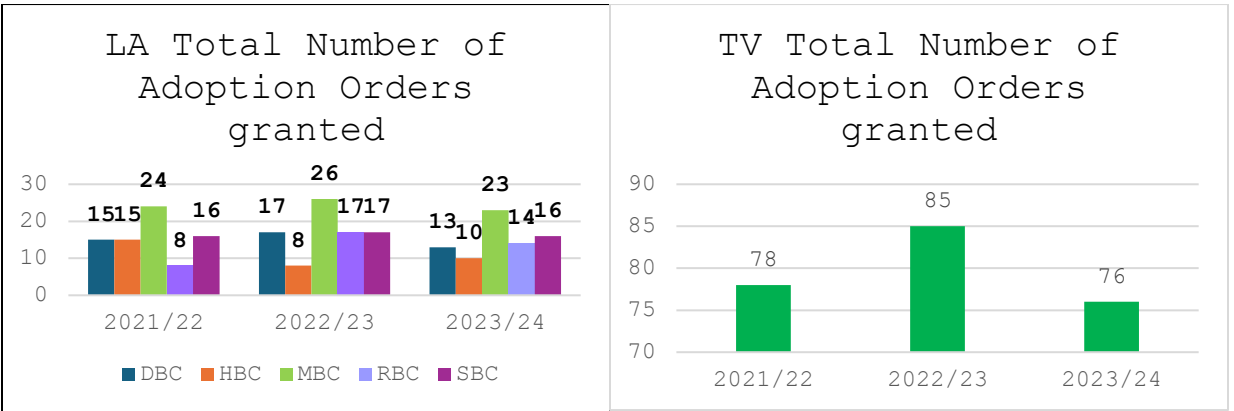
Hartlepool is seeing a year on year rise in the numbers of children with PO.

The number of children placed for adoption has remained consistent, while placements through early permanence have dropped by 27% (3) since last year.





The numbers of adoption orders have decreased by 10% compared with the previous year.



#### 4.2 Disrupted Placements prior to the Adoption Order

The biggest area of concern over this period has been the numbers of disruptions with 12 children having had a disruption compared with just 1 in the previous year.

In all cases an independently chaired disruption meeting has been convened to understand the reasons why a placement didn't continue as was planned.

Some notable factors have emerged during this analysis, case by case, enabling themes to be considered and analysed.

- All but one child were in a sibling group.
- All the sibling groups included a child over age 7 at the time of placement.
- All but 1 of the children were placed with external adopters, from VAA's or another RAA/LA.
- All but one of the children were placed some distance from the home area.

Other factors associated with assessment of children's needs, care planning, transitions, adopter assessment and contingency planning have emerged. There has been significant reflection on learning from the disruption meetings including with partner LA's at Board, and within ATV. New measures have been put in place to address factors identified from learning and review. However, it is recognised that for older children, there are some inherent risks that moving to a new family, especially at some distance may not work out as planned.

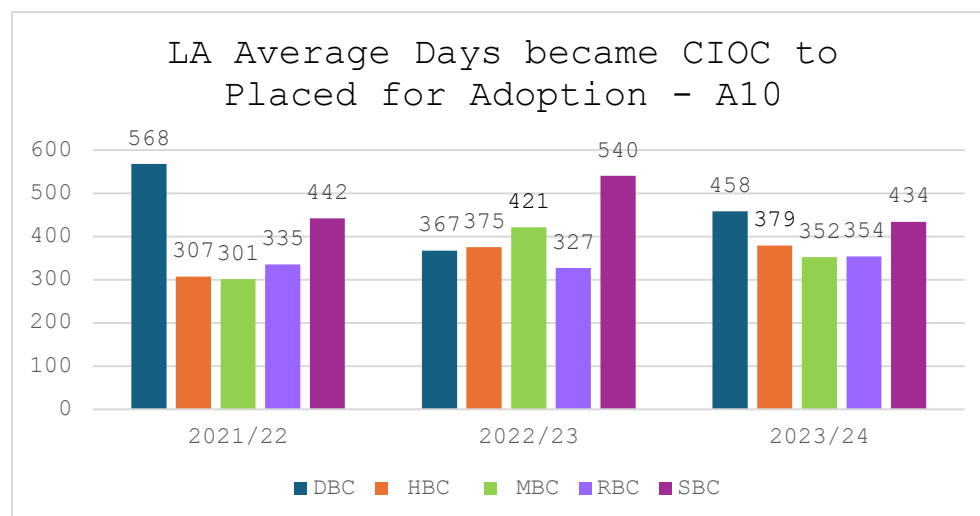
The ATV Board has agreed that increased access to assessment of children's therapeutic needs is required when planning for adoption, and it is agreed that such specialist assessments will be resourced in more cases, and especially for older children and sibling placements.

#### 4.3 Timescales for children for matching and moving in with their adoptive family

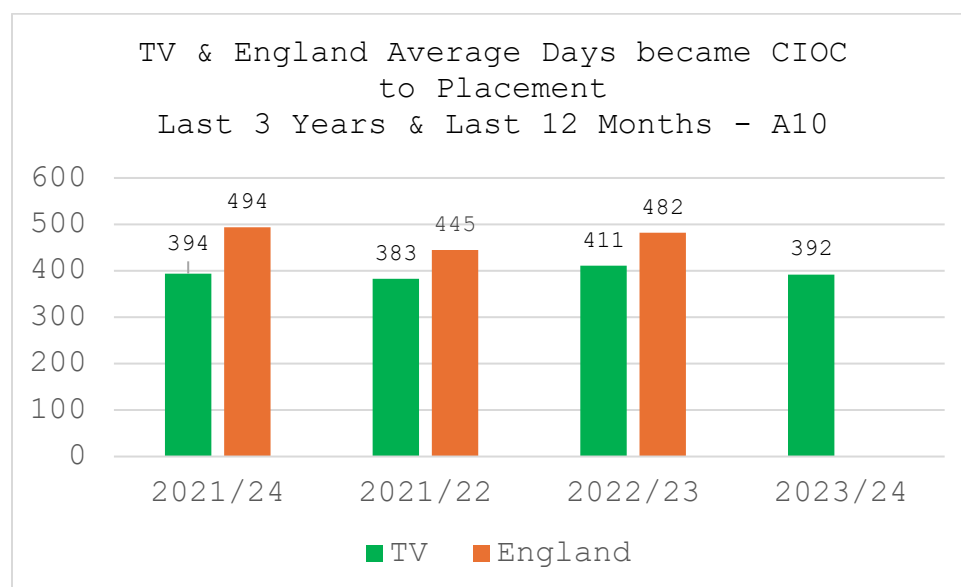
Timeliness of adoption for children has improved compared with the previous year, and ATV continues to find families and progress them to match and placement in good time, on average.

## A10- became Child in Our care, to Moving in with Adopter

In adoption we focus most significantly on the time between the child becoming a child in our care and moving in with adoptive parents. This is the A10 timescale, and the government sets 421 days as its target.



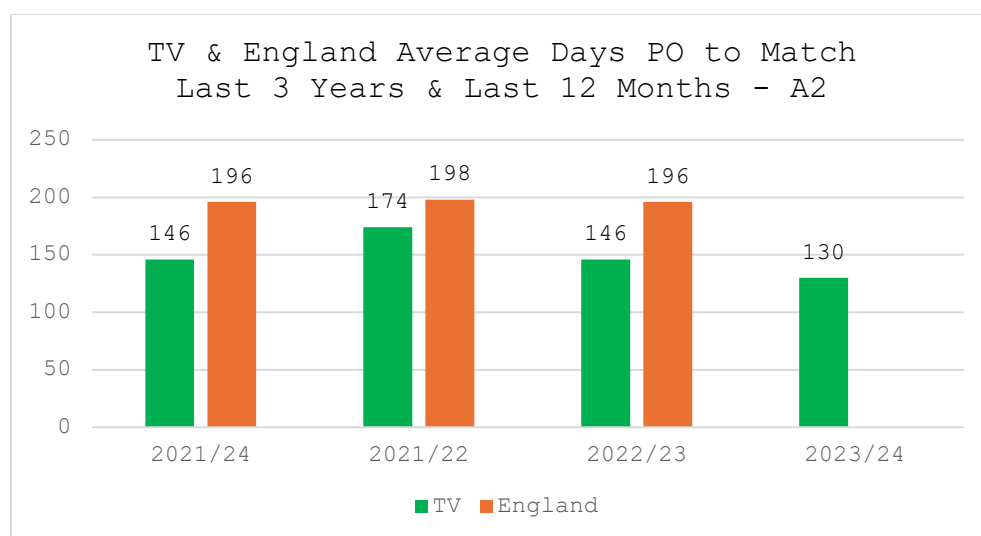
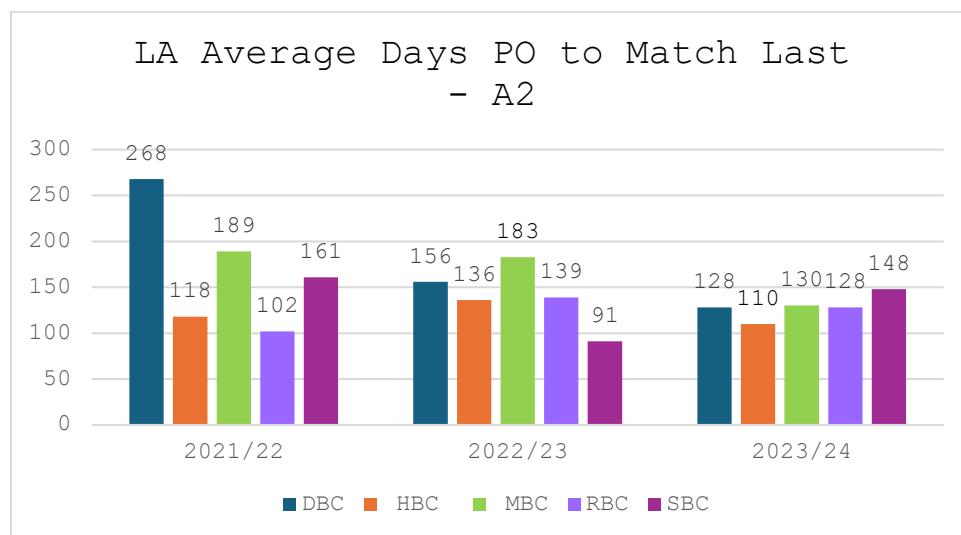
(Data based on children who have been adopted in this year).



ATV continues to perform well against national comparisons and has improved this year. There is an embedded process for early referral of children, and early consideration of potential families who may be linked to the child, in advance of the Placement Order being granted. Its important therefore to monitor the numbers of referrals to ensure that all children are considered at an early stage, even where adoption does not go on to be the final plan.

## A2- Placement Order to Match

ATV also measures the time between Placement Order (PO) and matching a child for adoption, this being the time beyond Court decision to award a PO to confirming the match with a family. This is the A2 figure, and the government target timescale is 121 days.



In Tees Valley this figure has reduced over the previous year on average, but remains a little over the government target, although has been better than England average for RAA's.

There is variation in the Local Authority performance around timescale over this year, and caution should be noted in that numbers in adoption are relatively small, therefore small changes in numbers can affect averages.

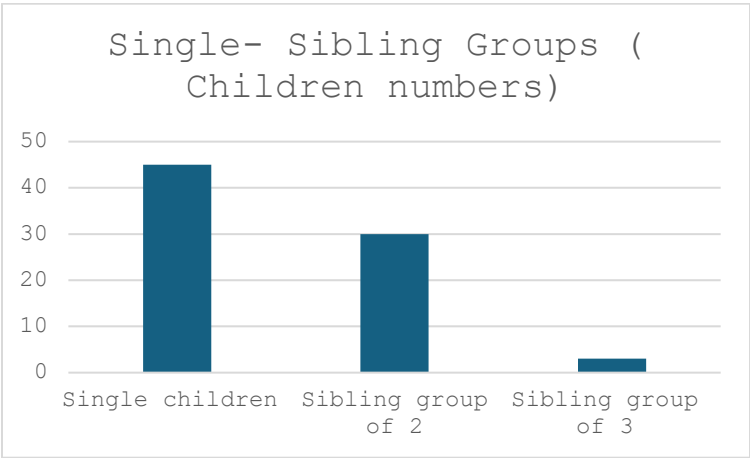
For children adopted in Middlesbrough and Stockton this year, the timeliness of becoming a child in our care to move in with adopters has reduced considerably, while it has increased for Darlington children.

For children from Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland, timeliness from Placement Order to match has reduced in this year, while it has increased for Stockton children.

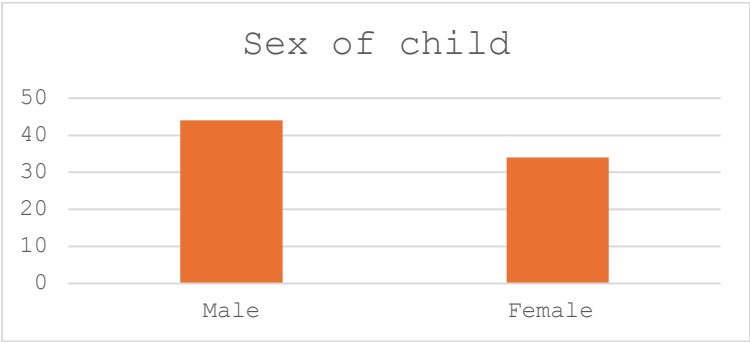
The data is based on the timescales for children who have been adopted in the year.

4.4 Needs of Children Placed and Children Waiting with Placement Order

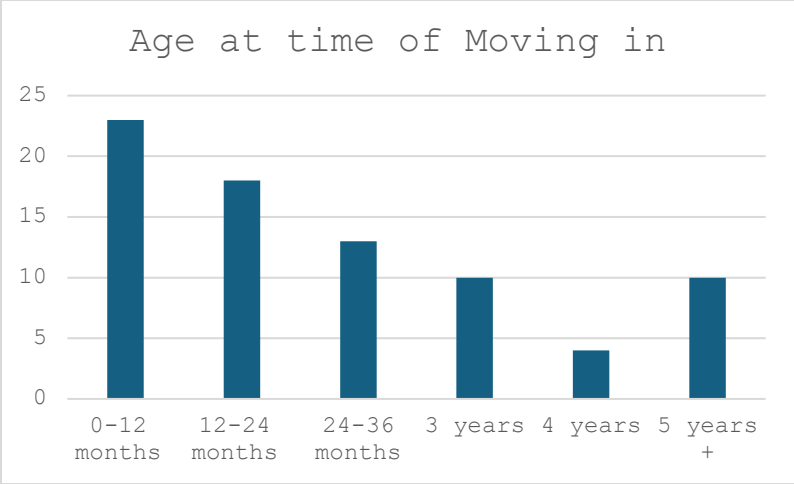
Children Placed



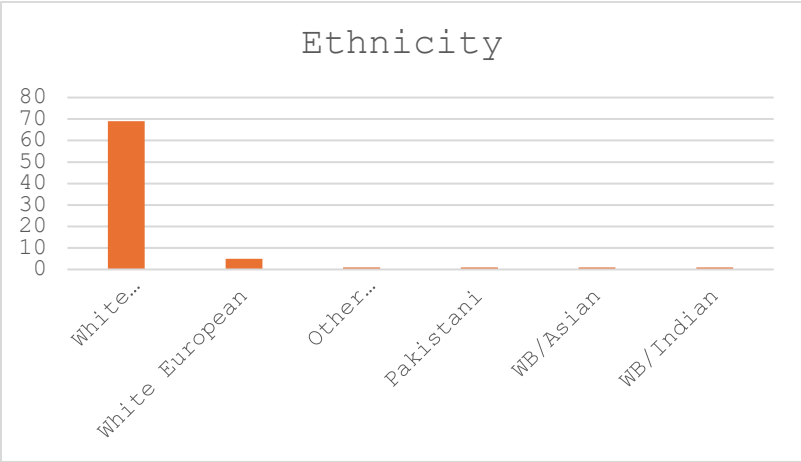
58% of children placed were single children, and 42% of children were in a sibling group, with one sibling group of 3 having been placed together.



56% of children placed were male, and 44% female.



While it continues to be the case that most children placed for adoption are aged under 1 year (29%), and aged 1-2 years (23%) the data shows that in this year 18% of all children were over 4 years, and 13% of the children were over 5 years. ATV has therefore been seeking to find suitable families for a high number of children who are considered harder to match due to age, and factoring in the older children in sibling groups, shows how there are greater risks of disruption, or of not finding suitable families.



The significant majority (88%) of children placed within this year have been of White British background. There were 5 children of White European background, and 4 children of Asian ethnicity, with 3 of these being dual heritage.

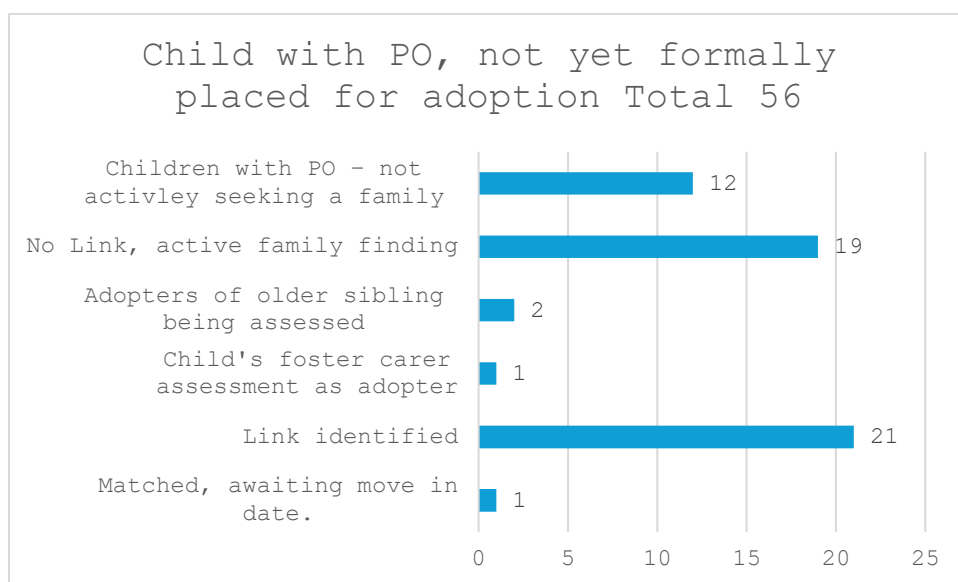
Of the children placed, 13 were considered to have significant emotional/health/learning or neurodivergent needs.

Children waiting with a Placement Order, not yet placed as of 31.3.24.

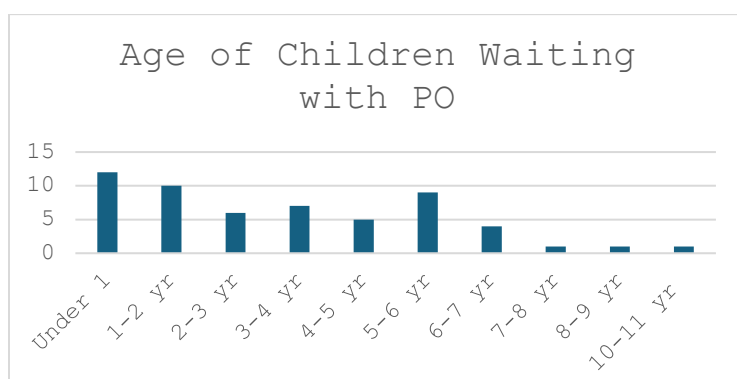
There were 56 children with a Placement Order not yet formally placed for adoption on 31.3.24.

25 had active plans progressing to be adopted by an identified linked family, 19 had no link at that time, and a further 12 were children for whom the Local Authority had ceased active family finding, including children who had had a disruption.

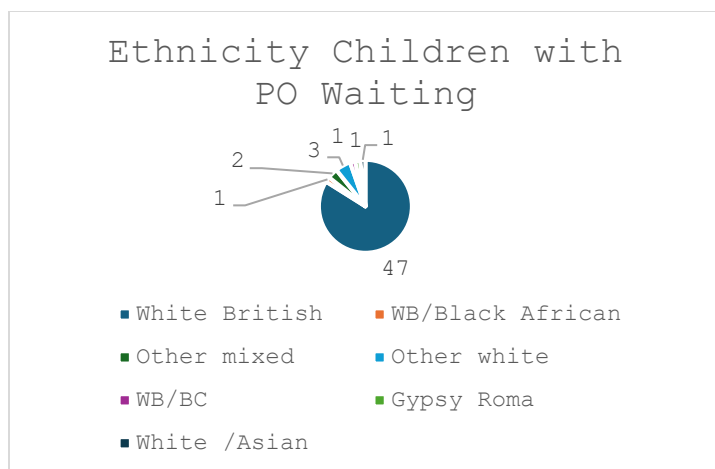
Thus, of the 56 children with a PO, not placed, 19 were children for whom there was active family finding.



### Needs of children with a PO, not placed



- Single children- 27
- Sibling groups of 2 children – 10 groups, 20 children
- Sibling groups of 3 children – 3 groups, 9 children



22 children waiting were identified as having additional complex needs, including emotional, attachment, behavioural, and neurodivergency needs.

#### 4.5 Summary of the priority needs for children requiring adoption in Tees Valley

In summary, ATV is currently identifying a high number of children who have a plan of adoption, and with a Placement Order who:

- Are in sibling groups
- Are older children, aged 4 +
- Have additional complex needs associated with early health ( FASD), trauma, attachment difficulties, and neurodivergent conditions.

Many of the older children have experience of living in harmful environments, with poor care, and have moved around the foster care system, prior to coming for a plan of adoption.

The implications for strategic planning, and assessment of these children's needs will be part of the forward planning priorities, and vision for ATV moving forward.

#### 4.6 Finding Families for Tees Valley Children

The priority for seeking suitable families for Tees Valley children is internally approved ATV adopters.

Where it is clear no suitable family is available for a child with a progressing adoption plan, ATV uses the strong links established with regional Voluntary Adoption Agencies to seek a placement. The agency also seeks placement with other RAA's in the region.



Children are placed on Linkmaker, the data system for sharing details nationally of children needing families, and of approved adoptive families. Through Linkmaker families are identified across England who wish to express an interest in children waiting.

ATV has promoted children for adoption through Activity Days, funded nationally, and Activity Days held within the RAA's own centre.

#### 4.7 Internal – External Placements

Year	Internal ATV	External	Total
2021-22	58 (75%)	19 (25%)	77
2022-23	52 (67%)	25 (33%)	77
2023-24	51 (65%)	27 (35%)	78

There has been an increased reliance on external VAA's for ATV placements over this year. This is due to lower numbers of approvals, and ATV adopters being unwilling to consider older children and older children in sibling groups.

Notably in this year, more children have gone to VAA's outside of the North East region, with 6 regional VAA placements, and 12 wider external VAA placements.

21 children have been linked through Linkmaker; 1 through an Activity Day; and 4 through local VAA meetings.

### 5. Recruiting, Preparing and Approving Adopters

Recruitment of adopters has been challenging in this period, for reasons outlined in the Executive Summary.

Additionally, there have been some challenges with timescales for assessment, with stage 1 timescales having met significant delays in some cases due to a small number of factors:

- Delays associated with medical checks. There have been some delays in awaiting the Medical Advisor summary, and in turn the MA's awaiting GP reports. Where prospective adopters (PA) complex health needs, these require further understanding by the MA in stage 1, and this can take time, as the PA consultant is required to provide their opinion.

To address delays, ATV has now worked with the ICB to introduce an additional MA, who will have responsibility for all adult health reports and working with regional GP's.

- Delays associated with worker absence or change of worker.

	Total 2022-23	Total 2023-24	Current c/w previous	England 2023-24 where applicable
<b>Initial contacts/enquiries</b>	309	232	Dec 25%	
<b>Initial Visits to prospective Adopters</b>	106	92	Dec 13%	
<b>Stage 1 Starts</b>	58	60	Inc 3%	
<b>Stage 2 Starts</b>	51	50	Dec 2%	
<b>Adopter Approvals</b>	55	38	Dec 31%	
<b>Carers approved who can do early permanence</b>	10	6	Reduced	
<b>Numbers in assessment at the end of the period</b>	38	41	Inc 8%	
<b>Numbers waiting to be matched at end of period</b>	29	22	Dec 24%	
<b>Timescale S1 (Govt target 60 days)</b>		101	Improved	134
<b>Timescale S2 (Govt target 121 days)</b>	156	139	Improved	150

The key challenge is achieving adoptive parents in this region for the needs of children who require adoption. The high numbers of children who have had a disruption to placements, almost all of which were out of area, indicates that we need to find more people in this region who can offer permanence via adoption to our children.

During this year there has been an adjustment to the settling in allowance offered to the prospective adopters of siblings, whereby all the budget is now

profiled to adopters who will take siblings, with a payment of £3000 to adopters internally approved, who adopt siblings. This in recognition of the very real financial pressures of taking on more than one child at the same time. We need to consider more active profiling of this allowance, and additional supports available to adoptive parents, to encourage more people to feel confident to take the children we need to find families for.

The numbers of prospective adopters who want to do early permanence has reduced in this year which is a downturn from the previous year, and goes against the national trend, which is an increase.

There is a Pan Regional Project for early permanence, which ATV are actively involved in. The reflections from the project consultant, based on analysis of the ATV data is that ATV is operating with a threshold for a concurrency project- a greater emphasis on children returning home, which is leading to more families dropping out of the EP route. This feedback has also been received from adopter feedback. To address this, ATV are refocusing on the balance between preparing carers for the potential for a child to return home, with a realistic picture that most who are placed through EP go on to be adopted.

## **6. Early Permanence**

### **6.1 Support to Early Permanence carers.**

The following supports are available to early permanence carers:

- Dedicated adoption social worker throughout the process
- Training and preparation for early permanence- a 2 day course
- Social Worker led EP support group- STEP
- Additional training and preparation around the fostering role.
- Peer buddy system
- Allocated supervising social worker from the Fostering Service
- Fostering allowance during the fostering period

The Adopter Survey completed in April 2024 gave positive views from adopters who had undertaken early permanence, especially in relation to the support received for EP carers (average 4.8/5). The survey provided feedback that the training is very focused on preparing carers for a child returning home, and as detailed above, the balance of preparation is being reviewed.

Carers feel clear about their fostering role, and the expectations of them during this period, and feel the benefits are an earlier relationship with the child.

## 6.2 EP Children's Care Plan Outcomes

In this period, all 8 children placed under early permanence have continued with an adoption plan, with no children having been reunified with parents.

## 6.3 Working in Partnership with LAs and other agencies

Following national learning, ATV has worked with the 5 LA's to implement the practice of an ATV worker attending all Legal Gateway meetings. This means early permanence is discussed before the LA initiates care proceedings. At the time of this report, this practice is embedded in 2 of the 5 LA's- Stockton and Middlesbrough. We are now beginning to see effectiveness in this practice, with more early referrals of children and consideration of EP more widely.

We know we need to influence wider stakeholders to understand and feel confident in planning for early permanence, including understanding it is not a plan of adoption until the PO is granted, and that EP carers are well prepared for this.

There will be a pan regional conference in October 2024, aimed at wider stakeholders in LA's, CAFCASS and the Judiciary to promote a shared understanding of EP.

There is a decision to plan an Adoption Subcommittee of the Local Family Justice Board, to ensure wider stakeholder engagement with early permanence.

## **7. Adoption Support**

Adoption Tees Valley continues to offer a 3 tier Adoption Support Offer.

<b>Tier 1</b>	<b>Universal</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allocated Social Worker until 12 months post adoption order</li><li>• Adoption Support Plan in all cases</li><li>• Young People's Group, exclusively for adopted children within a local youth club venue (age 7-16)</li><li>• Play and Stay group weekly in ATV, providing support and relationships for adoptive parents and younger children (age up to 5)</li><li>• Access to CATCH</li><li>• Loud and Clear music group, run by the Sage within ATV</li><li>• Family and Friends Network training</li><li>• Parties and activity days within ATV</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to Keep In Touch (formally Letterbox) – for children, birth parents, and adoptive parents.</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 2 Targeted</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapeutic parenting support training</li> <li>• Future Stars</li> <li>• Nurturing Attachments</li> <li>• Non-Violent Resistance</li> <li>• Education Support from ATV Education Support Worker</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 3 Therapy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapeutic services provided commissioned services, and funded through the Adoption Support Fund</li> <li>• Specialist assessment, where needed, through commissioned services</li> <li>• Allocated social worker, for assessment of adoption support needs, and development of an adoption support plan to meet needs.</li> </ul>

### 7.1 Assessment of Adoption Support Needs

ATV has implemented a different process for beginning the assessment of adoption support needs when this is requested by an adoptive parent. There is now an early duty response and a booked telephone session to commence the assessment.

In this period there were 127 assessments of adoption support needs completed, compared with 126 in 2022-23.

The average timescale from enquiry to allocation to a social worker was 7 days.

The number of applications to the Adoption Support Fund was 267. In many cases the applications are repeated applications and have not had a new assessment of adoption support needs. In 2022-23 this was 289.

The value of applications submitted was £943,112.35, compared with £1,060,650 in the previous year.

68 Adoptive parents completed the survey around satisfaction of timeliness of adoption support, and the average rating was 3.99 out of 5.

The overall satisfaction with adoption support provided was 4.12 out of 5

It's been brilliant to know we have support if we need it

They have explained all the processes and kept me informed throughout, they have provided good training opportunities and tailored them for my circumstances. They have been a great support through an emotional time. I feel reassured and have no doubts that they will continue to support us after the adoption order has been granted.

My child is benefiting from Theraplay and she is processing information well. Having sessions myself with the same therapist is helping me to help my child and to teach school good therapeutic parenting strategies to help my child. whilst also gaining confidence in the way that I am doing things and handling behaviours at home.

While there were many positive examples of how adoption support assessments have helped children and families, we know some families still feel they wait too long. We aim to increase early access to a social worker where needed and reduce waiting times. We will do this by reviewing the case allocation system and introducing new staff to support Adoption Support Fund applications, giving our social workers more time to undertake face to face work with children and families.

We are introducing a new set of national measures through our case management system to help us improve the quality of data and management oversight of cases, and of timeliness of completion of assessments.

## 7.2 Stay and Play

The group continues to run weekly within ATV and is well attended by adoptive parents and children in the pre school years. The groups tend to be attended while parents are on adoption leave.

On average 8 parents and their children attend the Play and Stay group each week.

19 families have accessed this support group over the year.

The average satisfaction with Stay and Play in the Adopter Survey was 4.71 out of 5.

To be with other adopters is an amazing source of support and advice.

I love attending group, I feel a connection with all the parents and it's great to discuss my thoughts and get others advice.

We will continue to run our weekly Stay and Play sessions, which we know is great source of peer support, and early help for families.

### 7.3 Education Support

Education Support is funded via the partnership of the Virtual Schools within the 5 Local Authorities of ATV and continues to be a unique offer within Tees Valley, when considered across the national adoption system. The education support offered is through advice and information, rather than direct classroom support to children, which is provided through the education plan for the child, where needed. The Education Support worker is trained in the Thrive Approach, which is a developmental and trauma sensitive approach and model, also used within education and development settings within this region. The Thrive approach helps to identify gaps in the child's development due to early life experiences and uses games and activities to start helping to address those needs. It is a holistic approach so that schools and parents can deliver the games and implement a consistent approach.

The ESW is also delivering a course on attachment for schools, as part of the Local Authorities and Schools Qualification for teachers. The course is rooted in attachment awareness and trauma informed practice, with an aim of helping education staff to attend to the attachment systems of children, to better help them to settle and to learn.

The course utilises Virtual Reality headsets to help participants engage experientially with the child's lived experience.

The dedicated education support worker within ATV has this year worked with 118 children. This is an increase of 10 children on the previous year, and 26 more than in 2022-23.

The breakdown by Local Authority is set out below.

<b>DBC</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>HBC</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>MBC</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>R&amp;CBC</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>SBC</b>	<b>38</b>
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In the adopter survey 43 families said they were aware of the education support service, 18 said they weren't aware, and 10 were not sure.

Of those who had used the service, the satisfaction with the education support service was 4.67 out of 5

She (ESW) has attended meetings at school and provided school with Thrive training

Attended meetings with school and I to support my son in getting the right help in school to meet his needs.

School staff have also fed back, showing the beneficial impact of the course for teaching staff ...

It was really interesting training, and I loved the VR headsets, as it created a real-life feeling for what some children experience in their everyday life. I still think about it to this day., and how I can adapt my own approaches to fully support our children.

The training yesterday was very eye opening for me. I did the training in my teacher training year with RCTTP and it was hard to relate to the training as much as I couldn't really apply it to my class as I didn't have one at the time. Now having my own class and redoing the training it helped me identify children who could be vulnerable or need additional support.

#### 7.4 Pan Regional Commissioning Project – Innovation in Adoption Support

ATV is working with the wider pan regional RAA's on a commissioning project to innovate in adoption support services. This project is managed alongside the MDASS Project and has input from the North Tyneside lead Commissioning Manager in Children's Services. The vision is that all 3 NE based RAA's will use the experience and guidance of the commissioning project to develop a new adoption support offer across the 3 RAA's, which will serve to better unify the supports available to all North East based adoptive families, and will meet current gaps in service delivery.

This funded project is in its early days, however, a needs analysis exercise has taken place, and all adoption staff across the 3 RAA's have been surveyed for their views on where are the gaps, and what the barriers are.

## 7.5 Birth Parent Support and Access to Records

ATV has commenced a new contract for these 2 elements of adoption support, following a re-tendering process, supported by Stockton BC Procurement team.

The contract was awarded to Arc Adoption NE, having previously been delivered by Adoption Matters. Arc Adoption NE provided best value in tendering and offer significant expertise in the specialist adoption arena.

The contract commenced 1.4.23 and is a 2 year contract.

### *Birth Parent Support*

Arc Adoption NE provide the statutory independent birth parent support through counselling advice and information, from the time at which adoption is the local Authority plan for the child. This service is complemented by ATV who can offer support to birth parents, in setting up Keep In Touch arrangements, and with ongoing Keep In Touch.

There were 94 new birth parents referred to the service within this period.

At the yearend, 74 birth parents were "active" to the service, i.e. actively engaged with receiving a service from Arc Adoption NE in respect of support around their child's adoption.

### *Access to Adoption Records*

Arc Adoption provide the statutory service to adult adoptees and their birth relatives in respect of accessing birth records around adoption. The service requires sensitive and experienced counselling, redaction of records as required, and provision of a report for the adult adoptees. The service interfaces with each of the 5 Local Authorities in the partnership, who continue to hold children's adoption records.

55 individuals accessed their birth records in this period, of which 48 were pre-commencement and 7 were post commencement. This refers to the legislation governing access at the time of the adoption, which changed in December 2005, to increase rights and access to information for any adopted person over the age of 18.

Overall, Arc Adoption NE have worked closely with ATV to take on the existing cases, and new referrals, ensuring a smooth transfer of responsibility for this

sensitive area of the work. ATV and Arc meet quarterly to review the contract and ensure any anomalies are given due focus.

## **8. Voice and Influence of Young People, and Adoptive Parents**

ATV has an established young people's group which has run for the previous 2 years and was in operation prior to the pandemic.

Over this year, the groups for young people have changed, with the previous 2 young people's group being brought to one single group, for adopted children and young people aged 7-16 years.

A second group is the Voice and influence Group and has a clear focus on enabling children and young people to have a voice and influence ATV practice and that beyond.

### **8.1 Young People's Group**

In ATV we are proud that we now have an established group for adopted young people and have directed its development with the feedback received from young people and their parents. We have brought together adopted children from age 7-16 to meet monthly, with the aim of promoting a positive identity for young people around adoption and enabling them to build friendships and confidence through the group.

Young people fed back last year that they would like more opportunity for activities and a more "young person" focused setting. Previously the group ran in the ATV Centre, however, now runs in a local youth club, with dedicated access only to ATV for that evening session. This means that ATV can offer the opportunity for young people with a wide range of needs and preferences to meet and use the facilities and activities on offer, while building friendships and relationships. Activities such as table football, crafts, and games consoles are taken up by the young people. The young people wanted to have a tuck shop available which is now running, and there is also a sensory room for young people who need a calmer environment.

Feedback is positive from children and parents, with many parents also taking the opportunity to meet with other adopters and build their own networks too.

In the period November 2023- July 2024 there have been 8 sessions run in the Youth Club, with 29 young people accessing this group regularly, and 9 who have attended all sessions.

Children said...

I have made 2 friends, and they are nice and so are the ladies who are there.

I have enjoyed meeting other adopted children.

A parent said....

"As a family I wish we had done this a long time ago. It is really heartwarming to us all as a family especially A and myself. Knowing that there is support. Also, it helps both boys build up a resilience. Seeing others in a similar situation. I feel this will help both of the boys feel and see that adoption is just part of life. They are no different. To see other children feel as ease., play, chat. .. take part in activities gives them all a great foundation and positive memories to hold on to always".

"For a little while B has often felt different due to being adopted and has had lots of questions. She finds it reassuring and comforting when she spends time around other adopted children, she finds it comforting that she's not the only one. B benefits from attending the group as it gives her the chance of socialising with other adopted children".

Feedback through the Adopter Survey indicated that there is a gap for children aged 5-7 as children pre-school can access the Play and Stay Group and aged over 7 can access the Youth Group. Currently, ATV doesn't have staffing resources to run a third group, however, we will continue to look at what can be offered to children in this age group, on a regular basis.

## 8.2 Voice and Influence

The ATV Voice and Influence group has been running now for around 12 months. 4 young people are active members. ATV reached out to all families in regular contact, however, this small group are the pioneers of Voice and Influence in ATV. The group have named themselves AdoptBats, and they meet monthly with 2 staff from ATV.

Currently, they young people are bringing together their voice and view through a creative project with Blue Cabin which is co-producing a film about what its like to be adopted. Young people are concerned about how adopted

young children feel and cope in school; about life story work, and about Keep in Touch arrangements with birth family and parents.

Current plans are underway to deliver a launch of their film, at a dedicated event for wider stakeholders, which will include Board members, Virtual School Heads, adoption social workers and other young, adopted people.

The young people attended and met with the Middlesbrough Council Corporate Parenting Board in 2023, to share their ideas about what work they are doing and what's important to them.

### 8.3 Adopter Forum

ATV Adopter Forum runs monthly and is a small group of adoptive parents who meet with managers from ATV to review agency practice with adopters' views in mind. The Adopter Forum have supported the implementation of a weekend event and have advised that more support forums and groups should be held outside of usual working hours, leading to a co-produced event with the Darlington heritage railway museum due to take place in July 2024.

The forum has shared views about the way in which early permanence is supported and have assisted with development of the 2024 adopter survey, and have reviewed feedback.

## **9. Panel**

The Adoption panel sits weekly and is now held once per month as a face to face panel, with all other panels being virtual. Due to pressure on panel, it has been operation practice to schedule 5 panels per month.

There have been 61 panel meetings in the year.

There are 2 Independent Chairs of Panel, and 2 vice chairs of panel, 3 of whom are social workers, with significant senior management experience in adoption work, and one who is an adoptive parent with significant panel experience. There are 32 central list members, and 5 Medical Advisors. Diversity of adoption panel members has increased over the last year in respect of more males, and a member with lived experience of being adopted. Despite significant efforts it has not been possible to recruit a more ethnically diverse panel to date.

Panel is managed and led by a manager within ATV, who also acts as the Agency Advisor to Panel.

The panel manager has developed a stronger quality assurance (QA) mechanism, with QA feedback from all people who are involved in panel helping to improve quality, consistency and the experience of adopters and others attending. There is a quarterly quality assurance report which is provide to Local Authority senior managers to provide feedback on the quality of reports presented.

Central list members have a programme of training and engagement, with quarterly newsletters providing feedback on the outcomes of panel, and updates on relevant agency or legislative matters.

Panel members have undertaken training within this year on:

- Cultural Humilities
- Trauma Timeline, and trauma informed practice
- Early permanence
- Culture change in adoption

A full report on panel business and quality of practice is provide to the ATV Board on a 6 monthly basis.

## **10. Quality Assurance**

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

Quality assurance is carried out through a variety of mechanisms. Key means of assuring quality are outlined below, and the service plan 2023-25 is underpinned by a cross cutting platform of continuous improvement and quality assurance. The ATV Board has a role in being assured of quality of the service delivery, and a risk register is in place around key areas of risk for delivery, and/or quality concerns. At a recent Board Away day it was decided that we will work together to review the vision for ATV moving forward.

### *Service Plan*

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

### *Practice Models*

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

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

The **UEA Moving on to Adoption** is adopted in practice in many cases and is adapted dependent on the needs of the child, and family. Learning from our disruptions indicates we have more work to do within the wider system to understand the core principles of this model and implementation in practice. Moves due to foster carer circumstances remain a stubborn issue in this region. As detailed above, the service has adopted the **Trauma Timeline**, and is promoting trauma informed practice, within the RAA's own work, and across partner agencies.

Aspects of **Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and Practice (DDP)** (Dan Hughes) are supported through the service delivery, including PACE parenting. 8 staff have now received level 1 training in DDP and it is planned for more to undertake this.

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

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

### *Performance Monitoring*

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

### *Panel*

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



### *Surveys and Feedback*

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

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

### *Policies Review 2024*

ATV policies have been reviewed to ensure that they reflect current and most up to date practice and expectations.

Policies will be available on the ATV website.

### *Supervision*

All staff receive monthly supervision in ATV, which includes reflective practice. All staff have an annual appraisal which sets out their further personal development plan for the year ahead, aligned to their own career and role, and service planning.

### *Workforce Development*

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

Examples within this year are:

- Culture Change in Adoption
- DDP training – level 1
- Matching Standards Training
- EP Practice Standards

3 managers have undertaken level 5 management qualification. This will strengthen the management capacity in ATV and support overall succession planning.

### *Audit*

Audits have been regularly carried out with staff involved in individual cases. The audit process has been LA specific in this year, due to a number of partner LA's undergoing full ILACS inspections by Ofsted.

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

### *Ofsted*

One of the partner LA's, Hartlepool, has been inspected by Ofsted, which includes inspection of the RAA- Adoption Tees Valley, through the lens of the Local Authority. Hartlepool received an Outstanding grading, and ATV was positively recognised within the report.

## **11. Finance**

### **11.1 2023/24 Financial Year End Position**

The year end position for the Adoption Tees Valley budget is presented below:

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Budget 2023/24</b>	<b>Outturn 2023/24</b>	<b>Variance 2023/24</b>
Employees	1,767,000	1,680,000	(87,000)
Running Costs	264,000	349,000	85,000
Support Service Costs	113,000	115,000	2,000
Interagency Fees	500,000	525,000	25,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,644,000</b>	<b>2,669,000</b>	<b>25,000</b>

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

Running costs overspent due to:-

- additional utility costs of premises, noting that the Emergency Duty Team has been co-located for the past 24 months and utility costs have risen due to this (24-hour heating and lighting)
- additional adoption support and post adoption costs, associated with placements with Voluntary Adoption Agencies where the child (ren) has not been adopted within a 12-month period.

### **11.2 Interagency Fees**

Interagency fees exceeded the budget figure by £25,000. Additional contributions from each Local Authority are as follows:

	Percentage	Budget 23/24	Actual Cost 23/24	Additional 23/24
Darlington	15.95%	80,000	84,000	4,000
Hartlepool	14.22%	71,000	75,000	4,000
Middlesbrough	27.16%	136,000	142,000	6,000
Redcar & Cleveland	15.95%	80,000	84,000	4,000
Stockton	26.72%	133,000	140,000	7,000
	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>500,000</b>	<b>525,000</b>	<b>25,000</b>

### 11.3 Contributions for 2024/25

Contributions from each Local Authority will remain at the same percentages in 2024/25, as in 2023/24.

The ATV Board has commenced a review of the financial contribution percentage from partner local Authorities, to ensure that there is an equitable and fair allocation of costs, commencing 2025-28.

## 12. Priorities for Forward Planning

The annual report and review provide the data evidence, linked to the wider national adoption strategy, for setting priorities for ATV for the forthcoming year. As detailed in the Executive Summary, ATV Board have sought to establish a Vision for ATV for the next 3 years, based on national adoption developments, and learning from practice through independently chaired disruption meetings. What is clear is that children's long-term outcomes, and the wellbeing of adoptive and birth families is a high priority for ATV, and its partner agencies. The priorities for the forthcoming year are:

1. Recruiting more adoptive parents locally, who can take the children we need to find families for.

We will strengthen marketing, and the first contact enquiry process, to reduce delay, and strengthen a consistent approach from a small dedicated and experienced team.

We will promote the offer of the settling in allowance for ATV adopters who can take siblings.

We will continue to review the core “offer” for adopters for more complex children with our partner LA's and Board.

We will work together with partner LAs to ensure that there is an adoption experienced, ATV led consideration of local adopters, for children, when planning for permanence.

2. Children's voices will be heard, and young people will have an influence in how adoption services and wider services consider the needs of adopted people.

We will produce the Voice and Influence film with Adoptbats, and will ensure that it is used for wider stakeholder awareness raising.

We will hold an event for Board and stakeholders, with Adoptbats, to share young people's views on what needs to change.

We will ask Adoptbats to help achieve the engagement and views of more adopted young people, to make sure we are listening to, and involving adopted children in having their say.

### 3. Learning from Disruptions

We will use the learning from independently chaired disruptions to inform ATV practice, and wider LA practice in care planning for adoption.

ATV Board will have oversight of disruptions in adoption.

We will work with the national planned research into disruption in adoption.

### 4. Early Permanence Planning will continue to be a priority

We will review the balance of key messaging around what early permanence is for adoptive parents in the early stages of their journey with ATV.

We will work with all 5 LA's to develop mechanisms for ATV involvement in legal gateway planning.

We will involve ADM's in the LA where there is a difference of view between ATV and the LA around an EP plan for the child.

We will contribute to leadership of the pan regional conference on EP for wider stakeholders.

We will contribute to a LFJB plan for early permanence, and be part of a wider Adoption Sub Committee on Adoption.

5. Culture change in adoption practice will be promoted through ATV and partner agency practice and development

We will hold a team event on Culture Change in Adoption.

We will promote learning and awareness through workforce development in partner LA's and wider stakeholders.

The ATV Board will provide leadership on Culture Change through their role in ATV and in partner agencies, and through a shared vision statement.

We will promote the pan regional conference at which the UK leading adoption academic, Professor Beth Neil, will provide the keynote speech on Culture Change and Early Permanence.

6. Access to Adoption Support – the right help at the right time.

We will review the caseload allocation and our case holding system, to reduce active case holding by a social worker, enabling swifter access to assessment of adoption support needs.

We will work with the pan regional MDASS service, and with the pan regional commissioning project, to seek to implement new and better ways of allocating the right assessment and support to families.

We will implement the new data reporting measures in the AS system, to ensure we can deliver the new national AS data reports.

We will continue with our 3 tier adoption support system, encouraging take up and access to all tiers, by children and parents.

## 7. Retaining a high-quality staffing team

We will work to ensure that staff have access to high quality training and supervision that gives high job satisfaction and maintains skills and motivation.

We will create opportunities for progression and development wherever possible.

We will creatively use the skills and experience of ATV staff to help ATV development, and to develop the workforce in wider partner agencies.

**Vicky Davidson Boyd**

**July 2024**

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

10 SEPTEMBER 2024



**Subject:** CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

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

**Decision Type:** For information

## 1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- where people will be safe and protected from harm.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To present to members the Annual Report of Children Social Care Complaints and Compliments 2023/24.

## 3. BACKGROUND

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

## 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 The report is attached as **Appendix 1** and provides an analysis of complaints and compliments during the reporting period. The report outlines where learning has occurred from complaints and actions implemented as a result.
- 4.2 The report includes:
- Complaints and compliments received in 2023/24



- Outcomes of complaints;
  - Actions undertaken following findings; and
  - Complaints considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2023/24.
- 4.3 During 2023/24, 10 compliments have been recorded relating to children's social care. These range from an expression of thanks and appreciation in the form of a thank-you card to written communication.
- 4.4 A total of 70 complaints were received in 2023/2024. Of these, 58 complaints were statutory complaints which was an increase of 12 complaints from the previous year. Of the 58 statutory complaints received, 23 complaints were not considered further leaving 35 for investigation, overall that was an increase of 15 statutory complaints from the previous year being investigated.
- 4.5 Of the 12 complaints received in 2023/24 which were in the scope of the corporate procedure about children's social care, 8 complaints were not considered further leaving 4 complaints for further consideration.
- 4.6 Details of the different stages of investigation are included within the annual report (**Appendix 1**).

## 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	None
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>SUBSIDY CONTROL</b>	None
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	Children's social care complaints are managed in accordance with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and statutory guidance. Public Health complaints are managed in accordance with NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	None
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None

<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Not required

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That members of Children's Services Committee note the contents of the Annual Report of Complaints and Compliments 2023/24 and that the report will be published online.

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.

## 9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 14/08/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 14/08/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 14/08/2024



**HARTLEPOOL**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

# **Children's and Joint Commissioning Services**

## **Annual Report 2023/24**



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## Executive Summary

In accordance with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, this annual report covers the complaints received about children's social care services during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The Statutory Guidance '*Getting the best from complaints*' sets out which children's social care functions can be considered under the regulations. Those complaints which fall outside of social care functions defined under the regulations, follow the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

To provide a complete picture about the complaints investigated in children's social care during 2023/24, we have included all the complaints received in this annual report regardless of which complaints procedure was followed.

Additionally, in accordance with the statutory requirement to produce an annual report which covers statutory complaints about public health functions, complaints received about public health in 2023/24 are also included within this report.

How children's social care and public health respond to complaints and any learning arising from them is an integral part of service development and continuous improvement. This also aligns with being open, transparent and accountable.

The complaints received in children's social care and public health functions serve to provide wider lessons about the quality of services provided.

### **Summary for 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 – Children's social care**

- 87% of complaints were received electronically in 2023/24.
- 70 complaints were received in 2023/24. Of these, 58 complaints were defined as statutory complaints which is an increase of 12 statutory complaints received from the previous year. The remaining 12 complaints received in 2023/24 were defined as corporate complaints.
- Of the 58 statutory complaints received in 2023/24, 23 statutory complaints were not considered further leaving 35 statutory complaints for investigation. Overall, this is an increase of 15 statutory complaints investigated in 2023/24 than the previous year.
- Of the 12 corporate complaints received in 2023/24, 8 corporate complaints were not considered further leaving 4 corporate complaints for further consideration.
- 2 of the 35 statutory complaints investigated in 2023/24 involved an advocate who supported the complainant (a young person) with their complaint.
- 9 complainants referred their complaint about children's social care on to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2023/24.

- 2 of the 35 statutory complaints investigated in 2023/24 remained ongoing as at 31 March 2024 and have been carried forward to 2024/25.
- 10 compliments were received about children's social care in 2023/24.
- This annual report will be published on the Council's website.

#### **Summary for 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 – Public health functions**

- 1 statutory complaint was received about a public health function in 2023/24.
- The complaint was received electronically about the health visiting service.
- Following investigation of the complaint, the complainant referred their complaint on to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- This annual report will be published on the Council's website.

# Children's Social Care

## 1. Introduction

In accordance with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, this section of the annual report covers the complaints received about children's social care services during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The Statutory Guidance '*Getting the best from complaints*' sets out which children's social care functions can be considered under the regulations. When a complaint is received, a decision needs to be taken regarding which part of the Children Act 1989 or the Adoption and Children Act 2002 the service being complained about falls under. If it is decided the service being complained about falls outside of social care functions which can be considered under the regulations, the complaint follows the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Generally, the following areas should be considered under the children's social care statutory complaints regulations:

- Children in need;
- Children in our care;
- Special Guardianship support; and
- Post-adoption support.

The areas which tend to be exempt from the statutory children's social care regulations are:

- Early Help;
- Child protection (including S47 enquiries and conferences);
- Assessments of potential foster carers and adopters;
- Foster carer registration; and
- Complaints about private law proceedings (Section 7 and Section 37 Court Reports).

If a complaint is received which spans both the included and excluded areas of the children's social care statutory complaint regulations, all elements of the complaint are considered under the statutory complaint regulations which ensures a complainant is not at a disadvantage in any way between the overlap.

To provide a complete picture about the complaints investigated and, where appropriate, redress made in children's social care, this annual report includes all the complaints received in 2023/24 regardless of which complaints procedure was followed. Complaint outcomes provide evidence of the action taken to learn from the complaints received and drive continuous improvement.

Complaints and compliments are valued as an important source of feedback in helping to improve the quality of children's social care services. The service encourages complaints as a means of continuous assessment of the quality of services provided.

The feedback received from compliments about children's social care services during 2023/24 is also included in this report.

This annual report sets out:

- An overview of the complaints received about children's social care;
- An analysis of the complaints and compliments received by children's social care services during the reporting period;
- An overview of the children's social care complaints adjudicated upon by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman during the reporting period; and
- Highlights the action taken and improvements made to children's social care services following complaint investigations.

## **2. What is a complaint?**

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

## **3. Who can make a complaint about children's social care?**

A complaint can be made by:

- A child or young person;
- A parent or carer;
- Special Guardians;
- A person wishing to adopt a child; and
- Any other person who the Council considers has sufficient interest in the child or young person's welfare to warrant their representation being considered.

## **4. How can someone make a complaint about children's social care?**

There are a number of ways a person can make a complaint. Children's social care services has a publicly accessible factsheet which outlines the various ways someone can make a complaint together with information about the children's social care complaints procedure. A complaint can be made:

- Verbally in person or by telephone; or
- In writing by letter or by filling in our complaint form and posting it to us;
- Electronically by email or by filling in our online complaint form through the Council's website.



Every effort is made to assist a person in making a complaint and any member of staff can take a complaint.

## 5. Method used to submit a complaint about children's social care in 2023/24

For complaints received about children's social care during 2023/24, 87% were received electronically. The method of contact is broken down as follows:



31% of complaints received were from someone who used the online electronic complaint form.



56% of complaints received were from someone who sent an email to make a complaint.



9% of complaints received were from someone who telephoned to make a complaint.



4% of complaints received were from someone who posted a letter or complaint form to us.

## 6. Children's social care statutory complaints procedure

The children's social care complaint function sits within the Quality and Review Team under the management of the Head of Service (Quality and Review). The remit of the Complaints Manager's function is to:

- Develop, manage and administer the children's social care complaints procedure;
- Provide assistance and advice to those persons who wish to make a complaint;
- Oversee the investigation of complaints;
- Monitor and report on complaints activity; and
- Support and train staff.

The Regulations and Statutory Guidance set out a 12 month time limit for a person to make a complaint from when the subject matter being complained about occurred. After this time, a complaint will not normally be considered although there is discretion to accept a complaint after the 12 month time limit if the Council is satisfied that the complainant had good reason(s) for not making the complaint sooner and it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly. If a child or young person makes a complaint, they are allocated the services of an advocate to enable their views to be effectively heard and promoted.

There are three stages to the complaints procedure which is fully embedded in practice. These are:

- **Stage 1 – Local Resolution**

The aim of Stage 1 is to sort out the matter as quickly as possible. The complaint will be allocated to a manager who will look into the issue raised and respond to the complaint, in writing, within 10 working days. However, if there are a number of issues to look into, the timescale can be extended up to 20 working days.

- **Stage 2 – Investigation**

If the complainant is unhappy after their complaint has been responded to at Stage 1 or if the Council and the complainant believe it would not be appropriate to consider the complaint at Stage 1, the complaint can move directly to Stage 2. An investigation is conducted by an Investigating Officer who must be independent of the service area or the decision making being complained about. Sometimes, an Investigating Officer external to the Council is appointed when the issues complained about are complex, have a number of elements to them or there is sufficient justification to appoint an Independent Investigating Officer. An Independent Person (who must be external to the Council) is also appointed at Stage 2. This is a statutory role and the Independent Person works alongside the Investigating Officer with a remit to ensure the process is open, transparent and fair. The separate reports completed by the Investigating Officer and Independent Person are submitted to an Adjudicating Officer (usually the Assistant Director) for response. The investigation and adjudication process should be concluded within 65 working days.

- **Stage 3 – Independent Complaint Review Panel**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint at Stage 2, they can request the complaint is heard at a Complaint Review Panel. The Panel is made up of an Independent Chair and 2 Independent Panelists. It is their role to:

- consider the investigation and adjudication carried out at Stage 2;
- reach findings on each element of complaint being reviewed; and
- make any recommendations including redress if appropriate.

The Panel should be held within 40 working days from the complainant's request to progress to Stage 3. Within 5 working days of the Panel meeting, the Panel must send their decision and any recommendations to the Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services. The Executive Director is then required to make a formal response to the findings and any recommendations made within 15 working days of receiving the Panel's decision.

If at the end of Stage 3 the complainant remains unhappy with the outcome or the way in which their complaint has been handled, they may ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), the independent body who look into complaints about Councils, to investigate their complaint. A complainant can approach the LGSCO at any time about their complaint but in these circumstances the LGSCO usually refer them back to the Council for their complaint to complete the relevant complaints procedure before they intervene. Similarly, the time limit for raising a complaint with the LGSCO is 12 months but, like Councils, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman may choose to waive the time limit if there is good reason to do so.

Learning from complaints is shared and discussed within relevant management forums to ensure that the improvements identified are cascaded throughout the workforce.

## 7. Compliments received about children's social care in 2023/24

During 2023/24, 10 compliments were received relating to children's social care services.

The compliments received range from an expression of thanks and appreciation in the form of a thank-you card to written communication. They broadly reflect the work being delivered across children's social care with someone expressing their thanks and general appreciation of the service / worker who has made a difference to their lives.

The table below provides some examples of the compliments received during the reporting period.

Service area	Compliment
Independent Reviewing Officer	<i>"Thank you for listening to me and for your help and support, lots of love."</i>
Fostering Team	<i>"Thank you so much for all your support and for organising things. A huge thank you for supporting us in this challenging journey! Your care, consideration and respect for all of us made a huge difference to the process. .."</i>
Safeguarding, Assessment and Support Team	<i>"He's extremely grateful of the work X has done with him and his family and has help him recognise what's important in life. Y said that when the case was initially opened he had a negative view of social workers and didn't want to work with them, however now he feels that the work that's been completed with him and his family has been really helpful and he's pleased they've accessed this support."</i>
Independent Reviewing Officer and Fostering Team	<i>"Things are going so well, I'll never forget the kindness and support you both gave us."</i>
Young Person's/Leaving Care Team	<i>"Thank you for helping me to move on so I can be with my family. Thank you for your time to sort things out. Thank you for all that you have done for me on my behalf and the support that you have given me. Thanks go to you and A for all your patience and hard work ...."</i>

## **8. Complaints received about children's social care in 2023/24**

A total of 70 complaints were received during 2023/24. Of these, 58 complaints were within the scope of the statutory complaints procedure which is an increase of 12 complaints from the previous year. The remaining 12 complaints received in 2023/24 were within the scope of the corporate complaints procedure.

There were 2 statutory complaints that were carried forward to 2023/24 from 2022/23. Of these:

- 1 statutory complaint concluded following the completion of Stage 2; and
- A Stage 3 Complaint Review Panel was held in the case of the remaining statutory complaint. Following the conclusion of Stage 3, the complainant progressed their complaint onto the LGSCO. The LGSCO decided not to investigate the complaint because there was not enough fault causing injustice about the Council's actions to warrant an investigation.

### **Statutory complaints procedure**

Of the 58 statutory complaints received in 2023/24, 23 statutory complaints were not considered further leaving 35 statutory complaints for investigation. Overall, this is an increase of 15 statutory complaints investigated in 2023/24 than the previous year.

Of the 23 statutory complaints not considered further, this was because:

- Eleven statutory complaints related to ongoing or concluded public law court proceedings. Any dissatisfaction about matters before the Family Court cannot be considered within the statutory complaints framework. These should be raised during the court proceedings before decisions are reached by a Judge or, in the case of disagreement with a decision made by the Family Court, via the legal appeal process.

In the case of these statutory complaints, each complainant was informed that their representation could not be considered under the statutory complaints procedure and was signposted to the LGSCO if they remained unhappy with the Council's decision not to investigate their complaint.

There was one complainant from these eleven statutory complaints who progressed their complaint onto the LGSCO. The LGSCO decided not to investigate the complaint but asked the Council to seek further information from the complainant to reach a fresh decision with regard to whether the exact nature of the information being complained about presented a challenge to the accuracy of the Council's records used in the court proceedings under the Data Protection Act 2018. Despite numerous efforts made to glean further detail from the complainant, no information was forthcoming about the exact nature of the information being complained about. The LGSCO confirmed that they were satisfied the Council had carried out the agreed action and ended their involvement with the case.

- Four statutory complaints were withdrawn by the complainant who had decided they no longer wished for their dissatisfaction to be addressed within the statutory complaints framework.
- Four statutory complaints received were not accepted because the person making the complaint did not meet the 'who may complain' eligibility set out in statutory guidance. The Council outlined its reason for not accepting the complaint and signposted each complainant to the LGSCO if they remained unhappy with the Council's decision not to accept their complaint.

There was one complainant from these four statutory complaints who progressed their complaint onto the LGSCO. The LGSCO decided not to investigate the complaint because it did not meet their assessment code on complaints which the LGSCO investigate.

- One statutory complaint was received outside the time limit to make a complaint and there was no justifiable reason to exercise discretion to consider the complaint. The Council outlined its reason for not accepting the complaint and signposted the complainant to the LGSCO if they remained unhappy with the Council's decision.
- One statutory complaint related to concluded public law proceedings and was out of the time limit to make a complaint. The complainant was informed that their representation could not be considered under the statutory complaints procedure and was signposted to the LGSCO if they remained unhappy with the Council's decision not to investigate their complaint. The complainant progressed their complaint onto the LGSCO who decided not to investigate because the matter being complained about happened over 10 years ago and was decided in Court.
- One statutory complaint was withdrawn by the Council when the complainant did not communicate further despite repeated efforts by the Council to engage with the complainant.
- One statutory complaint was not accepted at the time it was submitted because the handling of the complaint would coincide with concurrent investigations which were already underway. The complainant was informed of their right to resubmit the complaint within 12 months of the concurrent investigations being fully concluded.

Of the 35 statutory complaints investigated in 2023/24:

- 23 statutory complaints were received from a parent;
- 7 statutory complaints were received from a grandparent or another relative;
- 3 statutory complaints were received from a connected carer or foster carer;
- 1 statutory complaint was received from a child in our care; and
- 1 statutory complaint was received from a young person.

With the exception of the two statutory complaints that were received from children who both submitted their complaints with the support of an advocate who remained fully involved during the process, no other complainant chose the services of an advocate or a representative to assist them with their complaint.

All 35 statutory complaints were responded to at Stage 1 in the first instance. Of these:

- 30 statutory complaints were resolved at Stage 1; and
- 5 statutory complaints progressed to Stage 2.

Of the 5 statutory complaints which have progressed to Stage 2:

- 2 statutory complaints were resolved to the complainant's satisfaction during the Stage 2 process;
- 2 statutory complaints have concluded the Stage 2 process; and
- 1 statutory complaint has not yet concluded the Stage 2 process.

Of the two statutory complaints which have concluded the Stage 2 process, the complainants requested their complaint progress to Stage 3 Complaint Review Panel. In one case, the Stage 3 process has fully concluded and the complainant signposted to the LGSCO. In the other case, the Stage 3 Complaint Review Panel has not yet been held. This complaint, together with the one statutory complaint that has not yet concluded at Stage 2, will be carried forward and the outcome reported in 2024/25.

### **Corporate complaints procedure**

Of the 12 complaints received in 2023/24 which were within the scope of the corporate complaints procedure, eight corporate complaints were not considered further leaving four corporate complaints for further consideration. Of the eight corporate complaints not considered further, this is because:

- Three corporate complaints related to ongoing or concluded private law court proceedings. Any dissatisfaction about matters before the Family Court cannot be considered within the corporate complaints framework. These should be raised during the court proceedings before decisions are reached by a Judge or, in the case of disagreement with a decision made by the Family Court, via the legal appeal process.

In the case of these three corporate complaints, the complainant was informed that their representation could not be considered under the corporate complaints procedure and were signposted to the LGSCO if they remained unhappy with the Council's decision not to investigate their complaint.

There were two complainants from these three corporate complaints who progressed their complaint onto the LGSCO. In one case, the LGSCO decided not to investigate the complaint because it was reasonable for the complainant to take the matter to Court and, in the other case, the LGSCO decided not to investigate because the Court was involved.

- Three corporate complaints were withdrawn by the Council when the complainants did not communicate further despite repeated efforts by the Council to engage with the complainants.
- One corporate complaint was not accepted at the time it was submitted because the handling of the complaint would coincide with a concurrent criminal investigation. The complainant was informed of their right to resubmit the complaint within 12 months of the criminal investigation being fully concluded.

- One corporate complaint related to concluded private law proceedings and was out of the time limit to make a complaint. The complainant was informed that their representation could not be considered under the corporate complaints procedure and was signposted to the LGSCO if they remained unhappy with the Council's decision not to investigate their complaint. The complainant progressed their complaint onto the LGSCO who decided the complaint was late and it was reasonable for the complainant to pursue the matter in Court.

Of the four corporate complaints investigated in 2023/24:

- 2 corporate complaints were received from a grandparent or another relative;
- 1 corporate complaint was received from a parent; and
- 1 corporate complaint was received from a person who may have been affected by a decision made.

Of the four corporate complaints investigated:

- Three corporate complaints were looked into and responded by the service area concerned in the first instance. In two cases, these were resolved to the complainant's satisfaction. In the one remaining case, the complaint approached the LGSCO who determined the complaint was premature because the Council's corporate complaints procedure had not been exhausted. The complainant did not engage further, despite the repeated efforts made by the Council about progression of the complaint.
- One corporate complaint was formally investigated and the complainant signposted to the LGSCO at the conclusion of the process. The complainant referred their complaint onto the LGSCO who decided that the matters involved court proceedings that they could not investigate and it was unlikely they could add to the Council's response.

## **9. Complaints referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about children's social care complaints in 2023/24**

The LGSCO is the independent body who looks into complaints about Councils. There were nine complaints considered by the LGSCO about children's social care in 2023/24. Of these, four complaints were within the scope of the statutory complaints procedure and the remaining five complaints were within the scope of the corporate complaints procedure.

The outcome of these nine complaints considered by the LGSCO has already been reported upon at earlier stages of this report. In summary, the LGSCO was satisfied further investigation was not required in all cases.

## 10. Actions and improvements from children's social care complaints investigated in 2023/24

An integral part of complaints management is ensuring that when service delivery failures are identified, proportionate and timely action is taken to remedy any personal injustice to the complainant and action is taken to improve the quality of service being provided.

The table below provides some examples of the complaints received during the reporting period and the actions taken as a result.

Complaint	Actions taken
<p>The complainant (a grandparent) expressed dissatisfaction about a lack of communication, family time being stopped and the child's case being closed despite being told the case would remain open.</p> <p>The complaint was resolved at Stage 1.</p>	<p>Explanations were provided to the complainant for each area of complaint raised which resolved matters.</p> <p>This included an apology because the complainant should have received a clear explanation as to why they were no longer an integral part of care planning for the child.</p>
<p>The complainant (a parent) was unhappy with the response that had been provided about travel reimbursement for family time and wished to complain.</p> <p>The complaint was resolved to the complainant's satisfaction during the Stage 2 process.</p>	<p>Although the complainant had accepted that the mode of travel would be the most cost effective, it transpired the complainant had only been reimbursed one way rather than return.</p> <p>An apology was provided for the oversight and the return element of travel reimbursed.</p>
<p>The complainant (foster carers) expressed dissatisfaction about payments, information and support received following their transfer from an Independent Fostering Agency.</p> <p>The complaint was resolved to the complainant's satisfaction during the Stage 2 process.</p>	<p>In discussion about their complaint with the Investigating Officer and Independent Person appointed to the complaint at Stage 2, the Investigating Officer considered there was an opportunity to resolve the complaint.</p> <p>This was addressed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• backdating a payment back to when the foster carers transferred to the Council; and</li> <li>• A policy and guidance to be developed for foster carers transferring to the Council from an Independent Fostering Agency.</li> </ul>



<p>The complainant (a connected carer) was unhappy that an extra payment for child's summer holiday, birthday and Christmas has not been included despite being told in an email that this would be included in the Special Guardianship Order payment.</p> <p>The complaint was resolved at Stage 1.</p>	<p>An explanation and apology was provided to the complainant and the extra payment made.</p> <p>This addressed the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction.</p>
<p>The complainant (a relative) expressed that police checks were undertaken in relation to her family without her consent.</p> <p>The complaint was resolved at Stage 1.</p>	<p>An explanation was provided to the complainant about safeguarding and police checks that are carried out to ensure safe care arrangement for a child which can be undertaken without a person's consent as there is a legal basis to do so.</p> <p>It was outlined that although police checks can be carried out without consent, it is good practice to inform the person first and ensure a case note is added to the child's record in this regard. Social Workers were reminded about this.</p>
<p>The complainant (a child in our care) was unhappy about moving from one care provider to another.</p> <p>The complaint was resolved at Stage 1.</p>	<p>An explanation was provided to the complainant about the provider having served notice on the placement to the Council which meant the Council needed to find an alternative. It was expressed that their wishes about the location they wished to reside in had been taken into account and that the new placement would better prepare the young person for adulthood.</p>
<p>The complainant (a parent) was unhappy that requests for family time with the children had not been responded to.</p> <p>The focus of the response was on achieving the complainant's desired outcomes which resolved the complaint at Stage 1.</p>	<p>Arrangements were put in place for the complainant to complete the necessary assessment work as well as an assessment of a family member to be part of supervising the family time.</p> <p>The complainant agreed these actions were an acceptable way to resolve the complaint raised.</p>

## 11. Conclusion

The Council's children's social care will continue to monitor its complaint handling process and performance so that it can further improve the experience for someone making a complaint and continue to make every complaint count as a learning opportunity to improve the quality of children's social care services.

# Public Health Functions

## 1. Introduction

In accordance with the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012, this section of the annual report covers the complaints received about public health functions during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The statutory complaints procedure sets out that complaints about public health functions include:

- the Council's public health functions which the Director of Public Health has responsibility for; and
- the provision of services by a service provider for its public health functions.

## 2. What is a complaint?

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

## 3. Who can make a complaint about a public health function?

A complaint can be made by:

- A person who receives or has received a service;
- A person who has been refused a service for which they think they are eligible for;
- A person who is, or is likely to be, affected by the action, decision or omission of the service which is the subject of the complaint; or
- Someone acting on the person's behalf (including acting on behalf of a child).

## 4. How can someone make a complaint about a public health function?

There are a number of ways a person can make a complaint. There is a publicly accessible complaint form which outlines the various ways someone can make a complaint.

A complaint can be made:

- Verbally in person or by telephone; or
- In writing by letter or by filling in our complaint form and posting it to us;
- Electronically by email or by filling in our online complaint form through the Council's website.

Every effort is made to assist a person in making a complaint and any member of staff can take a complaint.

## **5. Public health statutory complaints procedure**

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

Good complaint handling involves:

- Keeping the complainant informed and at the centre of the complaint process;
- Being open, accountable and transparent;
- Responding to complaints in a way that is fair and reasonable;
- Being committed to try and get things right when they have gone wrong; and
- Seeking to continually improve services.

Staff will always try to resolve problems or concerns before they escalate into complaints and this ensures that, wherever possible, complaints are kept to a minimum.

The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012:

- Sets a 12 month time limit from when the subject matter being complained about occurred or came to the attention of the person making the complaint, to when a complaint may be made. After this time, a complaint will not normally be considered although there is discretion to accept a complaint after the 12 month time limit if the Council is satisfied that the complainant had good reason(s) for not making the complaint within the time limit and it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly.
- Places a duty on the Council's public health functions and NHS bodies to coordinate the handling of complaints received across their respective jurisdictions and provide a joint response;
- Allows for a service provider to respond to a complaint under these regulations;
- Sets a mandatory timescale of three working days to acknowledge receipt of a complaint; and
- Allows for a maximum six month timescale to investigate and respond to a complaint.

Some complaints can take considerably longer to investigate than others and the statutory timescale provides a flexible approach to complaint response times dependent upon the nature and complexity of the complaint. The person allocated to investigate a complaint usually seeks to negotiate the time period for responding to the complaint with the complainant wherever possible. There are a range of factors that

can impact upon a timescale such as whether the complaint spans more than one body, the number of points of complaint for investigation, the availability of key people and conducting interviews, reading material relevant to the complaint, consideration of all available information and writing a report or proportionate response.

If, at the end of the public health complaints procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome or in the way which their complaint has been handled, they may refer their complaint on to the LGSCO, the independent body who looks into complaints about Councils.

Learning from complaints is shared and discussed within relevant management forums to ensure that the improvements identified are cascaded throughout the workforce.

## **6. Complaints received about public health functions in 2023/24**

There was one statutory complaint received during 2023/24 about a public health function. This complaint was received electronically from a parent of a child in relation to a Health Visitor. This function sits within the Early Help service area.

The complaint was investigated by someone independent of the service area concerned and once fully concluded, the complainant was signposted to the LGSCO.

## **7. Complaints referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about public health complaints in 2023/24**

The LGSCO is the independent body who looks into complaints about Councils. The complainant, whose complaint was investigated in 2023/24, progressed their complaint onto the LGSCO. The LGSCO decided not to investigate the complaint because the Council had carried out a thorough investigation and there was insufficient evidence of fault to justify an investigation.

## **8. Conclusion**

The service will continue to promote the statutory public health complaints procedure and make every complaint count as a learning opportunity to improve the quality of our public health functions.

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

10 SEPTEMBER 2024



**Subject:** HOLIDAY ACTIVITY FUND PROGRAMME (HAF)

**Report of:** Executive Director, Children's

**Decision Type:** For information

## 1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- where people will be safe and protected from harm.
- of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To present to Children's Services Committee the annual report of the Hartlepool Holiday Fun Programme funded by the Department for Education's Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In November 2020, the government announced the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme providing funding to local authorities to coordinate free holiday provision including healthy food and enriching activities during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. The HAF programme is aimed at children who receive benefits-related free school meals although other children could also benefit from the offer. Local authorities were asked to ensure that the HAF programme was available for all children eligible for free school meals in the local area, although recognised that not all eligible children would participate.
- 3.2 In October 2021, the Government announced a further investment of over £200m per year over the next three financial years for the holiday activities and food programme and issued updated guidance on the programme. Hartlepool Borough Council has provided the HAF in accordance with

Government guidance and reported annually to Children's Services Committee. The financial year 2024/25 is the final year of the current three year programme.

#### 4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 For the calendar year of 2023, Hartlepool Borough Council received £601,950.00 to commission and deliver activities and food under the name Hartlepool Holiday Fun. This is part of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme funded by the Department for Education.
- 4.2 The Annual Report of the Hartlepool Holiday Fun is attached at **Appendix A** to this report and follows the required Department for Education annual report template. The report covers:
- Funding allocated and how it was spent;
  - Numbers of children and young people the programme reached, including our reach for SEND;
  - Providers delivering the programme;
  - Governance of the programme; and
  - Feedback from children young people and their families.

#### 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	The HAF programme has been funded by the Department for Education and is supported by guidance documentation. Delivery of the programme is a significant undertaking for the Council and requires the cooperation and partnership working across HBC and with a range of providers to make sure that the programme is successful and reaches as many children and young people as possible.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	Hartlepool Borough Council received £601,950.00 to commission and deliver the 2023 HAF programme from the Department for Education. 2024 is the final year of the current programme with Christmas 2024 being the last funded delivery. Clarification is awaited from the Department for Education in relation to any future funding.
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no legal considerations arising from this report.
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	A Poverty Impact Assessment for the 2023 delivery programme is attached to this report ( <b>Appendix B</b> ).

	Given the possibility that the programme ceases following Christmas 2024 delivery, this could impact on child and family poverty. Many parents across the town have come to rely on the programme to ensure that their children are fed and active over the holidays.
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are no specific equality and diversity considerations arising from this report, the HAF programme is offered to all children and young people who are entitled to free school meals. The programme is delivered through a range of partners to ensure the offer is inclusive and meets the needs of all children and young people including those with protected characteristics.
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Throughout the delivery of the HAF programme in 2023 consultation has been undertaken with children, young people, parents, carers and activity providers about what activities they would like to see and how the programme can be further developed. The Annual Report includes feedback from children, families and providers.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the Annual Report of the HAF programme delivered in 2023.

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The HAF programme is an initiative of the Department for Education to tackle holiday activities provision, nutrition and physical health and reduce social isolation. The Council has received funding to deliver programme and will report progress to Children's Services Committee.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Department for Education Guidance Holiday activities and food programme 2022 Updated 11 March 2024.

## 9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Zoe McKenna, HAF Programme Manager  
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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 16/08/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 15/08/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 15/08/2024





# HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Funded by



Department  
for Education

## Section 1 - LA details

*Which local authority is this report about?*

Hartlepool

## Section 2 – Overview

For the calendar year of 2023, Hartlepool Borough Council received £601,950.00 to commission and deliver activities and food under the name Hartlepool Holiday Fun as part of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme funded by the Department for Education.

Funding was spent as follows:

Administration costs including salaries = £60,195.00

Activities = £528,391

Other costs including printing, equipment, booking system and marketing = £13,364

To look at the programme in terms of children we have worked with please see the below breakdown's by holiday period:

Easter 2023 = 1,488 unique children (237 SEND) reached with 4,170 individual attendances

Summer 2023 = 2,656 unique children (361 SEND) reached with 13,268 individual attendances

Christmas 2023 = 847 unique children (181 SEND) reached with 1,612 individual attendances

To offer provision to the children and young people of Hartlepool, we worked with 37 organisations and offered a total of 26,763 spaces across 117 clubs. Organisations worked with for 2023 delivery are:

- Rossmere Academy
- Simon Carson Sports School
- RepeaT for Kids
- Something Positive Solutions CIC
- Kilmarnock Road Children & Young People Family Resource Centre
- HBC Community Hubs
- Lets Pretend and Play CIC
- St John Vianney Primary School
- Seaton Carew Community and Sports Club
- North East Cycling Academy
- Eden Academy Trust

- Hartlepool Art Studio
- Hartlepool United Community Sports Foundation
- Belle Vue Sports Community and Youth Centre
- HBC Youth Service
- Gamers@Hart
- LilyAnne's Wellbeing
- The Wharton Trust
- Harbour Support Services
- HBC Mill House Leisure Centre
- School's Out, Sport's In
- Lisa McGee Education
- West View Project
- Springwell School
- Hartlepool Wadokai
- We Make Sound
- The Sensory Spot
- English Martyrs School and Sixth Form
- Communities of Hope, Hartlepool
- Hartlepool St Francis
- Hartlepool Rovers
- HBC Resettlement Team
- Aeronauts Trampoline Club
- HBC Participation Team
- Live it & Get Active
- National Elite Sports Coaching
- The Thrive Hive

The 2023 Steering Group for Hartlepool Holiday Fun was comprised of the following organisations:

- The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services as Chair (HBC)
- The HAF Programme Manager (HBC)
- The HAF Programme Coordinator (HBC)
- Two Head Teachers of Hartlepool schools (Golden Flatts Primary School and English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College)
- Representative from the HBC Communications Team (HBC)
- Representative from Public Health (HBC)
- Representative from the SEND community (Community Led Inclusion Partnership)
- Representative from the Hartlepool Food Council (Hartlepower)
- Representatives from the Cleveland Police and Cleveland Fire Authority
- There will also be elected provider representatives from the Local Authority (HBC), private sector (Gamers@Hart Ltd and Lisa McGee Education Ltd and the voluntary and community sector (LilyAnne's Wellbeing and The Sensory Spot CIC)

Across the year, changes were made to the management of the system to enable HBC to come further into line with the target aims of the programme as well as being able to provide greater accuracy in data. Following summer provision, it was clear that we needed to make a change to our process in order to meet the terms of funding from the Department for Education. The aims of the programme are to offer provision to children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals, with the option to also spend up to 15% of our funding on children not eligible for the programme facing other vulnerabilities. For both Easter and summer 2023, we were falling within the 30-40% range on this.

As such a new booking system was employed starting at Christmas 2023 to enable us to pre-eligibility check participants. This move was approved by our Steering Group and was partially rolled out. This partial rollout saw some provisions use the new system, whilst some remained as “closed” groups and handled their own bookings. This led to a reported figure of 78.87% of children who accessed provision at Christmas being in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. We have continued this work moving into 2024 and now have all providers using the booking system.

### Section 3 – Children and families feedback

Below is a selection of feedback from across 2023 from children and families as well as a video showcasing some of the excellent work that took place over Christmas 2023  
<https://www.facebook.com/HartlepoolHolidayFun/videos/827462712480634>:

"Excellent scheme for the children!"

"Such a well thought out and organised event overall for kids. Would love to see options for activities expand as time goes on. I don't think enough people know about it though despite efforts to advertise. Maybe also opt to include children outside of government funding at a cost? I have other friends with children not eligible for the voucher scheme but would love to send them to clubs and would be willing to pay."

"Best day ever, really enjoyed never tried this before, would never eat this food but loved it, best day of my life, didn't think cooking was this easy."

"We moved last month, this course has helped our child get used to his new school and community for September."

"A little annoyed my younger children don't get to attend, the staff did try and accommodate and they did explain why. I just think there should be funding for all children, not just school age"

"It has meant the world to me and my children, we have been able to take part in activities in a safe environment and children haven't missed out due to the financial impact. The staff are amazing"

### Section 4 - Food

All children who attended the programme were provided with at least one healthy and nutritious meal per session they attended. Alongside these “main meals” providers also offered snacks including fruit as well as offering food and nutrition activities as part of the children's day.

We know that children can often struggle with changing their diets and incorporating healthy food, and this was a challenge that all providers took on. Examples of this would be providers using Quorn mince in a Spaghetti Bolognese and having the discussion with children after the meal explaining what they had eaten. Fruit was a major part of the programme in 2023, with many providers offering activities such as fruit kebab making or “Bushtucker Trials” where children did blindfold fruit tasting.

It can be an extremely lengthy process to have a child change their eating habits, but this work has been carried across the year with examples of children trying and liking new, healthy foods being reported across most provisions.

## **Section 5 – Enriching Activities**

We offered an extremely wide range of enrichment activities to try and offer something for everyone. We had forest school activities, general sports courses, mindfulness and wellbeing, play schemes, STEM activities, imaginative play, cycling, art, youth clubs, Pokémon and Harry Potter activities, role-playing games, swimming, boxing, karate, music, sensory play, football, rugby, trampolining, parties and panto trips, visits from Santa and more.

We had numerous reports of children trying some of these activities during the HAF programme and continuing them into their life beyond the holidays by signing up to regular groups and sessions.

In 2023 we were very provider led in terms of the types of activities we had to offer. We were very lucky because it covered such an excellent array of activities without overlapping and overcrowding an area. As such, we did not need to interfere and request additional provisions or decline any for being too similar.

## **Section 6 – Physical Activities**

All our activities included the minimum standard of 60 minutes of physical activity per session, with most clubs going well above this. The range of physical activity stretched from boxing to meditation, football to dancing and much, much more as detailed in section 5. In most settings, even when children were not engaged in a specific activity aimed at being a physical activity, they were engaging in free play which was doing the same job.

Once success was a provider who was unsure how they would be able to accommodate physical activity into their day and so, following a meeting with our Coordinator, they incorporated daily walks into their provision with children visiting different sites around their local area and collecting items to use in crafts sessions.

## Section 7 – Nutritional Education and the promotion of healthy living/lifestyles

Again nutritional education is something we require from all of our providers. This varies depending upon space, equipment and level of expertise. Some providers offer specific nutrition workshops where children have a hand in preparing their own meal. Others look at fun and engaging activities such as fruit kebab making or using a smoothie bike to blend their own fruit smoothie. We also have some who use arts and crafts to offer nutritional education with healthy plate activities on offer.

Our families have also been referred to local low and no cost food venues as well as being provided with links to the Hartlepool Food Network.

## Section 8 – Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

All of our provisions are accessible to children with special educational needs and disabilities to varying degrees. We worked hard on our previous system as we felt that it did not meet our need in supporting and offering children with SEND needs to access certain provisions. The new system we have in place does not have the option for providers to state that they will not accept children with additional needs.

In terms of SEND specific programmes, this is something that we would like to see increase. For the calendar year of 2023, we had two specialist SEND providers including one specialist school. We also have a small number of providers who offered SEND specific sessions within their offers.

## Section 9 – Key challenges

The key challenge for our programme was to ensure that we came further into line with the requirements of the programme regarding eligibility. We struggled with this for some time using our old booking system and, when it became apparent that we would be unable to make any further progress, the decision was made to move on. In 2023 this improved our figures in terms of meeting the requirements of the Department, but did see a drop in overall attendance which we anticipated. The key challenge moving into 2024 will be to continue the positive element of maintaining the integrity of the programme, whilst also growing the provision.

Using this learning, we have determined that we need to reduce the number of spaces for 2024 as we had almost 8,000 unused spaces in 2023. Alongside this reduction in spaces, we need to ensure that communications and marketing are improved both internally and with our providers.

We have already seen new, yet eligible, names and faces coming into the programme since the introduction of our new booking system. This new system is based around

voucher codes and so some families who potentially did not see the marketing materials are now receiving their codes direct.

## **Section 10 – Marketing and Communication?**

Throughout 2023 we communicated with our families using flyers, school apps and advertisements in local written press. Just prior to Christmas 2023 we also introduced our own Facebook page. This was not able to bear much fruit at Christmas as it went live too close to activities beginning.

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

**If YES please answer question 2 below**

**2. Will there be an impact of the decision requested in respect of Child and Family Poverty? YES / NO**

**If YES please complete the matrix below**

GROUP	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT	NO IMPACT	REASON & EVIDENCE
Young working people aged 18 - 21	X			
Those who are disabled or suffer from illness / mental illness	X			
Those with low educational attainment	X			
Those who are unemployed	X			
Those who are underemployed	X			
Children born into families in poverty	X			
Those who find difficulty in managing their finances	X			
Lone parents	X			
Those from minority ethnic backgrounds	X			

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

Poverty Measure (examples of poverty measures appended overleaf)	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT	NO IMPACT	REASON & EVIDENCE
Children in low income families	X			HAF programme provided activities and food to children and young people eligible for free school meals during the three longer school holidays in 2023.
Educational attainment	X			HAF programme will support disadvantaged children and young people during the school holiday period which is designed to provide them with healthy food and enriching activities that will support them to be more engaged with school
Healthy eating	X			The HAF programme is designed to support children and young people to eat more healthily and be more active during school holidays and provide them with a greater knowledge of health and nutrition.
Overall impact of Policy / Decision				
POSITIVE IMPACT	X	ADJUST / CHANGE POLICY / SERVICE		
NO IMPACT / NO CHANGE		STOP / REMOVE POLICY / SERVICE		
ADVERSE IMPACT BUT CONTINUE				
Examples of Indicators that impact of Child and Family Poverty.				
Economic				
Children in Low Income Families (%)				



Children in Working Households (%)
Overall employment rate (%)
Proportion of young people who are NEET
Adults with Learning difficulties in employment
<b>Education</b>
Free School meals attainment gap (key stage 2 and key stage 4)
Gap in progression to higher education FSM / Non FSM
Achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils (key stage 2 and key stage 4)
<b>Housing</b>
Average time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council tax benefit claims
Number of affordable homes built
<b>Health</b>
Prevalence of underweight children in reception year
Prevalence of obese children in reception year
Prevalence of underweight children in year 6
Prevalence of obese children in reception year 6
Life expectancy

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

10 SEPTEMBER 2024



**Subject:** HIGH NEEDS PROVISION CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS (HNPCA) 2020-2025

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

**Decision Type:** For information

## 1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 For members to note High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) to develop SEND provision.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) is paid to local authorities to support the provision of places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision.
- 3.2 Allocations from the DfE for 2020-2025 are set out below:

2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	TOTAL
£200,958	£500,000	£1,384,648	£310,383 (initial allocation) £665,422 (additional allocation) Total = £975,805	£270,605	£3,332,016

3.3 Reports have been presented to committee and approved for:

- Catcote increased capacity;
- Catcote ASD 6<sup>th</sup> Form;
- Springwell increased capacity; and
- High Tunstall MLD (Moderate learning Disabilities)

3.4 The total costs of the above funded from HNPCA is £2,619,873, leaving uncommitted funding of **£712,143**.

#### 4. DEVELOPMENT OF SEND PROVISION

4.1 Work has been undertaken with schools to understand ongoing need. There continues to be a pressure on specialist primary places as there is only one Primary Special School (Springwell) in Hartlepool. Work has started to scope an extended build at Springwell but this is likely to cost in excess of £1million. In the meantime Springwell need to make some adaptations to the current building to support six more children to prevent these children being placed out of area. This is at a cost of approximately **£66,000**.

4.2 Officers have asked for primary schools to express an interest in supporting children with complex SEND including ASD/ Complex Learning /Multi-Sensory but excluding PMLD needs, in a mainstream provision through developing more Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP). To date, three schools expressed an interest:

- Grange Primary already has an ARP for 21 children. The school are proposing to open a new ARP for 12 children. The school are not requesting any capital funding for this project.
- Greatham Primary are proposing to develop an ARP to accommodate 20 children. The cost of this project is **£19,000**.
- Ward Jackson Primary have expressed an interest but officers are still working on the costs for this project which will be reported to a future Committee.

4.3 As these projects needed to commence in the school holidays when children were not on site, the Chair of Children's Services Committee in conjunction with the Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services approved the projects.

4.4 This would leave an uncommitted HNPCA allocation of **£627,143** to be used on future projects.

**5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS**

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	There is a risk if we do not undertake these works that children will need to be educated outside of Hartlepool owing to a lack of places.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	The budget for HNCPA is set out above.
<b>SUBSIDY CONTROL</b>	None
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	The council needs to adhere to the SEND Code of Practice.
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY</b>	All children with additional needs are supported as required.
<b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	All children with additional needs are supported as required.
<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	None
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Consultation has taken place with Schools Forum, headteachers and SENDCOs. Hartlepool's SEND/AP Partnership meets bi monthly and reviews the effectiveness of services and plans for future need.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the schemes approved by the Chair of Children's Services Committee and the Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services as outlined at Section 4.

**7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 To ensure that children with SEND are supported to attend schools in their own community.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 None

**9. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 20/08/2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 20/08/2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 21/08/2024