

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

AGENDA



Tuesday 18 March 2025

at 5.00 pm

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

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE:

Councillors Creevy (C), Dunbar (VC), Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Little and Sharp.

Co-opted Members: Gillian Hood, 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 4 February 2025 (*previously circulated and published*)

CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE

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

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

4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS

No items

5. KEY DECISIONS

- 5.1 Dedicated Schools Grant – Early Years Block 2025/26 - *Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Finance, IT and Digital*
- 5.2 Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block 2025/26 - *Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Finance, IT and Digital*
- 5.3 Schools Capital Works Programme 2025-26 - *Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 6.1 Approval of School Term and Holiday Dates 2026-27 – *Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 7.1 Ofsted Inspection of Park Road Children's Home and Wilton Avenue Children's Home - *Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – To be confirmed.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18TH MARCH 2025



Subject: DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT –
EARLY YEAR'S BLOCK 2025/26

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

Decision Type: Key Decision – CJCS 158/25 tests (i) and (ii) applies

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.
- of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.
- with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To present the indicative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding allocation for Early Years Funding in 2025/26 and propose the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) that sets hourly rates for providers for 2025/26.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The 'Early Years Block' (EYB) is issued to local authorities specifically for the delivery of the early year's offer. Funding and associated entitlements expanded significantly in 2024/25, with the introduction of 2-year-old entitlements for working parents from 1 April 2024 and new entitlements for children aged from 9 months to 2 years from 1 September 2024. Further changes are being introduced in 2025/26, with both new entitlements extending to 30 hours from 15 hours in September 2025.

- 3.2 2025/26 continues to be a period of significant change, bringing uncertainty to budget planning for the local authority. As such, careful consideration of proposed hourly rates for providers is required, along with an appropriate amount that should be centrally retained to fund the effective management of expanded entitlements by the authority.
- 3.3 Local authorities are required to consult providers on proposed annual changes to local early year's funding formulas, although the final decision rests with the local authority. Consultation with providers was open between the 27 January and 7 February 2025.
- 3.4 Schools' Forum received the results of provider consultation and gave their own feedback on the hourly rate proposals at their meeting on 19 February 2025. Schools' Forum requested a further consultation period with providers that took place from 20 February to 26 February 2025.
- 3.5 The Council has consulted on proposed hourly rates for the following provisions in 2025/26:
- 3 to 4 year old provision;
 - 2-year-old provision for eligible disadvantaged pupils;
 - 2-year-old provision working parent entitlement (expanding to 30 hours from September 2025);
 - A 9 month to 2-year-old provision (expanding to 30 hours from September 2025).

4. 2025/26 EARLY YEAR'S BLOCK FUNDING

- 4.1 The table below provides the provisional early year's funding for Hartlepool provision in 2025/26. Funding for the new entitlements introduced in 2024/25 is based on May 2024 census information. As take-up is yet to stabilise for the newer entitlements, DfE are continuing to reflect additional census points during 2025/26 and will adjust funding accordingly.

Early Years Block 2025/26	Hourly Rate Funding £	Part Time Equivalents (Estimate)	Indicative Funding £
3 to 4 Year Olds – Universal	5.90	1,280.01	4,304,674
3 to 4 Year Olds – Additional	5.90	497.76	1,673,967
3 to 4 Year Olds – Pupil Premium			219,388
3 to 4 Year Olds – Disability Access Fund			77,854
2 Year Olds – Additional Support	8.28	353.77	1,669,653
2 Year Olds – Working Parents	8.28	421.46	1,989,123
2 Year Olds – Pupil Premium			149,340
2 Year Olds – Disability Access Fund			23,450
Under 2 Year Olds	11.27	459.08	2,949,084
Under 2 Year Olds – Pupil Premium			13,441
Under 2 Year Olds – Disability Access Fund			7,504
Total Indicative Funding 2025/26			13,077,478

4.2 At their meeting on 24 September 2024, Forum approved the recommendation to Committee for retention of 4% of Early Year's funding in 2025/26, with 96% for pass through to providers. The minimum pass-through rate is 96% from April 2025. In future, DfE are planning to increase the minimum pass-through rate to 97%, although DfE have acknowledged that it would not be feasible to mandate this increase until take up for the new entitlements is embedded.

4.3 Local authorities need to consider the following in proposing an hourly rate structure for each provision:

- At least 96% of the funded hourly rate must be passed to providers. This has increased from 95% in previous years;
- The level of funding needed to effectively administer and manage the expanded early year's offer by the Council. This can be up to 4% of the hourly rate in 2025/26;
- An appropriate level of contingency in case payments to providers during the year exceed census funding levels. [It must be noted that Hartlepool Borough Council has historically made payments to providers for 2-year-old placements where, owing to census numbers, sufficient funding has not been received to cover payments, resulting in a deficit position];
- A Special Educational Needs (SEN) Inclusion fund to support individual children with low level and emerging needs;
- Additional financial support for those children living with a greater level of deprivation.

4.4 The local authority can choose whether to introduce a single rate that covers all 2-year-old provision – whether provision relates to existing disadvantaged children or to new 2 year olds of working parents or two different rates for the two categories of children.

5. ADDITIONAL HELP – 3-4 YEAR OLD PROVISION HOURLY RATE

5.1 For 3–4-year-old provision only, DfE have provided an additional 24p to support providers in funding the teaching staff pay award from September 2024. The additional 24p is included in the total funded hourly rate of £5.90 shown in the table at paragraph 4.1.

5.2 The funded hourly rate of £5.90 for 3–4-year-old provision, also includes 2 earlier amounts to support teaching staff pay and pension awards (September 2019 and September 2023). Taking these earlier amounts plus the new 24p from April 2025, there is now a total of 73p included within the overall £5.90 hourly rate relating to teaching staff pay and pension increases.

- 5.3 The first increase to support teaching staff pay and pension awards with effect from September 2019, is currently managed as a separate supplement within the 3–4-year-old hourly rate structure. The supplement is only paid to those settings employing a qualified teacher. Such settings receive the base rate for 3–4-year-old provision plus the historic supplement. Although the supplement is funded by government at 24p per hour, payments to qualifying settings are made at 29p per hour. The funded 24p is based on payments to 100% of providers whereas not all settings benefit, making 29p per hour affordable.
- 5.4 The second increase to support teaching staff pay and pension awards with effect from September 2023 was added to the base rate payable to all providers. The local authority recognised that pay award pressures were not limited to teaching staff and therefore, the addition to the base rate would represent a more equitable approach. This view was supported through consultation with providers, by Schools Forum and by Committee.
- 5.5 In line with the approach taken for the September 2023 increase, the local authority is proposing to add the new September 2024 increase to the base rate instead of increasing the historic supplement that is only payable to settings employing teaching staff.
- 5.6 The local authority also proposed the removal of the historic supplement altogether by transferring it to the base rate. This would mean that the full 73p per hour received from DfE would benefit all providers. There would no longer be a separate supplement within the 3–4-year-old hourly rate structure. At their meeting on 19 February 2025, Schools' Forum rejected this proposal on the basis that the historic supplement did not represent new funding – it was funding that schools had already received since 2019/20. Schools' Forum recommended retention of the historic supplement.

6. PROPOSALS / OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 6.1 This section includes proposals for hourly rate splits for each type of provision in 2025/26. The proposals have been revised in response to consultation with Schools' Forum at their meeting on 19 February 2025.
- 6.2 Key principles within the proposed hourly rate splits are:
- In order to provide adequate funding to the local authority for administration and management of the extended offer, the Council proposes to retain 4% of hourly rate funding across all types of provision, in previous years the Council has requested a 5% retention;
 - A supplement for deprivation should continue to be included against 3- to 4-year-old provision, where this remains a mandatory requirement;
 - There is a growing concern about insufficient capacity for 2-year-old provision for disadvantaged children resulting from the strong take up for the new 2-year-old working parent entitlement. The increase from

15 to 30 hours for the working parent entitlement only is expected to significantly increase this risk. Following consultation, the authority is now proposing to move away from a single rate for 2-year-old provision by reflecting a deprivation supplement for the disadvantaged provision only.

- After consideration, the authority does not propose to include a deprivation supplement for working parent provision. Although there is recognition that working parent provision will be accessed in some cases by those less well off, allocating as much funding as possible to the base rate will benefit all children.
- A contingency amount should be included across all provisions because of the continuing uncertainty surrounding take up in 2025/26, alongside the expansion of newer provision from 15 hours to 30 hours in September 2025. A higher contingency rate is proposed against the newer entitlements, linked to the levels of uncertainty;
- A SEN Inclusion fund should be set aside across all provisions in order to support increasing numbers of children with low level and emerging need

6.3 Proposed hourly rate payments for 3- to 4-year-old provision are shown in the table below. The funded hourly rate for 3- to 4-year-old provision is £5.90. This includes 73p for the teacher pay and pension funding. Without this extra funding, the DfE hourly rate is £5.17.

3- to 4-Year-Old Provision	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£5.90	100%	£5,978,641
Retained by local authority	£0.24	4%	£243,199
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£5.36	94.6%	£5,431,443
Deprivation Supplement	£0.01	0.2%	£10,133
Teacher Pay / Pension Supplement	£0.24	4.2%	£243,199
Contingency	£0.02	0.4%	£20,267
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.6%	£30,400

6.4 As outlined in section 5, the local authority proposes to add the new teachers pay and pension funding of 24p into the base rate payable to all settings. Added to the DfE rate increase of 2p, this would increase the current base rate from £5.10 to £5.36 for all providers.

6.5 Providers employing a qualified teacher would continue to attract the Teacher pay and pension supplement funded at 24p (paid at 29p) on both universal and additional hours.

- 6.6 Proposed hourly rate payments for the 2-year-old disadvantaged provision rate are shown in the following table. As outlined in paragraph 6.2, in response to potential impacts from the working parent provision, a deprivation supplement has been included in the disadvantaged rate. This has been achieved through a lower contingency amount.

2-Year-Old Provision (disadvantaged)	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£8.28	100%	£1,669,653
Retained by local authority	£0.33	4%	£66,544
Base rate	£7.82	98.4	£1,576,894
Deprivation	£0.07	0.8%	£14,115
Contingency	£0.03	0.4%	£6,050
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.4%	£6,050

- 6.7 Proposed hourly rate payments for the 2-year-old working parent provision rate are shown in the following table. The rate includes an increased contingency rate to reflect the greater uncertainty.

2-Year-Old Provision (working parent)	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£8.28	100%	£1,989,123
Retained by local authority	£0.33	4%	£79,277
Base rate	£7.82	98.4%	£1,878,616
Contingency	£0.10	1.2%	£24,023
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.4%	£7,207

- 6.8 Proposed hourly rate payments for the under 2-year-old provision rate are shown in the following table. Provision will be extended to 30 hours from September 2025. The splits mirror the 2-year-old working parent hourly rate proposal.

Under 2-Year-Old Provision	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£11.27	100%	£2,949,085
Retained by local authority	£0.44	4%	£117,754
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£10.69	98.8%	£2,797,313
Contingency	£0.10	0.9%	£26,168
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.3%	£7,850

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The original consultation with providers ended on 7 February 2025. A summary of the responses is provided in the table below. 25 Providers (or 30%) responded to the consultation (21 respondents in 2024).

7.2 Schools' Forum received the results of consultation at their meeting on 19 February 2025 and expressed significant concern at the response rate. Forum felt unable to make final recommendations to Children's Services Committee based on a 30% response rate.

7.3 Results from the original round of consultation are presented in the following table.

Early Years Consultation 2025/26 - Responses	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total	% Agreed
1: A pass-through rate of 96% is proposed. This proposal is expected to provide the budget required to effectively administer and manage the extended offer. Do you agree that 96% should be passed through to providers across all hourly rates in 2025/26?	23	0	2	25	92%
2: Do you agree that the separate supplement for historic teaching staff pay and pensions support should cease and be transferred to the base rate?	20	0	5	25	80%
3: Do you agree that funding for deprivation should be part of the base rate for 2-year-old and under 2-year-old provision instead of setting a separate deprivation supplement? Please note that deprivation remains a mandatory supplement for 3- and 4-year-old provision.	18	2	5	25	72%
4: Take up for the newer entitlements continue to bring a greater degree of uncertainty to funding levels and payments to providers for the local authority. This is why the Council is proposing to continue to set aside a contingency amount within each hourly rate split, with a larger contingency rate on the newer entitlements. This position would be reviewed before April 2026 when the take up is expected to have stabilised. Do you agree that a contingency should be set aside to help manage the uncertainty?	16	6	3	25	64%
5: A greater level of Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is emerging within the early year's sector. This highlights the importance of using some of the hourly rate funding for a SEN inclusion fund across all provisions. Do you agree with this approach?	18	5	2	25	72%
6: As in 2024/25, the Council is proposing to operate a single rate across both additional support 2-year-old provision and working parent 2-year-old provision. Do you agree that a single rate should be set?	20	3	2	25	80%

8. SCHOOLS FORUM 3 MARCH 2025

8.1 At the request of Schools' Forum a second consultation window was open from 20 February to 26 February 2025. The consultation involved 2 questions that covered the key areas of feedback from schools and other Forum Members.

8.2 The results from the second round of consultation are shown in the following table.

Supplementary - Early Years Consultation 2025/26 - Responses	Yes	No	Total	% Agreed
<p>Do you agree that the separate supplement for historic teaching staff pay and pensions support should cease and be transferred to the base rate? Option A outlines the hourly rate to Providers should the supplement cease. Option B outlines the hourly rate to Providers should the supplement be retained. The supplement only affects 3- to 4-year-old provision.</p> <p>Option A – removing the supplement Providers with a qualified teacher £5.60 per hour All other Providers £5.60 per hour Option B – retaining the supplement Providers with a qualified teacher £5.65 All other Providers £5.36</p>	15	14	29	52%
<p>Should the Authority move away from a single rate for 2-year-old provision and pay a deprivation supplement for 2-year-old <u>disadvantaged</u> provision? The local authority is proposing to introduce a deprivation supplement of 7p per hour by reducing the current contingency of 10p per hour to 3p per hour.</p> <p>Option A - keeping the single rate across all 2-year-old provision All Providers would receive £7.82 per hour for 2-year-old disadvantaged provision (and the same amount for 2-year-old working parent provision)</p> <p>Option B – moving to a separate hourly rate for 2-year-old disadvantaged provision that includes a deprivation supplement All Providers would receive £7.89 per hour for 2-year-old disadvantaged provision (and £7.82 for 2-year-old working parent provision)</p> <p>For Hartlepool settings with the highest number of 2-year-old disadvantaged children, the annual increase per setting would range from £1,287 to £1,780.</p>	16	12	28	57%

8.3 Schools' Forum were disappointed at the response level from the second round of consultation (35% response rate).

8.4 Discussion relating to the historic teaching pay and pension supplement covered by question 1 in the second round of consultation took place. Although Forum acknowledged the consultation result of 52% in favour of removing the 3 to 4 year old supplement, Members explained that they continued to feel the low response rate was unsettling. They also referred back to the original intention of the previously separate grant for the 2019 teaching pay award and pension increase and felt strongly that this should be preserved.

8.5 In response, Forum voted in favour of retaining the supplement (10 for; 2 against; 0 abstentions).

- 8.6 In relation to introducing a deprivation supplement for the 2-year-old disadvantaged entitlement hourly rate (covered by question 2 in the second round of consultation), Forum supported the 57% in favour. Forum felt the introduction of a deprivation supplement sends an important message of support to encourage provision for disadvantaged families and helps to address the concerns of lack of capacity for disadvantaged 2-year-olds.
- 8.7 Forum requested that Members were reminded of the increasing risk to 2-year-old disadvantaged places (limited to 15 hours per week), particularly with the introduction of 30 hours per week entitlement to working parent provision from September 2025. Places for children under the working parent entitlement of up to 30 hours can be agreed for children from 9 months old and therefore those disadvantaged 2 year olds could be in a position where places are limited if working parents have already secured the place for their child between 9 months and 2 years.

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Whilst the new working parent entitlements continue to embed and undergo expansion from 15 to 30 hours, 2025/26 remains a year of uncertainty within the early year's sector. Funding of places in 2025/26 would usually be based on the two January census points – January 2025 and January 2026. However, in recognition of the greater uncertainty, government are continuing to measure two additional census points in 2025 for the newer working parent entitlements. This reduces the financial risk of significant underfunded places for the Council in 2025/26.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The 2025/26 allocations are subject to adjustment following the May 2025, October 2025 and January 2026 census points. Therefore, the figures provided in the table shown at paragraph 4.1 are subject to change during 2025/26, although the hourly rates will not vary.
- 10.2 All of the proposed hourly rates for early year's provision reflect the revised requirement within the regulations to pass through at least 96% of the NFF to providers (previously 95%).

11. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 The local authority is required under the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations to consult providers on annual changes to their formula. This has been completed, with the outcomes reported at paragraph 7 of this report.

12. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	To address the growing concern of insufficient capacity for 2 year old provision disadvantaged places, the authority proposes to move away from a single 2 year old formula and introduce a deprivation supplement for the disadvantaged provision only.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	There are no specific equality and diversity considerations.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	There are no staff considerations,
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	There are no asset management considerations.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	There are none.
SUBSIDY CONTROL CONSIDERATIONS	There are none.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 It is recommended that Members:

- a) note the contents of this report and the outcomes from both consultations with providers and Schools' Forum on 19 February 2025 and 3 March 2025;
- b) note the recommendation by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of 4%;
- c) approve the hourly rate funding formula for 3- to 4-year-old provision in 2025/26 as shown in the table at paragraph 6.3, as recommended by Schools' Forum;
- d) approve the hourly rate funding formula for disadvantaged 2-year-old provision in 2025/26 as shown in the table at paragraph 6.6 of this report as recommended by Schools' Forum;

- e) approve the hourly rate funding formula for working parent 2-year-old provision in 2025/26 as shown in the table at paragraph 6.7 of this report as recommended by Schools' Forum;
- f) approve the hourly rate funding formula for under 2-year-old provision for 2025/26 as outlined at paragraph 6.8 as recommended by Schools' Forum.

14. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 15.1 Schools' Forum Report 19 February 2025.
- 15.2 Schools' Forum minutes 19 February 2025 and 3 March 2025.

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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

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

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 05/03/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 06/03/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 06/03/2025

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18TH MARCH 2025



Subject: DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT –
HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2025/26

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

Decision Type: Key Decision – CJCS 159/25 tests (i) and (ii) applies

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- Where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- Where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.
- Of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.
- With a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the funding allocation for the High Needs Block (HNB) in 2025/26 and to seek approval for the 2025/26 budget. The HNB forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Updated HNB funding allocations for 2025/26 were published on 18 December 2024. As with other areas of the DSG, funding for the HNB is via a National Funding Formula (NFF).

- 3.2 Along with many other authorities, Hartlepool is continuing to experience spending pressures against the HNB. Despite significant increases in funding during financial years 2019/20 to 2023/24, meeting the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) continues to significantly exceed available funding.
- 3.3 From financial year 2023/24, a HNB budget exceeding the funding available was approved by Children's Services Committee. The budget shortfall for 2023/24 was £2.147m, with an actual shortfall of £2.348m. The budget shortfall for 2024/25 is £2.171m, against a forecast shortfall of £4.475m as at quarter 3.
- 3.4 On 31 March 2024, the overall Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit stood at £1.589m. This is expected to increase to £6.064m by this financial year end. This deficit is being cash flowed by the council at an approximate cost of £0.300m a year based on current rates of interest.
- 3.5 As the Council is now in a DSG deficit position, DfE require a DSG Management Plan covering a 10-year period. The plan has been submitted and approved and DfE require regular updates. The latest update suggests a provisional deficit position of £38.208m by 31 March 2031. The council would not have enough cash reserves to sustain this deficit.
- 3.6 The budget requirement proposed for 2025/26 exceeds the HNB funding allocation by **£4.257m** (£2.171m in 2024/25). This report outlines funding available, and the proposed budget requirement recommended by Schools' Forum.

4. 2025/26 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING

- 4.1 The HNB allocation for 2025/26 is shown in the following table.

High Needs Block	2025/26 Funding £m
DSG High Needs Block Allocation	21.297
Schools Block Transfer 2025/26	0.436
Central School Services Block Transfer 2025/26	0.080
Total High Needs Block Funding 2025/26	21.813

- 4.2 Members are asked to note that final allocations remain subject to change from amendments known as import/export adjustments, during 2025/26 depending on volumes of pupils accessing provision outside of their home authority. These updates take place during summer 2025.
- 4.3 To assist with the growing financial pressure, Schools' Forum agreed to a transfer of funding from the Schools Block of DSG to the HNB in 2025/26. Committee approved this transfer at their meeting of 4 February 2025 (report item "Schools Block and Central School Services Block Budgets 2025/26"). The transfer increases available funding by £0.436m as shown in the table above.

- 4.4 Schools' Forum also recommended a block transfer of £0.080m from the Central Schools Services Block to the HNB in 2025/26. Committee approved this transfer at the same meeting on 4 February 2025.

5. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK PLANNED SPEND 2025/26

- 5.1 Schools' Forum considered the HNB budget requirement across two meetings – 28 January 2025 and 19 February 2025. The planned HNB budget recommended by Schools' Forum for 2025/26 is shown in the table below. As outlined in paragraph 3.7, the budget requirement proposed for 2025/26 exceeds the High Needs Block funding allocation by **£4.257m**.

£m 2025/26 Proposed	
Budget Area	£m
Special Schools	6.056
Independent Schools	5.282
Academy Place Funding	3.913
IPS	3.339
ARPs	2.538
Exclusions and AP	1.675
Post-16	1.548
High Needs Services	0.713
Out of Area	0.442
HI/VI	0.251
Early Intervention	0.223
Nurture Base (new provision)	0.180
Haven Recharges	(0.090)
TOTAL	26.070

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

5.3 Special Schools

This year's budget	£4.674m
Projected Outturn	£5.192m
Next year's budget proposal	£6.056m

This budget area includes the cost arrangements for Catcote and Springwell schools that is payable in addition to their place funding recouped by DfE. The price for each cost arrangement is already agreed to the end of academic year 2024-25. The new academic year cost arrangements for 2025-26 are assumed at a 3% increase within the budget proposal and within the DSG Management Plan.

This budget area also includes the Hartlepool Free School. Although the Free School was assumed to be cost neutral in the 2024/25 budget, top-up funding is not covered by DfE because of a funding lag. This is the primary reason for the projected overspend of £0.518m in the current year.

In 2025/26, DfE will continue to pay place funding to the Free School direct, with places rising from 30 to 41 from September 2025. An element of funding is expected for the Free School once the import / export adjustment is completed during summer 2025. However, the level of funding is uncertain at this stage. Therefore, the budget proposal for 2025/26 includes 100% of top-up funding for the planned Free School places in 2025/26.

5.4 Independent Schools

This year's budget	£5.141m
Projected Outturn	£5.553m
Next year's budget proposal	£5.282m

Although an overspend of £0.412m is anticipated at quarter 3, the budget estimate was deliberately challenging and aimed to restrict new placements to a minimum. Independent school fees are the key area of mitigation in the DSG Management Plan as we aim to reduce the need for costly placements outside of the town wherever possible. The SEMH Free School has several pupils on roll that would otherwise have been placed in an Independent School at a significantly higher cost.

During 2025/26, we expect a total of 21 leavers as they end year 11 of education.

The budget requirement assumes a total of 68 placements at an average cost of £78k per placement.

5.5 Academy Place Funding

This year's budget	£3.473m
Projected Outturn	£3.473m
Next year's budget proposal	£3.913m

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

Provision	Places	Funding per Place £'000	Recoupment 2025/26 £'000
Primary ARP places	38	6	228
Primary ARP places (part year)	37	6	129
Secondary ARP places	19	6	114

Primary Special School places	124	10	1,240
Secondary Special School places	134	10	1,340
Post-16 Special School places	46	10	460
Post-16 College places	67	6	402
Total academy recoupment	465		3,913

5.6 Individual Pupil Support (IPS)

This year's budget	£2.535m
Projected Outturn	£3.242m
Next year's budget proposal	£3.339m

Despite the introduction of increased scrutiny and peer challenge through the Seeking Support Panels, the cost of financial support through IPS and group funding agreements continues to rise.

At quarter 3, there are 65 group funded arrangements in place at a total cost of £0.959m. There are 411 pupils funded via IPS (this includes any exceptional arrangements). Cost growth of £0.069m is assumed in quarter 4.

The budget proposal for 2025/26 assumes that any further growth in demand or underlying need is offset by the avoidance of other costs because other solutions are found – training and support solutions for example. The growth in budget for 2025/26 is limited to the projected outturn plus 3% which is proposed as the inflationary increase on IPS ranges. This aligns with the assumptions in the DSG Management Plan.

5.7 Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs)

This year's budget	£1.936m
Projected Outturn	£2.208m
Next year's budget proposal	£2.538m

ARPs are increasingly dealing with more complex pupil needs and this has an impact on higher levels of banding for pupils with an associated increase in cost. Primary ARP places have increased from September 2024, so the budget requirement also assumes the full year impact of the increase.

A permanent solution for accommodation linked to primary ARP places is a priority for SEN capital funding once allocations are published. Even with sufficient funding, the current temporary accommodation is likely to require extension for a further year at a cost of £0.104m.

5.8 Exclusions, including Alternative Provision

This year's budget	£1.192m
Projected Outturn	£1.637m
Next year's budget proposal	£1.675m

There is general acceptance that volumes of permanently excluded pupils are unlikely to return to historic volumes in the short to medium term. The current funding model of 28 places at Horizon School and 12 places for Haven no longer reflects the volume of pupils being managed by the service. This has now been the position for an extended period.

The need to remodel the service and to ensure appropriate accommodation is clear. Until a solution for a building is in place, it is not feasible to produce revised costs for the service with any certainty, or to move to a cost model arrangement in line with Springwell and Catcote special schools.

In response, the proposed budget requirement for 2025/26 should have regard to the current year projected outturn and the assumptions included in the DSG Management Plan. The current year projected outturn is £1.637m and the assumed budget requirement in the DSG Management Plan is £1.642m.

The proposed budget requirement for 2025/26 takes the £1.637m projected outturn and assumes average pay awards of 3%, with general inflation on non-pay costs of 2.5%. This gives a budget requirement of £1.675m.

5.9 Post-16

This year's budget	£1.507m
Projected Outturn	£1.471m
Next year's budget proposal	£1.548m

This budget funds the costs relating to pupils with SEND that remain in education beyond age 16. The projected outturn is within budget as at quarter 3. The budget requirement assumes a 3% increase for Catcote post-16 cost arrangements in line with the DSG Management Plan. An increase in pupils at Hartlepool College of FE is anticipated and estimates are included in the budget proposal.

5.10 High Needs Services

This year's budget	£0.692m
Projected Outturn	£0.692m
Next year's budget proposal	£0.713m

This budget contributes towards the cost of services provided by education such as Commissioning, along with support services and management. This includes central services such as finance. An increase of 3% is proposed within the 2025/26 budget to reflect the estimated cost of pay awards.

5.11 Out of Area Placements

This year's budget	£0.452m
Projected Outturn	£0.430m
Next year's budget proposal	£0.442m

Placements have remained relatively stable during 2024/25, with the projected outturn close to the budget estimate. There are 5 leavers expected during 2025/26. The budget requirement assumes 26 places at an average cost of £17k.

5.12 Hearing Impaired / Visually Impaired SLA

This year's budget	£0.205m
Projected Outturn	£0.230m
Next year's budget proposal	£0.251m

This budget funds the cost of the service level agreement to Middlesbrough Borough Council. The SLA cost is expected to be £0.251m in 2025/26. The SLA represents a value for money approach in supporting hearing impaired and visually impaired pupils within Hartlepool schools. To deliver the service in-house, the council would need to employ a Teacher of the Blind and a Teacher of the Deaf. This would represent a more costly option and presents significant difficulties in recruitment and retention for such specialist roles.

5.13 Early Intervention

This year's budget	£0.217m
Projected Outturn	£0.217m
Next year's budget proposal	£0.223m

This budget funds early intervention strategies – the Small Steps service and the Early Year's Portage Offer. The Small Steps service delivers one to one support to children and families. Some upskilling work with staff is included. The Early Year's Portage Offer works with providers to agree support packages and expand inclusivity. The offer sits around the Early Years Panel to consider what can be put in place to prevent escalation of need. An increase of 3% is proposed in the budget for 2025/26 to reflect the estimated cost of pay awards.

5.14 Nurture Base (New Provision)

The need for appropriate placement of pupils presenting a high level of challenging behavior is becoming critical. The authority is proposing to commission 6-8 places at an estimated cost of £30k per place. This would be for those pupils with high incident behavior at KS3-4. A specification will be drafted, and schools will be asked for expressions of interest. Without the establishment of such a nurture base, the requirement for a high-cost independent school place, or residential care provision at circa £4k per week is the likely alternative. This proposal increases the budget requirement by £0.180m, although potentially avoids cost of up to £1.248m.

5.15 Haven School Charges (New Proposal)

Haven School educates up to 12 pupils who find a usual school setting difficult and are likely to be at risk of permanent exclusion otherwise. As Haven pupils remain on their original school roll, funding for Haven pupils flows to their home school. From 2025/26, a charge to the relevant home school is proposed. The charge would be structured as a weekly rate and the level of charge would reflect the average pupil-led funding at primary or secondary phase. For a secondary school, this would be an average charge of £200 per week per pupil. The amount is calculated using the average per-pupil led funding across all secondary schools for 2025/26. Introduction of charges to home schools would reduce the HNB budget requirement by an estimated £0.090m in 2025/26.

6. RISK AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Demands on the service to provide education for pupils with SEND are continuing to exceed the financial resources allocated. For the third consecutive year, officers are proposing a budget to Committee that exceeds available funding - by £2.146m in 2023/24, £2.171m in 2024/25 and £4.257m in 2025/26. This is despite funding transfers of £0.516m from the School's Block and Central School Services Block in 2025/26.
- 6.2 Against this background, government have extended the "statutory override" regulations to 2025/26 which means authorities do not have to charge these deficits to their General Fund budget. This means that where authorities have a HNB deficit, this is carried on the balance sheet as a negative reserve and does not affect the Council's own reserves available to fund local priorities and commitments. The Council is required to "cash-flow" the deficit, leading to loss in potential investment income.
- 6.3 The government has not indicated what they will do from 2025/26, although it seems inconceivable that they will require authorities to write off HNB deficits against General Fund reserves as this would either require authorities to stop using their own reserves as planned, or for those authorities with low reserves is likely to trigger section 114 notices.
- 6.4 Alongside these arrangements, the government operates a "safety value" system and a "delivering better value programme" whereby the Department for Education (DfE) provide "support and challenge" to authorities with significant HNB deficits. This support requires authorities to draw up a financial recovery plan to address the recurring deficit within three years. It is our understanding that two thirds of authorities have triggered the criteria for one of these arrangements.
- 6.5 Up until 2022/23, the Council has successfully managed HNB costs within the available annual grant allocation and HNB reserves. This has been achieved despite a significant increase in demands on this service, including the impacts arising from COVID-19.

- 6.6 Demands on the service in 2023/24 exceeded the grant allocation of £18.6m by £2.348m (budgeted deficit was £2.146m) – a deficit of 12.6% (budget was 11.5%). Projections for 2024/25 expect to exceed the grant allocation of £19.9m by £4.475m (budgeted deficit was £2.171m) – a deficit of 22.5% (budget was 10.9%). The budget requirement presented in this report shows a third year funding gap of £4.257m in 2025/26 – a deficit of 19.5%.
- 6.7 The increase in cost is considered necessary to invest in Hartlepool provision and so avoid placement of pupils with SEND outside the town wherever possible. Early indications demonstrate that this approach has begun to reduce costs for independent and out of town provision, with a greater level of SEND need being met with Hartlepool provision. Unfortunately, the number of pupils with SEND, the continued pressure arising from permanently excluded pupils and the increased complexity of need is placing financial pressure on provision for pupils needing Individual Pupil Support within a mainstream setting, or within ARP provision.
- 6.8 Based on experience from other authorities the Council will not trigger DfE intervention until the deficit is 25% of the annual grant – which for Hartlepool equates to £4.9m. It is likely that a deficit exceeding £6.0m will be reported as at 31 March 2025. However, a meeting with DfE during October 2024 did not suggest intervention in the short term, with the exception of providing regular updates of the DSG Management Plan.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

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

SUBSIDY CONTROL CONSIDERATIONS	There are none.
---	-----------------

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 All schools have been consulted on budget proposals for the High Needs Block for 2025/26 via Schools' Forum.
- 9.2 Schools' Forum receive quarterly reports on projected High Needs budget outturn projections in-year.
- 9.3 The DSG Management Plan has been shared with and approved by DfE as at 31 October 2024.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 It is recommended that Members:
- a) note the contents of the report;
 - b) Approve the budget proposal recommended by Schools' Forum for 2025/26 shown in the table at paragraph 5.1 of this report, acknowledging the funding gap of £4.257m.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To ensure that that we can meet the educational needs of children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities in Hartlepool.
- 11.2 To ensure the local authority establishes an appropriate budget for High Needs in 2025/26 that meets expected demand.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Schools' Forum reports of
- 28 January 2025 – High Needs Block Budget Requirement 2025/26;
 - 19 February 2025 – High Needs Block Requirement 2025/26;
- 12.2 Schools' Forum minutes of 28 January 2025 and 19 February 2025.

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

Sally Robinson
Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
sally.robinson@hartlepool.gov.uk
(01429) 523914

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

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 25/02/25
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 24/02/25
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 24/02/25

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18TH MARCH 2025



Subject: SCHOOLS' CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2025-26

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

Decision Type: Key Decision CJCS 162/25

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

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

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to the 2025/26 Schools' Capital Works Programme, as detailed in confidential **APPENDIX A**, in order to progress the design and detailed costing exercise in time for the majority of projects to be carried out during the summer holiday period. **This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Each Spring term, the Department for Education (DfE) announces capital funding allocations, these being School Condition Allocations (SCA) – formerly known as Capital Maintenance - and Devolved Formula Capital (DFC), for the school estate in Hartlepool.

- 3.2 At the time of writing this report, capital funding allocations had not been communicated to the LA. The DfE have previously stated that SCA allocations for a current year would be indicative of the funding that responsible bodies will receive in future years and further stated that SCA will be revised annually to reflect any schools moving to a different responsible body e.g. converting to academy status, opening or closing. One school has converted to academy status this academic year, therefore the funding allocation is expected to reflect this conversion.

4. PROPOSALS

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

5. FUNDING

- 5.1 School Condition Allocation is a grant to the LA for all maintained community schools and is aimed at addressing condition needs in existing school premises, but does not include academies who receive funding from a Condition Improvement Fund, direct from the Education & Skills Funding Agency.
- 5.2 Devolved Formula Capital is a relatively limited capital allocation made directly to schools via the LA to support small scale projects and ICT development. Schools often use this allocation to fund their 10% contributions to larger capital schemes
- 5.3 This report is seeking approval for the schemes proposed in confidential **APPENDIX A** and will be funded from all available funding. Schools are also expected to contribute a minimum of 10% towards the condition schemes.
- 5.4 Detailed in Table 1 below is the total funding available for works. Table 2 details the costs of proposed schemes, the contingency sum for 2025/26 and the total funding required. Members are asked to approve the works and contingency sum totaling £554,000. The programme will be carefully managed to ensure there is no risk of overspending the funding available.

Table 1

24/25 SCA Funding*	467,724
23/24 Unallocated	24,501
23/24 Unused Contingency	17,044
10% School contributions	45,400
Total Available	554,669

*anticipated allocation

Table 2

Condition schemes	454,000
Contingency	100,000
Total Required	554,000

6. CONTINGENCY

- 6.1 As in previous years, the overall programme recommended to Committee for approval includes a separate contingency fund which has been allocated from the SCA. This will continue to ensure that urgent but unforeseen items can be addressed, should the need arise.
- 6.2 Other than in response to an emergency situation, there will be no significant variation to the programme of works as detailed in confidential **APPENDIX A**.
- 6.3 Within the 2024/25 programme there was a contingency sum of £100,000. There was call on this funding for an emergency project at Horizon School and there was also a reduced funding allocation both detailed in confidential **APPENDIX A**.

7. PROCUREMENT

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

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	The proposed programme of school condition works has been compiled on the basis of those areas/sections of school buildings which are showing clear signs of failure and those aspects which will prevent possible loss of school days due to emergency school closures.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	If the schemes detailed in the attached confidential APPENDIX A are approved, funding can be met from the 2025/26 Schools Condition Allocation and current unallocated capital funding.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	There are no legal considerations.
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	There are none.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	There are none.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	There are none.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	The report is concerned with the condition, protection and development of Council assets i.e. school buildings.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	There are none.
CONSULTATION	A draft list of condition priorities detailed in confidential APPENDIX A were noted at Schools Capital Subgroup meeting of the 30 th January 2025.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members are recommended to:

- a) Approve the schedule of 2025/26 capital works programme as summarised in confidential **APPENDIX A**, subject to the LA agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum;

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

- b) Allow the Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services, in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, dispensation and discretion to authorise works where an emergency (e.g. risk of school closure) or a significant health and safety risk is exposed;
- c) Allow the Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services, in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, dispensation and discretion to add or remove a project(s) as a result of an increase/decrease in the 2025/26 SCA funding allocation.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 There are no background papers.

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

Amanda Whitehead
Assistant Director (Education)
amanda.whitehead@hartlepool.gov.uk
(01429) 523736

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 18/02/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 18/02/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 18/02/2025

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18TH MARCH 2025



Subject: APPROVAL OF SCHOOL TERM AND HOLIDAY DATES 2026-27

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

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 those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To seek agreement of the Children's Services Committee to the pattern of school term and holiday dates for the school year 2026-27 for Community Schools.
- 2.2 To seek agreement of the Children's Services Committee in recommending these dates to governing bodies of Foundation schools and Academies in Hartlepool.

3. BACKGROUND

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

- 3.2 Five professional development (PD) days are provided for in the teachers' conditions of service and can be taken in combinations of part-day "twilight" sessions at the direction of individual schools. The pattern proposed for 2026-27 provides for an "envelope" of 195 days.
- 3.3 For a number of years, local authorities have, with some success agreed a unified calendar of term dates across the northern region.

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 In the autumn term 2025 the Tees Valley region and a number of other north east representatives consulted on a pattern for 2026-2027 based on the guiding principles as shown in **Appendix 1**. The proposed pattern enables schools to begin the academic year on Tuesday 1st September 2026 and end the year on Wednesday 21st July 2027.
- 4.2 Following discussions, arrangements were made to consult all head teachers in Hartlepool and also the relevant associations / unions on the school year pattern for 2026-2027. On the completion of local consultation in the region, the general consensus from the local authorities within the Tees Valley and other regional authorities is to adopt the model attached as **Appendix 1**.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	None
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	None
SUBSIDY CONTROL	None
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	None
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	None
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	None
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	None

ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	None
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	None
CONSULTATION	Neighboring local authorities and Hartlepool Headteachers have been consulted.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 To approve the scheduled term and holiday dates for the academic year 2026-2027 for Community schools shown in **Appendix 1**.
- 6.2 To recommend the schedule of term and holiday dates for 2026-2027 to governing bodies of Foundation Schools and Academies in Hartlepool.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 There are no background papers.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

Amanda Whitehead
 Assistant Director (Education)
amanda.whitehead@hartlepool.gov.uk
 (01429) 523736

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 18/02/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 18/02/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 18/02/2025

DRAFT HARTLEPOOL LA School Holiday and Term Dates 2026-2027

Appendix 1

	AUGUST 2026	SEPTEMBER 2026	OCTOBER 2026	NOVEMBER 2026	DECEMBER 2026	JANUARY 2027
Monday	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25
Tuesday	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26
Wednesday	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27
Thursday	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28
Friday	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29
Saturday	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30
Sunday	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24 31

39

35

	FEBRUARY 2027	MARCH 2027	APRIL 2027	MAY 2027	JUNE 2027	JULY 2027
Monday	1 8 15 22	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26
Tuesday	2 9 16 23	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27
Wednesday	3 10 17 24	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28
Thursday	4 11 18 25	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29
Friday	5 12 19 26	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30
Saturday	6 13 20 27	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31
Sunday	7 14 21 28	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25

30

24

34

33

Bank Holiday	
School Holiday	
PD Days	

39

35

30

24

34

33

195

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

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

18TH MARCH 2025



Subject: OFSTED INSPECTION OF PARK ROAD
CHILDRENS HOME AND WILTON AVENUE
CHILDRENS HOME

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

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 The purpose of this report is to present to Children's Services Committee the recent full Ofsted inspection reports of Park Road Children's Home which took place on 6 and 7 November 2024, and Wilton Avenue Childrens Home which took place 2 and 3 December 2024.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Inspections of children's homes are carried out by Ofsted. Ofsted have a duty to inspect children's homes annually under The Children's Homes Regulations 2015. The scheduling of inspections takes account of.

- Children's standard of care;
- previous inspection findings;
- complaints and concerns about the service;
- notifications from the home; and
- The content of monitoring reports to Ofsted by children's homes under regulations 44 and 45 of The Children's Homes Regulations 2015.

- 3.2 The inspection judgments and descriptions for a full inspection are:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Inadequate

Inspectors will use the descriptors as the benchmark against which to grade and judge performance. Inspectors are required to weigh up the evidence in:

- How well children and young people are helped and protected;
- The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers and consider it against the evaluation criteria before making the judgment of the experience and progress of children and young people.

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 Both Childrens homes are operated and managed by Hartlepool Borough Council. They provide care for children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.
- 4.2 A full inspection of Park Road took place on 6 and 7 November 2024, against the judgments and descriptors outlined in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 above and the service was judged as GOOD overall. Therefore, meeting the criteria that 'The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for GOOD.
- 4.3 A full inspection of Wilton Avenue took place on 2 and 3 December 2024, against the judgments and descriptors outlined in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 above and the service was judged as GOOD overall. Therefore, meeting the criteria that 'The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for GOOD.
- 4.4 The full inspection reports are attached at **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2** of this report and provide Members with the detailed findings reached by Ofsted in making their judgements.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	The Children's homes need to action and implement the statutory requirement and recommendations to ensure children and young people continue to receive a good service. If the children's home does not continue a programme of improvement and does not follow up on the recommendations made, it runs the risk of being judged 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' meaning the care of children and young people has become unsafe or poor.
--------------------------	--

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	There are no financial considerations arising from this report.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	There are no legal considerations arising from this report. Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE.)	There are no specific child and family poverty implications arising from this report. Children in our care have their life chances promoted to achieve good outcomes. Good quality care and support provided by a children's home is essential to this.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE.)	The inspection outlines how the children's home, care and practice is sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith, or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	There are not staffing considerations
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	There are no asset management considerations arising from this report.
CONSULTATION	During the inspection, inspectors observed and sought the wishes and views of children and young people living at Wilton Avenue and Park Road and this informed their findings

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to note the positive inspection reports of Park Road Children's Home and Wilton Avenue Childrens Home. Both of the provisions have been judged to be GOOD, this is testament to the care, commitment, and skill of the staff teams.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Park Road and Wilton Avenue are regulated statutory services providing care for children and young people and Children's Service Committee must be kept informed of inspections and the judgments of OFSTED in relation the provisions.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Park Road Ofsted Full report 6 and 7 November 2024 (**Appendix 1**)
Wilton Avenue Ofsted Full report 2 and 3 December 2024 (**Appendix 2**)

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

Laura Gough
Assistant Director (Children and Families)
Laura.Gough@hartlepool.gov.uk
(01429) 525380

Sign Off: -

Managing Director	Date: 18/02/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 30/01/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 30/01/2025

2745434

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2023.

There were two children living in the home at the time of the inspection, and the inspector spoke to both children.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 November 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
---	-------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
---	------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
---	------

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 6 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/02/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making good progress from their starting points. They are supported to build trusting relationships with staff, which helps them to develop a sense of permanence.

Staff support children to understand that education is a priority, and children are attending school and making progress. Good daily routines are in place, which help to ensure that children attend school regularly. When barriers emerge, staff work closely with teachers to ensure that children do not fall behind academically. Children's achievements have been recognised and celebrated, and they are prepared well so that they have every chance to succeed in life.

Staff work hard to develop a good working relationship with the important people in children's lives, and do all they can to facilitate good-quality time together. This includes taking one child and their sibling to enjoy time on holiday together. Children's friends and family are welcome to visit the home. This helps to keep them in touch with significant people in their lives.

Children are well prepared for moving to or on from the home. Children are welcomed into the home, and most have an opportunity to visit prior to moving in. When children move on from the home, they continue to be supported, which helps to take some of the tension out of what can be a very difficult time for children.

Children are supported to capture memories of their time at the home in colourful and beautifully presented memory books. These books serve as a permanent reminder to take with them when they are ready to move on.

Children's views are captured in a variety of ways. This includes, but is not limited to, direct work sessions, discussion in team meetings and involvement in decisions about their future. Staff ensure that children have access to an independent advocate to assist with this. This helps to ensure that children's voices are heard and acted on, where appropriate.

Children live in a warm and well-decorated home with ample space to spend time together or by themselves. Their rooms are well decorated and reflect each of their individual identities. Children's involvement in the décor of the home helps them to have a sense of belonging.

Children are in good physical health and are being supported by staff to have a healthy diet and regular exercise. However, the inspector found that staff are locking some food away to help them to manage children's diet. This hinders the children from learning the skills they need to self-regulate and balance what they eat in the future. In addition, it detracts from what is otherwise a family environment.

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

Staff know the children extremely well and follow each child's care plan and risk assessment. Children's risk assessments and safety plans are unique to the needs of each child and updated regularly. The safety and well-being of children is central to staff practice. The staff are well informed of policies and procedures through induction and training. They know how to safeguard children and the procedures to follow in partnership with other agencies. This means that children are consistently and effectively protected.

Staff follow the individualised missing-from-home procedures and look for children when they go missing. Every effort is made to locate the child, and staff actively search known areas and speak with people who the child may be with. This proactive approach reduces the time that children are away from the home, which makes them safer.

Staff are consistent in the way they help children to manage their behaviour. Children are praised and rewarded for their positive behaviour choices and sanctions are rarely used. Children know the rules and understand that sanctions are linked to their behaviour, which helps them to understand the consequences for their action.

Staff are alert to children's emotions and are skilled in de-escalating situations. This means that children are only ever held as a last resort, and all instances are proportionate and appropriate. Staff work with children to help them understand why they are held and help them find an alternate way of responding to how they feel.

There has been one allegation made since the previous inspection. This has been fully investigated and reported to the appropriate agencies, including the local authority designated officer and Ofsted. Restorative work has been completed with the adult and child, which has helped to repair relationships and better enabled the child to trust those caring for them.

Safe recruitment checks are in place to ensure that staff are appropriately vetted as suitable to work in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a committed and experienced registered manager. Their leadership style has helped to create a stable staff team, with almost no staff turnover. Feedback from staff is positive about the support they receive from the manager and senior leaders. This caring culture cultivates staff to support each other and helps to ensure that the children are cared for by familiar and consistent adults.

Leaders and managers use feedback and reflection to learn from practice and improve children's experiences. When one child moved on from the home, the manager hosted a development day to reflect on what happened and influence decisions about the child's future. Supervision for staff and the manager takes place regularly and includes reflective discussions about safeguarding children and their own practice and

development. This helps to ensure that the manager has good oversight of his team and confidence in their ability to care for children. The manager regularly monitors and reviews the quality of care, which is evident in the level of management oversight and evaluation across the documents reviewed. However, the local authority has an appraisal system and, while the manager has no concerns around staff practice, staff's annual appraisals do not happen. This is not reflective of the statement of purpose and does not provide a process to ensure that the fitness of staff to meet children's needs is monitored and reviewed.

The manager and staff have developed strong multi-agency relationships. All professionals spoken to during the inspection spoke highly of the manager and the staff team, identifying good communication and consistent care as particular strengths.

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

Statutory requirements

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

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c))</p>	1 January 2025
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>the privacy of children is appropriately protected;</p> <p>children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and</p> <p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and</p> <p>allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p>	1 January 2025

Information about this inspection

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

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2745434

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council, Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Brian Thwaites

Inspector

Lisa Gordon, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024

2710606

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to two children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The home is owned and operated by a local authority. The home was registered with Ofsted on 15 December 2022.

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 December 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
---	-------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
---	------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
---	------

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 26 September 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/09/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are supported to have well-planned and positive moves in and out of the home. Staff work positively with children and their families to ensure that they have the right information about the home before moving in. This very much helps children to settle when they arrive and, overall, supports children to have positive introductions to the home.

Clear care planning documents help staff to have a sound understanding of the needs of the children. Staff know the children well, and positive relationships are a key feature in the home. Children clearly benefit from the consistent care given to them by staff. The result of this is that children feel valued and have trusting relationships with staff.

Children have been supported to personalise their bedrooms, which reflect their likes and personalities. They are also encouraged to have a say in how the home looks. This helps children to develop a sense of belonging.

Children are encouraged to attend school regularly and are doing well. When difficulties arise, staff are proactive in working with schools to explore ways of preventing absences. As a result, children have positive experiences at school.

Children are encouraged to take part in new activities and holidays away from the home. Staff spend time organising the photos of these activities into well-presented memory books. This helps children to keep memories and look back on their time in the home when they move on.

Children are supported to express their views and feelings both individually and in children's meetings. However, children's wishes are not always acted on by staff. One child's request for a display shelf for toys was discussed in six children's meetings. However, it is not clear in records why this was not followed up. This means that children do not always see the results of their views being listened to.

Children cannot access laundry facilities without first asking staff. The laundry is in a locked external building. This prevents children being able to wash their own clothes independently. This could impact on children's developing their independence and dignity.

Overall, the home is a welcoming and well-furnished environment. However, there are areas that are not in keeping with the rest of the home. For example, the home has tamper-proof television cabinets, which were used historically and are not currently needed. In addition, information displayed on notice boards takes away from the homely environment. This risks giving the home a more institutionalised feel and could impact on all children's experiences of the home.

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

Children's risk assessments are detailed and provide staff with clear information about children's vulnerabilities. Children are supported by staff to make safe choices alongside being encouraged to take age-appropriate risks. This helps children to make informed decisions about keeping themselves safe.

Children's behaviour is well managed in the home. Physical restraint happens only as a last resort and is well recorded. Restraint is performed by staff who are trained to do so and for the shortest time necessary to keep children safe. The manager has effective oversight of these incidents and ensures that children are offered the opportunity to speak to an independent advocate.

Various health and safety measures and risk assessment are in place to ensure that the environment is as safe as it can be for children, staff and visitors. However, the fire exits are locked at night and only able to be opened with a key. This has not been fully explored as part of the fire risk assessment. Furthermore, this practice may restrict children from being able to escape in the event of an emergency.

Staff promote positive behaviour by giving rewards, including verbal praise, prizes and extra pocket money. There are few sanctions given to children in the home. When sanctions are used, they are considered, restorative in nature and fully discussed with the children. This helps children to make positive choices.

Children do not go missing from the home. However, the manager ensures that staff are up to date with policy, practice and training should this become an issue. This helps to ensure that staff have the tools they need to keep children safe in case of missing episodes.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a suitably experienced and qualified manager. The manager has a clear view of what is currently working well in the home and areas that she wants to develop. The manager has a strong presence in the home and ensures that she spends time with the children. This helps children to develop a trusting relationship with the manager.

Leaders and managers know the children well. They have a thorough understanding of children's starting points and the progress they have made while living in the home. This helps the manager and staff to continually monitor children's progress.

Team meetings take place regularly and focus on the care given to children. This gives staff the opportunity to reflect on practice and take learning forward. This helps staff to agree and provide a consistent approach to the care given to children.

The manager ensures that staff receive regular supervision sessions. Records of these sessions show a focus on reflective practice and staff well-being. Staff said that they feel valued and supported by the manager.

The manager has effective monitoring systems in place. These help her to identify strengths and areas for development in the home. When shortfalls occur, the manager takes learning from these and supports staff to alter their approach and make improvements.

The manager ensures that staff have access to and are supported to complete a broad range of training which benefits them in their role. This means that children are given care by staff who know how to care for them. However, few staff hold the required qualification. Leaders and managers are aware of this and have plans in place to support all staff to achieve the qualification within required timescales.

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

Statutory requirement

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

Requirement	Due date
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— provide adequate means of escape from the home in the event of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(b))	13 December 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are able to access all shared areas of their home. This includes laundry facilities, unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression in the home. In particular, notices and the way that information is shared and displayed should be in keeping with a homely environment. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that children are able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, 4.11)

Information about this inspection

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

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2710606

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Vacant

Registered manager: Lindsay Cummins

Inspectors

Mark Cryer, Social Care Inspector

Lisa Gordon, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024