

PLEASE NOTE VENUE AND TIME

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA



Friday 27th April 2007

at 1.00 pm

**Belle Vue Community, Sports and Youth Centre
Kendal Road, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE:

Councillors S Allison, Barker, Clouth, R W Cook, Fleet, Gibbon, Hall, James, Laffey, A Marshall, J Marshall, Preece, Shaw, Wallace, Wistow and Wright.

Resident Representatives:

Ian Campbell, Iris Ryder and Linda Shields

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2007.

4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

4.1 Portfolio Holders Response to the 'Closure of Rossmere Swimming Pool Scrutiny Referral' – *Joint Report of the Director of Children's Services / Chief Personnel Officer and the Portfolio Holders for Children's Services and Regeneration, Liveability and Housing*

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5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS FROM COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND NON EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

- 5.1 Scrutiny Topic Referrals: North and South Neighbourhood Consultative Forums and an Elected Member – *Scrutiny Manager*

6. FORWARD PLAN

No Items.

7. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

- 7.1 Portfolio Holder's response to the actions resulting from the Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education On-Site Nursery Facility – Director of Children's Services

8. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL MONITORING/CORPORATE REPORTS

- 8.1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Corporate Assessment Report – *Assistant Chief Executive*
- 8.2 Joint Area Review of Services for Children and Young People – *Director of Children's Services*
- 8.3 Audit Commission Annual Audit and Inspection Letter – *Assistant Chief Executive/Chief Financial Officer*
- 8.4 Audit Commission Report – Use of Resources – *Chief Financial Officer*

9. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- 9.1 Final Report – Scrutiny Investigation into the Provision of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in Hartlepool Schools – *Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum*
- 9.2 Final Report – Performance and Operation of Private Sector Accommodation and Landlords in Hartlepool – *Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum*
- 9.3 Final Report – Youth Unemployment – *Chair of Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum*
- 9.4 Final Report – Social Prescribing – *Chair of Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum*
- 9.5 Final Report – Response to Hartlepool PCT's Consultation on its proposed management arrangements – *Chair of Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum*

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9.6 Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2006/07 – *Scrutiny Manager*

10. CALL-IN REQUESTS

11. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Date of Next Meeting Friday 18th May 2007 at 3.30pm in the Main Hall, Owton Manor Community Centre, Wynyard Road

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

23rd March 2007

The meeting commenced at 1.30 pm in Owton Manor Community Centre,
Wynyard Road

Present:

Councillor: Marjorie James (In the Chair)

Councillors: Mary Fleet, Gerard Hall, Pauline Laffey, Ann Marshall and Edna Wright.

Resident Representatives:
Iris Ryder

Officers: John Mennear, Assistant Director, Adult and Community Services
Paul Briggs, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Chris Little, Assistant Chief Financial Officer
David Hunt, Strategy and Performance Officer
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager
Jonathan Wistow, Scrutiny Support Officer
Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

222. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephen Allison, Caroline Barker, Rob Cook, Steve Gibbon, Arthur Preece, Jane Shaw and Gerald Wistow.

223. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

224. Minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2007

Confirmed.

225. Matters Arising

It was noted that the proposed meeting referred to in minute 211, had been arranged for 10th April 2007 at 5.00pm, venue to be confirmed.

226. Withdrawal of European Structural Funding to the Voluntary Sector within Hartlepool – Scrutiny Referral (*Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee*)

The report outlined the draft findings and conclusions of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's investigation in relation to the Withdrawal of European Structural Funding to the Voluntary Sector within Hartlepool.

The Scrutiny Support Officer outlined the conclusions of the report which the Committee had reached over the course of the investigation:

- a) That The UK will receive about half the total sum in funding through European Structural Funding under the 2007-13 round of funding, compared with 2000-06.
- b) That a number of witnesses including ESFVON, TVSJU, Council officers and representatives of the CVS have argued that the 2000-06 Objective 2 Programme Priority 4 programme of European Funding (concerned with community regeneration) was very successful and that across Hartlepool the CVS has been particularly successful in accessing funding from this. Hartlepool's total amounted to 10.2% of the funding available for the North East, whilst its population is only 3.54%.
- c) The fact that there is less European Structural Funding available now means that there is likely to be more competition within the region and sub-region to access the available European monies. Therefore, it is less likely that Hartlepool will be able 'overachieve' to the same proportion, within a smaller budget.
- d) That Members were concerned that the additional pressures resulting from a reduction in European Funding had led the Government and regional government (through GONE and ONE) to focus the remaining funding on economic development at the expense of social funding objectives.
- e) That Co-financing under the 2007-13 programme of European Funding will further limit the potential of CVS bodies to access European Funding and that this will require partnerships of CVS groups to access this funding.
- f) Given the hierarchical nature of this issue there is limited amount that can be done locally to change the nature of funding allocation. Indeed, ESFVON and the TVJSU (in consultation with CVS bodies and Local Authorities) have both lobbied nationally and regionally to request that more of the available funding is allocated to communities and social regeneration, rather than to skills and economic regeneration. However, it has remained the Government's, and

regions, priority to improve economic sustainability as a means to improving social cohesion.

- g) Over the course of the investigation a number of Members have expressed a desire to see some form of partnership-based approach to responding to the pressures resulting from changes to European funding. This has included the suggestion that a 'core' CVS organisation is established, which will have the capacity to help smaller CVS organisations. Similar suggestions from Members have included the need to establish a partnership / working party to respond to this issue strategically, which would include Council and CVS representatives.

In addition to the above conclusions, particular attention was drawn to a number of suggestions from Members on how the Local Authority and its partners on the LSP could respond to this issue.

A discussion ensued which included the following issues:

- **In relation to the tapering funding arrangements, were there any other options that could be explored?** The Assistant Director, Adult and Community Services indicated that the tapering arrangements were initially introduced three years ago when the criteria for Community Pool grants was reviewed with the aim of helping groups achieve sustainability.
- **If an organisation received a grant, could they apply again after the 3-year funding package ended?** The Assistant Director of Adult and Community Services responded that it was the intention of Community Pool Grants that organisations receiving 3 year's tapered funding arrangements be self-sufficient beyond these grants.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee were requested to give delegated authority to the Chair to approve the final report.

Decision

- (i) That the final report include the following recommendations:
- (a) That a Working Group comprised of representatives from the Council (both elected Members and Officers), the Community and Voluntary Sector, partners from the LSP, and other external representatives (depending on the issues under discussion) is established and that in particular it focuses on:
- 1) Developing an ongoing approach to respond to the loss of European Funding locally and the consequences this will have on the CVS, and it does so by focusing on such issues as, for example: 'sustainability'; the Community Pool criteria; and developing a partnership based approach to responding to the consequences of a reduction in European Funding; and

- 2) Producing a response to this issue that will enable the Authority to lobby the local MP, national government, GONE and ONE about these changes.

- (ii) That delegated authority be given to enable the Chair to approve the final report

227. Building Schools for the Future: Stage Two Consultation *(Director of Children's Services)*

The Assistant Director, Children's Services presented a report which informed Members of the outcomes of the second stage of consultation in preparation for the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. A report was submitted to Cabinet on 19th March 2007 and Members were asked to note that all three recommendations were accepted and approved, this was attached as Appendix A.

The report provided a summary of the outcomes of the second stage consultation process in preparation for Building Schools for the Future, reports on discussions from Stakeholder Board and Project Board and made recommendations about the next issues which needed to be addressed and the processes to be followed.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director of Children's Services indicated that any specialist provision currently provided at Brierton, would be transferred to another school. A key aim of Building Schools for the Future, was that all schools should be accessible to all pupils.

Decision

- (i) The outcomes of the second stage of the consultation prepared for the Building Schools for the Future be received. .
- (ii) The decisions agreed by Cabinet on 19th March 2007 be noted.

228. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Reports of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

None.

229. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews from Council, Executive Members and Non Executive Members

None.

230. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents – Corporate Plan 2007/08 – Collective Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees *(Scrutiny Manager)*

Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee considered a report presented by the Scrutiny Manager which outlined the collective feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the proposed objectives and actions as outlined in the Draft Corporate Plan 2007/08.

The Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee, that whilst Members were supportive of the proposed objectives and actions as outlined in the Draft Corporate Plan for 2007/08, a number of comments were raised in relation to specific areas of the Plan and these were detailed as follows:

Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

- (i) **HC02** - The Forum queried the take up of healthy school meals and were advised that whilst there had been drop off, a strategy had been developed to deal with the issue. The Forum was also advised that officers would like to see legislation with nutritional standards for packed lunches.
- (ii) **SC06** – The Forum queried if work had been undertaken to ascertain what other local authorities were doing. Members were assured that other local authorities had been contacted and that efforts were being made to encourage outside businesses and supermarkets to participate in initiatives to make Hartlepool a Fairtrade Town.
- (iii) **EO3** – The Forum highlighted the ongoing issue of subsidised bus services and in particular the issue of the provision of transport to hospitals outside Hartlepool. Members were advised that work was being undertaken to look at this issue with Stagecoach and options considered for the provision of a service by the Local Authority.

Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

- (i) In relation to the general issue of performance indicators the Forum:-
 - Expressed concern that schools were being 'over faced' and emphasised the importance of children rather than achieving

targets;

- Queried how 'value added' figures were utilised in the setting of targets and were advised that current BVPI's were based around actual figures and only looked at the high level of indicators; and
 - Highlighted that figures were not always clear as the percentages used can related to small numbers. This could provide an inaccurate picture.
- (ii) In relation to children being taken out of school during term time to go on holiday, the Forum was advised of work being undertaken with local travel agents regarding initiatives to address the pricing of holidays during school holidays. Members were of the view that this work should be encouraged.
- (iii) **BVPI 38 to 41** - In relation to figures for the percentage of pupils achieving Members expressed concern regarding the setting of unrealistic targets for schools. The Forum was assured that targets were set following validation of last year's figures and in conjunction with schools and school governors. It was also highlighted that the Corporate Strategy Division had a role in challenging targets that were felt to be unrealistic.
- (iv) **BVPI 197** - Disappointment was expressed that despite all of the work undertaken in Hartlepool in relation to the issue of teenage pregnancies, the figures were still on the increase.
- (v) **LAA LLS6a to LAA LLS10c** – The Forum expressed concern that targets for the NRS area in Hartlepool were unrealistic as they relate to the most deprived areas of the town. It was, however, highlighted that this could be a way of highlighting areas where additional resources should be targeted across the town.

Decision

That the collective feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in relation to the proposed objectives and actions as outlined in the Draft Corporate Plan 2007/08 be received and use to form the basis of the formal response of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to Cabinet on 16th April 2007.

231. Consideration of financial monitoring/corporate reports – Quarter 3 – Corporate Plan Progress and Revenue Financial Management Report 2006/07
(Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer)

A copy of the comprehensive report which was presented to Cabinet on 19th February 2007 was submitted for the Committee's consideration. The Strategy and Performance Officer briefly outlined the overall performance and progress on actions and key performance indicators. The Assistant Chief Financial Officer gave a brief overview of the Council's anticipated 2006/2007 Revenue Outturn.

A discussion ensued which included the following issues:

- (i) Members had concerns that underspends specifically allocated for certain projects, were being utilised for other projects. It was suggested that any underspends should be brought back into the General Fund from where it was issued. The Assistant Chief Financial Officer indicated that any underspends were reported to this Committee as part of the final outturn.
- (ii) Were the Council in the process of taking over the land at Navigation Point in view of the funding allocated for street cleaning in this area? The Assistant Chief Financial Officer indicated that this was a longstanding problem that the Director of Neighbourhood Services was in the process of negotiating with the owners of the area in relation to recovery action of costs incurred being pursued. It was noted that the perception of this area was that it was public open space and therefore local authority responsibility and detracted from the marina area if left unkempt.
- (iii) Members sought clarification of why NDC wardens were included as an adverse variance? The Assistant Chief Financial Officer responded that the Wardens fixed term contracts were coming to an end due to the phasing out of NRF and NDC funding. Work was currently being undertaken to realign this budget in line with service requirements and this adverse variance was a temporary measure.
- (iv) Why was there an adverse variance for Town Care Management? The Assistant Chief Financial Officer indicated that this reflected the need to maintain high environmental standards which had involved an increase in work undertaken by this service.
- (v) Members sought clarification on the number of CRB checks undertaken and the costs associated with this. The Assistant Chief Financial Officer responded that the adverse variance was due to a reduction in recharge income following the cancellation of two Service Level Agreements. It was added that national legislation stipulated

that a CRB check had to be undertaken for each organisation separately.

Decision

That the report be noted.

231. Consideration of financial monitoring/corporate reports – Quarter 3 – NRF, Capital and Accountable Body Programme Monitoring Report 2006/07 *(Chief Financial Officer)*

A copy of the comprehensive report that had been presented to Cabinet on 19th February 2007 was submitted for the Committee's consideration. The Assistant Chief Financial Officer highlighted the principal issues for the Committee's information. Details of the various accountable body programmes were also submitted for information within the report.

Members sought clarification on the timescale for the proposed PCT development at the Barlows site in Park Road. The Assistant Chief Financial Officer indicated that the costs for the clearance of the site were met by the Authority but this was included in the income from the sale of the land. The Chair added that a Scrutiny referral had recently been made to the Committee to examine the mix of services provided by the PCT across the town and this development would be included in this.

Decision

That the report be noted.

MARJORIE JAMES

CHAIR

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27 April 2007



Report of: Joint Report of Director of Children's Services and the Chief Personnel Services Officer and the Portfolio Holders for Children's Services, Performance Management and Regeneration, Liveability and Housing.

Subject PORTFOLIO HOLDERS RESPONSE TO THE CLOSURE OF ROSSMERE SWIMMING POOL SCRUTINY REFERRAL

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with feedback on the recommendations from the investigation into the Closure of Rossmere Swimming Pool Scrutiny Referral, which was reported to Council on 14 December 2006.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The investigation into the Closure of Rossmere Swimming Pool Scrutiny Referral conducted by this Committee falls under the remit of the Children's Services and Chief Executive Departments and is, under the Executive Delegation Scheme, within the service area covered by the Children's Services, Performance Management and Regeneration and Planning Services Portfolio Holders.
- 2.2 On 14 December 2006, Council considered the Final Report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee into the Closure of Rossmere Swimming Pool Scrutiny Referral. This report provides feedback from the Portfolio Holders following the Council's consideration of, and decisions in relation to this Committee's recommendations.
- 2.3 In addition to this report a further progress report will be produced for Member's consideration by the responsible service department(s) six months after the Final Report was considered by Council to enable Members to monitor the implementation of their recommendations.

3. SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXECUTIVE DECISION

- 3.1 Following consideration of the Final Report, Council approved the recommendations in their entirety. Details of each recommendation and proposed actions to be taken following approval by Council are provided in the Action Plan attached at **Appendix A**.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That Members note the proposed actions detailed within the Action Plan, appended to this report (**Appendix A**) and seek clarification on its content where felt appropriate.

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Chief Executive's Department
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's Final Report into the Closure of Rossmere Swimming Pool Scrutiny Referral considered by Council 14 December 2006.
- (ii) Decision Record of Council held on 14 December 2006.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Closure of Rossmere Swimming Pool Scrutiny Referral

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: Council on 14 December 2006

RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(a)	That the Executive makes the necessary arrangements to ensure that the Rossmere Pool site is cleared and that the land is re-instated forthwith.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building demolished site cleared. 2. Site re-seeded 	Asset Manager (Children's Services)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 12 Jan 07 2. 20 April 07
(b)	The Executive ensures that the ongoing responsibility for the maintenance of Council properties is reviewed regularly and that the appropriate Health and Safety Inspections are carried out annually.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence of health and safety inspections undertaken on a quarterly basis 2006/07. 2. Evidence of health and safety inspections scheduled to be undertaken on a six monthly basis 2007/08. 3. Annual health and safety inspections w ef 1.4.08 if considered appropriate after risk assessment. 4. Annual joint health and safety/ property services inspections w ef 1.4.07. 	Chief Personnel Officer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2006/07 2. 2007/08 3. w ef 1.4.08 4. w ef 1.4.07

(c)	That where significant issues are identified as a result of Health and Safety Inspection, that these matters are reported to the relevant Portfolio Holder.	Definition of 'significant' is high risk of occurrence of high risk of impact which could cause harm to people. No significant issues identified in 2006/07.	Chief Personnel Officer	On-going
(d)	That the Authority's Children's Services Department makes appropriate budgetary provision for the maintenance of Brinkburn Swimming Pool, in light of the recent conditions assessment, so that it meets the same standards of the schools on-site swimming pools;	Separate budgetary provision for Brinkburn Swimming Pool took effect from 1 April 2007. Capital support for maintenance/condition issues will come via the Corporate Planned Maintenance Programme, Children's Services RCCO and, with appropriate member approval, the "ring fenced funding" set aside for swimming facilities in the town.	Asset Manager (Children's Services)	On-going from 1 April 2007
(e)	That representatives of the Hartlepool Swimming Club are invited to work with the Authority's Children's Services Department to ensure that where concerns are identified in relation to the condition/maintenance of the Brinkburn Swimming Pool, these are rectified as soon as is practicable.	The Hartlepool Swimming Club are no longer using the Brinkburn Pool on a regular basis. Any club or organised group using the pool in the future will be given direct access to a pool management representative regarding all aspects of their pool usage.	Head of Finance (Children's Services)	Ongoing from 1 April 2007
(f)	That an annual review of the Swimming Strategy is undertaken and the findings of which are reported to	1. The Swim Development Strategy was adopted over 18 months ago. The first annual report will be	Swim Development Co-ordinator	1. May 2007

	the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.	<p>presented shortly to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation.</p> <p>2. The Indoor Sports Strategy, which includes swimming facilities, is due for completion in May 2007. This document will assist directly with the development of a policy as to future investment incorporating the planned H2O Centre and potential investment via Building Schools for the Future. An appropriate report will be presented to the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.</p>	Assistant Director (Community Services)	2. June, 2007
(g)	That where the Executive / responsible Portfolio Holder considers buildings that have been identified as surplus to the needs of the Council, that renovation and demolition costs are considered amongst the options for its future use.	Where a school swimming facility is considered to be surplus to the overall needs of the Authority, an appropriate report identify options and the consequences of those options will be presented to the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).	Assistant Director (RSS) Children's Services	As appropriate

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27 April 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Manager

Subject: SCRUTINY TOPIC REFERRALS: NORTH AND SOUTH NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATIVE FORUMS AND AN ELECTED MEMBER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee that a number of recent scrutiny topic referrals have been made from the North and South Neighbourhood Consultative Forums, and from an Elected Member under the Scrutiny Referral Pro-forma.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 This report outlines a number of Scrutiny Referrals from the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums and from an Elected Member under the Scrutiny Referral Pro-Forma. Within the Authority's Constitution, the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee has discretion over whether it will consider these issues. However, if a decision is made not to examine these issues it must be justified and reported to Council and the referring body or individual.
- 2.2 In addition, the Constitution identifies a number of criteria to aid Members of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee in assessing the appropriateness of undertaking a scrutiny investigation of non-mandatory scrutiny topic referrals. The criteria are, whether the issue:-
- (a) Affects a group of people living within the Hartlepool area;
 - (b) Relates to a service, event or issue in which the Council has direct responsibility for, significant influence over or has the capacity to act as public champion;
 - (c) Not be an issue which overview and scrutiny has considered during the last 12 months;
 - (d) Not relate to a service complaint; and
 - (e) Not relate to matters dealt with by another Council committee, unless the issue deals with procedure and policy related issues.

- 2.3 The Referrals to Scrutiny are as outlined below :-
- (a) Role and meaning of 'Extended Schools': implications for sustainability and accountability of community usage;
 - (b) Coastal Walkway; and
 - (c) Health Deficits.
- 2.4 These Referrals are outlined in more details in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.11 below :-
- 2.5 Role and Meaning of 'Extended Schools': Implications for Sustainability and Accountability of Community Usage - At its meeting on 30 March 2007 the South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum referred the issue of the "Role and meaning of 'Extended Schools': implications for sustainability and accountability of community usage" to Scrutiny.
- 2.6 Given that the responsibility for this issue lies with the Children's Services Department the issue falls under the remit of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum.
- 2.7 Coastal Walkways - At its meeting on 28 March 2007 the North Neighbourhood Consultative Forum referred the issue of the "Coastal Walkway" to Scrutiny for consideration. The following issues were highlighted for investigation by the Scrutiny function:
- (a) The lack of investment in care / attention to the walkways;
 - (b) The lack of access for public use;
 - (c) The need for accessibility to enhance public use and promote fitness and recreation within the town; and
 - (d) The need for the provision of a link from the walkway to Hart Station.
- 2.8 Given that the main focus of this referral relates to public rights of way the responsibility for this issue lies predominantly with the Adult and Community Services Department. Consequently the issue falls under the remit of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum.
- 2.9 Health Deficits - On 22 March 2007 an Elected Member made a Referral through the Scrutiny Referral Pro-Forma mechanism in relation to "Health Deficits". It has recently been reported that over two thirds of Councils have been adversely affected by the financial deficits of their local Primary Care Trusts. 36% of Councils, according to a Local Government Association (LGA) survey expect the pressure on them, as a result of such deficits, to increase over the next financial year. In addition, 40% of Councils responding to the LGA survey have reported "cost shunting", where cases that appear to be the NHS's responsibility are referred to Local Authorities.

A further 24% of Authorities reported PCTs failing to fully fund agreed or jointly funded services, while 13.3% reported withdrawals from local area or other agreements.

- 2.10 Consequently, the referral asks that the issue of Health Deficits is investigated so that the local position in regard to this issue can be explored, with a view to keeping the costs of referrals of health deficits to the Council down.
- 2.11 Given that the main focus of this referral relates to the NHS this issue falls under the remit of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 In line with Council procedure, it is recommended that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee considers on an individual basis the appropriateness of undertaking scrutiny investigations into the topics outlined below, and if felt suitable incorporates the issues within the forthcoming Work Programme for 2007/08:-
 - (a) Role and meaning of 'Extended Schools': implications for sustainability and accountability of community usage (South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum Scrutiny Referral);
 - (b) Coastal Walkway (North Neighbourhood Consultative Forum Scrutiny Referral); and
 - (c) Health Deficits (Elected Member Scrutiny Referral).

Contact Officer:- Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- (a) Minutes of the South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum held on 30 March 2007.
- (b) Minutes of the North Neighbourhood Consultative Forum held on 28 March 2007.
- (c) Elected Member Scrutiny Referral Pro-forma dated 22 March 2007.

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27 April 2007



Report of: The Director of Children's Services

Subject PORTFOLIO HOLDERS RESPONSE TO THE ACTIONS RESULTING FROM THE CLOSURE OF THE COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION'S ON-SITE NURSERY FACILITY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with feedback on actions resulting from the closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education's onsite nursery facility.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education's on-site nursery facility highlighted two actions for follow up by the Early Years and Childcare Team (EYCT) within the Children's Services Department.
- 2.2 The updated action plan, attached as **Appendix A** details the two actions and briefly describes how the team has made progress against them.

3. CHILDCARE PROVISION IN HARTLEPOOL

- 3.1 Information prepared for the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee as part of the First Steps closure highlighted concern for the number of daycare places in Hartlepool. As a result of this action the EYCT now has a detailed analysis of both registered and unregistered childcare provision in Hartlepool (covering daycare, childminding and out of school provision), total available capacity and, in the case of full daycare, a monthly report on the take up and availability of places. Childcare places information is available for the whole of the town and can be broken down by ward for analysis.
- 3.2 Childcare providers are supplied with market sector information by the EYCT through a bi-monthly business newsletter. In addition, providers can view information on both the local and national childcare market sector to ensure they have up-to-date business information which in turn can be used to shape their business practice.

- 3.3 The Children's Information Service now monitors enquiries for 'unmet demand'. This information is used to support the planning of new childcare places and assist providers in diversification of existing childcare provision.

4. BARRIERS TO CHILDCARE

- 4.1 The EYCT collects information from parents and through stakeholders identifying childcare as a barrier to the take up of training, employment and education. Parent consultation has been through one to one discussions with parents accessing SureStart Children's Centres, closely supported with information from those parents accessing groups such as PATCH. Where childcare is perceived as a barrier to training, education and employment, mechanisms to remove such barriers are put in place through support by all relevant stakeholders.
- 4.2 A SureStart Training and Employment task group meets every six weeks to discuss parental participation in training, employment and education. This is closely supported by stakeholders such as Jobcentre Plus, Hartlepool Working Solutions and post 16 training providers. Evidence and information from stakeholders working directly with parents is used to shape childcare provision for parents.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee notes the progress against actions.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in the preparations of this report.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education's on-site Nursery Facility Scrutiny Referral

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Council on 14 September 2006)

RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(a) That a formal feedback mechanism be established with regard to the dissemination of information throughout the Authority for Elected Members serving on internal and external bodies (as also recommended by the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum during the undertaking of the Partnerships Enquiry, accepted by the Cabinet in May 2006).	The Action Plan devised for the Partnerships Enquiry proposed that: <i>The Constitution Working Group should consider establishing feedback mechanisms from its representatives on Partnerships to Council.</i> This action was agreed by Cabinet on 29 August 2006.	Tony Brown	December 2006
(b) That the Council seeks to engage all partners to establish a comprehensive picture of childcare provision in Hartlepool that focuses particularly on demand and supply in relation to nursery care provision together with an understanding of the extent to	In accordance with the 10 Year Childcare Strategy the Early Years and Childcare team will carry out a detailed childcare sufficiency assessment in order to help the local childcare market respond to local demand. In addition the EYCT will undertake	Penny Thompson	December 06

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education's on-site Nursery Facility Scrutiny Referral

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Council on 14 September 2006)

RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
	<p>which parents with young children experience barriers to access to further education.</p> <p>consultation with parents of young children in order to ascertain the extent to which the take up of childcare places is a barrier to accessing further education</p> <p>A detailed analysis of registered and unregistered provision is available by ward showing total capacity and in the case of full daycare showing occupancy and therefore availability/take up of places.</p> <p>Childcare providers are now notified of the current state of the market sector in Hartlepool via a –bi-monthly business Inewsletter. In addition this information is available via a national website, childcare link. The Childrens Information</p>		

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

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RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
	<p>Service closely monitors “unmet demand childcare enquires” and this information is strategically used to inform the planning of future childcare places.</p> <p>In addition the EYCT will undertake consultation with parents of young children in order to ascertain the extent to which the take up of childcare places is a barrier to accessing further education</p> <p>The EYCT collects information directly from parents and through appropriate stakeholders regarding the barriers to the take up of training, employment and education and this includes childcare as a barrier to take up.</p>	Danielle Swainston	January 07

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

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DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Council on 14 September 2006)

RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
		<p>Parent consultation is conducted via one to one discussions, with Job Centre Plus benefit claimants, group discussions with parents who access Sure Start Childrens Centres and parents accessing PATCH groups.</p> <p>Stakeholder consultation is conducted via a 6 weekly training and employment task group and regular meetings with colleagues in Job Centre Plus</p>		

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27 April 2007



Report of: Assistant Chief Executive

Subject: COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT
– Corporate Assessment Report

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the Audit Commission's Corporate Assessment Report of the Council.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the Audit Commission undertook an inspection of the Authority in the period 27 November to 8 December 2006. This assessment was against the Audit Commission's framework for CPA which is called 'The Harder Test'.
- 2.2 The Authority had prepared a self assessment as required by the Audit Commission and a working group of members from Scrutiny were involved in this process.
- 2.3 The report from the Audit Commission is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report. This report was published on 13 March 2007.
- 2.4 The report provides a series of scored judgements against key criteria. The overall score for the authority is 3 (out of a possible 4). This score is combined with others to provide an overall rating for CPA. Based on current scores for what are termed "service blocks" the combined overall CPA rating for the Council would remain 4*.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members of the Committee note the content of the report.

CONTACT OFFICER

Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive

Corporate Assessment

Hartlepool Borough Council

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high quality local services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we ensure that public services are good value for money and that public money is properly spent.

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Introduction

- 1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the means by which the Audit Commission fulfils its statutory duty under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make an assessment, and report on the performance, of local authorities. Corporate assessment is one element in the overall assessment that leads to a CPA score and category.
- 2 The purpose of the corporate assessment is to assess how well the Council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others, and ensures continuous improvement across the range of Council activities. It seeks to answer three headline questions which are underpinned by five specific themes.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

- sustainable communities and transport;
- safer and stronger communities;
- healthier communities;
- older people; and
- children and young people.

- 3 Corporate assessments are normally aligned with a joint area review of services for children and young people (JAR). In practice this means that the Council's achievements in relation to children and young people are assessed using the evidence provided from the JAR. In addition, examples of outcomes and activity, which are relevant to the other themes and which are identified through the JAR, are considered within the corporate assessment.

- 4** The JAR covers all services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes. The separate JAR report covers the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that such services work together to improve outcomes. The description and judgement in respect of children and young people in this report is summarised from the JAR report.

Executive summary

- 5 Hartlepool Borough Council is performing well. Ambitions and action to achieve them are founded on a strong drive to improve life in Hartlepool. The Council has a very good understanding of the significant needs which have been generated by industrial decline and long-standing deprivation and of local people's priorities. There has been significant progress in improving outcomes for local people in Hartlepool, and the gap between the quality of life in Hartlepool and other areas has narrowed in most respects. The achievements are supported by excellent partnership working and by very effective community leadership by the Council.
- 6 While the quality of life in Hartlepool is still poorer than national averages, the Council and its partners share a determination to improve outcomes for local people. This commonality of purpose is very strong and informs the way the members of the Hartlepool Partnership work together to define and deliver the ambitions of the Community Strategy 2002-2015.
- 7 The priority aims of the Community Strategy are wide ranging and embrace the key issues for Hartlepool people. The Council works to these priority aims and there is a very clear link from the Community Strategy through the Council's Corporate Plan to departmental and service plans and staff objectives. Good communications help councillors, staff and partners to understand the Council's objectives and to work together very effectively for their achievement.
- 8 Excellent consultation and engagement with local people and good use of data enable identification of local needs and priorities. The Council's services all have a strong focus on their users and in particular on the needs of the more deprived and disadvantaged communities. Neighbourhood Consultative Forums directly involve local people in service planning and in some decision making. The Council is taking a thorough approach to developing its arrangements for equality and diversity and is making good use of new arrangements to engage directly with minority communities.
- 9 The Mayor and Cabinet provide very effective community leadership, facilitating the achievement of shared aims with partners. Scrutiny committees work well in providing appropriate challenge to the Cabinet and to partners. Some weaknesses in political arrangements, including insufficient delegation on planning and a lack of transparency for the public, partners and Council staff on the function and status of the Administration Group, do not prevent overall political management from operating effectively.
- 10 Officer leadership and management are good. Staff at all levels demonstrate very strong commitment to delivering quality services. Officers work productively across departmental and organisational boundaries and are well supported by training programmes. The Council is using innovative approaches to procurement including long term partnering, joint commissioning, joint tendering, and working with the voluntary sector and other local authorities but it is not fully realising the benefits of strategic procurement or of new ways of working.

- 11 Financial capacity is good and the Council has substantial reserves. The Council uses its budget processes effectively to ensure that priorities are funded. While there is no formal medium term financial strategy, the Council has practical arrangements for financial planning in the medium term. Overall financial capacity is greatly enhanced by the Council's ability to attract significant external funding, which is well managed. Day to day financial management is effective and the Council provides good value for money.
- 12 Good performance management enables the Council and its partners to monitor and drive progress. There is a strong focus on improvement. Councillors and officers are open about performance and take action to improve performance when they need to do so. Performance often ranks among the best in England.
- 13 Outstanding partnership working is achieving improved outcomes almost without exception across national and local priorities. The Council has a strong and thorough approach to regeneration as essential to improving the quality of life in Hartlepool. There is good integration of housing and environmental improvements as key components of the regeneration of neighbourhoods. The economic gap between Hartlepool and the rest of the country has narrowed. Environmental services are good, with effective action by the Council to keep the borough clean while reducing waste and increasing recycling.
- 14 Crime rates overall have risen but there have been reductions in some types of crime and fear of crime has fallen significantly. The Council and its partners have had significant success in narrowing the gap between crime levels in Hartlepool and national averages. The Hartlepool Partnership has made tackling anti-social behaviour a priority in response to local concerns. Good work to reduce drug addiction is bringing positive results. Accident levels are falling. The Council is sustaining and improving community cohesion.
- 15 The Council and its partners are working well together to tackle the health inequalities suffered in Hartlepool. Health is improving and life expectancy is increasing. Premature deaths from heart disease and cancer have reduced and are on track to meet local targets. The prevalence of smoking is still high but has reduced. Teenage pregnancy rates are also reducing. There is good work to improve health through housing and physical activity programmes. However in spite of this progress, the gap between health outcomes in Hartlepool and the rest of the country is widening.
- 16 There is a strong and inclusive strategic approach to services for older people. Older people in Hartlepool are increasingly involved in a wide range of activities and in the development of services. There is a focus on independence and well being. Social care for older people is very good.

- 17 Outcomes for children and young people are good, supported by strong partnership working. Health education and provision are good. Vulnerable children and young people are well safeguarded through effective action by all agencies. Early years and childcare provision are good, and educational attainment continues to improve, but the number not in education, employment or training remains high. Support for school improvement and provision for children with special education needs are particular strengths. Multi-agency work to reduce offending and anti-social behaviour is good.

Areas for improvement

- 18 There are a number of ways in which the Council can further improve the way it works.
- 19 The Council does not have a formal approach to medium term financial planning. While it has a very good framework for performance management, the Council could improve its financial and performance planning by developing and adopting a formal medium term financial strategy, clearly linked to Council objectives and funding streams and to its role in delivering the Community Strategy.
- 20 The Council could further enhance its capacity to deliver its objectives and further stimulate modernisation of the Council's functions by developing a strategic approach to working with the voluntary sector, including funding arrangements, which maximises the sector's potential to improve the quality of life in Hartlepool and to enable these organisations to plan ahead in support of the Council's objectives; and by reviewing its approach to strategic procurement and business process re-engineering to ensure that these produce the maximum gains in terms of outcomes for service users and efficiency.
- 21 The Council has effective political management, but it could further improve this by reviewing delegation arrangements for planning to ensure swift, transparent and efficient decision-making; and by clarifying the status and function of the Administration Group to make it transparent and understandable within and outside the Council.

Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	4
	Prioritisation	3
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	3
	Performance management	3
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
Overall corporate assessment score**		3
*Key to scores		
1 – below minimum requirements – inadequate performance 2 – at only minimum requirements – adequate performance 3 – consistently above minimum requirements – performing well 4 – well above minimum requirements – performing strongly		

**Rules for determining the overall corporate assessment score

Scores on 5 themes	Overall corporate assessment score
Two or more themes with a score of 4 None less than score of 3	4
Three or more themes with a score of 3 or more None less than score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

Context

The locality

- 22 Hartlepool is on the north east coast of England, at the northern end of the Teesside conurbation. It is a coastal town with a rural belt to the west. It experienced significant growth during the early nineteenth century to provide port facilities and associated industry for local entrepreneurs, becoming the fourth largest port in the country by 1850. The decline of the north east's coal mining and heavy industries and of the associated port trade during the last 50 years has had a significant impact on the town, which now suffers high levels of deprivation and has large areas of derelict land.
- 23 The population of 90,000 people includes a slightly higher proportion of both children and older people than the national averages. 1.2 per cent of the population are from black and ethnic minority communities; altogether 2 per cent of the total population are of groups other than white British. The borough is the 14th most deprived of the 354 English boroughs and over half of Hartlepool's residents live in areas which are among the 10 per cent most disadvantaged in the country.
- 24 More people in Hartlepool suffer poor health than the average for England. A quarter of the population have limiting long term illnesses, life expectancy for both men and women is lower than national averages and deaths from heart disease and cancer are significantly higher than average. There are health inequalities within Hartlepool, with a difference of 13 years in average life expectancy between the best and worst wards. Both the prevalence of smoking (34 per cent, rising to 44 per cent in the most deprived wards) and the incidence of teenage pregnancies are high. Hartlepool is a Department of Health Spearhead Authority in recognition of the significant and complex health issues in the local population.
- 25 Fewer people than average are in professional and managerial jobs and more people are in low skilled jobs than the average for Great Britain; employment in manufacturing and construction is relatively high, with fewer people employed in service industries. At 4.2 per cent, unemployment is higher than the national and regional averages. Fewer people are owner-occupiers of housing and more are in rented accommodation than the average for England and Wales. Crime levels are higher than national averages.
- 26 In spite of the decline in the local economy, Hartlepool remains an active port with sizeable facilities. It has several historic sites linked to its maritime heritage. Transport links to the region and beyond are via the A19 north-south trunk road, which suffers from congestion, and some east-west main roads. Direct rail links are currently confined to the north east region.

The Council

- 27 Hartlepool is the second smallest unitary council in England. It has 47 ward councillors and a Mayor who is elected on a borough-wide basis. Of the ward councillors, 27 are from the Labour party and six are from the Liberal Democrat party. There are nine Independent councillors, four Conservative councillors and one United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) councillor. A number of Independent councillors, the UKIP councillor and the Conservative councillors make up an 'Administration Group' which is not formally aligned to any of the party political groups.
- 28 The Council has an elected Mayor, Cabinet and Scrutiny political structure. The Mayor was first elected in 2002 and was re-elected in 2005 with a greatly increased majority. He is independent of any political grouping in the Council and leads a Cabinet of Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent councillors. Cabinet portfolios are for Regeneration, Liveability and Housing; Culture, Leisure and Transportation; Performance Management; Children's Services; Adult Service and Public Health; and Finance. Portfolio holders have delegated decision making powers exercised through Portfolio meetings which are open to the public.
- 29 A Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee is responsible for the management of the scrutiny process and co-ordinates the work of the four Scrutiny Forums, for Regeneration and Planning Services, Adult and Community Services and Health, Neighbourhood Services and Children's Services. There are two regulatory committees, for Licensing and Planning, a General Purposes Committee and a Contract Scrutiny Panel. The Standards Committee includes three independent members, two of whom are the chair and vice-chair.
- 30 Three Neighbourhood Consultative Forums (for North, South and Central) include ward councillors and elected resident representatives and meet in public every two months within the areas. The Forums are responsible for Neighbourhood Action Plans in six deprived areas. They also provide information to local residents on services provided by the Council and its partners and act as forums for local consultation.
- 31 The Council has approximately 4,600 staff in five departments: Regeneration and Planning, Neighbourhood Services, Adult and Community Services, Children's Services and Chief Executive's. In 2006/07 it has a net revenue budget of just over £75.5 million, excluding school expenditure, its capital investment programme is almost £27 million and it has reserves of £31 million. Council Tax increased by 4.9 per cent for 2006/07, and its average level stands at 1 per cent below the average for unitary councils; in 2001/02 Hartlepool's Council Tax was over 5 per cent above that for unitary councils. The Council has significant external funding including Neighbourhood Renewal, New Deal for Communities and Housing Market Renewal grants; over half of its capital budget is from specific grants.

- 32** The Council works with a number of providers. In 2004 it transferred its housing stock to a new social housing organisation, Housing Hartlepool. All residential social care for adults and children and two thirds of domiciliary care for adults is provided by other organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. ICT provision is by a private sector partner.
- 33** The local strategic partnership, the Hartlepool Partnership, draws together a range of partners from public, private and voluntary sectors in the development and delivery of the Community Strategy 2002-2015. The Partnership is chaired by the Member of Parliament for Hartlepool. The Community Strategy is reviewed every five years and has been reviewed and revised during 2006 for adoption in spring 2007. The revised Strategy incorporates the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and the Sustainable Development (Local Agenda 21) Strategy.
- 34** Hartlepool has a Local Area Agreement. The Council is a member of the Tees Valley Partnership, which focuses on the economic development of the area and prepared the business case for a Tees Valley 'city region' presented to the Government in autumn 2006.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

Ambition

- 35 The Council is performing strongly in this area. Ambitions for Hartlepool are founded on a strong sense of the needs of local communities and of the legacy of industrial decline and impact of long-standing deprivation. A very strong Community Strategy focuses on narrowing the gap between the quality of life in Hartlepool and in the rest of the country. It drives the ambitions and actions of the Council and other partners. A widely shared clarity of purpose and outstanding partnership working drive action to deliver the shared ambitions.
- 36 The Council and its partners share a very strong determination to improve the quality of life in the borough. This commonality of purpose is expressed clearly and robustly in the Community Strategy 2002-2015 which, together with its action plan, sets out clear and challenging ambitions for the borough. Around a vision of 'a prosperous, caring, confident and outward looking community, in an attractive environment, realising its potential', the Community Strategy has seven 'priority aims': Jobs and the Economy, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Health and Care, Community Safety, Environment and Housing, Culture and Leisure, and Strengthening Communities.
- 37 The Community Strategy presents a challenging agenda for the partners in reducing inequalities for Hartlepool people. There are detailed objectives for each of the priority aims which recognise the gap in the quality of life for many Hartlepool residents and that experienced elsewhere in the north east and in the country as a whole. The Strategy's targets for improvement are clear, outcome-focused and identify what needs to be achieved in the medium and longer terms. The targets differentiate the more deprived areas of the borough; for example, the target to halve the 6 per cent gap in 2002 between the employment rate in Hartlepool and the national rate is accompanied by a target to reduce the gap between the most disadvantaged areas, where unemployment is significantly higher, and the town as a whole. Targets are based on good analysis of local issues and good baseline information. Ambitions are backed up by realistic long-term planning, for example in the 20-year, billion-pound scheme for Victoria Harbour.
- 38 Outstanding partnership working pervades the way the Council and its partners approach the delivery of the shared ambitions. Clear actions and responsibilities in the Community Strategy provide a very firm foundation for the way the members of the Hartlepool Partnership work together. There is a strong framework for mutual accountability in the way the Partnership works, with effective theme partnerships reporting to an active Board and very good performance management. The strength of the Community Strategy means that the Council and its partners have a sound common understanding of what needs to be done and why and are able to translate this into their own plans.

- 39** Strategies developed in partnership align well with each other as part of the integrated framework for the borough. These include the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, the Housing Strategy, the Children and Young People's Plan and the Public Health Strategy. Housing plans are designed to support improvements in the quality of life, the development of safer and stronger communities, and improvements in the local environment; and the inclusive approach to developing Building Schools for the Future proposals is placing benefit for the whole community at its heart.
- 40** The Hartlepool Partnership is very effective in monitoring progress against its priorities and in ensuring that it stays in touch with local needs. The Community Strategy is revised every five years to reflect changing needs and priorities but the Partnership is able to respond to changing local priorities outside planned major reviews, for example in prioritising anti-social behaviour in response to local concerns. The revision of the Community Strategy for 2007, carried out during 2006, has been based on wide-ranging consultation with local people and organisations. Housing has been given greater prominence in the revised Strategy because of its importance to local people. The revised health and care priority has more focus on improving general well being. The Hartlepool Partnership has also drawn on good performance information to reflect on the achievements of the first five years of the Strategy and to inform the revisions. The partners in the LSP, including the Council, are therefore able to be flexible in response to local circumstances and focus their efforts where need is greatest.
- 41** The Hartlepool Partnership and the Council have a strong evidence base for their actions. They have a thorough, inclusive and open approach to consultation with local communities. Use is made of surveys, the citizens' panel and area meetings and the Council regularly feeds back the results to local people. Detailed data to underpin needs analysis is provided through the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, which is funded by all five Tees Valley councils. There are specific arrangements for engagement with older and younger people. The Council is delivering on the results of consultation with black and ethnic minority groups in the town, for example it has established a dedicated team to support black and ethnic minority pupils. Effective use of consultation and research data means that the Council and its partners have a very good understanding of local needs.
- 42** The Council's Corporate Plan is a clear expression of the Council's contribution to the achievement of the ambitions of the Community Strategy. Updated annually, the Corporate Plan takes its lead from the Community Strategy and acts as a strong driver for planning and delivery by the Council's services. It interprets the ambition and objectives of the Community Strategy for action by the Council's services and includes longer term (five to ten years) objectives against each of the priority objectives of the Strategy. It contains specific outcome based targets for the next three years. The Corporate Plan is in effect the Council's delivery plan for the Community Strategy.

- 43** Ambitions and plans which have been developed with local people are communicated clearly to them. This approach has been particularly beneficial in the Housing Market Renewal area of the town, where the quality of communication and involvement, the clarity of vision and objectives, and the close partnership working of all stakeholders, including developers, has engendered local enthusiasm for radical changes to the area and very few objections to the Compulsory Purchase Orders. Children and young people were engaged effectively in the development of the Children and Young People's Plan and feel confident that their aspirations and views are taken fully into account.
- 44** Councillors and staff are well informed about what needs to be achieved and why. The objectives of the Community Strategy are cascaded within the Council through the Corporate Plan, departmental plans, service plans and staff objectives. Very good internal communications ensure that staff are clear about what the Council is trying to achieve and are aware of its progress. At the front line, services adopt a cross-cutting approach to deliver against economic, social and environmental objectives. An example of this approach is 'Operation Cleansweep', which as well as dealing with environmental issues includes measures to reduce crime and the fear of crime. This approach means that Council staff are very effective in crossing organisational and departmental boundaries for the achievement of the shared ambitions.
- 45** The Council demonstrates excellent community leadership. Its partnership working is highly regarded by partners including the business sector. The Mayor provides good leadership within and outside the Council, including his long-standing healthy eating in schools initiative and leadership of action under 'Pride in Hartlepool' and 'Operation Cleansweep'. He acts as an ambassador for the town, for example in securing the Tall Ships Race 2010 for Hartlepool and in work with other Tees Valley councils. Councillors of all parties are involved in good community leadership; for example, the five Scrutiny Committees are actively supported by resident representatives, and Neighbourhood Consultative Forums involve all ward councillors in effective engagement with local communities.

Prioritisation

- 46** The Council is performing well in this area. Service planning and delivery reflect and support corporately agreed priorities and objectives which are clearly linked to the Community Strategy's overall aim of improving the quality of life and to specific objectives and actions within the Strategy. Financial planning is informed by Council priorities. Partnerships identify their priorities and partners work well together to ensure that these priorities are resourced. Excellent consultation and engagement with local people enable understanding of their priorities and of where there is a need to take action to improve life in Hartlepool, particularly where inequalities are greatest.

- 47 Partnerships are very effective in identifying priorities and taking action on the basis of local needs and views and analysis of data. For example, housing needs analysis identified an oversupply of poorer rented housing and a shortage of executive housing; the Council is working with partners including Housing Hartlepool and the private sector to address these issues through Housing Market Renewal and developments of executive housing. The Safer Hartlepool Partnership uses the findings of research, crime statistics and local surveys to make decisions about priorities and resource allocation, for example in its response to an increase in alcohol-related crime in the town centre and in adopting tackling anti-social behaviour as a priority over burglary, a national priority, in response to local concerns. Similarly, the analysis of need which informed the Public Health Strategy is comprehensive and shared between stakeholders; the analysis has been used for the identification of ranked priorities. Prioritisation in the Children and Young People's Plan is good, supported by a strong sense of shared priorities and ownership by schools and external partners.
- 48 There is effective action to allocate resources for the achievement of partnership objectives. Although formal sharing of resources is limited, partners work together to ensure delivery. Financial resources to deliver partnerships' priorities, including external funding, are agreed between partners. There are some examples of more formal sharing of resources, for example the neighbourhood management arrangements share resources between the Council's neighbourhood wardens' service and the police. Shared workforce planning is developing including in children's and adult services, where the partners have implemented a major inter-agency change programme which includes workforce planning.
- 49 The Council responds clearly and robustly to the priorities of the Community Strategy, using them to define its own objectives and actions. There are strong linkages from the Community Strategy through the Corporate Plan to annual departmental and service plans. The Community Strategy's medium and long term approach is reflected in the Corporate Plan by objectives for a five to ten-year period, with specific targets for the next three years. In setting targets, the Council prioritises services which need to improve the most. Priorities in departmental plans have clear regard for national and local policy and there are good links between priorities, enabling the Council to deliver the cross-cutting objectives of the Corporate Plan. The Mayor's priorities support the Community Strategy and are well understood and acted upon by councillors and staff. The Mayor and portfolio holders are involved in regular checking of progress against priorities and targets. The Council is therefore able to identify, communicate, link and track its priorities.

- 50** The Council uses its budget processes effectively to ensure that priorities are funded. While there is no formal medium term financial strategy, the Council has practical arrangements for financial planning in the medium term. The budget process is an annual debate on priorities which links cuts and growth in service budgets to priorities; this year this process has been expanded to include discussion by the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums and debate in scrutiny committees to inform Cabinet decisions. The capital strategy has clear links to the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan. The Council's healthy financial position mitigates the risk of it not being able to fund priorities in the future, but it has ensured that exit strategies are in place for all major grant aid.
- 51** Annual budgeting is successfully linked to priorities. Service areas which are key to the delivery of local and national priorities have received additional funding, most notably in education and social care but also in waste reduction and recycling. The Council prioritised spending on education and social care in response to low performance, the expectations of shared ambitions and local needs. As a result, educational attainment has risen significantly (Hartlepool children perform better than national averages in a number of significant areas, despite high levels of deprivation), and social care for children and adults are now good. Additional resources to support improvement have included social care (an additional £1.2 million in 2004/05, plus £0.5 million for the Children's Fostering Service and £0.5 million for adult and older people's services in 2006/07), and £0.76 million to achieve waste reduction and recycling targets in 2006/07. The Council is able to focus its resources where need is greatest, to combat disadvantage or to improve performance.
- 52** The Council has made decisions which have significantly changed the traditional provision of services to better secure delivery of priorities. It transferred its housing stock to Housing Hartlepool (in 2004) to secure major investment for improvement. Its ICT contract has brought increased capacity and a £2 million investment fund provided by the contractor.
- 53** The Council is very effectively identifying and acting on the very local priorities of geographic areas within the borough. At neighbourhood level, the Council's strong community engagement and extensive use of survey evidence enable local priorities to inform local service planning based on needs analysis and community views. Ward councillors and local residents form the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums which between them cover the whole borough and are well attended. In the areas of greatest disadvantage six Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs) each identify priorities for their areas. The NAPs are written to the seven themes of the Community Strategy but prioritise neighbourhood issues. Residents in the most disadvantaged communities have a high level of satisfaction with consultation and opportunities for involvement.

- 54** The Council is engaging well with minority communities to identify their priorities but some of its arrangements to do so are at a relatively early stage. It has long-standing consultation arrangements with disabled people and new arrangements for consultation with the lesbian and gay community; it responds well to the needs of these groups. It is making new efforts to reach minority ethnic communities through its successful Talking with Communities initiative and is taking action to respond to needs arising from these consultations, for example in language coaching. It assesses the impact of its services on minority communities but does not have sufficient information about these communities to provide the baselines for target setting. While its awareness of local need is generally very good, the Council has not yet identified the overall priorities of the smaller groups within local communities.

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

Capacity

- 55 The Council is performing well in this area. Political and managerial leadership and capacity are good and councillors and officers work well together to deliver improved outcomes for Hartlepool. Organisational development is progressing well. Financial management is good. Partnership working very effectively enhances capacity for the delivery of Hartlepool Partnership and Council objectives.
- 56 Political leadership and management are good. Councillors are united in acting in the best interests of Hartlepool and maintain a focus on outcomes for local people. The Mayoral function is very effectively delivered and the Mayor and Cabinet provide excellent community leadership. The Mayor leads a cohesive and focused Cabinet. Cabinet meetings are well run with good contributions by portfolio holders, who are clear about their roles. Regular 'portfolio' meetings are effective in briefing portfolio holders and enable delegated decision-making, with appropriate challenge and guidance to officers. Relationships between councillors and officers are good; codes of conduct are in place. Decision making is generally efficient and transparent and takes account of strategic and operational risks.
- 57 The scrutiny process is working well, with much improvement in the last two years. The executive and scrutiny functions work well together. Scrutiny forums have had impact in a number of areas, for example on approaches to the new rail interchange, flooding, and bus transport: resident satisfaction with bus services has improved and is now very high. Political leadership of scrutiny is very good, and there is very effective officer support for the scrutiny function. The Council is able to rely on its scrutiny function to provide appropriate and productive challenge to Cabinet and to the Council's partners.
- 58 The three Neighbourhood Consultative Forums operate well, building capacity to respond to local needs and combining councillors and residents in securing very local improvements. They have some delegated decision-making powers and budgets of £87,000 each (in 2006/07), which are mainly used for environmental improvements. The Forums are a key and effective element in the Council's capacity to maintain its strong community focus.

- 59** Some aspects of the political arrangements are not as effective, although they do not prevent overall political management from operating well. Delegation to officers for planning decisions is low and the impact of this is evident in the service's performance. Decisions on planning applications are slow compared to other Councils and in 2005/06 a large number (relative to other councils) of planning appeals against the Council were allowed. There is little transparency within and outside the Council around the operation of the 'Administration Group'. There is confusion particularly with regard to its leadership and its ability to address standards of conduct among its members, who are otherwise not aligned to a political group. While the councillor training programme is comprehensive and clearly linked to priority areas, attendance is often low and has fallen during 2006/07. The Standards Committee is not proactive. These weaknesses reduce the capacity, effectiveness and potential of the Council's political system.
- 60** Officer leadership is good and the Council is efficiently managed. There is a strong senior management team. Staff at all levels have pride in Hartlepool and demonstrate very strong commitment to delivering quality services. Some staff at the front line are empowered to make decisions to improve services in line with Council priorities; for example, neighbourhood environmental services staff and school cooks directly deliver the Mayor's priorities of a clean borough and healthy eating in schools. Turnover is low, including in the traditional staff shortage area of social care. The restructure of the Council into five departments (from six) in 2005 has increased services' ability to address cross-cutting priorities; officers work very productively across departmental and organisational boundaries.
- 61** The Council has a sound and pragmatic approach to organisational development, which forms an additional priority for the Council in the Corporate Plan. The priority and the actions to deliver it demonstrate a good awareness of key areas of focus to support the Council's capacity for the delivery of ambitions, including access by the public, training and development of councillors and staff, and efficiency and financial management. 'The Way Forward' change programme, led by the Chief Executive, drives organisational change and efficiency. Good human resource management includes the People Strategy and the Workforce Development Strategy. Good training and development of staff includes the 'Be the Difference' programme for managers. The organisational restructure in 2005 was facilitated by a very good change management process. There are excellent internal communications; consultation with staff is good. New approaches to reducing high sickness absence are beginning to have some effect.
- 62** Access to services is improving. The Council is implementing well founded plans for a co-ordinated approach to customer service, including a new contact centre and a customer charter. ICT is being used effectively to provide many e-enabled services, although the Council's website, which is a portal for the whole of Hartlepool, is not always easy to navigate. Translation and interpretation services are available for all the Council's services and communications.

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- 63** The Council does not have a strategic approach to procurement or to new ways of delivering services. The procurement strategy is weak and does not indicate how the Council will use procurement to increase its capacity. A five-year procurement plan sets out a range of tasks to be achieved and a programme of services to be reviewed in the medium term, but it does not take a strategic approach linked to the Council's ambitions and relies on departmental officers, rather than a corporate procurement function, to deliver it. E-procurement is not fully exploited. Similarly, the business process re-engineering programme is not ambitious; its projected outcomes are modest or not quantified. Pragmatically, the Council is using innovative approaches to procurement including long term partnering, joint commissioning, joint tendering, and working with the voluntary sector and other local authorities to deliver both savings and improved service delivery and to increase capacity, for example through the contract for ICT. However, it is not fully realising the benefits of strategic procurement or of new ways of working.
- 64** Operational financial management is prudent and effective and the Council provides good value for money. Since 1998/99 careful financial management and robust budget monitoring have enabled the Council to increase its reserves, which now stand at £31 million. The annual budget process supports significant growth in priority areas from these reserves while making cuts in areas no longer considered by departments to be priorities; the current allocation from reserves to revenue budgets is £7.2 million over four years. Financial capacity is greatly enhanced by the Council's ability to attract significant external funding, which is well managed; exit strategies are in place for major initiatives which are currently supported by external funding, for example New Deal for Communities. The asset management plan is thorough and links clearly to the Community Strategy themes. Financial capacity for the delivery of the Council's objectives is good.
- 65** Risk Management is fully developed within the Council and used effectively to inform key corporate and strategic planning. It is increasingly applied to partnership plans and objectives, for example the partnership arrangements with the Joseph Rowntree Housing Foundation and the local Primary Care Trust for the new Hartfields extra care village and for the provision of ICT services ensure risk is considered at every meeting.
- 66** The Council is taking concerted action to improve its arrangements for equality and diversity. It has achieved level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. A cross-departmental officer group is progressing a thorough action plan for the achievement of Level 3 in early 2008. Departments have equality and diversity objectives and action plans and are carrying out impact assessments. A member of the Cabinet is political champion for equality and diversity. The proportions of staff from ethnic minority communities or with a disability are low in relation to the proportion of ethnic minority and disabled people in the borough's population but are increasing.

- 67** The Council plays a full and often leading role in major partnerships which enhance the Hartlepool Partnership's capacity to deliver priorities. Relationships are mature and partners are clear about their roles; the Council is regarded as a very good partner. Partnership working gives the Council access to external funding and additional leadership capacity; notable examples are the Housing Market Renewal project and the new £34 million Hartfields extra care village. The extra care village is an example of the Council's willingness to innovate in partnership with others; a further example is the joint work of the Council's neighbourhood warden service and the Cleveland Police neighbourhood policing pilot in the New Deal for Communities area of the town.
- 68** The Council's approach to working in partnership with smaller organisations in the voluntary sector is underdeveloped at a formal and corporate level. The sector as a whole is well represented in partnerships and the Council works well with a network of organisations through the Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency. However there is currently no formal corporate approach to using the capacity and potential of voluntary groups. A Compact developed three years ago has been implemented only in part; it is now being revived and revised. Funding is generally short term and does not respond to the core funding needs of organisations. The Council's grant aid to voluntary organisations is normally only for one year, leading to uncertainty and to time spent re-applying for grants. The Council is not maximising the capacity of voluntary organisations to support its services and to respond to local need.

Performance management

- 69** The Council is performing well in this area. There is a strong performance management culture throughout the organisation and in its work with partners, with a focus on performing well and on improvement in outcomes. Councillors and officers are open about performance, are regularly engaged in monitoring and take action to improve performance or review Council policy where needed. There is a very good performance management framework which is well embedded in almost all services.
- 70** The performance management framework ensures that there is a strong link from the Community Strategy aims through the Corporate Plan to departmental plans, and from those to service plans and individual staff development and appraisal. Departmental and service plans are written to good corporate guidance which has become increasingly comprehensive in its approach, most recently adding risk management and equality and diversity to the service planning framework. Some weaknesses in departmental plans (they lack financial information and there is no consistent approach to setting out priorities) do not undermine the effectiveness of the performance management framework.

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- 71** Councillors and officers use performance management well. Awareness of its importance is high and responsibilities are clear. There is regular reporting of performance to individual portfolio holders, scrutiny forums and departmental management teams, to Cabinet on an exception basis and to the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums, which include resident representatives. The Cabinet portfolio for performance management has a high and active profile within the Council's activities. Project management techniques are used effectively.
- 72** In almost all services, councillors and officers make good use of performance information to track the achievement of targets and take remedial action where needed. The Council is taking action to address weaknesses in management information in children's social care. Portfolio holders agree action to address performance issues on a quarterly basis. Scrutiny forums and the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee play an active part. Feedback on performance is given to local residents through regular communications. Staff appraisal linked to Council objectives is well embedded and valued by staff. The result is a strong performance management culture, which permeates the organisation.
- 73** Financial and service performance management are not formally integrated in plans or in monitoring reports, but in practice the Council takes a comprehensive approach. Councillors and officers consider financial and performance monitoring reports at the same time and link the two. The results of consultation and analysis of complaints are also considered as part of performance management.
- 74** Good performance management extends to the Council's work with partners. The Hartlepool Partnership uses performance management well, with information openly shared and discussed between partners and robust arrangements for performance reporting and progress checking. The Council works with partner organisations including health, police and fire authorities to develop and consider performance information, including trends over time and comparisons with others, with a focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups. Examples include the joint work of partners including the Council and the voluntary sector to monitor and review progress against the Older People's Strategy.
- 75** The Council uses target setting and the monitoring of targets effectively. There is a focus on improvement particularly of poorer performance. The Corporate Plan contains a large number of specific targets for improved outcomes for local people. The Council focuses its efforts for improvement in line with priorities and performance. The Corporate Plan targets are challenging where there is room for improvement, for example targets relating to the Jobs and the Economy and Lifelong Learning and Skills themes, with less planned improvement for those services where performance is already very high, for example in housing and environmental services. The achievement of targets has improved from 40 per cent met in 2003/04 to 60 per cent in 2005/06. Improved performance management is helping the Council to focus its efforts with greater success.

- 76** Good performance management is bringing significant improvement. The performance of the Council's services and their rate of improvement as measured by national performance indicators are among the best in the country. Of the basket of 2005/06 indicators used for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, 42 per cent were among the best performing single tier and county councils and 73 per cent showed improvement on 2004/05 performance.

What has been achieved?

- 77** The Council is performing well in this area. There is very good delivery against the goal of the Hartlepool Partnership and the Council: 'to regenerate Hartlepool by promoting economic, social and environmental wellbeing in a sustainable manner'. This goal supports the shared vision of 'a prosperous, caring, confident and outward looking community, realising its potential in an attractive environment'.
- 78** The priority aims of the Community Strategy embrace the national shared priorities and strongly inform the activities of the Council. In practice the Council and its partners work to the broad themes of the national priorities while maintaining a local focus on the issues of key importance in Hartlepool, at borough-wide and local neighbourhood levels. Good links are made between priorities, for example between the quality of the environment and community safety and between the quality of housing provision and health.
- 79** Improved outcomes are being delivered almost without exception across both national and local priorities. Significant improvement has been achieved in areas which are fundamental to improving the quality of life and prospects for people in Hartlepool, particularly in education and social care. The aim of the Hartlepool Partnership and the Council to reduce inequalities is being realised. The gap between Hartlepool and the national average in the percentage of economically active adults in employment has halved since 2002; unemployment levels have reduced to within 2 per cent of the national average. Crime levels, while still relatively high, have reduced from 41 per cent to 25 per cent above average; domestic burglary and vehicle crime have halved in the last two years and are falling faster than national averages. Educational achievement is the third most improving in the country and is now very close to the national average at GCSE level. Care for older people is among the best in the country. Only the gap between the health of people in Hartlepool and in the rest of the country continues to widen, but most health outcomes are nevertheless improving in Hartlepool.
- 80** Improvements are evident in the most disadvantaged areas of the town. Unemployment rates, while still higher than in the rest of the borough, have reduced by the same amount as in Hartlepool overall; the crime rate in the most deprived wards dropped by about two thirds between 2003/04 and 2005/06 compared with a fall of about one third in Hartlepool overall.
- 81** Residents' satisfaction with many of the services provided by the Council has risen during the last three years and is often among the highest in the country. The way in which the Council provides high quality services is illustrated in the Audit Commission's 2006 School Survey, which measures schools' satisfaction with local education authorities; the Council obtained the best results in the country in this survey.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 82 The Council has a strong approach to regeneration as a key driver for improving the quality of life and supporting sustainable communities in Hartlepool. It focuses on physical regeneration as the foundation for economic regeneration and development, which are viewed by the Council and its partners as essential for the achievement of priority aims. The aims in regeneration strategies and plans are shared by the Council, its partners and by local communities. There is good integration of housing and environmental improvements as key components of the social and physical regeneration of neighbourhoods.
- 83 The Council works effectively with other local authorities in the Tees Valley to pursue common interests and secure economic benefit for the area, for example in the Business Case for a Tees Valley City Region recently submitted to the Government. It is a partner in the Tees Valley Regeneration Company. It negotiates with other organisations in the Tees Valley to bring benefit to Hartlepool itself, for example in housing allocations.
- 84 Very good preparation work and engagement with local communities contribute to the success of the Council's efforts. Regeneration work is supported by thorough planning and preparation by the Council on major planning applications, and by very good relationships with partners in the public and private sectors locally and across the sub-region. Communities are involved well in the development of plans and in the monitoring of their implementation, particularly in areas which benefit from external funding (currently mainly New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Renewal).
- 85 The Council combines a strategic approach to regeneration with a good awareness of its role in providing infrastructure and support for businesses. Current schemes for business premises sites include Queens Meadow, which is now being occupied. Ambitious plans for Victoria Harbour to bring a mix of uses to a large site alongside the working port reached outline planning permission stage in 2006. Earlier work to improve and revitalise the Marina area is now bringing the benefits of tourism to the town, with increases in the number of visitors and tourism businesses. The Council provides good support to local business; it provides grants, locations, incubation schemes and advice, working appropriately with other agencies. It works with partners including local colleges and construction contractors to improve access to local jobs for local people. It has provided specific assistance into employment for single parents and people with disabilities.
- 86 The impact of regeneration and economic development work on local communities is positive. The gap between Hartlepool and national employment rates narrowed from 15.6 per cent in 2002 to 7.3 per cent in 2005; self-employment increased from 3.8 per cent in 2002 to 5.8 per cent in 2005; small business start-ups increased by 40 per cent between the first quarters of 2005 and 2006, compared to a regional increase of 13 per cent; and 1,150 jobs have been created in the last three years. There was a 22 per cent increase in the number of tourism-related jobs between 2003 and 2004.

- 87 The strategic approach to housing is good, with good community and partner involvement and a good response to housing need. Tenant satisfaction is high. Relationships between the Council and Housing Hartlepool, the Registered Social Landlord to which the Council transferred its housing stock in 2004, are strong and productive, with commonly agreed aims and close working. Housing developments are integrated into regeneration and town-wide plans, with a strategic focus on housing market renewal and the provision of good quality affordable and executive housing. There is a good focus on the sustainability of developments.
- 88 The condition of housing in the borough is improving. The Council has secured additional funding for housing initiatives, including Housing Market Renewal and private sector housing. There is good progress in the Housing Market Renewal area of the town; the Council's thorough preparation and effective work with partners and local communities have ensured that work to demolish and rebuild is progressing with very few objections. Work to achieve the Decent Homes Standard and energy efficiency targets is on track to meet Government requirements. There is a good range of supported housing initiatives for vulnerable groups; the Council is taking effective action to address weaknesses identified in an inspection of Supporting People services early in 2006.
- 89 The Council has had significant success in its work to improve the local environment and has engaged well with local communities in doing so. The town is very clean, partly as a result of the Mayor's popular Operation Cleansweep and Pride in Hartlepool campaigns. Improvements in the town's environment include increased use of derelict (brownfield) sites for development; in 2005/06 almost all planning permissions for new dwellings were for previously developed land. An independent evaluation of the Neighbourhood Action Planning process concluded that the process helped to develop trust and confidence, enabling local communities to become active partners in improving the local environment.
- 90 The Council works effectively to deliver the Teesside waste management strategy. It has conducted information campaigns about waste reduction and about its new collection system which focuses on recycling. The Council's performance has improved year on year and it has already met its targets for 2010. Total waste is reducing and Hartlepool is among the best performing councils for reduction in waste to landfill. It has increased recycling, to over 22 per cent in 2005/06 and 25 per cent for the first half of 2006/07. The Council is reducing its own impact on the environment: its electricity is supplied from green sources and two of its services have won two 'green star' awards from the Energy Saving Trust.

- 91** There is a keen awareness of the importance of transport to jobs and the local economy. The Council has worked well with partners at local, regional and national levels to improve the transport infrastructure and access to public transport. The concessionary fares scheme goes beyond national requirements and has been extended to cover the whole of the Tees Valley, in collaboration with the other Tees Valley councils. A new high speed train will link Hartlepool with London from mid-2007 as a result of the efforts of the Council and its partners; external funding has been secured for improvements to the rail station and the construction of a new transport interchange to facilitate access to public transport.

Safer and stronger communities

- 92** The Council adopts a collaborative, pro-active and co-ordinated approach to tackling crime and the fear of crime. It works with its partners in the Safer Hartlepool Partnership, which is chaired by the Mayor, to deliver the Crime, Disorder and Drug Strategy. Crime levels overall have risen, as they have nationally, but within this overall rise there has been success in reducing some types of crime and the fear of crime has fallen significantly. The Local Strategic Partnership has made tackling anti-social behaviour a priority. Good work to reduce drug addiction is bringing positive results. Accident levels are falling. Arrangements for responding to emergencies are good. The Council is using a number of approaches to sustain and improve community cohesion, which is already good.
- 93** The Council and its partners have had significant success in narrowing the gap between crime levels in Hartlepool and national averages, which reduced from 41 per cent above average in 2003/04 to 23 per cent above in 2005/06. Crime is highest in the Neighbourhood Renewal areas of the town but the gap in crime levels between these areas and the town as a whole has also reduced from 113 per cent above the Hartlepool rate in 2003/04 to 42 per cent above in 2005/06. Overall crime rates rose in 2005/06 compared with the previous two years, but domestic burglary and vehicle crime both halved between 2003/04 and 2005/06 and have fallen faster than national averages, particularly in domestic burglaries. However, violent crimes have increased over the same period significantly faster than the national increase. Latest figures indicate that crime in Hartlepool is now reducing and that performance in comparison to similar areas is improving.

- 94 The Council and its partners have successfully used a range of evidence-based approaches to reducing crime. For example, the alleygating programme shows excellent use of evidence to produce a strategy that is user-focused and which has had a clearly evidenced effect on reducing domestic burglary and increasing feelings of safety. Responsibilities for reducing crime and the fear of crime are well understood by the Council's services. There are good links between local environmental services and community safety; Operation Cleansweep includes work to increase the safety of local neighbourhoods, and neighbourhood management in the New Deal for Communities area combines the work of the Council's team of wardens with Cleveland Police's neighbourhood policing pilot. The Council has responded to a high level of resident concern about environmental crime with strong enforcement, particularly on abandoned cars, fires and fly tipping. This has contributed to the reduction in deliberate fires by removing fly tips on the same day that they are reported.
- 95 These efforts are producing good results in local people's perceptions. Fear of crime has reduced, particularly on burglary and vehicle crime. In the New Deal for Communities area, the reduction in the fear of crime is significant: over the two years to 2006, fear of crime fell by about one third.
- 96 There are well developed measures in place to identify and respond to children at risk of offending. While the number of young people who enter the criminal justice system has increased during the last three years, re-offending among young people has reduced over the same period. There are effective arrangements to respond to domestic violence with good communication between the Council, the police and the voluntary sector.
- 97 The Partnership has responded well to local people's concerns about anti-social behaviour (ASB). This is now a priority for the LSP and the Mayor and partners have moved resources to action to tackle it, including educational programmes in schools. Some of the targets for overall levels of ASB are being missed but there has been recent improvement and the incidence of deliberate fires has reduced by 38.5 per cent in the last two years.
- 98 Drug services are effective. There are some good results on the number of drug users engaged in treatment, with this number almost doubling in the two years to 2006, and on retention in treatment, although this fell slightly in 2005/06. Hartlepool is among the top 20 drugs partnerships in the country for waiting time for service, with the average waiting time only 1.3 weeks in the second half of 2005/06. The Hartlepool Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) is assessed by Government Office as the best performer in Tees Valley; users accessing the DIP wait only two days for prescribing, compared with the national target of five days. The Dordrecht and HYPED programmes are examples of good practice. However there are no specific strategies for problematic drug users in ethnic minority communities, who may currently go out of the borough to access treatment.
- 99 Work to tackle alcohol related crime is recent, but the Council is making good links with the health service and has good analysis of the problems. However, there is a lack of treatment options for adults. While there are good examples of services for young people with drug or alcohol problems, there are significant problems with young people's use of alcohol in some communities.

- 100** Effective action on safety measures and education, focusing on younger and older people, has contributed to reductions in accidents. The Council has worked effectively with partners including the police, the Fire Brigade, health, coastguards, rail and British Energy to help reduce accidents amongst children. The 'Crucial Crew' accident prevention and personal safety awareness scheme involved over 1,300 primary school children last year. The 12 per cent reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents compared with the average for 1994-98 includes a reduction of 58 per cent for children. Each year 200 older people attend programmes aimed at avoiding falls; there was a 44 per cent reduction in injuries from falls between 2005 and 2006.
- 101** Emergency planning, including business continuity, is good. There are comprehensive arrangements for responding to emergencies in collaboration with partners in Teesside, through the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit. Emergency plans contain some examples of good practice, for example in advice on the emergency accommodation of people from ethnic minority communities.
- 102** Formal work to promote community cohesion is at an early stage, but the Council has worked closely with the police to maintain good community relationships, reacting swiftly to national events and local anti-social behaviour to calm fears in local communities. There are very good arrangements for the involvement of local people and groups in the Hartlepool Partnership and in the Neighbourhood Action Planning process. The Council has recently completed a best value review of 'strengthening communities'; the improvement plan resulting from this pulls action together to form a coherent approach. It has a Race Equality Scheme in place and has recently agreed its Disability Equality Scheme.

Healthier communities

- 103** Health is improving in Hartlepool and people are living longer but they suffer more ill health and disability, higher death rates from cancer, heart disease and respiratory disease than in most other parts of the country. This gap is widening and there is also health inequality within Hartlepool itself: the most deprived areas suffer poorer health than the affluent areas, with a difference of 13 years in male life expectancy between the best and the worst wards.
- 104** The Council and its partners are actively tackling these challenges. There is strong leadership on health issues from councillors and Council officers. The Director of Public Health is a jointly funded post. Partnership structures are robust and there is good multi-agency working. There is a joint Public Health Strategy which has annual action plans (some of which are still in draft) which include tackling the determinants of health. The partners' approach is very clearly set out for local people in the 'Vision for Care' document, which emphasises the prevention of ill health and the priority given to those most in need. Current plans include service reconfiguration for locality working and health trainers and the first national pilot of Connected Care. For young people, there are good programmes for drug, alcohol and sex education and good services for those who have substance misuse problems.

- 105** Progress is being made in a challenging context. Premature deaths from heart disease and cancer have reduced and are on track to meet local targets, but the gap between Hartlepool figures and national averages is widening. The number of smoking cessation clinics has increased and the smoking cessation four-week quitter rates are among the best in the country; smoking prevalence reduced from 40 per cent in 2000 to 34 per cent in 2004. This prevalence is still very high compared to national figures, and is higher (44 per cent) in the Neighbourhood Renewal and New Deal for Communities areas. The incidence of teenage pregnancies is also very high but has reduced from 75.6 per 1,000 to 64 per 1,000, exceeding the target for Hartlepool (the England rate is 41 per 1,000).
- 106** Partners are working hard to address health inequalities and to improve access to health services. For example, the Owton Neighbourhood Action Plan includes a review of health and social care services and identifies areas for improvement, including a need to have outreach schemes, improved signposting to services, programmes to support healthier lifestyles, help for carers and assistance for those with complex deprivation. There are robust action plans for the delivery of this community's priorities. In the borough as a whole, more vulnerable people are receiving help to live at home, and between 2003/04 and 2005/06 there was an 83 per cent increase in the number of drug users receiving treatment.
- 107** There is very good awareness by the Council and its partners of the determinants of health and work to tackle these is based on strong partnership working between public, private and voluntary sector organisations in Hartlepool. Action includes smoking bans in a number of public places, including a ban in the main shopping centre which is shortly to be implemented, and in workplaces. The Public Health Strategy physical activity action plan is led by the Council's sports and recreation manager on behalf of the LSP's Public Health Strategy Group and leisure centre attendance, including by people living in the most deprived wards, has increased. Most schools have Healthy School status.
- 108** The Council is working well with housing and health partners to make good linkages between work to improve health outcomes and improvements to housing conditions. The number of households defined as suffering from fuel poverty more than halved between 1997 and 2003. During 2005/06, 88 private homes occupied by vulnerable people were grant assisted by the Council to achieve the Decent Homes Standard. The mobile benefits service is providing quicker access to benefits and benefits staff are able to provide advice, for example on grants for improving the energy efficiency of homes which includes referral to a voluntary sector agency. There was a significant decrease in the number of excess winter deaths (from all causes) between 1996 and 2003.

- 109** The Council and its partners have a good focus on the more deprived communities and vulnerable people in efforts to promote healthier lifestyles. The health needs of children and young people in ethnic minority and traveller communities are addressed well. There are 11 smoking cessation drop-in clinics in areas of greatest disadvantage. A Health Development Worker and a Community Nutritionist are based in the most deprived wards, developing healthy eating initiatives; these include two new food co-operatives and weight management schemes. There are programmes of support into work for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. The Hartlepool Exercise for Life Programme (HELP) introduces people suffering from physical and mental health problems to regular physical activity to improve their wellbeing; the Council estimates that 70 per cent of the 300 people (half of all referrals) who completed this programme in 2005/06 continue to participate in the activities.

Older People

- 110** The Council and its partners have a strong strategic approach to older people. Older people in Hartlepool are increasingly involved in a wide range of activities and play a key role in the development of services.
- 111** The broad approach is demonstrated well in the Older People's Strategy, which aims to promote and support the independence and wellbeing of older people. Adopted in 2005, it has ten strategic objectives covering maximisation of income, participation in community life, community safety, choice and independence, access, transport, learning, information and involvement. An annual action plan, which includes a progress report, puts the Strategy into effect. It is supported by a comprehensive and well presented information publication, Ageing Well in Hartlepool, which promotes an active and healthy lifestyle.
- 112** The Older People's Strategy is founded on very good engagement with older people on a wide range of issues including citizenship and wellbeing as well as health and social care. The strategy and its action plan are produced by the Local Implementation Team for Older People which includes six representatives of older people and has the strong involvement of the Hartlepool 50+ Forum, which is funded by the Council and facilitated by the Anchor Community Development Trust. The Council's portfolio holder for adult service and public health acts as the Older People's Champion and meets regularly with the 50+ Forum to discuss services; this has resulted in changes such as to the policy for the removal of unwanted furniture to better meet the needs of older people. The Council's leisure and library services have consulted older people and shaped services to meet their needs.

- 113** Older people are also actively involved in the planning of new schemes. The 50+ Forum is a member of the Hartfields Extra Care Retirement Village Partnership (which also includes the Council, Hartlepool Primary Care Trust, North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust). The Village is an ambitious project for people over 60, involving £10m of Department of Health funding and partnership with Health Trusts and the Joseph Rowntree Trust to deliver new build housing scheme of 242 new dwellings and a comprehensive range of leisure, community and healthy living facilities, as well as extra care provision to those who need it. Older people are also influencing the Connected Care pilot and the development of the new Telecare scheme, which aims to facilitate older people's independence.
- 114** Services for older people have improved. The free older people's concessionary fares scheme, which covers Teesside and has resulted in a 40 per cent increase in bus journeys by older people in the first five months of operation. The number of older people receiving the Home Library Service, has more than doubled, up from 10 per cent of older people helped to live at home in 2001/02 to 25 per cent in 2005/06. There is intergenerational work between teenagers and residents of a care home. The Walks for All programme has a significant proportion of participants who are older: of the 134 participants in 2005/06, 70 per cent were over 50 and 34 per cent were over 65.
- 115** Social care for older people is among the best in the country and also benefits from good partnership working. The Assistant Director - Adults Commissioning is a joint PCT/Council appointment and joint commissioning arrangements are improving. There are year on year increases in the number of older people helped to live in their own homes. There was a significant increase in the number of people receiving direct payments and a 47 per cent increase in intermediate care between 2004 and 2006. The Council provides a top-rated service for supporting admissions of older people to permanent residential or nursing care, with no delayed discharges attributed to the Council.

Children and young people

- 116** The council is performing well overall. Strong political commitment to very effective partnership working has resulted in good outcomes for children and young people. Good levels of safety are maintained and vulnerable groups are generally well supported. There is a satisfactory youth service and the youth offending service is judged as good overall with adequate management.
- 117** There is exceptional unity of purpose in the authority to ensure that every Hartlepool child matters. Vision and ambitions are set out well in the Children and Young People's Plan with comprehensive priorities reflecting the Every Child Matters agenda. Key priorities include the continuation of impressive improvements in educational attainment, preventive work and inclusion. Planning is consistent and of a high quality, but financial implications are not explicit in plans. There is good value for money overall and very thorough arrangements for performance management.

- 118** The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Health education and provision is generally good although there is a weakness in the provision of child and adolescent mental health services to those children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good services are provided for vulnerable groups, especially for looked after children and those with substance misuse problems. There is, however, a lack of capacity in some therapy services, such as speech therapy.
- 119** The combined work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good. Nearly all children responding to the inspection survey feel safe and a good road safety education programme has effectively reduced the numbers of injuries. Agencies work effectively together to promptly identify and safeguard those at risk of harm. Good child protection practice has resulted in a high number being removed quickly from the register with low re-registration rates.
- 120** The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good. Parents and carers receive good support and guidance. Schools are very satisfied with almost all services and the support they receive while their response to the schools' survey is the best in the country. Standards of attainment are good overall, particularly given the socio-economic issues in the area. Pupil attendance and behaviour is good. A small number of permanently excluded pupils do not receive the level of education to which they are entitled and reintegration into mainstream schooling remains low. Good progress is made by vulnerable groups including black and minority ethnic pupils and looked after children. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into mainstream school provision. The high quality of school improvement services has reduced the number of schools causing concern with no schools currently in Ofsted categories. Children and young people are able to access a wide range of recreational and leisure opportunities.
- 121** The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people contribute to society is good. Services combine well to support the social and emotional development of children and young people. Although there are very good examples of challenging and promoting anti-racism, members of the black and minority ethnic groups have limited opportunities to help shape services. Children and young people are, however, routinely engaged in consultation and some do participate in decision-making at a high level. Support for care leavers and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good although the effectiveness of the complaints process is limited.

- 122** The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Childcare provision meets the needs of parents and carers, particularly given employment patterns. There is a wide range of beneficial work experience for Key Stage 4 pupils and partners combine well to ensure that 14-19 provision meets the needs and interests of young people. Monitoring the participation and progression of vulnerable groups is underdeveloped and the specific level of participation in education, employment or training by those young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is too low. Many aspects of the care leaving process are good, particularly pastoral and emotional support, but there are too many young people leaving education or training before completion.

Appendix 1 - Framework for Corporate Assessment

- 1** This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2** The Council's self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
 - key documentation, including the Council's improvement plan;
 - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
 - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3** The assessment for Hartlepool Borough Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 28 November 2006 to 8 December 2006.
- 4** This report has been discussed with the Council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the Council.

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27 April 2007



Report of: Director of Children's Services

Subject: JOINT AREA REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with the results of the Joint Area Review of Services for Children and Young People.

2. BACKGROUND

The results of the Joint Area Review of Services for Children and Young People were published on 13th March 2007. The results have been communicated to Elected Members and at the meeting of Cabinet on 19th March a verbal update was given.

3. OUTCOMES

Appendix 1 contains the outcome of the Joint Area Review of Children's Services. **Appendix 2** is the summary report prepared for children and young people. **Appendix 3** is the report on the inspection of the Youth Service carried out at the time of the JAR.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to:

- Note the results of the Joint Area Review
- Agree to receive further reports detailing improvement plans resulting from the inspection

6. CONTACT OFFICER

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Joint area review

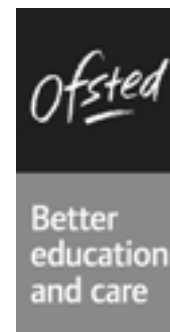
Hartlepool

Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

Adult Learning Inspectorate
 Audit Commission
 Commission for Social Care Inspection
 Healthcare Commission
 HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
 HM Inspectorate of Court Administration
 HM Inspectorate of Prisons
 HM Inspectorate of Probation
 Ofsted

Audience	Published	Reference no.
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Introduction

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of seven inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (HCC), the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.

2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and its findings are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.

3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in the Hartlepool area and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being.

4. The review evaluates the collective contribution made to each outcome for children and young people by relevant services in the area. It also judges the contributions made by the council's services overall and, specifically, its education and children's social care services. Particular attention is given to joint action by local services on behalf of those groups of children and young people who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. Two such groups are covered in detail: children and young people who are looked after by the council; and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

5. The review took place in two stages consisting in total of three weeks over a six-week period. The first stage reviewed all existing evidence including:

- a self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
- a survey of children and young people
- performance data
- the findings of the contemporaneous inspection of the youth service
- planning documents
- information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision
- evidence gathered during the earlier Youth Offending Team inspection
- briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. The second stage involved inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study

of provision in one neighbourhood in Hartlepool. It also included gathering evidence primarily on six key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. This included discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users and community representatives. A review of case files for children and young people receiving support from a number of local agencies was also included.

Context

7. Hartlepool is a compact coastal authority and its population of nearly 90,000 is projected to decline slightly over the next decade. It is located at the eastern end of the Tees valley and, despite a port facility and being close to a major north-south trunk road route, Hartlepool remains relatively isolated from the national transport infrastructure and major markets. From a strong economic position in 1900, with a thriving port and associated industries, Hartlepool town and area had been in decline. However, there is now strong evidence of a growing renaissance supported by both public-sector and private-sector investment. Reinvestment in the docks area, for example, including The Maritime Experience and the marina, is generating tourism that will be further enhanced by Hartlepool's hosting of the Tall Ships event in 2010. Regeneration is also strongly evident in the town itself, particularly with ongoing large scale housing redevelopment.

8. The town of Hartlepool is densely populated, with the rest of the borough being predominantly rural. Nearly 2% of the population is of black or minority ethnic heritage, although this small percentage is growing. The 0-19 age group represents 27% of the population, which is higher than the national average, although this is projected to fall to around 15% of the overall total over the next 13 years. The area is socio-economically disadvantaged, with 40% of Hartlepool residents living within the category of the 10% most deprived areas in the country. Life expectancy is lower than national and regional averages, with wide variations between council wards. Unemployment rates are significantly higher than the national average, contributing to an underlying culture of disadvantage. Hartlepool Council became a unitary authority in 1996. Overall political control is held numerically by Labour, although there is an independent elected Mayor and an inclusive coalition cabinet.

9. There is a range of nursery settings in Hartlepool, together with 30 primary schools, six secondary schools, two special schools and three further education colleges, making this one of the smallest Local Education Authorities nationally. Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC) are partners with the local authority, post-16 colleges, training providers and schools in addressing the 14-19 strategy. Post 16 education and training is provided by one further education college, one sixth form college, one 11-18 Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided secondary school and 17 work-based training providers. Entry to Employment provision is managed by three providers within a local consortium

controlling 126 places. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by the local authority and Hartlepool College of further education. Cleveland College of Art and design also provides education and training in Hartlepool.

10. Primary care for children in Hartlepool is provided by the Hartlepool Primary Care Trust. North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust is the main provider of acute health services. Other children's hospital services are provided by South Tees NHS Trust, which also provides services to surrounding areas. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are provided by the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust, which also provides services to surrounding areas. The trusts providing health services for the children of Hartlepool, with the exception of the Ambulance Service, fall within the North East Strategic Health Authority.

11. There are no young offender institutions (YOI) in the immediate area. Close liaison exists, however, with Castington YOI in Northumberland, since this institution caters for any remand requirements from Hartlepool. High levels of social deprivation contribute to higher than average levels of crime.

12. Services for children and young people are delivered by Hartlepool children's services, which incorporate early years, children's social care services, education, Children's Fund and the youth service. The council has corporate parenting responsibility for 125 looked after children and young people.

Summary Report

Outcomes for children and young people

13. **Outcomes for children and young people in Hartlepool are good.** The findings of this review corroborate most judgements reached by the authority and its partners in their self-assessment. There is, indeed, strong partnership working across all outcome areas, with good examples of flexible arrangements to meet specific individual needs. Health education and provision is generally good, although there is a weakness in the dedicated provision of CAMHS to those children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The most vulnerable children and young people are well safeguarded through effective action by all agencies. Good and improving early years and childcare provision is available to all who require it. Standards of educational attainment have continued to improve and are now generally good, which is commendable, particularly given the socio-economic factors involved. The reintegration of excluded school pupils, however, remains a concern. Particularly good support is offered to vulnerable pupils, who consequently achieve well, although there are poorer levels of progression and participation in extended education for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Consultation with children and young people is well developed, although the full participation of Black and minority ethnic groups in this respect is underdeveloped. Multi-agency work to reduce offending and anti-social

behaviour is generally good. Young people are increasingly prepared well for working life, although the numbers who are not in education, employment or training remains high. Hartlepool Borough Council and its partners are justifiably proud of what has been achieved to date, but are continuing with a clear and ambitious vision to further improve services for children and young people.

The impact of local services

14. The impact of local services in improving outcomes for children and young people is good.

Being healthy

15. The impact of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Partnership working on health issues is good. Universal and targeted multi-agency services support parents and carers well in keeping children healthy. A well coordinated approach to promoting healthy lifestyles for schoolchildren and young people is effective, leading to good outcomes such as healthier eating in schools. Hospital services for children are generally satisfactory, with a very good environment for day-case surgery. Access to CAMHS is generally good, but the service for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is underdeveloped. Conversely, looked after children and young people enjoy priority access to CAMHS and receive a good service. There are good programmes for drug, alcohol and sex education and good services for young people who develop substance misuse problems. Healthcare for looked after children is good, and the particular needs of Black and minority ethnic groups and traveller families are addressed well.

Staying safe

16. The impact of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good. Families and children in need of support, and children and young people at risk of harm, are well supported through a comprehensive range of preventative services, which also decrease the need for children to become looked after. Joint commissioning arrangements for looked after children, however, are underdeveloped. Local agencies share information well and make timely assessments and refer their concerns appropriately. Initial referral, assessment and case transfer arrangements in children's social care are well managed, and good multi-agency communication means that thresholds are mostly well understood. The quality of assessments varies from adequate to good. Child protection arrangements are robust, and protection plans are effective and are regularly reviewed. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is developing well with sound leadership, but it lacks capacity to undertake its wider safeguarding role. Serious case reviews are appropriately and thoroughly undertaken and action plans are implemented effectively, but not always within the required timescale. Vetting checks for staff in regular contact with children are adequate and improving. Children's services staff

receive good support from their managers and their access to training is at least adequate.

Enjoying and achieving

17. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good. Parents and carers are provided with good support and guidance, which is well targeted in the most disadvantaged areas. Support for early years and childcare providers is effective and there are enough places to give parents sufficient choice. The strategy for early years and childcare is good, using the existing SureStart programmes effectively to secure the expansion of children's centres to meet local need. The high quality work of school improvement services is reducing the number of schools causing concern and improving the quality of provision, particularly in primary schools and special schools. Effective use of national strategies is improving pupil performance in targeted schools. Standards of attainment are good overall. The achievement of 11 and 16 year olds is very good, compared to statistical comparators, but the proportion of pupils achieving good GCSEs in English and mathematics remains low. Children and young people of Black and minority ethnic heritage and those looked after by the council make good progress. The council has made good progress to reduce surplus places in schools, maintaining choice in local areas. Nearly all parents achieve their first choice of primary and secondary school. The guidance to parents for admissions to schools is fit for purpose. Pupil attendance and behaviour is good. Exclusions in primary and secondary schools have fallen, but remain slightly above the national average in secondary schools, and the rate of reintegration into mainstream schools is too low. There is very good support for the most vulnerable pupils, including children looked after by the council and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The council has an excellent policy for including pupils with special educational needs within mainstream schools. These pupils make good progress and achieve well. Parents have a real choice of schools for their children and relationships with the special educational service are very good. Children and young people access a good range of recreational, arts, sport and leisure opportunities, although some young people still believe that cost limits use.

Making a positive contribution

18. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. Services have been developed well to meet local need and combine very well to support the social and emotional development of children and young people. Intervention programmes that focus on aspects of play and relationships are particularly effective in helping children's and young people's emotional and social development. Initial work to challenge and promote anti-racism is a model of good practice. The effectiveness of training and support for peer mentoring is variable. Children and young people are routinely engaged in consultation; they have been well prepared for this level of involvement and make a full contribution through

strategic forums leading to the shaping of services. Children and young people of Black and minority ethnic heritage are well supported in school and aspects of integration are good. Multi-agency work to reduce anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending is generally good, although impact is variable. First-time offending is lower than similar areas, re-offending is reducing and specific initiatives targeted at local trouble spots are leading to reduced crime.

However, there remains a problem with young people's misuse of alcohol in certain areas. School exclusion and attendance rates are improving. The council's commitment to looked after children is a strong feature; there are opportunities for them to make their views known and they have helped to shape services. Support for care leavers is particularly good. Opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and their views have helped to shape some council services. Services meet their needs in most cases and transitions are well managed, including most of those to adult services, although these options are limited.

Achieving economic well-being

19. The contribution of all local services in helping children and young people to achieve economic well-being is good. Childcare provision reflects well the employment patterns of parents and carers in Hartlepool, with an appropriate number of childcare places available in the evenings and weekends. Almost all Key Stage 4 pupils, including young people who are in special schools, take part in a wide range of beneficial work experience. Within the last two years, a wide range of good initiatives have been implemented to engage young people who are at risk of leaving education without any qualifications, some of whom have challenging behaviour or are disadvantaged by a family history of long-term dependency on the benefit system. All partners collaborate well to ensure that 14–19 provision more closely meets the interests of young people and supports the development of courses which reflect business growth in Hartlepool. However, the monitoring of participation and progression for more vulnerable groups, such as young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and care leavers, is insufficient. Although the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training has improved, it remains high, as is the case for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The authority has utilised regeneration projects well to provide a range of education and training opportunities for young people. Most vulnerable young people, including young parents at risk of homelessness, ex-offenders and care leavers, gain adequate access to supervised or semi-independent housing. Many aspects of the care leaving service, more especially the pastoral and emotional support, is good, but too many care leavers progress to employment without further training. The quality of learning support offered by the education and training providers for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is at least satisfactory, with some good provision.

Service management

20. **The management of services for children and young people is good, as is the capacity to improve.** There is a powerful commitment to achieving the very best for children and young people. Leadership is good and there is exceptional unity of purpose. There is a strong sense of shared priorities and ownership by schools and external partners. Engagement with children and young people is excellent. Priorities clearly reflect the outcomes of consultation with children and young people, parents and carers. There is consistency in planning at all levels and plans are of high quality. However, medium term financial planning is under-developed. Priorities explicitly identify children and young people from Black and minority ethnic communities as a vulnerable group, and there are some good examples of support for them. Positive action is taken to deliver key priorities, such as improving educational attainment, prevention and inclusion.

21. The quality and extent of partnership working is outstanding. There is effective use of the community and voluntary sector. Political and managerial leadership is strong, and scrutiny is increasingly focused on key issues. The universal level of staff commitment, enthusiasm and pride is outstanding. Overall, there is good value for money and good improvements are being made, but benchmarking of costs is not embedded in management practice. Schools are very satisfied with almost all services and the support they receive. Overall, their response to the schools' survey is the best in the country. However, there are deficiencies in ICT provision to schools and in the social care software system. There are very thorough arrangements for performance management in place at partnership, elected member, corporate and departmental levels. However, there are deficiencies in management information available to social care managers, which should be overcome with implementation of a new software system. The involvement of service users in performance management is not as well developed as other aspects of consultation and engagement.

Grades

Grades awarded:

4: outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate

	Local services overall	Council services	Health services
Being healthy	3		
Staying safe	3		
Enjoying and achieving	3		
Making a positive contribution	3		
Achieving economic well-being	3		
Service management	3		
Capacity to improve	3	3	
Children's services		3	
The education service		3	
The social care services for children		3	
The health service for children			2

Recommendations

For immediate action

- Develop inter-agency guidance in relation to thresholds for referrals to children's social care.

For action over the next six months

- Improve the quality of provision for children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties in order to meet their needs.
- Improve the quality of provision for pupils excluded from secondary schools and the rates of reintegration into mainstream schools.

- When the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is reviewed, a high-level assessment of the financial implications should be incorporated.
- Undertake benchmarking of costs on a systematic basis.
- Improve joint commissioning and contracting arrangements in relation to out of authority placements for looked after children.
- Engage service users in the evaluation of services they receive on a systematic basis.

For action in the longer term

- Improve the provision of occupational therapy and speech and language therapy services.
- Develop a wider range of courses for post-16 young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Main Report

Outcomes for children and young people

22. Outcomes for children and young people in Hartlepool are good.

23. Children and young people are generally healthy. Most children and young people who responded to the survey conducted as part of the inspection reported positive views of feeling quite or very healthy. Parents, carers, children and young people are provided with good information, advice and support. Teenage pregnancy rates are falling but remain above the national average. Deaths of babies around the time of birth, infants in the first year of life and children up to the age of 15 are all in line with the national average. Immunisation rates have improved and are now around the national average. The reported incidence of measles is low. Oral health is good. Access to CAMHS is good for most young people and admission placements are appropriate. The healthcare of looked after children is good, with 95% having had annual health and dental checks in the last 12 months. Healthcare for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally good, but there is a lack of capacity in some therapy services.

24. The combined work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good, and Hartlepool is a safe place for children and young people to live. Almost all children and young people responding to the inspection survey feel safe in school and in their local area. Few serious injuries occur on roads and an effective road safety education programme has reduced the numbers of those slightly injured. Agencies work effectively together to provide prompt identification and safeguarding of children at immediate risk of significant harm including children with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities. These children receive a service from a specialist team with appropriate knowledge and communication skills. Child protection arrangements are well managed and effective practice means that the number of children whose names remain on the register for more than two years is lower than in similar authorities, while re-registration rates are also low. However, more children are referred to initial child protection conferences and this is reflected in slightly higher numbers on the register. Most initial assessments and almost all core assessments are completed on time, but data in relation to their numbers is unreliable, although the council is taking appropriate steps to address this. All children in need who are on the child protection register and those looked after are allocated to a qualified social worker. A wide range of preventative support is offered in Hartlepool. Fewer children are looked after than in similar authorities and they live in safe and mostly stable placements. Almost all looked after children have annual health assessments, and numbers who contribute to their statutory reviews, while lower than similar authorities, are improving. Numbers of children adopted from care and the timeliness of achieving this are very good, and better than similar authorities.

25. Looked after children and young people feel safe in their placements and are able to report their concerns. Their carers receive good support, training and rewards, but there are not enough local placements, so some children are placed at a distance. Children's cases are regularly reviewed and their participation in reviews is improving. Prospective adoptive families, and children for whom the plan is adoption, receive an exceptional service, although the adoption panel does not have adequate legal and administrative support. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support. That promotes their inclusion. There is good partnership working for children with complex needs, but aspects of management and funding are preventing further integration.

26. **Children and young people achieve highly.** Almost all children and young people surveyed enjoy their education and feel they are doing very or quite well at school. The overall quality of childcare is in line with the national average. The quality of nursery education is at least satisfactory overall and more is good than found nationally. Children enter the initial stage in school with much lower than average abilities in key areas of learning. Pupils' standards of attainment are in line with those in similar authorities and national averages at age seven. Pupils at age 11 perform above those in similar authorities in English and mathematics and the progress they make during their primary school education is well above that of children nationally. The majority of pupils aged 16 achieve five or more good GCSEs, in line with national averages, in 2006. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more good GCSE passes including English and mathematics is lower, but improving. Boys' achievement remains a concern, as it is nationally, but, at ages 11 and 16, schools are successful in narrowing the gender gap. The majority of vulnerable pupils, including those from Black and minority ethnic communities, children looked after by the council and young people with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities, achieve well when compared to their starting points and in comparison to similar groups nationally.

27. The proportion of schools causing concern to the council has reduced and is now low. The number of primary schools failing to meet the Government's targets for English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has fallen significantly from eight to one over the last three years. All secondary schools met the Government's minimum targets at the end of Key Stage 3 and for GCSE achievement in 2006. The numbers of permanent and temporary exclusions of pupils has fallen in both primary and secondary schools, but the number excluded from secondary schools was slightly above the national average in 2005. Although the majority of pupils permanently excluded from school receive the hours of education to which they are entitled, a small number do not, and the percentage of children and young people re-integrated into mainstream schools remains too low. Attendance has improved and is now above national averages in primary and secondary schools while the rate of unauthorised absence remains low and below national averages.

28. **Children and young people have a good range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility and many make a very good contribution to their communities.** Most children and young people, including those looked after by the council and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have the necessary skills and confidence to comment on and influence issues that matter to them. Almost all school children have been actively involved in the democratic process leading to the appointment of school council members and the UK Youth Parliament representative. All school children and young people involved in various participation forums are well prepared. They are bright and articulate and listen to others before arriving at a decision. They support and represent the views of others well and are becoming increasingly confident in their role.

29. Children and young people benefit from positive relationships with workers. Young parents and young carers are enjoying the support they receive and are gaining in confidence as a result. Children from Black and minority ethnic groups are achieving well at school and like living in the area. Children and young people are engaging with the programmes that exist to reduce anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending. However, some young people are drinking excessive amounts of alcohol on Friday and Saturday nights. The number of first-time offenders is below that in similar authorities, and re-offending rates have reduced consistently over time and are now in line with similar areas. Opportunities to celebrate children and young people's successes are used well, with some very good examples for those who are looked after by the council. Care leavers are particularly pleased with the support services they receive and are very positive about their in-care experiences, although some have low aspirations for further and higher education. Children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities enjoy good levels of support to help them participate in decision making.

30. Children and young people are increasingly able to achieve economic well-being and most are well prepared for working life.

Outcomes for almost all young people have improved to good levels, with most above that of similar authorities or at national averages. For a small number of young people, however, outcomes are satisfactory or low. Participation rates of young people in education, employment and training have improved, since 2004, from below to above the national average, which is good. Participation rates in work-based learning are also good. Success rates for Levels 1, 2 and 3, including work-based learning courses, is satisfactory, with some good success rates on A-level courses. Almost all Key Stage 4 pupils gain good work experience, including young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All schools provide a satisfactory range of vocational courses and a good range of enterprise activities.

31. A significant number of young people have benefited from a wide range of good education and training courses through regeneration activities. Care leavers' participation in education, employment and training is satisfactory, but too many progress to employment without further training. Almost all these young people live in decent housing. The participation of young offenders in education, employment and training is low and below the national target. The proportion of young people who gain Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications by the age of 19 is satisfactory, but too many leave education and training at the age of 18, and do not progress to Level 3. Progression rates to higher education are low. The number of 16 to 18 year olds whose whereabouts is unknown has significantly reduced to below the national average. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training, especially among young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, has reduced but remains high.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

32. The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. A good range of universal and targeted services helps parents and carers in keeping their children healthy. Access to childcare facilities is good and provided flexibly to meet identified needs. Health visitor contact rates are high. Very good multi-agency working is seen in the SureStart programmes, which promote healthy lifestyles for parents and pre-school children, particularly engaging those from hard to reach groups. A particularly good example is the Mams To Be course for pregnant teenagers. The level of smoking during pregnancy has reduced, and targets have been met, but is still high compared with the national average. The incidence of low birth weight is in line with the national average. Breastfeeding is actively promoted, and again health targets have been met, although initiation rates remain low.

Immunisation rates have improved to around the national average. There is a good, targeted health visitor service for travellers. The particular needs of Black and minority ethnic families are well addressed through, for example, a

SureStart project located in the Salaam Centre where a wide range of support, including health education, is provided for Asian families.

33. There is a well coordinated approach to promoting healthy lifestyles for children and young people. All schools are enrolled in the Healthy Schools initiative and at the time of inspection a creditable 29% had achieved New Healthy School status through meeting increased criteria. School nurses have begun to implement a good obesity strategy and are delivering comprehensive smoking prevention and cessation programmes in primary and secondary schools. Good programmes of drug, alcohol and sex education are delivered in imaginative ways in school and community settings, such as a mobile Youth Support bus which is well used and highly rated by users. Contraceptive services, including emergency hormonal contraception, are widely available and well publicised. There is a good forward-looking action plan aimed at tackling the high teenage pregnancy rate. Surveys indicate a good level of understanding of the factors important in living healthily, with some evidence that knowledge has been translated into practice in relation to healthy eating. There are good opportunities for sport and exercise, such as the popular FAST project football teams and the West View project involving young people in orienteering. Positive surveys show that a large majority of children and young people consider themselves to be quite or very healthy. Universal health screening is in place and all general practices offer child health surveillance. Access and waiting times for hospital in-patient and day care are good. Services for children in hospital are generally satisfactory, apart from the arrangements for emergency surgery highlighted in the Healthcare Commission Improvement review. The environment for day-case surgery is very good. There is good outreach provision through a hospital-based community paediatric nursing team.

34. A comprehensive self-assessment exercise has been undertaken to inform a new mental health strategy for children and young people. The length of wait for new cases to access CAMHS is satisfactory, though some parents say there are issues in relation to the timing of appointments and cancellations at short notice. Training and support provided by primary mental health workers for front line staff in health and other agencies are good. There are direct referral pathways agreed with various agencies, including the youth offending service and Connexions. There are good examples of services for young people with drug or alcohol problems, such as the Straightline project for young people found in possession of alcohol, which involves a multi-agency approach including the police, the A&E department and school. A positive survey shows that 96% of children and young people rate their lives as quite, or very, enjoyable. Management protocols for children and young people who self-harm are well developed and clear. There is a good diagnostic service for young children with possible autistic spectrum disorder. Transition of young people with mental health problems to the adult service is not always smooth as it lacks a specific policy.

35. There is a designated nurse for looked after children who, with help from the designated doctor/s, provides an excellent service undertaking and arranging health assessments and follow-up health care. Most health assessments are undertaken where children and young people live, enabling a user-friendly service and affording the opportunity for advice on other matters, such as sexual health and healthy living. The assessment service is also available to care leavers, and the nurse runs useful drop-in sessions for vulnerable young people living in supported housing. The nurse also provides good support and advice to carers; her input is very highly valued by looked after young people. Assessments are of good quality and are regularly reviewed. For looked after children who live outside Hartlepool, the nurse liaises with her counterparts in other areas to try and ensure an equally good service in relation to their health care needs. Looked after children and young people enjoy priority access to CAMHS and receive a good service.

36. The Care Coordination programme provides a good multi-agency approach to needs assessment for children under five who have learning disabilities. Care plans are developed and regularly reviewed, with good involvement of parents/carers. The process is now being rolled out to include children and young people up to the age of 18 years. The provision of short-break care and other family support for this group of children and young people is good. There is good clinical provision to meet their physical health needs, but this is not always well coordinated. There is no dedicated service for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within CAMHS, which can result in a poorer service to families caring for children with the most challenging behaviour. The learning disability nursing service supports families well, but does not yet have sufficient help from a specialised psychiatrist or psychologist. A much appreciated social inclusion programme enables these children and young people to improve their health through a wide range of sport and leisure activities. The Healthy Schools project has an approach tailored to the particular needs of this group. Parents report an overall shortage of therapy services, with those that are available having long waits; this is particularly notable in respect of speech and language therapy and there is no paediatric occupational therapist. Some parents report difficulty in accessing appropriate equipment, including wheelchairs, for their children. Transition from paediatric care to adult health services is adequate but requires further development to provide a seamless progression.

Staying safe

37. **The combined work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good.** Almost all children surveyed for this review and who were interviewed during inspection said that they feel safe in school and in their local area. Good action is taken to ensure that children and young people and carers know about key risks to their safety and how to deal with them, and good quality information is available in a number of community languages. However, less information is available for children and young people in relation to the risks posed by some adults. Initiatives, such as the school-based Crucial

Crew programme, are appropriate, well focused and targeted, and the Safer Hartlepool Partnership's fire safety programme provides secure medical cabinets for storage of medication.

38. Policies and systems to identify, assess and manage risk of harm are sound and most staff are well supported and trained. Health and safety assessments of facilities are rigorous and good advice is provided. The council and its partners have, through the contributions by young people, rightly prioritised bullying in the CYPP and have strengthened coordination and monitoring arrangements. However, some young people are still concerned that the effects of mentoring schemes are short-lived and that school-based anti-bullying schemes are not always fully confidential.

39. There is an impressive and comprehensive response to domestic violence, and all organisations, including the LSCB and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), accord this a high priority. Incidents of domestic violence are routinely reported and appropriate responses are made. Innovative schemes are in place, such as the outreach pilot between North Tees Women's Aid and the police, which is increasingly having a positive impact on numbers of women and children supported.

40. Families and children in need of support and children and young people at risk of harm are effectively supported. A good and creative range of preventative services, including those commissioned from the voluntary and community sector, are well coordinated through the Hartlepool Intervention Panel. Staff are mostly well informed about this provision; however, the online directory requires further work to make it easily accessible, especially for children and young people.

41. All agencies understand their role in keeping children safe, and children at risk of harm or in need are suitably referred and their cases promptly investigated. The generic social care duty service provides a valued screening service, within which thresholds for the involvement of social care are appropriate and consistently applied. Good multi-agency communication means that thresholds are mostly well understood, but a lack of specific written guidance increases the risk of inconsistency. Initial referral, assessment and case transfer arrangements are safe, timely and well managed. The quality of assessments varies from adequate to good, but some case records do not analyse risks effectively or reflect fully the quality of practice. Appropriate action is being taken to replace the council's electronic data system, which does not routinely provide sufficiently reliable data to support the effective performance management of services to vulnerable children. All children in need, those on the child protection register and looked after children are appropriately allocated to a qualified social worker.

42. Agencies work well together to safeguard children; inter-agency safeguarding policies are comprehensive and have been recently revised and reissued in accordance with government guidance. Child protection

arrangements are sound. Meetings to review the cases on the child protection register are well attended and robustly managed. The length of time for which children's names remain on the register has also reduced. Parents and carers are appropriately involved in plans to safeguard their children, but their experiences are not used in the development and redesign of services. Arrangements for Criminal Records Bureau and other vetting checks are adequate and improving. Most files seen during the inspection comply with statutory requirements and firm action has been taken to ensure that outstanding checks are completed.

43. Staff and carers receive at least satisfactory guidance and training within their own agencies and within multi-agency programmes; training and support for designated staff in schools and health settings is sound. A comprehensive approach to progressing the Common Assessment Framework incorporates a good focus on change management and the accreditation of learning. Children's services staff are well supported by their managers and have access to good quality and regular supervision. Their work is regularly and consistently audited, but these audits have yet to fully address the quality of practice.

44. The LSCB is well led, has appropriate representation and is effectively linked to other strategic groups. Good attention is paid to enabling committed members to contribute effectively, but the LSCB has not yet secured sufficient permanent funding or capacity to undertake its wider safeguarding role, or to strengthen multi-agency training and quality assurance processes. Serious case reviews are appropriately and thoroughly undertaken and action plans are effectively implemented. However, reviews are not always completed within required timescales and arrangements for producing independent overview reports are underdeveloped. Children's services staff use MAPPA to make an appropriate contribution to the Tees-wide arrangements for managing offenders who pose risks to children.

45. Information sharing is well managed and prompt action is taken to make sure that children do not become lost in the education or care system or when moving across local authority boundaries. Sound policies are implemented to ensure that all children have a school place and attend school regularly; for some young people, targeted group work has improved their attendance and given them a more positive view of school.

46. Proactive and well-resourced inter-agency support and protection enable children and young people to remain safely at home. Children are not looked after until all alternative avenues have been explored and so there are lower numbers of looked after children than in similar authorities. Decisions in relation to becoming looked after are made by managers at the right level of seniority.

47. Children and young people in foster care feel safe and are well cared for by carers who receive good training and rewards. However, there are insufficient placements to meet local needs, so some are placed a considerable distance away. Placement stability is good and children who have settled in out

of area placements are enabled to remain there. Looked after children, including those placed out of area, are reviewed regularly and participation in reviews has recently improved to an acceptable rate with the introduction of the Viewpoint software. Looked after children told inspectors that they are able to report concerns about their care and treatment and enjoy a good independent advocacy service, although the children's complaints service is only adequate.

48. Kinship care placements are a regular feature, as extended family systems are common; these placements are now assessed and supported by the Family Placement Team to the same rigorous standard as other foster placements. Good action has also been taken to begin to identify, support and review children in private foster care. The Adoption Social Work Team provides an excellent service to prospective adoptive families, and to children for whom the plan is adoption, although the legal and administrative support to the adoption panel is inadequate. Joint commissioning arrangements are not well developed, and this is significant for Hartlepool as a council with no in-house residential placements.

49. The demand for short-break services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has changed and a review of the reasons for this is underway, with good involvement of young people and their families. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support to access mainstream social and leisure opportunities which promote their inclusion. Parents and carers are offered assessments for services in their own right, in line with legal requirements, but the children's complaints service has not been sufficiently adapted for easy use by disabled children. The funding of placements for children with complex needs is successfully undertaken through good partnership arrangements, but differences in protocols, management and funding arrangements stand in the way of further integration of services.

Enjoying and achieving

50. **The impact of local services to help children and young people enjoy and achieve is good.** Clear and helpful information is available to parents and carers in brochures through the children's information service and the council website. Good information and guidance is available to parents of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities about the services provided, including how the annual statutory review process works. The parent advice line provides good support and the service is valued by parents who use it.

51. The strategy for early years and childcare is good. The range of early years and childcare provision is targeted appropriately at areas in most need. There are sufficient places for those parents who require them. Good advice and information is on offer from the children's information system about the availability of places to give parents and carers sufficient choice. The quality of provision is improving. For example, the quality of childcare has improved due to more effective quality assurance, good support and training. Foundation

Stage training, and support for meeting the needs of all young children, is increasingly effective. Early years and childcare providers value the good range and quality of advice, training and support.

52. There have been good improvements in the attainment of pupils aged 11 and 14, and at a faster rate than the national average. Exam results for 16 year olds have continued to improve at an impressive rate over the last three years and the gap to the national average has been closed. However, the percentage of 16 year olds achieving five good GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and mathematics, is too low compared to the national averages.

53. The council's strategy to support schools and intervene when necessary is very good. It is based on an excellent analysis of need and very good use of data. Partnership working with schools is highly effective and well planned, and targeted support and intervention is reducing the numbers of schools causing concern. The quality of leadership and management and educational provision inspected since September 2005 is good in Hartlepool. No schools are currently in Ofsted categories of concern. The council has taken effective action with schools causing concern. Experienced headteachers and advanced skills teachers are used to give effective support to other schools facing challenges.

54. The council has thorough and accurate data about the achievement of pupils across the borough. This information is used well with schools to target support and has resulted in increased attainment at Key Stage 2 and very good improvements in the percentage of pupils achieving five good GCSEs. The council is also making good use of the national strategies for primary and secondary education to improve educational performance for 11 and 14 year olds. Pupils' attainment has improved in schools receiving targeted support, particularly in narrowing the attainment gap between boys and girls at key points in their schooling, although as is the case nationally, more remains to be done.

55. The council has made good progress to reduce surplus places in schools, and planning for Building Schools for the Future is thoroughly integrated with plans to respond to declining pupil numbers. Admissions procedures prioritise places for children looked after by the council and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all parents get a place for their children at their first-choice school. There is appropriate guidance to parents for admissions to schools.

56. Attendance in primary schools has remained similar to the national average and that of other similar areas. Secondary schools have worked hard to improve attendance, with the result that absence levels are lower than those found nationally and unauthorised absence is well below the national average. Targeted and coordinated support and intervention by the attendance service and behaviour support programme, as well as encouraging parents not to take holidays in term time by negotiating a discount scheme with a local travel agency, have brought about this good performance. No pupil was permanently

excluded from special schools in 2004/2005 and the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs excluded from mainstream schools has also reduced significantly. The percentage of pupils permanently excluded from secondary schools remains too high and the rate of reintegration of permanently excluded pupils into mainstream schools is too low.

57. Almost all permanently excluded pupils get full-time education, but for a very small number of pupils the provision is not yet adequate. Concerns exist about the overall quality of provision at the pupil referral unit, coupled with the challenging nature of some pupil's behaviour. Protocols are in place to support managed moves and hard to place pupils, but as yet have not made sufficient impact. The council is aware of and shares these concerns. A constructive debate with headteachers about the way forward is underway as part of the developing Hartlepool Education Improvement Partnership.

58. The range of provision to support pupils who are unable to attend school is mainly effective. The home and hospital tuition service and the support for pregnant school girls are good. The monitoring of provision for children educated at home is thorough. The provision for pupils with statements of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties is under review and the council is aware of the need to improve the current arrangements which are unsatisfactory at present.

59. There is a good range of recreational, arts, sport and leisure opportunities for children and young people, including those looked after by the council and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The accessibility of these opportunities is good overall, particularly for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Schools provide a comprehensive range of family learning, study support and extended school activities. The community and voluntary sector makes a valuable contribution to improving the enjoyment and achievement of young people.

60. Looked after children are supported very well in their education and, although their attainment is low at the end of some key stages, they make better progress at age 11 than looked after children do nationally. Their attendance at school remains low but is improving and currently no looked after children are permanently excluded. The council makes strenuous efforts to ensure that children and their carers are involved in setting and reviewing the targets in their personal education plans, or the individual education plans of those with special educational needs. Most looked after children have good quality personal education plans. Every school has a designated teacher for looked after children and the council ensures there is good training and support for this role.

61. There is excellent support to enable pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to enjoy their education and achieve. Statements of special educational need (SEN) are timely, well written and meet needs, with parents and pupils involved in their development and review. The quality of information,

advice and support from SEN services to early years and childcare settings and schools is very good. Early identification and action ensure that support is targeted to young children who require it. Schools make good use of quality provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The achievement and progress of pupils with SEN is good. The council's commitment to inclusion is reflected in the high proportion of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are educated in mainstream schools; those who are not are educated in local special schools that meet their individual needs very effectively. Arrangements for the dual registration of children with SEN enable the two special schools to work supportively and flexibly with mainstream schools without the necessity for all children to have a statutory statement. Parents are very supportive of these arrangements and spoke highly of their choice of schools and the high quality of curriculum and extra-curricular activities available for their children as a result.

Making a positive contribution

62. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. Children and young people's social and emotional development is promoted effectively through early years settings and schools. Services have been developed to meet local need and agencies work well together to deliver effective responses. There is a wide range of opportunities for children and young people and parents to access support. Many of these programmes are of the highest quality. Mentoring schemes and parenting skills programmes which focus on developing aspects of play and relationships are particularly good at improving outcomes for some of the most hard to reach and at risk children. Actions to reduce bullying are embedded in school practice. The effectiveness of training and support to peer mentors is variable and therefore confidentiality is sometimes an issue.

63. Children and young people who face significant change and challenge in their lives are provided with good levels of support. For example, work with young parents, children who have witnessed domestic violence, and behaviour management programmes are all particularly effective. Support for Black and minority ethnic children and young people with their education and some aspects of integration are good. Some excellent work has taken place in challenging racism. Transition support through early years, primary and secondary schools is a strong feature. Learning mentors in schools and services for young carers are well developed. The youth service is providing a range of effective programmes, for example, work to raise awareness of sexual health and targeted work with specific groups such as deaf children.

64. The council has a strong commitment to encourage children and young people to participate. The Participation strategy provides a sound basis for this work. All agencies are committed to this agenda and are progressively empowering children and young people. Effective forums exist for local issues to be heard and prioritised from across the borough. The views and aspirations of children and young people are demonstrably helping to shape services. For

example, Young Voice ideas to provide solutions for reducing children and young people's anti-social behaviour have been implemented. Overall, children and young people who represent others demonstrate good social adjustment and responsible citizenship. Children and young people of Black and minority ethnic heritage are included in participation forums.

65. There is good multi-agency work to reduce anti-social behaviour by children and young people, for example, the Hartlepool Intervention programme and the Youth Inclusion programme. Improved school exclusion and attendance rates are having a positive impact. New methods of community policing are effective. Intervention programmes are well targeted and involve a broad range of coordinated activities, including family-based programmes. There is good take-up by young people of the community services provided, for example, youth clubs. The FAST football programme is effectively targeting and engaging hard to reach young people and supporting their social and emotional development. The youth service is working with many vulnerable and hard to reach young people. The relationships between workers and children and young people are good and attendance by young people is sustained over time. However, there are no concessionary rates for children under 16 to use mainstream sports and leisure facilities. There are problems with young people's misuse of alcohol in some communities, where interventions such as the community warden scheme have had limited effect.

66. Action to reduce offending and re-offending is good. Youth justice board targets are being met consistently in most areas. Action taken by the police to evaluate impact is good and there is evidence that community and neighbourhood policing initiatives are reducing crime in specific areas. The youth offending service provides a good range of activities and reparation projects for those young people who offend and are at risk of offending. Work with families and individual young people is particularly effective, helping to reduce offending behaviour and raise children and young people's self-esteem. The support to meet the mental health needs of children and young people is effective. Good arrangements are in place to support offenders on release from custody. Young people who have served their sentence are supported well in the community, resulting in good outcomes. Educational and training support to meet the needs of children and young people working with the youth offending service is variable. Work to support those over 16 years into employment, training and education, and mentoring schemes to support engagement in education for young offenders, are underdeveloped.

67. The council has a strong commitment to the involvement of looked after children. Corporate parenting is a strong feature. Opportunities for looked after children to make their views known are good and young people are helping to shape services, in particular placement stability. Participation in both statutory reviews and aspects of care planning has improved. The participation officer has helped looked after children to have a voice and develop their skills and confidence in speaking out. Young people have access to a good independent advocacy service. Representations made by young people are considered and

acted on. Looked after children's successes are being celebrated, leading to raised self-esteem. Arrangements for looked after children to have contact with their families are good. The support for care leavers is particularly good, including aspects of transition, and young people value the very good support provided by workers in the team. The aspirations of some care leavers for further and higher education is low, while the effectiveness of the complaints process is limited.

68. Opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a positive contribution are good and their views have shaped some council services. For example, a DVD produced by young people at Catcote Special Needs School has helped to break down barriers in the community and raised the confidence of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Aspects of integration are good, for example, day care services and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. The involvement of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education reviews is good and they benefit from a full programme of social outings, including out of school activities and community leisure pursuits. Good provision is available to support disabled children and their families. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with severe communication difficulties cannot use the complaints procedure; Viewpoint software is being enhanced to enable this. The transition process to adult services is well managed in most areas, but service options are limited.

Achieving economic well-being

69. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Children and young people are prepared well for working life.** The authority's childcare strategy is very effective in removing barriers to employment and training for parents and carers. A wide range of good childcare provision, such as day care, sessional care, out of school day care and regulated child-minding provision, reflects the employment patterns in Hartlepool well. For example, with employment patterns in the call centre sector, the authority has been very successful in supporting childcare providers to offer more flexible provision, such as drop-in childcare and childcare provision in the evenings and weekends. Childcare provision, including respite care, for the carers of young people aged 5 to 18 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. A comprehensive range of information on childcare, childcare cost, health, financial support and employment is available to parents and carers. Partnership working between Jobcentre Plus, children's centres and voluntary and community venues that provide childcare is good in offering advice on employment and training opportunities. The range of family learning opportunities is satisfactory and is helping carers and parents to progress to training or employment.

70. A wide range of good strategies and initiatives prepares young people for working life. All schools provide a range of vocational subjects, which increasingly offer better progression routes to post-16 education and training. Almost all Key Stage 4 pupils, including those in special schools, take part in a wide range of beneficial work experience such as computer repairs. Learn2work, an education–business link organisation, and the schools collaborate well to provide activities for young people to gain an understanding of business and enterprise. In one special school, a wide range of enterprise and work-related projects provide particularly good and interesting opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A significant number of young people benefit from the arrangements to attend local colleges for part of their studies. The overall impact of these arrangements has improved achievement rates at Key Stage 4 and increased participation rates in post-16 education and training from below the national averages to above. Within the last two years, a wide range of good initiatives has been implemented to engage young people who are at risk of leaving education without any qualifications, have challenging behaviour or are disadvantaged by a family history of long-term dependency on the benefit system. Some of these young people improved their personal skills and self-confidence by spending part of a week with employers and the remainder of the week in school. In two schools, however, there are still too many young people who leave without gaining any qualifications. Advice and guidance for young people in schools is generally satisfactory, but for a few this advice is not sufficiently comprehensive.

71. The strategy for 14–19 education and training is effective in improving participation and success for young people. The Tees Valley LSC and the authority collaborate well to ensure that the provision more closely meets the interests of young people, for example, through the detailed analysis of 14–19 provision and by supporting the development of new courses that reflect the business growth in Hartlepool. Four groups take responsibility for implementing the various aspects of this strategy, including raising standards, staff development and quality assurance. Collaboration between Hartlepool College of further education and Catcote School has been effective in developing good provision for young people with moderate to profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This provision offers learners the opportunity to develop independent living skills in addition to basic vocational skills. However, the monitoring of participation and progression for the more vulnerable groups, such as young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and care leavers, is insufficient. The progression of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to work-based provision is low. Although the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training has improved, it remains high for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Connexions, the authority and other partners have been very successful in significantly reducing the number of young people whose whereabouts are not known. Young people have satisfactory access to provision at pre-entry and entry level.

72. A significant proportion of regeneration funds is allocated specifically to improve the education and employability of children and young people. Financial resources, including the neighbourhood renewal fund and the new deal for communities fund, are used effectively to provide very well-resourced learning centres within two of the most deprived areas. The authority has recognised the significance of regeneration projects in helping young people to gain training and employment, and good arrangements are in place to provide a range of education and training opportunities for young people. The authority has good strategies to consult the local community and the level of involvement of young people is good.

73. The authority is in the process of implementing plans to improve the availability of decent housing in general. Currently, the arrangements with the private and social housing sectors are generally satisfactory in providing a range of housing for young people. However, the sharing of up to date housing information between partners is insufficiently developed. Most vulnerable young people, including young parents at risk of homelessness, ex-offenders and care leavers, gain adequate access to supervised or semi-independent housing. However, at times there is insufficient appropriate accommodation for vulnerable young people, with some use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

74. The support for care leavers to achieve economic well-being is satisfactory. Many aspects of the care leaving service, more especially the pastoral and emotional support, are good. While the authority and Connexions are working well through a number of projects and initiatives to support these young people, too many leave education or training too early. There is effective support from all relevant agencies to help looked after children or young people who have substance dependencies, young parents or those who are involved with the youth justice system. The effectiveness of the care leaving service is compromised by the fact that its location is not readily accessible to the young people, and not within proximity of other services which these young people need to use.

75. The quality of learning support offered by the education and training providers for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is at least satisfactory, with some good provision. Connexions provide effective guidance for these young people. They have a good level of involvement in discussions to ensure better coordination of their education, health and social care support. The take-up of direct payments is low despite a user-friendly approach. The arrangements for transition planning are good, with appropriate representation from the relevant agencies.

Service management

76. **The management of services for children and young people is good.** Ambition is good. The council and its partners provide excellent leadership for children's services. There are clear and challenging ambitions for children and young people in Hartlepool, a strong shared commitment to them

and an exceptional unity of purpose. The community strategy places a strong emphasis on children and young people. Vision and ambitions are set out well in the CYPP and key outcomes for children and young people are incorporated in the Local Area Agreement.

77. Children and young people have been effectively engaged in an extensive consultation process about aims and priorities, and a children and young people's version of the plan was produced by Hartlepool Young Voices, a group of young people supported by Barnardos. There are two young people on the Local Strategic Partnership and they are well supported. There is further representation on the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Children and young people feel confident that their aspirations and views are taken fully into account.

78. Prioritisation is good. Key priorities are clearly set out in the CYPP and there is a strong sense of shared priorities and ownership by schools and external partners. Strategic partnership meetings, for example, demonstrate an embedded pragmatic approach to committing resources across agencies. The approach to engagement of children and young people is excellent. There has been an extensive process of consultation with large numbers of children and young people, and intensive engagement with a smaller number, particularly through Diamond 9, a process of facilitated discussion leading to identification of priorities. The priorities clearly reflect the outcomes of consultation with children and young people, parents and carers and these are taken as the starting point for the CYPP. There is extensive ongoing consultation with children and young people underpinning children's services planning and decision making, including involvement in the appointment process for the Director, Assistant Directors and many other posts, as well as feedback on how their engagement can be made even more effective.

79. The CYPP incorporates a clear high level action plan and is underpinned by high quality lower level plans containing three-year priorities and a one-year action plan. There is consistency in plans at all levels. Resources are allocated appropriately to priorities, but medium term financial planning is underdeveloped as there is no reference in the CYPP or some key lower level plans to their financial implications.

80. The needs of Black and minority ethnic children and young people are prioritised and acted on effectively. The CYPP identifies this group as vulnerable, alongside looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are examples of good support for BME children and young people, for example, through the Salaam Centre and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team.

81. There is good evidence of robust action to deliver key priorities. This includes excellent support for improving educational attainment in schools, widespread adoption of a preventative approach and a very effective approach to inclusion. These actions have had a very positive impact.

82. Capacity to deliver outcomes for children and young people is good. The fact that Hartlepool is the second smallest unitary council has been turned into a significant strength rather than a weakness. The quality and extent of partnership working at all levels in all outcome areas, and the strong personal networks which exist across all sectors, are outstanding. There is effective use of the very extensive community and voluntary sector. The exceptional quality of partnership working contributes significantly to the high quality of provision in almost all service areas.

83. There is very strong commitment to delivering the best possible services to children and young people from key elected members, such as the Mayor, portfolio holder and Scrutiny Forum chair. There are good reporting arrangements and clear roles, good leadership and appropriate challenge. The Corporate Parenting Forum is strengthening the input from children and young people and becoming more focused on the achievements of looked after children and their recognition. The contribution of the Scrutiny Forum is improving. Good engagement with children and young people is to be enhanced by direct representation of six young people on the forum. It is becoming more focused on making an impact on important issues.

84. There is good senior management capacity within the children's services department. The level of commitment, enthusiasm and pride in staff at all levels in delivering quality services to Hartlepool is outstanding. Vacancies are low. There is strong internal consultation and communication.

85. Overall, good value for money is being delivered and significant areas of overspend are examined rigorously, though benchmarking of costs is not embedded in management practice. Education costs are about average and social care costs a little above average, with mostly good and some outstanding services. The proportion of surplus school places is low and planning is underway to respond to projected longer term reductions in pupil numbers over the next 10 years. The community asset of schools is well recognised; Dyke House is an outstanding example of a community hub, and the inclusive approach to developing Building Schools for the Future proposals is placing benefit for the whole community at its heart. There is some pooling of resources across the five Tees Valley councils, for example, the emergency duty social work service is run by Stockton-on-Tees on their behalf. These all provide better value for money. Overall, management of financial, human and material resources is good.

86. Support for school improvement is strong, and the response to the Audit Commission's schools' survey is outstanding – overall the best in the country – with high satisfaction for 74 of the 76 aspects of support and service.

87. A good start has been made on developing a multi-agency workforce strategy. The Integrated Working Information Sharing programme is a major programme to deliver change, including a multi-agency modular NVQ Level 4 training programme for 550 staff across the sectors.

88. There are some significant capacity issues or deficits, but they are mostly being addressed effectively. There are high school budget surpluses, but the Schools Forum has agreed in principle that a clawback scheme should be introduced and tighter auditing of the use of surpluses has been introduced. High costs of home to school transport for special needs pupils, which are not attributable to the requirements of the excellent provision for such pupils, are being addressed through a corporate transport review. High levels of sickness within children's social care are being addressed by a series of management actions, supported and monitored corporately.

89. ICT infrastructure and support have some important deficiencies. The system does not provide effectively for modern school requirements and the social care system has poor analytical capability. A new children's software system has been purchased and, when fully operational, this should resolve the current deficiencies. The ICT contract is being reviewed to secure improvements but a solution which fully meets schools' requirements may be some time off.

90. Performance management is adequate overall. There are very thorough arrangements for performance management in place at partnership, member, corporate and departmental levels. Performance is reported quarterly to the portfolio holder, and this includes enhanced analysis for certain vulnerable groups and a review of progress with the departmental plan. There is good analysis of school performance, including support for self-evaluation, and effective challenge and support has contributed significantly to improved attainment in schools.

91. There are currently important gaps in performance management in social care, though these should be rectified shortly. There are deficiencies in the management information available to managers, with effective cessation over the past six months. Implementation of the new integrated children's system should provide much improved information. There are, however, several examples of good performance management: detailed reviews of external placements and increased fostering have led to better provision and substantial savings; re-registration rates have been reduced by introducing control points in decision making.

92. Looked after children are involved well in assessing the services they receive. However, overall the involvement of service users in performance management has not been developed in as consistent a manner as other aspects of consultation and engagement.

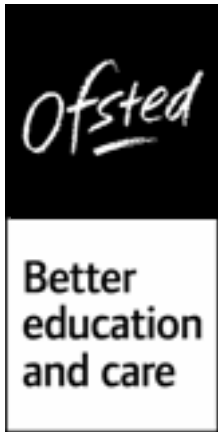
Annex: The children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report

1. The council is performing well overall. Strong political commitment to very effective partnership working has resulted in good outcomes for children and young people. Good levels of safety are maintained and vulnerable groups are generally well supported. There is a satisfactory youth service and the youth offending service is judged as good overall with adequate management.
2. There is exceptional unity of purpose in the authority to ensure that every Hartlepool child matters. Vision and ambitions are set out well in the CYPP, with comprehensive priorities reflecting the Every Child Matters agenda. Key priorities include the continuation of impressive improvements in educational attainment, preventative work and inclusion. Planning is consistent and of a high quality but financial implications are not explicit in plans. There is good value for money overall and very thorough arrangements for performance management.
3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Health education and provision is generally good, although there is a weakness in the provision of CAMHS to those children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good services are provided for vulnerable groups, especially for looked after children and those with substance misuse problems. There is, however, a lack of capacity in some therapy services, such as speech therapy.
4. The combined work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good. Nearly all children responding to the inspection survey feel safe and a good road safety education programme has effectively reduced the numbers of injuries. Agencies work effectively together to promptly identify and safeguard those at risk of harm. Good child protection practice has resulted in a high number being removed quickly from the register with low re-registration rates.
5. The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good. Parents and carers receive good support and guidance. Schools are very satisfied with almost all services and the support they receive, while their response to the schools' survey is the best in the country. Standards of attainment are good overall, particularly given the socio-economic issues in the area. Pupil attendance and behaviour are good. A small number of permanently excluded pupils do not receive the level of education to which they are entitled and reintegration into mainstream schooling remains low. Good progress is made by vulnerable groups, including Black and minority ethnic pupils and looked after children. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into mainstream school provision. The high quality of school improvement services has reduced the number of schools causing concern, with

no schools currently in Ofsted categories. Children and young people are able to access a wide range of recreational and leisure opportunities.

6. The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people contribute to society is good. Services combine well to support the social and emotional development of children and young people. Although there are very good examples of promoting anti-racism, members of the Black and minority ethnic groups have limited opportunities to help shape services. Children and young people are, however, routinely engaged in consultation and some do participate in decision making at a high level. Support for care leavers and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, although the effectiveness of the complaints process is limited.

7. The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Childcare provision meets the needs of parents and carers, particularly given employment patterns. There is a wide range of beneficial work experience for Key Stage 4 pupils, and partners combine well to ensure that 14–19 provision meets the needs and interests of young people. Monitoring the participation and progression of vulnerable groups is underdeveloped and the specific level of participation in education, employment or training by those young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is too low. Many aspects of the care leaving process are good, particularly pastoral and emotional support, but there are too many young people leaving education or training before completion.



Joint area review

Report for children and young people
Hartlepool

Report for children and young people about the services they receive in Hartlepool

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and doing well at school and as they grow up
- Making a positive contribution to society
- Being successful in whatever they choose to do when they are adults

Why should I read this?

The law says that inspectors must look at and then report on how well local services serve children and young people in an area. This is called a "review". Inspectors visited your area recently. You might like to read this, or the full report which you can find on Ofsted's website, to find out what they had to say.

What did the inspectors do?

Nine inspectors visited Hartlepool in November and December 2006 so that they could get a feel of what life is like for children and young people in the area. They:

- ❖ listened to a number of children and young people they met at youth clubs, children's centres and schools, especially in the Dyke House ward of Hartlepool
- ❖ talked with adults working with children and young people (like social workers, teachers, youth workers, nurses, doctors, police officers and councillors)
- ❖ spoke to parents and other people caring for children
- ❖ heard from the council and other agencies what it thinks about the services it provides for children
- ❖ read a lot of reports; and
- ❖ visited services used by children to see things for themselves.

The inspectors also looked at how well particular children are doing, like those children in council care or those who have a learning difficulty or disability.

How well are children and young people doing in Hartlepool?

- ❖ Most children and young people are healthy,
- ❖ Children and young people appear to be safe.
- ❖ Most children and young people enjoy and do well at school,
- ❖ Many children and young people make a good contribution to their schools and the area in which they live.
- ❖ The young people who continue their studies after the age of 16 are doing increasingly well.

What were the main things children and young people told inspectors about your area?

- ❖ Most children and young people feel healthy. There are good opportunities generally for sport and exercise.
- ❖ Almost all young people feel safe at school and in their local area, although some are concerned about bullying.
- ❖ Children who are looked after by the council feel safe where they live and that they can report any concerns they may have.
- ❖ Looked after children within Hartlepool value highly the support they receive, particularly from the nursing service.
- ❖ Almost all children enjoy their education and feel that they are doing well at school.
- ❖ Most children and young people are skilled and confident enough to comment on and influence issues that matter to them in schools and their local communities.
- ❖ Children and young people consistently say they enjoy their lives in Hartlepool.
- ❖ They are increasingly well prepared for joining higher education or gaining employment.
- ❖ Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally well supported, particularly in schools.

What things did the inspectors say are good for children and young people in your area?

- ❖ Services provided for children and young people are good. The Mayor, councillors and council workers are very clear about the needs of local children and young people. They are working hard to meet those needs. Inspectors feel that services will continue to get better.
- ❖ The range and quality of services for the under 5s are good.
- ❖ There are many good examples of help provided for young people to help them become, and to stay, healthy. Good support is provided to those with drug and substance misuse problems.
- ❖ The council and partners work well together to keep children and young people safe, particularly those who are at risk of harm.
- ❖ Services also work well together to support the social and emotional development of children and young people.
- ❖ Good work is being done by the council and its partners to reduce the number of young people getting into trouble with the police.

- ❖ Children and young people, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well supported to access recreation, arts, sport and leisure.
- ❖ The council also tries very hard to make sure that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to go to ordinary schools.
- ❖ Children and young people are helped to do their best and achieve well at school. Attendance at, and behaviour in, schools is good.
- ❖ Black children and those from minority ethnic groups and those who are looked after by the council make good progress in school.
- ❖ Some excellent work has been done by the council to challenge racism.
- ❖ There are many good opportunities for children and young people to make their views heard and to take part in making decisions about services.
- ❖ Services work well together to ensure that the needs and interests of young people aged between 14 and 19 are met.

What things are not so good for children and young people?

- ❖ The council and its partners need to make sure that appropriate action is taken at the right time for children in need.
- ❖ Provision for children and young people with behaviour, emotional and social problems needs to improve.
- ❖ Pupils who are excluded from secondary schools need a better service and more help to return to those schools.
- ❖ There need to be more occupational, speech and language therapists to meet the demand from children and young people.
- ❖ Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities need to be encouraged more to follow courses after the age of 16, and to have more choice of courses.
- ❖ Too many teenagers are still getting pregnant despite the advice and support they get.
- ❖ Some young people in certain areas of Hartlepool are drinking too much alcohol on Friday and Saturday nights.
- ❖ Too few young people who offend are taking part in education, employment or training after leaving school.
- ❖ The transfer of young people with mental health problems from children's to adult services sometimes needs to be smoother.
- ❖ There are not enough local foster parents, so some looked after children are placed too far away from their home areas.



Hartlepool Youth Service Report

Hartlepool Children's Services Authority Area

Publication Type	Published	Reference no.
All	13 March 2007	805

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Introduction

1. The Youth Service in Hartlepool is located within the Local Authority Children's Services. The service is accountable to the Assistant Director, Planning and Service Integration. In addition to the head of service and an operations manager, there are 7 full time and 82 part time youth workers to 20 full-time equivalent (fte) posts.
2. Youth work is delivered from three main centres and four satellite centres as well as through mobile and detached provision. The service gives priority to 13-19 year olds. There are 9,127 young people in the 13-19 age range. Expenditure from the local authority budget was £127 per head for 13-19 year olds in 2005/06. The budget made available by the local authority for 2006/07 is £994,279 augmented by £66,000 from external sources. The service reached 29.23% of young people aged 13-19 in 2005/6, which is well above the national benchmark of 25%. In terms of its more regular contact with young people it successfully engages 24%.
3. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the youth service's self-assessment and met with officers and a cross section of staff and partners. They reviewed key service documentation and observed a sample of youth work sessions in Dyke House as part of the JAR neighbourhood study, as well as work in other parts of the borough.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

4. Hartlepool borough council provides an adequate youth service and delivers satisfactory value for money. It is reaching a high proportion of young people in the 13-19 age group, many of whom exhibit challenging behaviour. Staff have worked hard to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries for behaviour and most young people are making reasonable progress in developing self-confidence and social skills. There is well-targeted provision that is effectively meeting the needs of some vulnerable groups. High vacancy levels and long-term sickness absence have had a negative impact on the quality and quantity of provision. Premises are of a high standard and located appropriately in areas of high need. The involvement of young people in planning, delivery and evaluation of provision is under-developed. Plans are poorly defined, and the management of the curriculum weak. The service collaborates well with a wide range of partners to share resources and expertise. Managers communicate well with their staff and have a good grasp of what needs to be done to improve the service. The service makes good use of the funds available to it.

Strengths

- Youth workers are responsive to the complex needs and significant obstacles to achievement that many young people are experiencing
- Young people's attendance at youth work activities is regular and sustained.
- There is some effective and well targeted provision
- Premises are well maintained, accessible and of a high quality
- There are good strategic links with a wide range of voluntary and statutory partners.

Areas for development

- Very low numbers of young people achieve accredited outcomes
- Curriculum management is weak
- The service's strategic plans and priorities are insufficiently defined
- Strategies and plans to support equality, inclusion and diversity are underdeveloped
- Involvement of young people in planning and evaluating youth service provision at strategic and operational level is limited.

Key aspect inspection grades

Key aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	2
	Quality of youth work practice	2
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	2
3	Strategic and operational leadership and management	2

The table above shows overall grades about provision. Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale:

Grade 4: *Excellent/outstanding: a service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users:*

Grade 3: *Good: a service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users:*

Grade 2: *Adequate: a service that delivers only minimum requirements for users:*

Grade 1: *Inadequate: a service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users.*

Part B: The youth service's contribution to *Every Child Matters* outcomes

5. The service's contribution to the *Every Child Matters* outcomes is adequate overall though there are good examples of work in some areas. Of particular note is the high priority given to providing a wide range of sexual health advice and services at youth centres, through detached work and from the service's mobile provision. Young people value this provision highly and there is evidence that it is having a positive impact on their sexual attitudes and behaviour. The service is effectively supporting a small number of young people through the UK youth parliament group and the youth opportunities fund group to participate in decision-making and democratic processes. Youth centres are well attended and valued by those who use them as safe and welcoming places to go. Detached workers have developed good relationships with young people who congregate on the streets and are using mediation skills well to tackle local concerns about anti-social behaviour.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

Key Aspect 1: Standards of young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice

6. Standards of young people's achievement are satisfactory overall. Attendance is regular and sustained over time. Young people have formed positive relationships with staff. Those attending open access provision, many of whom exhibit challenging behaviour, value the safe environment that youth centres provide and are making reasonable progress in developing their levels of self-confidence and social skills. Young people respond well to sexual health awareness and drugs programmes which have challenged their attitudes and resulted in them taking increased personal responsibility for their health. Those engaged in special projects learn about political and democratic processes. Involvement in multi media and performing and creative arts provide a useful means by which young people can consider and explore issues of interest.

7. Young people at risk of exclusion are making good progress in literacy and communication skills from a low baseline of attainment and are working towards achieving accreditation for their work through ASDAN and the Open College Network. Overall, young people's involvement in reviewing and recording their progress is limited.

8. Young people involved in the UK youth parliament support group and in the Youth Opportunities Fund grant-givers group are developing an understanding of democratic processes as well as self-confidence, planning and presentational skills. Outside of these, insufficient opportunities exist for young people to demonstrate initiative or willingness to take on responsibility either within their projects or in their community.

9. The quality of youth work practice is satisfactory overall. In most practice, boundaries for behaviour have been established and are maintained by the constant efforts of staff. Workers have a good knowledge of their local communities and of the needs of young people with whom they work. They have made good links with other services to extend the opportunities available to young people. There are some good examples of youth workers responding imaginatively to young people's needs. At Throston youth centre, for example, a group of young men with low self esteem and poor school achievement were helped to teach music skills to primary school children.

10. Staff are clear about the educational focus of youth work but a minority are struggling to apply this principle and implement the service curriculum effectively. Programmes in much of the open access provision are narrow in range and dominated by the interests of young men. The quality of planning and evaluation is variable. In a high proportion of provision, plans focus on activities rather than learning outcomes and young people are insufficiently involved in the process.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

11. A curriculum statement sets out the service's broad aims and values. This document is poorly aligned to *Every Child Matters* outcomes and is insufficiently linked to the priorities that have been identified in the service's analysis of need. Management responsibility for curriculum development has not been allocated and too little guidance is provided for staff to help them develop expertise in implementing the curriculum.

12. The curriculum lacks breadth and the extent to which opportunities are available across the borough is limited. For example, although mentioned in the documentation, there are significant gaps in the provision of information and communications technology (ICT), citizenship and volunteering and the promotion of racial and cultural diversity. Detached work, again identified as a priority, is currently available in only two neighbourhoods and delivered by two workers. Plans to develop this work have been hindered by staff vacancies.

13. Nonetheless, young people's needs are effectively identified through discussion with partners and staff, observations of practice and statistical data. The service has identified priority groups with whom it will work and there is some well targeted provision for young carers, deaf young people, young people with learning difficulties and young people at risk of exclusion to ensure that they are able to access recreational and voluntary learning opportunities. The service is reaching a high proportion of young people in the 13-19 age range and open access provision is very well attended. The needs of young women are not being met effectively. There is a significant gender imbalance in the participation of young men and women in the service.

14. High levels of vacancies and long-term sickness absence have had a negative impact on the service's effectiveness. The situation has now been resolved and the recent appointment of five full-time professional youth workers has greatly

enhanced the service's capacity to improve. Service delivery is heavily reliant on part-time staff, many of whom are new to the service and not yet qualified.

15. Specialist youth workers such as those providing sexual health programmes are well trained, demonstrate a high level of expertise and have up to date knowledge. There is a very good in-house training programme that responds well to identified development needs. Mandatory training, such as health and safety, is not co-ordinated or monitored effectively. The induction programme does not provide an adequate introduction to service policies and procedures.

16. Premises used by the service are well maintained, accessible, warm and inviting. They are well located in disadvantaged communities. The mobile unit is well equipped and is fully accessible for those with mobility difficulties. There is a good bank of resources, accessible to all staff. Access to ICT is poor.

17. Effective safeguarding procedures are in place, including health and safety audits for accommodation, in-house child protection training and risk assessments for off-site visits. A child protection issue arising during the inspection was dealt with appropriately. Criminal Records Bureau clearance processes are effective.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

18. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. However, the service's plans and priorities are poorly defined. The annual plan is insufficiently strategic and lacks ambition. Many service policies are out of date and are not supported by procedural guidelines. Despite this, most staff have a reasonable grasp of the service's aims and priorities for improvement. Managers make regular visits to practice, know their service well and have produced an open and accurate self-assessment.

19. The service does not have an equalities and diversity strategy or specific plans to tackle the low uptake of service provision by young women and young people with disabilities. This aspect is unsatisfactory. Although overtly racist remarks by young people are challenged, the promotion of positive race relations does not feature in the curriculum.

20. The recent introduction of termly planning and evaluation meetings, the development of supportive planning documentation and the revised approach to supervision and staff development have helped staff to focus on the importance of planning and evaluating their work. Staff speak very highly of the time and support they receive from managers and as a result morale is high, despite the difficult circumstances caused by high vacancy levels.

21. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. The service has an electronic management information system that enables reliable but limited data collection. There is a good system of peer inspection run in conjunction with a neighbouring authority, which is making some impact on improving performance. The inspection visits are, however, infrequent and judgements made are inconsistent. Managers have not established measurable targets for the service or

for staff. Service level agreements with commissioned services lack rigour and expectations are not always made clear. More generally, the service does not evaluate sufficiently the impact of provision.

22. The involvement of young people in planning and evaluating provision is weak. Neither are they involved in the management or quality assurance of the service. An entitlement statement included in the service's curriculum document is not monitored and young people are not aware of it. The service has conducted a survey of users, which received a good response, but has not contacted those who do not currently use the service to ascertain the reasons and to reduce barriers to inclusion.

23. The service has very good strategic links with a wide range of voluntary and statutory partners. Partners value the service's sustained and committed contribution to partner forums, strategic bodies and management boards. Collaboration with partners is effective in identifying needs, and in ensuring that resources are deployed efficiently to meet gaps in provision and reduce duplication.

24. The service makes effective use of the funds available to it by the local authority and pays good attention to the principles of Best Value in the deployment of resources. The good support it provides to voluntary organisations enables them to extend and enhance youth provision in the borough.

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27th April 2007



Report of: Assistant Chief Executive / Chief Financial Officer

Subject: AUDIT COMMISSION ANNUAL AUDIT AND
INSPECTION LETTER 2005/06

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the outcome of the Audit Commission Audit and Inspection Letter 2005/06. Attached as Appendix 1

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Attached is the Audit Commissions Audit and Inspection 'Annual Letter' for members, which incorporates the Annual Audit Letter for 2005/06. The letter summarises the conclusions and significant issues arising from the Audit Commissions recent audit and inspections of the Council.
- 2.2 A representative of the audit commission will attend the meeting to present the report and answer any queries
- 2.3 The Audit Commission Audit and Inspection Letter 2005/06 has been considered by Cabinet at its meeting of the 16th April 2007 and will be considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting of the 17th May 2007

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members of this Committee:-
- (a) Note the content of this report; and
 - (b) Consider the content of the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2005/06.

Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

Hartlepool Borough Council

Audit 2005/2006

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we ensure that public services are good value for money and that public money is properly spent.

Status of our reports

This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council, drawing on audit, inspection and performance assessment work and is prepared by your Relationship Manager.

In this report, the Commission summarises findings and conclusions from the statutory audit, which have previously been reported to you by your appointed auditor. Appointed auditors act separately from the Commission and, in meeting their statutory responsibilities, are required to exercise their professional judgement independently of the Commission (and the audited body). The findings and conclusions therefore remain those of the appointed auditor and should be considered within the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission.

Reports prepared by appointed auditors are:

- prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission; and
- addressed to members or officers and prepared for the sole use of the audited body; no responsibility is taken by auditors to any member or officer in their individual capacity, or to any third party.

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www.audit-commission.gov.uk

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Our overall summary

- 1 This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council and from the Corporate Assessment and inspections that have been undertaken in the last year and from a wider analysis of the Council's performance and its improvement over the last year, as measured through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework.
- 2 The report is addressed to the Council, in particular it has been written for councillors, but is available as a public document for stakeholders, including members of the community served by the Council.
- 3 The main messages for the Council included in this report are:
 - The Council has maintained its 4 star status and is improving well. It also received unqualified opinions on its accounts and on its value for money arrangements and our recent corporate assessment of the Council identified it as performing well.
 - The Council works well with its partners to deliver good services and an improving quality of life to the people of Hartlepool.
 - The Council has a significant and increasing level of reserves to support future expenditure.

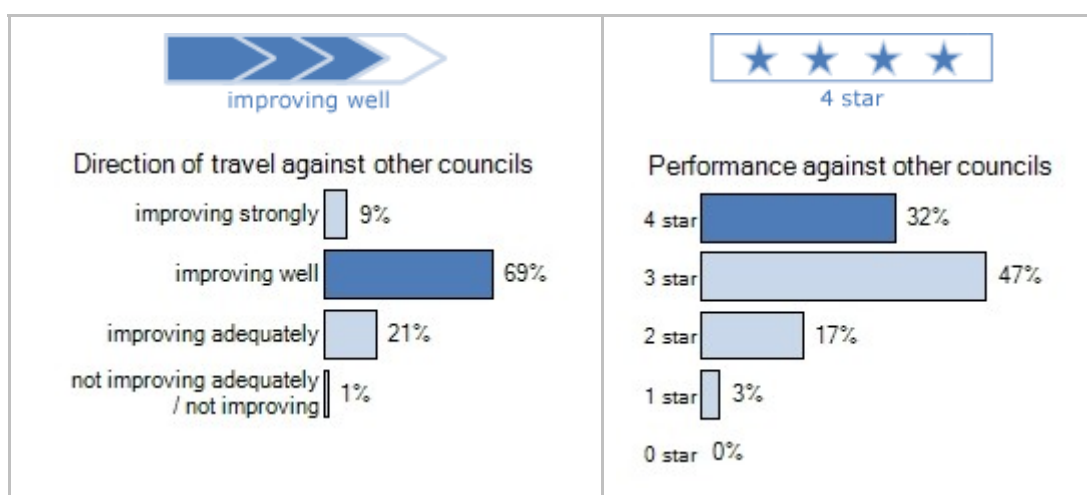
Action needed by the Council

- 4 In order maintain its progress the Council needs to:
 - address those issues identified by the corporate assessment as areas for improvement; and
 - take forward its proposed action and consider the results of the latest user satisfaction survey and determine if improvements in some services, for example in waste collection and recycling need to be made.
- 5 Develop a robust financial strategy to support the Council's ambitious plans for the future.

How is Hartlepool Council performing?

- 6 The Audit Commission's overall judgement is that Hartlepool Council is improving well and we have classified Hartlepool Council as four stars in its current level of performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- 7 These assessments have been completed in all single tier and county councils with the following results.

Table 1



Source: Audit Commission

- 8 The detailed assessment for Hartlepool Council is as follows.

Our overall assessment - the CPA scorecard

Table 2 CPA scorecard

Element	Assessment
Direction of Travel judgement	Improving well
Overall	4 Stars
Current performance	out of 4
Children and young people	3
Social care (adults)	3
Use of resources	3
Housing	3
Environment	3
Culture	3

Element	Assessment
Benefits	4
Previous corporate assessment/capacity to improve, as included in overall CPA judgement in 2006	4

(Note: 1 = lowest, 4 = highest)

CPA Scorecard Summary

- 9 The Council continues to make progress in all areas identified as priorities. Additional investment in education has led to improved levels of achievement at several key stages and a further reduction in school exclusions. People are in better health, although the gap between Hartlepool and the national average is widening. The management of a small number of services to support vulnerable people has been improved in response to an inspection highlighting the need for change. Most crime levels have fallen considerably, with performance well ahead of agreed targets. People feel safer and drugs misuse is being actively tackled. Almost all new homes are being built on derelict land.
- 10 The contribution to wider community outcomes is strong, particularly in relation to economic regeneration where jobs and business start ups have increased. The Council engages well with all communities who are actively involved in local planning. Organisational and financial capacity, including value for money, is good; but some aspects of organisational change are progressing slowly.
- 11 The potential for further improvement is enhanced through strong leadership and effective scrutiny within the Council.

The improvement since last year - our Direction of Travel report

- 12 The Council is improving in all of the priority areas set by the Hartlepool Partnership. These are: jobs and the economy, lifelong learning and skills, health and care, community safety, environment and housing, culture and leisure, and strengthening communities.
- 13 There has been continued improvement in educational achievement where Hartlepool is the third most improving authority in the country for key stage two results. The Council has made additional investments in education and there has been a 6% increase in the number of pupils obtaining 5 GCSE A-C grades. There has also been improvement in relation to services provided for those children and young people at risk of social exclusion. Fixed term exclusion rates are down and now very low in primary schools. Exclusions rates in secondary have fallen over a three year period but remain unchanged over the last 12 months.

- 14 Health and care continue to be a priority for the Council. Health is improving generally but the gap between Hartlepool and other areas is widening. Premature deaths from heart disease and cancer have reduced and are on track to meet local targets, but the gap between Hartlepool figures and national averages is widening. The smoking cessation four week quitter rates are among the best in the country. The incidence of teenage pregnancies is still very high but has reduced. The Council's supporting people services were rated as poor in an inspection report published in February 2006, but the Council has responded well to the report and introduced a number of changes which are beginning to impact on the quality of services to vulnerable groups. More vulnerable people are able to live at home and the benefits service continues to be judged as excellent by the BFI.
- 15 Community Safety is generally improving. Crime levels remain high in comparison, but the gap between Hartlepool and the rest of the country is narrowing having fallen from 41 to 25 per cent above average. Domestic burglary and vehicle crime have halved in the past two years and are falling faster than national averages. In the New Deal for Communities area, the fear of crime has been substantially reduced. Despite these improvements, the position on violence against the person is in the worst quartile and showing substantial deterioration. Accident levels, particularly among young people, are falling.
- 16 Environmental and housing currently form a single priority and again the Council continues to perform well. Work to meet the decent homes standard is on track to meet government requirements. Public satisfaction with cleanliness is also high and environmental campaigns led by the Mayor have proved to be effective in improving the area. There is more use of derelict sites for development with almost all new dwellings built on previously developed land. Total waste generated is reducing and recycling has been increased to 25 per cent in the first half of 2006/07.
- 17 The promotion of cultural and leisure services is one of the Council's priority areas. Although service costs are high, Hartlepool is the smallest unitary authority and these reflect the full range of cultural services offered. There are good satisfaction rates for library services and the Council now meets nine out of ten of the library standards. Services being developed include Sunday opening and an extensive home delivery service. The Council has been very successful this year, in being confirmed as the UK host for the 2010 Tall Ships Race, which will have a significant impact on the cultural and leisure opportunities open to local people.
- 18 The Council makes a strong contribution to wider community outcomes, particularly in relation to economic regeneration and the priority on jobs and the economy. Development work in the marina area has led to an increase in the number of visitors. The gap between Hartlepool and national employment rates has narrowed; self-employment and small business start ups has increased and 1,150 jobs have been created in the last three years. Emergency planning, in collaboration with partners is good.

- 19** Communities are very involved in the development of plans for regeneration and in their monitoring. Work to promote community cohesion is at an early stage, but the Council is working closely with the police to respond to local incidents. The Hartlepool Partnership and the Council have a thorough, inclusive and open approach to consultation with local people and a good knowledge of their needs. In the Housing Market Renewal area of the town the quality of communication and involvement has led to very few objections to the Compulsory Purchase Orders. Children and young people were engaged effectively in the development of the Children and Young People's Plan and feel confident that their aspirations and views are taken fully into account. Work on the preparation of Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs), which each identify priorities for their areas, involve ward councillors and local residents.
- 20** The Council is improving its approach to identifying the priorities of minority communities, through its successful Talking with Communities initiative, which engages with minority groups to provide information about Council services and seeks the views of these groups. It has long-standing consultation arrangements with disabled people and new arrangements for consultation with the lesbian and gay community. A thorough action plan towards the achievement of Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in early 2008 is being progressed. The proportions of staff from ethnic minority communities or with a disability are increasing, but remain low in relation to the borough's population. Departments have equality and diversity objectives and action plans and are carrying out impact statements.
- 21** The Council provides good value for money. The Council is continuing to produce high quality services and generates high rates of public satisfaction for many areas of its work. This is achieved against a local context which places Hartlepool as the 14th most deprived borough in the country. Areas of high spending are clearly in line with Council and community priorities. An amount is made available from the current budget to enable resources to be moved to priority areas, such as the development of health initiatives. The Council has used internal reviews to produce substantial savings and service improvement in a number of priority areas, including the attainment of children and young people at most key stages, the cost and quality of external care placements and the care of adults in residential care settings.
- 22** The Council, together with partners has a clear vision to improve the quality of life in Hartlepool. This is clearly stated in the Community Strategy 2002-2015 and together with its action plan, sets out clear and challenging ambitions for the borough. Actions and responsibilities within the plan are clear. Housing has been given greater prominence in the revised Strategy because of its importance to local people. The Council's own Corporate Plan and the Community Strategy's link to each other as part of the integrated framework for the borough.

- 23 The results of good performance management are clear and milestones are being achieved. Both service performance and the rate of improvement as measured by national performance indicators are among the best in the country. It is continuing to perform well in the way it is improving against the Audit Commission's PIs used in assessing CPA, where only seven other similar councils have performed better. Based on this comparative basket of PIs used in assessing CPA, 73 per cent have improved and 42 per cent are in the top quartile, which is well above the average.
- 24 Capacity continues to improve. 'The Way Forward' change programme continues to support organisational change and efficiency. Staff turnover is low. Some change is slow, with the projected outcomes from the business process re-engineering programme either modest or not quantified. New approaches to reduce high sickness absence are beginning to have some effect.
- 25 Financial capacity is good, but the approach to strategic procurement is underdeveloped. Overall financial capacity is greatly enhanced by the Council's ability to attract significant external funding, which is well managed. It is regarded as an excellent partner by those with whom it works and partnership working is used well by the Council to build and enhance capacity. Notable examples are the Housing Market Renewal project, the new £34 million Hartlands extra care village and the joint work of the Council's neighbourhood warden service and the Cleveland Police neighbourhood policing pilot in the New Deal for Communities area of the town. Risk management is effective.
- 26 Strong corporate governance arrangements provide a sound basis for continued improvement. Political arrangements are stable and there are good relations between councillors and officers. Both political and management leadership are good and the Mayoral function is very effectively delivered, with good community and Council leadership. The scrutiny process is much improved, where it has made an impact in a number of areas, for example on bus transport, railway approaches and flooding, and has demonstrated thorough work including on boys' attainment.

Corporate assessment

- 27 The field work for this was undertaken between October and December 2006. The summary of the report is as follows.

Executive Summary

- 28 Hartlepool Borough Council is performing well. Ambitions and action to achieve them are founded on a strong drive to improve life in Hartlepool. The Council has a very good understanding of the significant needs which have been generated by industrial decline and long-standing deprivation and of local people's priorities.
- 29 There has been significant progress in improving outcomes for local people in Hartlepool, and the gap between the quality of life in Hartlepool and other areas has narrowed in most respects. The achievements are supported by excellent partnership working and by very effective community leadership by the Council.

- 30 While the quality of life in Hartlepool is still poorer than national averages, the Council and its partners share a determination to improve outcomes for local people. This commonality of purpose is very strong and informs the way the members of the Hartlepool Partnership work together to define and deliver the ambitions of the Community Strategy 2002-2015.
- 31 The priority aims of the Community Strategy are wide ranging and embrace the key issues for Hartlepool people. The Council works to these priority aims and there is a very clear link from the Community Strategy through the Council's Corporate Plan to departmental and service plans and staff objectives. Good communications help councillors, staff and partners to understand the Council's objectives and to work together very effectively for their achievement.
- 32 Excellent consultation and engagement with local people and good use of data enable identification of local needs and priorities. The Council's services all have a strong focus on their users and in particular on the needs of the more deprived and disadvantaged communities. Neighbourhood Consultative Forums directly involve local people in service planning and in some decision making. The Council is taking a thorough approach to developing its arrangements for equality and diversity and is making good use of new arrangements to engage directly with minority communities.
- 33 The Mayor and Cabinet provide very effective community leadership, facilitating the achievement of shared aims with partners. Scrutiny committees work well in providing appropriate challenge to the Cabinet and to partners. Some weaknesses in political arrangements, including insufficient delegation on planning and a lack of transparency for the public, partners and Council staff on the function and status of the Administration Group, do not prevent overall political management from operating effectively.
- 34 Officer leadership and management are good. Staff at all levels demonstrate very strong commitment to delivering quality services. Officers work productively across departmental and organisational boundaries and are well supported by training programmes. The Council is using innovative approaches to procurement including long term partnering, joint commissioning, joint tendering, and working with the voluntary sector and other local authorities but it is not fully realising the benefits of strategic procurement or of new ways of working.
- 35 Financial capacity is good and the Council has substantial reserves. The Council uses its budget processes effectively to ensure that priorities are funded. While there is no formal medium term financial strategy, the Council has practical arrangements for financial planning in the medium term. Overall financial capacity is greatly enhanced by the Council's ability to attract significant external funding, which is well managed. Day to day financial management is effective and the Council provides good value for money.
- 36 Good performance management enables the Council and its partners to monitor and drive progress. There is a strong focus on improvement. Councillors and officers are open about performance and take action to improve performance when they need to do so. Performance often ranks among the best in England.

- 37 Outstanding partnership working is achieving improved outcomes almost without exception across national and local priorities. The Council has a strong and thorough approach to regeneration as essential to improving the quality of life in Hartlepool. There is good integration of housing and environmental improvements as key components of the regeneration of neighbourhoods. The economic gap between Hartlepool and the rest of the country has narrowed. Environmental services are good, with effective action by the Council to keep the borough clean while reducing waste and increasing recycling.
- 38 Crime rates overall have risen but there have been reductions in some types of crime and fear of crime has fallen significantly. The Council and its partners have had significant success in narrowing the gap between crime levels in Hartlepool and national averages. The Hartlepool Partnership has made tackling anti-social behaviour a priority in response to local concerns. Good work to reduce drug addiction is bringing positive results. Accident levels are falling. The Council is sustaining and improving community cohesion.
- 39 The Council and its partners are working well together to tackle the health inequalities suffered in Hartlepool. Health is improving and life expectancy is increasing. Premature deaths from heart disease and cancer have reduced and are on track to meet local targets. The prevalence of smoking is still high but has reduced. Teenage pregnancy rates are also reducing. There is good work to improve health through housing and physical activity programmes. However in spite of this progress, the gap between health outcomes in Hartlepool and the rest of the country is widening.
- 40 There is a strong and inclusive strategic approach to services for older people. Older people in Hartlepool are increasingly involved in a wide range of activities and in the development of services. There is a focus on independence and well being. Social care for older people is very good.
- 41 Outcomes for children and young people are good, supported by strong partnership working. Health education and provision are good. Vulnerable children and young people are well safeguarded through effective action by all agencies. Early years and childcare provision are good, and educational attainment continues to improve, but the number not in education, employment or training remains high. Support for school improvement and provision for children with special education needs are particular strengths. Multi-agency work to reduce offending and anti-social behaviour is good.

Areas for improvement

- 42 There are a number of ways in which the Council can further improve the way it works.
- 43 The Council does not have a formal approach to medium term financial planning. While it has a very good framework for performance management, the Council could improve its financial and performance planning by developing and adopting a formal medium term financial strategy, clearly linked to Council objectives and funding streams and to its role in delivering the Community Strategy.

- 44 The Council could further enhance its capacity to deliver its objectives and further stimulate modernisation of the Council's functions by developing a strategic approach to working with the voluntary sector, including funding arrangements, which maximises the sector's potential to improve the quality of life in Hartlepool and to enable these organisations to plan ahead in support of the Council's objectives; and by reviewing its approach to strategic procurement and business process re-engineering to ensure that these produce the maximum gains in terms of outcomes for service users and efficiency.
- 45 The Council has effective political management, but it could further improve this by reviewing delegation arrangements for planning to ensure swift, transparent and efficient decision-making; and by clarifying the status and function of the Administration Group to make it transparent and understandable within and outside the Council.

Service inspections

Supporting People

- 46 This inspection report was published in March 2006 and assessed Hartlepool Council as providing a 'poor' no-star programme that has uncertain prospects for improvement.
- 47 During the inspection a number of weaknesses were highlighted, many of which were seen to be significant. These included lack of publicity for services, weaknesses in governance arrangements and lack of strategic direction. In addition, the report highlighted an absence of agreed service review methodology, eligibility or value for money criteria and an incomplete five-year strategy.
- 48 Some strengths of the programme were recognised. These included good arrangements for signposting enquirers, accurate payments being made on time to service providers and success in attracting additional resources to the programme from within and outside the Council.
- 49 The Council produced a response to the inspection in the form of an action plan which has been implemented with some success. A re-inspection is planned, but some evidence of improvement is highlighted within the corporate assessment summary.

Other Inspectorates

- 50 An important aspect of the role of the Relationship Manager is to work with other inspectorates and regulators who also review and report on the Council's performance. Relationship Managers share information and seek to provide 'joined up' regulation to the Council. During the last year the Council has received the following assessments from other inspectorates.

51 The assessment of children's services in Hartlepool has been conducted by Ofsted and other regulators through a joint area review (JAR), carried out in conjunction with the corporate assessment. The main points raised by the JAR were:

- 'The council is performing well overall. Strong political commitment to very effective partnership working has resulted in good outcomes for children and young people. Good levels of safety are maintained and vulnerable groups are generally well supported. There is a satisfactory youth service and the youth offending service is judged as good overall with adequate management. 117 There is exceptional unity of purpose in the authority to ensure that every Hartlepool child matters. Vision and ambitions are set out well in the Children and Young People's Plan with comprehensive priorities reflecting the Every Child Matters agenda. Key priorities include the continuation of impressive improvements in educational attainment, preventive work and inclusion. Planning is consistent and of a high quality, but financial implications are not explicit in plans. There is good value for money overall and very thorough arrangements for performance management. The combined work of all local services in securing each of the ECM outcomes is good.'

52 The CSCI assessment of adult services highlighted the following:

- This has been a year of significant change, with the successful separation of adult social care from children's services and its integration into a wider Adult and Community Services Department, opening up opportunities for a broader approach to social inclusion.
- Planning continues to be undertaken at local level through neighbourhood action plans, and a Connected Care approach has been introduced in one area, in which residents are involved in shaping the development of low level services.
- Work has been undertaken to strengthen capacity in the voluntary sector and there are close working arrangements with the Primary Care Trust (PCT).
- Assessments have been undertaken more speedily.
- More people were helped to live in their own homes than last year, with very good performance across all service user groups.
- An inspection of services for people with learning disabilities in June 2006 judged that some people were being served well, and there was promising capacity for improvement.'

53 The BFI assessment of the benefits service concluded that:

- 'Hartlepool Borough Council met 10 of the 12 performance measures where the Department had set a Standard and 64 of the 65 enablers. The council continued to set national and local targets that encouraged improved performance and had comprehensive performance monitoring and reporting systems in place. In addition, 2005/2006 saw the introduction of more mobile assessments in customers' homes so that benefits claims could be processed more quickly. Reported performance for processing new claims was an average of 24 days during 2005/06, a significant improvement over its performance of 40 days during 2004/05. Similarly, reported performance for processing changes of circumstances was 7 days and also demonstrated continuing improvement when compared to its performance of 19 days during 2004/05. In its efforts to reduce fraud and error the council met or exceeded the targets for interventions and visits, and secured 43 sanctions including 5 successful prosecutions during 2005/06. In December 2005 the Benefits Team and Counter Fraud Investigation Team achieved Charter Mark status for excellence in customer service.'

Citizens' views

- 54** Overall compared with 2004, users in 2006 were more satisfied with many aspects of the Council's performance and in particular with crime and leisure related activities. However, satisfaction with waste collection and with recycling has declined and people feel that the Council does not keep them as well informed about its activities as it did in 2004.

Other performance work

Partnership working across Teesside: tackling drugs misuse

- 55** This report was published by the Commission in December 2006. It looked at the way in which a number of agencies are working together, both locally and across Teesside.
- 56** In looking at the work being undertaken in Hartlepool, the report noted that partners are working together effectively and have developed a culture where any partner can bring items to the agenda. Partners are very supportive of each other and there is consistent representation at meetings despite pressures from within partners' own agencies. Partners respond collectively with action plans drawn-up and delivered by operational task groups of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership.

Financial management and value for money

- 57** As your appointed auditor I have reported separately to the General Purposes Committee acting as those charged with governance on the issues arising from our 2005/06 audit and have provided:
- an unqualified opinion on your accounts;
 - a conclusion on your vfm arrangements to say that these arrangements are adequate; and
 - a report on the Best Value Performance Plan confirming that the Plan has been audited.
- 58** Audit findings are an important component of the CPA framework described above. In particular the Use of Resources score is derived from the assessments made in the following areas.
- Financial Reporting (including the preparation of the accounts of the Council and the way these are presented to the public).
 - Financial management (including how the financial management is integrated with strategy to support council priorities).
 - Financial Standing (including the strength of the Council's financial position).
 - Internal Control (including how effectively the Council maintains proper stewardship and control of its finances).
 - Value for money (including an assessment of how well the Council balances the costs and quality of its services).
- 59** For the purposes of the CPA we have assessed the Council's arrangements for use of resources in these five areas as follows.

Table 3

Element	Assessment out of 4
Financial reporting	3
Financial management	2
Financial standing	3
Internal control	3
Value for money	3
Overall assessment of the Audit Commission	3

(Note: 1=lowest, 4=highest)

60 The key issues arising from the audit, as reflected in the above judgements, are as follows.

- Arrangements for reviewing internal control to support the Statement on Internal Control have improved since last year.
- Progress is being made in addressing value for money, balancing service developments and financial savings and supported by some use of benchmarking information.
- The Council's General Fund Balances was £19.53m at 31 March 2006. This includes the Unearmarked General Fund Balances of £5m which is available to meet any general expenditure commitments not budgeted for in year and a considerable proportion of earmarked funds (£7.2m) is earmarked to support the budget over the next three years. A further £3.9m relates to potential expenditure arising from strategic or service changes and another £2m relates to departmental carry forward of under spends. A formal medium-term financial strategy is needed to ensure that the Council can continue to deliver its services and at the same time maintain an appropriate level of reserves.

Conclusion

- 61** This letter has been discussed and agreed with the Chief Executive. A copy of the letter will be presented at the Cabinet, Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and Audit Committee in April and May 2007.
- 62** The Council has taken a positive and constructive approach to our audit and inspection I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the council's assistance and co-operation.

Availability of this letter

- 63** This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk, and also on the council's website.

Steve Nicklin

Relationship Manager

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27th April 2007



Report of: Chief Financial Officer

Subject: AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT- USE OF RESOURCES.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee that arrangements have been made for a representative from the Audit Commission to be in attendance at this meeting, to present the results of the Audit Commissions work on Use of Resources.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Audit Commission carry out the Use of Resources assessment to evaluate how well councils manage and use their financial resources. The assessment focuses on the importance of having sound and strategic financial management to ensure that resources are available to support the Council's priorities and improve services.
- 2.2 The evaluation assesses five themes and scores each one either:
- 1- Below minimum requirements – inadequate performance,
 - 2- Only at minimum requirements – adequate performance,
 - 3- Consistently above minimum requirements – performing well,
 - 4- Well above minimum requirements – performing strongly.

3. FINDINGS OF THE AUDIT COMMISSION

- 3.1 Attached, as Appendix 1, is the Audit Commission report on Use of Resources. The five scheme scores, as detailed in Table 2 in the Audit Commission report, show that the Council has maintained its scores in four of the five schemes and improved its score in the area of Internal Control. This is despite the 2006 evaluation being more testing than in 2005.

- 3.2 Table 3 within the Audit Commission report highlights improvement opportunities which have been taken into account when developing service plans for 2007/08.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee note the report of the Audit Commission.

Use of Resources 2006

Hartlepool Borough Council

External audit is an essential element in the process of accountability for public money and makes an important contribution to the stewardship of public resources and the corporate governance of public services.

Audit in the public sector is underpinned by three fundamental principles:

- auditors are appointed independently from the bodies being audited;
- the scope of auditors' work is extended to cover not only the audit of financial statements but also value for money and the conduct of public business; and
- auditors may report aspects of their work widely to the public and other key stakeholders.

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Introduction

- 1 The annual Use of Resources (UoR) assessment evaluates how well councils manage and use their financial resources. The assessment focuses on the importance of having sound and strategic financial management to ensure that resources are available to support the Council's priorities and improve services, covering five themes.
- 2 This is the second year of carrying out the assessment and our work has focused on building on our previous year's work and updating it for any changes and improvements to the Council's arrangements.
- 3 Judgements will be made for each theme on the following scale which has been standardised by the Audit Commission across inspection and performance assessment frameworks.

Table 1 Standard scale used for assessments and inspections

1	Below minimum requirements – inadequate performance
2	Only at minimum requirements – adequate performance
3	Consistently above minimum requirements – performing well
4	Well above minimum requirements – performing strongly

The overall score for Use of Resources assessment will be reported to the Council by the Audit Commission on 1 December 2006.

- 4 In forming our assessment, we followed the methodology set out in the Use of Resources Guidance for Councils, 2006 assessment. In particular, in order to support scores of 3 and above, we need to consider whether relevant arrangements are 'embedded' that is, they have been operating consistently with clear outputs and having an impact. For scores of 4 (performing strongly) we are required to consider whether, in addition to meeting the descriptors/criteria, councils can demonstrate innovation or best practice that can be shared with other authorities. The descriptors/criteria at level 4 have been kept to a minimum so as to avoid them becoming unnecessarily prescriptive and limiting.
- 5 In relation to future assessments, as outlined in the CPA framework documents for 2006 for single tier and county councils, the status of a number of criteria will change to 'must have status'. For information, these criteria have been summarised at Appendix 1. In order for the Council to sustain or to improve upon its current performance at the next assessment, it will need to take these criteria into consideration.

- 6 The five theme scores for Hartlepool Borough Council are outlined overleaf. This summary sets out our key findings in relation to each theme and key areas for improvement.

Use of resources judgements

Table 2 Summary of scores at theme and KLOE level

Key lines of enquiry (KLOEs)	Score 2005	Score 2006
Financial reporting	3	3
1.1 The Council produces annual accounts in accordance with relevant standards and timetables, supported by comprehensive working papers.	3	3
1.2 The Council promotes external accountability.	2	2
Financial management	2	2
2.1 The Council's medium-term financial strategy, budgets and capital programme are soundly based and designed to deliver its strategic priorities.	2	2
2.2 The Council manages performance against budgets.	2	2
2.3 The Council manages its asset base.	1	2
Financial standing	3	3
3.1 The Council manages its spending within the available resources.	3	3
Internal control	2	3
4.1 The Council manages its significant business risks.	3	3
4.2 The Council has arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control.	1	2
4.3 The Council has arrangements in place that are designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business.	2	3
Value for money	3	3
5.1 The Council currently achieves good value for money.	3	3
5.2 The Council manages and improves value for money.	2	3

Theme summaries

- 7 The key findings and conclusions for each of the five themes are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 Summary of findings and conclusions by theme

Financial reporting	
Theme score 3	
Key findings and conclusions	
<i>The Council produced its accounts within tighter deadlines and improved its arrangements for reviewing the accuracy of its accounts. The accounts were presented fairly and were subject to member scrutiny. We gave an unqualified opinion on the amended accounts.</i>	
Improvement opportunities	
KLOE 1.1 The Council produces annual accounts in accordance with relevant standards and timetables, supported by comprehensive working papers.	Improve quality review arrangements for the draft accounts to identify and correct minor errors.
KLOE 1.2 The Council promotes external accountability.	Consult stakeholders on the need to publish an annual report or similar document. An annual report should include the summary accounts produced for the year and an explanation of key financial information, designed to be understandable and informative to members of the public and available in a wide variety of formats in order to meet local user needs.

Financial management

Theme score 2

Key findings and conclusions

The Council has a medium-term financial strategy and has recently combined the capital strategy and asset management plan. Budgets and capital programmes are soundly based.

Improvement opportunities

KLOE 2.1 The Council's medium-term financial strategy (MTFS), budgets and capital programme are soundly based and designed to deliver its strategic priorities.

Develop the links between the corporate business plan, medium term financial strategy, detailed budgets and other Council strategies.

KLOE 2.2 The Council manages performance against budgets.

Develop detailed guidance for budget holders and a training programme for budget holders and members.

Financial standing Theme score 3	
Key findings and conclusions	
<i>The Council maintains expenditure within budgets and has reserves to support future plans.</i>	
Improvement opportunities	
KLOE 3.1 The Council manages its spending within the available resources.	Report the opportunity costs of exceeding budgeted levels of reserves

Internal control

Theme score 3

Key findings and conclusions

Risk management is embedded and significant improvements have been made in the arrangements for the statement on internal control.

Improvement opportunities

KLOE 4.1 The Council manages its significant business risks.	Risks from partnerships should be identified and managed in the same way as other business risks.
KLOE 4.2 The Council has arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control.	Develop the assurance framework and the role of the Audit Committee
KLOE 4.3 The Council has arrangements in place that are designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business.	Raise the profile of anti fraud and corruption measures within the Council, for example by including fraud in the risk register.

Value for money

Theme score 3

Key findings and conclusions

The Council is continuing to produce high quality services and generates high rates of public satisfaction in many areas, despite being the 18th most deprived borough in the country. A number of areas of unintended high spending have been identified in the past year and are being successfully addressed. A small amount is made available from the current budget to enable resources to be moved to priority areas, such as the development of health initiatives.

The Council has made progress in the way it approaches VfM and is producing a balance of financial savings and service improvements. The Council actively uses a range of benchmarking information to give it clear information on comparative costs.

Improvement opportunities

KLOE 5.1 The Council currently achieves good value for money.

Address those areas where performance falls below required standards eg supporting people

KLOE 5.2 The Council manages and improves value for money.

Benchmark and review services to reduce areas of high spending

Appendix 1 – Criteria which will gain 'must have' status for the next assessment

New criteria in bold type ('must have') for 2006/07 assessment

- 1 This table summarises criteria that are currently included in the KLOE but are not in bold type and do not have 'must have' status, but which will have such status for the 2006/07 assessment.

KLOE	Summary of criteria
Financial reporting	
1.1	Requests for information from audit are dealt with promptly.
1.2	Summary financial information that meets the needs of a range of stakeholders is published and their views are considered in deciding whether to publish an annual report.
Financial management	
2.1	There are arrangements for monitoring cash flow.
2.1	The medium-term financial strategy is communicated to staff and stakeholders.
2.2	Profiled financial monitoring reports are produced within ten days of the month-end.
2.2	The financial performance of significant partnerships is reviewed.
2.2	There is a training programme in place for members and staff on financial issues.
2.3	A member has been allocated portfolio responsibility for asset management and local performance measures in relation to assets have been developed.
Financial standing	
3.1	Collection and recovery of material categories of income is monitored.

12 Use of Resources 2006 | Appendix 1 – Criteria which will gain 'must have' status for the next assessment

KLOE	Summary of criteria
Internal control	
4.1	Appropriate staff are trained in risk management.
4.2	Criterion in relation to effective arrangements for internal financial control, for example, carrying out regular bank reconciliations and reconciliations of major feeder systems (new).
4.2	Arrangements for carrying out the functions of an audit committee are effective.
4.2	Standing orders, standing financial instructions and system procedure notes are reviewed and updated as appropriate.
4.2	Criterion at level two in relation to business continuity plans as required by the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) (new).
4.2	Governance arrangements are in place for significant partnerships.
4.3	The council is proactive in raising standards of ethical conduct among members and staff and can demonstrate that counter fraud and corruption work is adequately resourced.

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27 April 2007



Report of: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

Subject: FINAL REPORT – SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION
INTO THE PROVISION OF SEX AND
RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION (SRE) IN
HARTLEPOOL SCHOOLS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Children's Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into the provision of sex and relationship education (SRE) in Hartlepool Schools.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

- 2.1 There has over the last 12 years been a recorded deterioration of UK resident's sexual health, with increasing levels of teenage conceptions and sexually transmitted infections (STI's). In recognition of major national concern regarding this issue, growing emphasis was now being placed upon the importance of Sex and Relationship education (SRE) for young people.



- 2.2 In considering a subject for investigation the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum, at its meeting on the 12 June 2006, explored a variety of options. During the course of discussions concern was expressed regarding teenage conception and STI rates in Hartlepool and attention drawn to the importance of effective SRE as a tool to help improve the sexual health of the town's young people.
- 2.3 The issue of sexual health was not a new one for scrutiny in Hartlepool. An investigation into teenage pregnancy and associated issues had been undertaken in 2002; however, it had not focussed specifically on the way in which SRE was provided in Hartlepool. In view of the importance of SRE provision, the Forum was of the view that a full investigation into its provision

in Hartlepool should be undertaken. The 'Provision of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in Hartlepool Schools' was subsequently selected as an investigation to be undertaken as part of the Forum's 2006/07 Work Programme.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to review current practice in the provision of sex and relationship education (SRE) to young people in Hartlepool and suggest possible improvements.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4.1 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny investigation were as outlined below:-

- (a) To gain an understanding of the sexual health issues affecting young people nationally and regionally;
- (b) To gain an understanding of the national and regional position relating to the provision of SRE for young people, with particular reference to:-
 - (i) National policy relating to the provision of sex and relationship education for young people.
- (c) To gain an understanding of, and examine, the local position relating to the provision of SRE for young people, with particular reference to:-
 - (i) The sexual health issues affecting young people in Hartlepool;
 - (ii) The strategies/practices being implemented in Hartlepool schools for the provision of SRE;
 - (iii) Effectiveness of strategies/policies being implemented in Hartlepool; and
 - (iv) Sources of advice outside schools and how outside bodies/agencies assist in the provision of SRE in Hartlepool.
- (d) To consider examples of best practice in other Local Authorities;
- (e) To compare strategies/practices implemented in other Local Authorities, and strategies/models identified nationally, with those being implemented in Hartlepool with a view to identifying possible areas of improvement; and
- (f) To seek the views of local residents, parents, children/young people and those working in schools on this issue.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

5.1 The membership of the Scrutiny Forum was as detailed below:-

Councillors Brash, S Cook, Fleet, Griffin, Laffey, London, Preece, Rogan, Shaw, MWaller and Young

Resident Representatives:

John Cambridge, Evelyn Leck and Michael Ward

Co-opted Members:

Elizabeth Barracrough, David Relton and Jesse Smith

Young People Co-opted onto the Forum:

Leigh Bradley, Kelly Goulding, Cassie Jeffries, Gillian Pounder, Hannah Shaw, Jonathan Simpson and Leon Smith

6. METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

6.1 Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum met formally from 8 January 2007 to 16 April 2007 to discuss and receive evidence relating to this investigation. A detailed record of the issues raised during these meetings is available from the Council's Democratic Services.

6.2 A brief summary of the methods of investigation are outlined below:-

- (a) Detailed officer reports supplemented by verbal evidence;
- (b) Evidence from the Authority's Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder for Children's Services;
- (c) Questionnaire produced by the young people co-opted onto the Forum;
- (d) A Focus Group Session with Year 10 students, and teachers with responsibility for SRE, from schools across Hartlepool to obtain first hand views on the provision of SRE in Hartlepool;
- (e) Delivery of an SRE class to the Forum to illustrate the ways in which it is provided within Hartlepool schools;
- (f) Representatives from another Local Authority with examples of good practice (South Tyneside Council);
- (g) Evidence received from the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP) on their work in relation to SRE provision nationally;

- (h) Representatives from national and regional bodies. (Regional Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator and Regional Healthy Schools Co-ordinator);
- (i) Representatives from outside groups/bodies. (B76/Barnardos, Sure Start, Youth Service, the School Nursing Service, Relate, PATCH (Parent and Toddler Care in Hartlepool) and Teesside Positive Action; and
- (j) The views of the local community.

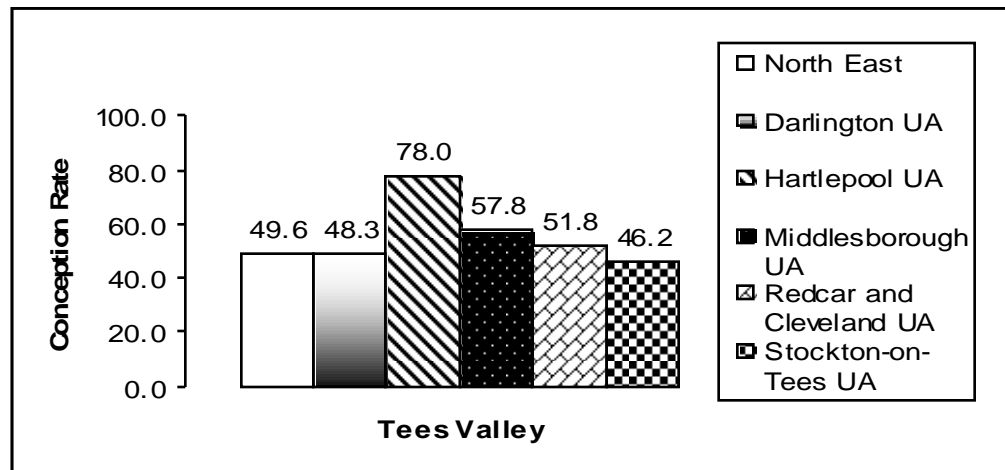
FINDINGS

7. SEXUAL HEALTH ISSUES AFFECTING YOUNG PEOPLE (NATIONALLY AND REGIONALLY)

- 7.1 As starting point for its investigation, the Forum learned that the key sexual health issues affecting young people in England were teenage pregnancy, termination of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. The Forum also found of interest more detailed information on the extent of problems on a national and regional basis.
- 7.2 National Sexual Health Issues - The Forum noted the deterioration of sexual health in the UK over the last 12 years and expressed concern regarding the large increases in STI's (e.g. Chlamydia by over 300%, Gonorrhoea by over 200%) and the incidence of HIV (more than threefold).
- 7.3 On a more positive note, Members welcomed indications that since the introduction of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, teenage pregnancy rates in England had fallen by 11.8% for under-18's and 12.1% for under-16's. Although national teenage pregnancies were at a 20 year low, Members were disappointed to learn that the UK still had the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in Western Europe. ⁽ⁱ⁾
- 7.4 Regional – On a regional basis, the Forum was informed that the 2005 rate of under-18 conceptions in the North East was 49.6, compared to 41.1 nationally (England). ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Members were, however, encouraged to learn that the under-18 teenage pregnancy rate in the North East had fallen by 12.2% between 1998 and 2005. Although, it was noted that the North East rate was still 0.4% higher than the national figure over the same period.
- 7.5 The Forum found of interest figures for 2005 relating to the rate of under-18 conception across the Tees Valley (as summarised in **Table 1** overleaf) and noted with concern that Hartlepool's figures were the highest across the sub region.

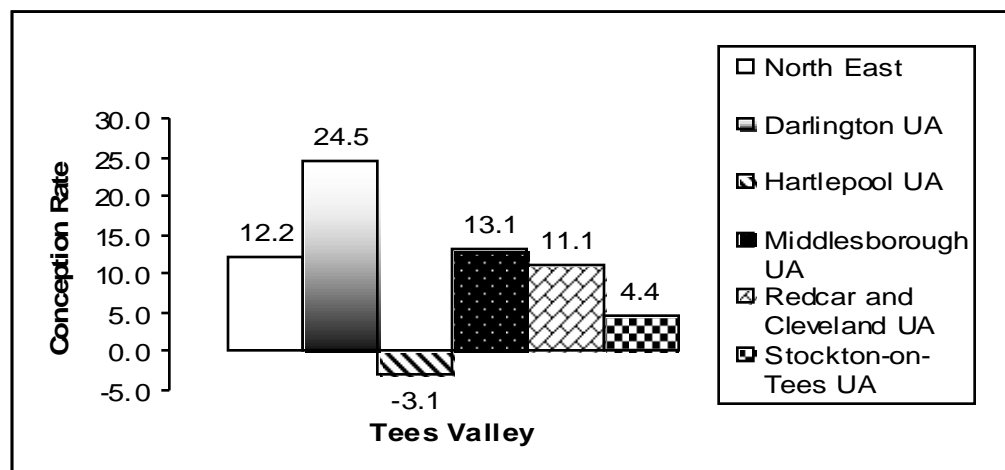
(i) Office of National Statistics – Provisional 2005 Conception Rates

(ii) Rate per 1000 females aged 15-17

Table 1 - Under-18 Conception Rates in the Tees Valley (2005)

Source: Office for National Statistics and Teenage Pregnancy Unit, 2007
Rate per 1000 females aged 15-17

- 7.6 Members also received information in relation to the levels of improvement in under-18 conception rates across the Tees Valley (as outlined in **Table 2** below) and noted with disappointment that Hartlepool was the only Tees Valley Authority to have an increase in its rate (3%).

Table 2 – Percentage Improvement in Under-18 Conception Rates in the Tees Valley (2005)

Source: Office for National Statistics and Teenage Pregnancy Unit, 2007
Rate per 1000 females aged 15-17

8. THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POSITION IN RELATION TO THE PROVISION OF SEX AND RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION (SRE)

- 8.1 The Forum learned that the provision of sex education had for many years been a key factor in addressing sexual health issues. It was noted with interest that sex education provision had over the last 50 years changed

drastically, with provision in the 1950's and 1960's sex education largely focussed upon the teaching about reproduction. It was not until the 1980's that emphasis started to be placed upon the acquisition of skills for decision making, communication, personal relationships and parenting strategies as part of sex education. This path led to the development of today's SRE, the aim of which was to provide learning about sex, sexuality, and sexual health, with emphasis upon emotions and relationships.

National Policy for the Provision of SRE for Young People

- 8.2 During the course of the investigation, it became apparent to the Forum that the provision of sexual health education was engrained through many strands of national policy and strategies, including Every Child Matters, the Children and Young Person's Plan and Extended Schools.
- 8.3 The Forum received clarification that every local education authority, head teacher and governing body had a statutory responsibility to take account of guidance requiring the provision of SRE. Members acknowledged that whilst every school was required to have an SRE policy in place there was no statutory requirement for the provision of SRE as a specific element of the curriculum. In reality, much of the biological content of SRE was provided through the statutory National Science Curriculum with the provision of the remainder of SRE engrained in Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHE).
- 8.4 Members were interested to find that on a national basis indications were that children and young people wished to receive better SRE. It was also interesting for the Forum to learn through its investigation that many of the views expressed nationally were shared by Hartlepool pupils with in many ways the SRE provided being too little, too late and too biological, with insufficient emphasis on practical relationship advice.
- 8.5 The Forum noted with interest OFSTED observations regarding the difference in the quality of teaching in SRE by specialists and non-specialist tutors. With indications that the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory in twice as many lessons taught by tutors as by specialist teachers. Members supported the view that the most effective teaching was by teachers with a special interest and expertise in SRE. Emphasis was, however, placed upon the need for a package of measures; including a professional lead (i.e. a school nurse), peer mentoring and the availability of outside expertise should it be required.
- 8.6 In relation to how SRE is provided, the Forum also received evidence of the mounting pressure being placed upon Government for the inclusion of SRE as a statutory element of the curriculum. Bodies involved in this included the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) and the Forum was disappointed that the results of its work would not be available in time for consideration during the course of this investigation.

9. THE PROVISION OF SEX AND RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION (SRE) IN HARTLEPOOL SCHOOLS

- 9.1 Following consideration of the national and regional position in relation to the provision of SRE, the Forum went on to look in detail at the position in Hartlepool.

The Sexual Health Issues Effecting Young People in Hartlepool

- 9.2 The Forum noted with concern that the percentage of Year 11 students who were sexually active in Hartlepool had increased over the last five years, as shown in **Table 3** below. Members also found of interest information provided on the sexual health issues affecting these young people (teenage pregnancies, terminations and STI's).

Table 3: Percentage of Year 11 Students Sexually Active.

	2002 (%)	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	2006 (%)
Boys	35	41	34	38	39
Girls	46	56	55	51	49

Source: Additional Information Report – Children's Services Scrutiny Forum 19 March 2007

- 9.3 Teenage Pregnancies/Conceptions – Evidence provided showed that the number for under-18 conceptions in Hartlepool had increased from 126 in 2004 to 149 in 2006, making it the highest in the North East region. Further information on the under-18 conception rate in Hartlepool was provided earlier in Section 7.5 of this report.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾
- 9.4 The Forum expressed its disappointment with this situation and emphasised the importance of accelerating the full implementation of the Council's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy to assist in reversing this trend.
- 9.5 Termination of Pregnancies – The Forum considered evidence in relation to the percentage of conceptions that lead to terminations in Hartlepool and was troubled to see that the figures had increased between 1998 and 2005 for both under-18 and under-16 conceptions. In the case of under-16 conceptions, this equated to 52.9% leading to abortion in 1998, compared with 57.2% in 2005. For under-18's, the figure was 42.4% in 1998, compared to 46.9% in 2005.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾
- 9.6 Particular attention was drawn to the issue of repeat terminations as a problem in Hartlepool. Whilst the Forum was reassured that this represented only a very small number of individuals, concern was expressed that even one was too many. Members were, however, pleased to find that work was ongoing to address the issue.

(iii) Office of National Statistics – Provisional 2005 Conception Rates

- 9.7 Sexually Transmitted Infections – Members considered, with concern, evidence in relation to Hartlepool's high rate of STI's. It was evident that in 2005 three males and 14 females had contracted conditions including Chlamydia, gonorrhoea, bacterial vaginosis and the w art virus.
- 9.8 The Forum welcomed indications that detailed work was being undertaken to deal with the issue in Hartlepool, including the provision of highly visible advertisements for special clinics in non-clinical settings, i.e. Connexions and the Youth Service. Members were, however, frustrated that despite all of the work being undertaken projections were that figures for 2006 would increase even further.

Strategies/Practices Implemented for the Provision of SRE in Hartlepool.

- 9.9 Members were encouraged to find that SRE provision in Hartlepool schools played an important part of the Council's strategic agenda and received evidence of its inclusion within the following plans and strategies:-
- (i) Every Child Matters;
 - (ii) The Children and Young Person's Plan;
 - (iii) Local Area Agreements;
 - (iv) The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy;
 - (v) The Healthy Schools Headline Plan; and
 - (vi) School Improvement Operational Plan.
- 9.10 The Forum was pleased to find that the approach to SRE in Hartlepool had been geared to reflect the differing needs of children and young people in primary and secondary schools across the town.
- 9.11 SRE in Hartlepool Primary Schools – Members noted with interests that the identification of a gap in SRE provision resulted in the 'in house' development of the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' programme. The intention of the programme being to provide SRE from Reception, supporting existing work and providing a gentle approach to aspects of Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHE) that had been taught for many years.
- 9.12 The Forum was advised of the various stages of the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' programme and was pleased to learn of its successful implementation in all 29 out of Hartlepool's 30 primary schools, with discussions ongoing with the one remaining school. Members were also pleased to find that 'Lucinda and Godfrey' materials were being further developed for use in special schools.



- 9.13 Although Members were disappointed to find that 'take up' of the programme was not 100%, it was recognised that the issue of SRE in primary schools was a very contentious one, especially in some church schools. It was, however, evident to the Forum that the aim of SRE in primary schools was not to promote sexual relationships, but rather to develop children's confidence in dealing with the whole range of relationships they will develop and the issues that arise from them. In view of this the Forum expressed its support for the encouragement of all schools to take advantage of the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' programme.
- 9.14 SRE Provision in Hartlepool Secondary School – Members learned that in 1998 the 'APAUSE' programme (Added Power and Understanding in Sex Education) was introduced in Hartlepool to provide extended SRE provision. As occurred nationally, SRE provision in Hartlepool was provided in conjunction with PSHE lessons and consisted of:-
- (i) Curriculum materials for Years 7 and 8 (National Curriculum Science);
 - (ii) Three adult led sessions in Years 9 and 10 (led jointly by a class teacher and a health professional, often as school nurse); and
 - (iii) Four peer led sessions in year 9.
- 9.15 Whilst curriculum material was provided in Years 7 and 8, the Forum expressed concern regarding the gap in specific SRE provision in these years. These concerns were supported by the views of young people during the investigation, in that the start of the 'APAUSE' programme in Year 9 was too late for some pupils. The Forum was keen to see this gap filled and was happy to learn that a pilot project was in the process of being developed to strengthen the delivery of SRE in secondary schools. The new programme was to begin in Year 7 and end in Year 11 and was based on evidence from OFSTED which demonstrated that comprehensive and early SRE empowered and encouraged young people to have sex later and use contraception when they do so.
- 9.16 The Forum expressed disappointment that only five out of the Local Authority's seven secondary schools would be delivering the 'APAUSE' programme in 2007 and felt that work to encourage participation by the remaining schools should be maintained. It was, however, recognised that the provision of SRE could be a contentious issue for some schools.
- 9.17 The Forum noted that SRE outside PSHE science classes was at the discretion of the school and its governing body. Whilst the Forum acknowledged that changing this situation was not within its remit, a view was expressed that ways of obtaining governing body 'buy in' for the provision of SRE, and any recommendations made by this Forum, needed to be explored. As a means of doing this, Members suggested that it would be beneficial for the Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum to meet with school governors to obtain 'buy in' for the recommendations arising from this investigation.

- 9.18 The Forum was also made aware that SRE in secondary schools was currently funded by individual schools and the Primary Care Trust. In view of this, the Forum felt that it was important that schools continued to see the value of SRE and that an investment in staff was required to enable them to deliver high quality teaching and learning in SRE. This was particularly evident to the Forum given indications that schools were finding it hard to get teachers to provide SRE and the importance of 'good' teaching for the success of SRE. Emphasis was also placed upon the role for external agencies to support schools in the delivery of SRE, with it most effective where it was planned to add value to the existing programme.

10. EVIDENCE FROM THE AUTHORITY'S CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- 10.1 The Forum was keen to seek the views of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and at its meeting on the 8 January 2007 received confirmation of the Portfolio Holder's acknowledgement for the importance of SRE in Hartlepool. Members welcomed the Portfolio Holder's eagerness to receive the outcome of their investigation and took on board her views regarding the importance of undertaking a subjective/qualitative assessment of young people's views, in addition to the examination of statistical information. The Forum's activities to obtain this subjective/qualitative information are outlined in Sections 11.7 and 13 of this report.

11. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SRE PROVISION IN HARTLEPOOL AND POSSIBLE WAYS OF IMPROVING IT.

- 11.1 The Forum considered evidence on the effectiveness of SRE provision from a variety of sources, including detailed officer reports, the results of the annual Year 11 'APAUSE' questionnaire and an informal survey undertaken by the young people co-opted to the Forum. The views of young people, and teachers with responsibility for the provision of SRE, were also obtained through a Focus Group session, details of which are outlined in Section 11 of the report.

The Effectiveness of SRE in Hartlepool's Primary Schools

- 11.2 The Forum was pleased to learn that the success of the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' programme in Hartlepool had resulted in it being purchased, and 'rolled out' by other Local Authorities. Members acknowledged the importance of the continued development of the programme with the income generated. As a way of doing this attention was drawn to the possible benefits of extending the availability of the Lucinda and Godfrey' books direct to parents.
- 11.3 The Forum was aware of the controversial nature of the provision of SRE in primary schools and Members themselves initially expressed mixed views regarding the age at which SRE should start to be provided. It was,

however, apparent to the Forum that there had been a good response from schools to the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' programme and officers were commended on the development of the programme.

The Effectiveness of SRE in Hartlepool's Secondary Schools

- 11.4 Results of the Year 11 'APAUSE' Questionnaire - The effectiveness of the 'APAUSE' programme was measured by a questionnaire undertaken by all Year 11 Pupils. Members were pleased to find from the results of last year's 'APAUSE' questionnaire that there had been a steady increase in the number of students with correct knowledge about STI's and contraception. **Table 4** illustrates this and highlights that girls have a better understanding than boys.

Table 4 – Percentage Improvement in Under-18 Conception Rates in the Tees Valley (2005)

	Boys				Girls			
	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %
STI Questions	58	66	62	67	67	73	76	78
Contraception Questions	62	59	65	66	71	72	76	77

Source: Additional Information Report (APAUSE Questionnaire results 2006) – Children's Services Scrutiny Forum 19 March 2007

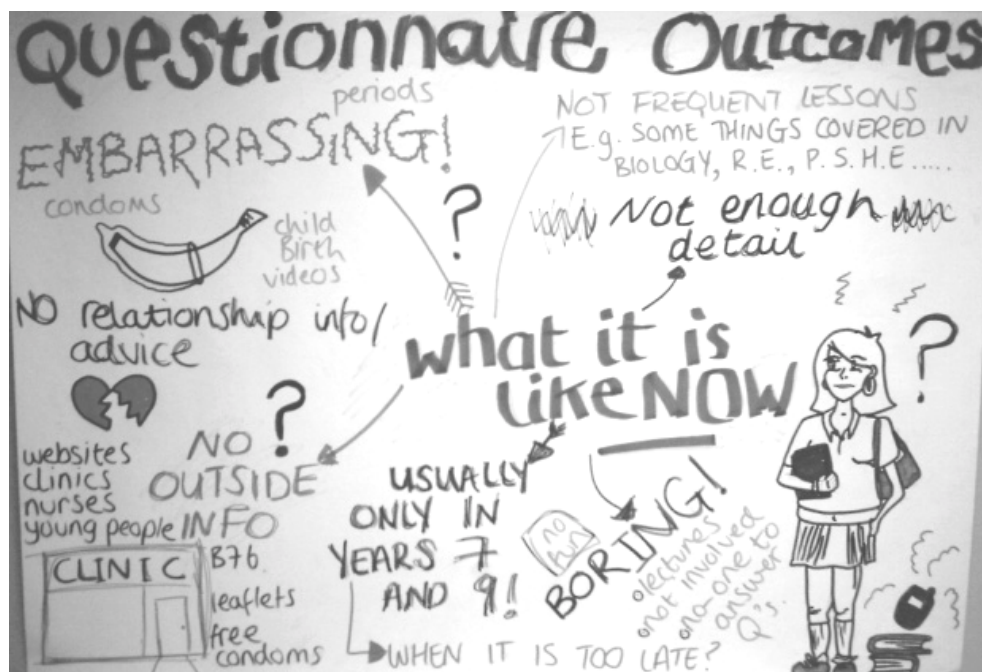
- 11.5 There was, however, some concern regarding the negative trend in terms of satisfaction with the overall provision of sex education. Whilst **Table 5** illustrates this it also showed that the highest proportion of students were of the view that they had learnt a lot and SRE provision should be left as it is.

Table 5 – How Year 11 Pupils Participating in the 'APAUSE' Programme Feel About Their Sex Education?

	Boys				Girls			
	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %
It is ok as it is	72	64	73	72	48	59	61	68
Boring	40		37	39	33		37	39
Learnt a lot	83	82	71	78	82	83	72	77
Enjoyed it	66	68	64	60	62	69	57	58

- 11.6 Whilst a reduction in figures was good the Forum drew attention to the importance of raising the aspirations of young women at risk of teenage pregnancies as a way of reducing conception rates. This was particularly relevant given the disappointing results of the Year 11 questionnaire, which indicated that only 30% of boys and 40% of girls in Hartlepool were planning to take a degree, compared with 45% and 58% respectively in 2003. This was low in comparison to other Authorities nationally.
- 11.7 The Forum noted that a similar route for the identification of parent's views did not exist. In view of this, the Forum indicated that the establishment of a similar questionnaire for parents could be beneficial as indications were that some parents find it difficult to communicate with their children about sex and relationships.
- 11.8 Questionnaire undertaken by the young people's representatives co-opted onto the Forum – As part of the Forum innovative approach to this investigation, the young people co-opted to the Forum agreed to undertake an informal survey of their peers (older than Year 11) to ascertain their views on SRE provision and possible improvements.
- 11.9 Following completion of the questionnaire a 'mind mapping' exercise was undertaken by the young people and the outcomes of this are outlined below and overleaf.

What young people think of SRE provision in Hartlepool.



How young people would like to see SRE provided in Hartlepool.



11.10 The Forum received a summary of the findings of the questionnaire at its meeting on the 19 March 2007. The Forum found of particular interest issues raised regarding:-

- (i) The link between the sex education and drug/alcohol education and the need to combine provision in the future;
- (ii) The preference of students for young people to provide SRE education;
- (iii) The feeling that current SRE provision was too little, too, with insufficient relationship information;
- (iv) Lacked the provision of information regarding outside sources of advice and assistance; and
- (v) The perception that SRE was boring with lessons too much like lectures (no real practical involvement).

11.11 Members were impressed with the information obtained by the young people co-opted on to the Forum and were pleased to find that some mirrored the views of SRE professionals. In particular justification for the development of combined sex/drugs/alcohol education which Members were encouraged to learn was already being explored.

- 11.12 The Forum also took on board the preference for young people to provide SRE and suggested that a the establishment of a working relationship with Millennium Volunteers and Further Education Colleges in Hartlepool (in particular Hartlepool College of FE) for the provision of peer mentors should be explored. It was, however, recognised that there had been problems in the past with students fitting participation in with their course work. In light of this, it was suggested that the possible course of action would be to explore the feasibility of acting as a peer mentor contributing to their qualifications.
- 11.13 The Forum found of interest a contradiction in young people and teacher views in relation to the provision of the relationship element of SRE provision. Whilst young people during the questionnaire process and Focus Group session (Section 13 of the report refers) felt that adequate 'practical' relationship education was not provided it was clear that teacher believed that it was. It was evident to the Forum that there was a difference of opinion as to what young people wanted, and needed, and as such further work needed to be undertaken to develop the relationship element of SRE provision.
- 11.14 The Forum acknowledged that considerable work had been undertaken to improve SRE in schools, non school settings and for parents' access to Contraception and Sexual Health Services. It was also the Forum's view that disappointing figures for under-18 conception rates did not truly reflect the level and quality of work being undertaken to ensure the provision of effective SRE.

How outside bodies/agencies assist in the provision of SRE in Hartlepool.

- 11.15 The Forum noted with interest that Hartlepool Borough Council worked with a number of external agencies to provide support in the provision of SRE. To gain a flavour of the work undertaken the Forum received evidence from Teesside Positive Action, PATCH (Parent and Toddler Care in Hartlepool) in relation to their 'Speakeasy' Project and RELATE in relation to their 'Time to Talk' programme.
- 11.16 Members also found of interest details of the 'Speak Easy' and 'Time to Talk' projects and received positive parent feedback on the work of the 'Speak Easy' project. It was brought to the Forum's attention that other Local Authorities (i.e. Sunderland) had benefited from a combination of external programmes, including the 'Time to Talk' and 'Speakeasy' programmes, with the 'APAUSE' system. Whilst the feasibility, and benefits of developing SRE in Hartlepool in this way needed to be explored further the Forum expressed support for the development of links between the Local Authority and these projects.
- 11.17 During the course of presentation the Forum's attention was again drawn to the gap in provision at Years 7 and 8 and the poor attendance of parents at information sessions prior to their children starting the 'APAUSE' programme. Members were keen to reiterate their support for the bridging of the gap in provision in Years 7 and 8 and expressed concern that by the time

the 'APAUSE' programme started it was often too late for some young people in terms of providing information. Members also welcomed the comments made in relation to the need to identify ways of encouraging parental involvement and indicated that this would need to be explored further in Hartlepool.

- 11.18 It was also suggested that it would be beneficial to review/update the language used for the delivery of the 'APAUSE' programme and the Forum was interested to hear views in support of the compulsory inclusion of SRE as a part of the curriculum.

12. SRE PROVISION IN A NEIGHBOURING LOCAL AUTHORITY

- 12.1 It had originally been intended that a small sub-group of the Forum would visit a neighbouring Local Authority to establish what good practice exists and how Hartlepool could benefit from the adoption of any such practices. During the course of the investigation it became apparent to Members that it would be more effective for a presentation to be given to the whole Forum.
- 12.2 The Forum subsequently welcomed evidence from South Tyneside Council's SRE Co-ordinator and was interested to learn that South Tyneside's under-18 conception figures in 2005 were broadly in line with those in Hartlepool (149 in Hartlepool and 147). However, it became apparent to the Forum that this was where the similarity between the two authorities ceased in terms of rates of improvement in 2005. The Forum noted with interest that the percentage improvement rate for South Tyneside in 2005 was 25.7% whilst as previously indicated there had been a 3% increase over the same period in Hartlepool.
- 12.3 In examining the ways in which South Tyneside Council achieved its 2005 decrease in under-18 conception rates, the Forum noted that the authority's work in relation to sex, drugs and alcohol education was now combined to reflect the views of young people's views that the two subjects were connected. Work had also been undertaken to provide more regular SRE/Drugs Awareness training following feedback from young people that nine hours over 3 weeks was insufficient to meet their needs. It had also been highlighted that previous SRE provision was not flexible enough to cater for children who were ready for SRE at different times.
- 12.4 The Forum was interested to find that South Tyneside Council also worked closely with the Youth Service, the Stag Project and the PEP Project (Policy, Education and Prevention) and that emphasis was placed upon the inclusion of SRE as a qualification for KS4 pupils. Of particular interest to the Forum was the use of 'Practice Sessions', as part of which young people were asked to interview an adult. The benefits of this in opening up dialogue between young people and parents were apparent to the Forum.

- 12.5 South Tyneside had also in the past relied heavily upon external providers to support SRE; however, budgetary restraints had meant that this could not be sustained. Members were interested to find South Tyneside now viewed the way forward as being through the provision of effective staff training to enable teachers to comfortably teach the sessions, with support from specialist such as school nurses and where applicable additional input from outside providers. The Forum was pleased to find that this mirrored the views expressed by SRE professionals in Hartlepool and encouraged to find that a pilot scheme for a combined SRE, drug and alcohol awareness course was already underway in Hartlepool. The intention of this scheme was also to start to bridge the gap in SRE provision in Years 7 and 8.

13. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – THE VIEWS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS, PARENTS, CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE AND THOSE WORKING IN SCHOOLS ON THE PROVISION OF SER IN HARTLEPOOL**

- 13.1 In addition to the consultation exercise undertaken with young people through the informal questionnaire (as outlined in Section 9.19 of the report) the Forum was keen to engage further with pupils and teachers with responsibility for the provision of SRE. In order for this to occur a Focus Group Session was held on the 15 March 2007, to which invitations were extended to all of the Council's secondary schools to send a selection of Year 10 pupils and a teacher.



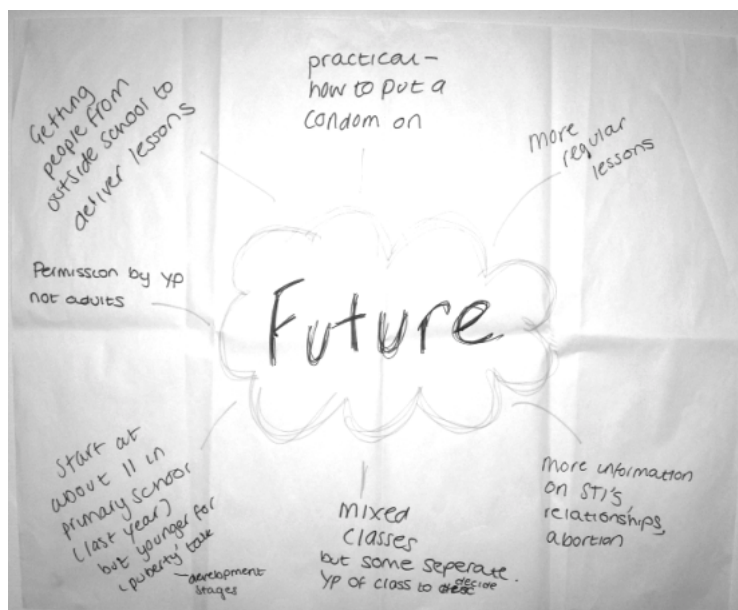
Focus Group Session was held on the 15 March 2007.

- 13.2 Invitations to the session were accepted by Brierton Secondary School, English Martyrs Secondary School and Manor College of Technology. During the course of the session representatives were given the opportunity to express their views on the effectiveness of SRE in Hartlepool and how they would like to see it improve in the future. To facilitate this teachers and pupils were split into separate groups to ensure that everyone felt free to speak and a 'mind mapping' exercise was undertaken with students, as illustrated overleaf.



What Year 10 pupils think of SRE provision in Hartlepool.

How Year 10 pupils would like to see SRE provided in Hartlepool.



13.3 A summary of the views expressed at this event were as outlined below :-

Year 10 Student's Views

SRE Provision Now

- (i) There is not enough relationship advice;
- (ii) SRE should include drugs and alcohol information and advice;
- (iii) Lessons aren't often enough, or long enough;
- (iv) Need more practical demonstrations;
- (v) A lot of what it taught pupils already know, or feel they know, from the TV and radio; and
- (vi) SRE is quite good but could be better.

SRE Provision in the Future

- (i) That lessons should be provided by young people and not adults;
- (ii) There should be more practical demonstrations i.e. How to put on a condom;
- (iii) Lessons need to be more regular;
- (iv) There needs to be more information on STI's, relationships and abortion; and
- (v) It would be beneficial for some classes to be single sex (The students in the class should decide).

Teachers ViewsSRE Provision Now

- (i) Felt that there was no gap in provision in years 7 and 8, with information provided through PSHE lessons;
- (ii) It was useful for children to know who to speak to, hence better for a teacher to provide SRE, with specialist assistance;
- (iii) It is not easy for young people to talk to their parents. Need to find ways of opening dialogue;
- (iv) Parental take up of information sessions prior to their children beginning 'APAUSE' is poor and it would be better if parents were more involved in the 'APAUSE' programme; and
- (v) Schools are not fully aware of the external services available to assist them in the provision of SRE.

SRE Provision in the Future

- (i) There would be benefits in promoting parental awareness of the 'APAUSE' programme at parent's evenings, options evenings and similar events (i.e. a stand).
- (ii) An information/best practice sharing system needs to be developed between schools. This could perhaps be done through a regular seminar or shared personal development days;
- (iii) Schools would benefit from a central resource/query line, possibly through Health Development;
- (iv) Teachers would like to be able to give the same support to students in Years 7 and 8 as is provided later through the 'APAUSE' programme (need smaller classes and similar support as with the 'APAUSE' programme; and
- (v) It would be useful to obtain feedback from students immediately following each session to assess its effectiveness, especially when an external provider is used.

- 13.3 The Forum noted with interest concerns regarding parental involvement and awareness in the education of their children in relation to sex and relationships. Members were concerned at the poor attendance of parents at pre 'APAUSE' information sessions and agreed that alternative ways of relaying information needed to be explored. Members welcomed proposals

that the use of a stall or presentation at parents evenings or option selection sessions could be a way forward and suggested that the feasibility of this be explored.

- 13.4 Based on the evidence provided it was also evident to the Forum that there appeared to be room for improvement in terms of information sharing between schools. In view of this, Members supported the development of information/best practice sharing systems between schools, as suggested by teachers through a regular seminar or shared personal development days. Support was also given for the development of a central resource/query line for schools, possibly through Health Development, to ensure that teachers are fully aware of the internal and external assistance available for the provision of SRE.

14. CONCLUSIONS

- 14.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum concluded:-

- (a) That increasing teenage pregnancy rates in Hartlepool did not truly reflect the level, and quality, of work being undertaken to improve SRE in schools, non school settings and for parent's access to Contraception and Sexual Health Services;
- (b) That emphasis needed to be placed upon the link between sexual health and drugs/alcohol education with the need for their combination in the future;
- (c) That the most effective way of providing SRE was for lessons to be provided by a specialist team (as recommended by OFSTED and to ensure a consistency of approach) of trained teachers with expertise in SRE/PSHE, with support from a professional lead (e.g. School Nurse) and the use of an element of peer mentoring. Specialist external providers should also be utilised where appropriate;
- (d) That a working relationship with Millennium Volunteers and Colleges of Further Education in Hartlepool (in particular Hartlepool College of FE) for the provision of SRE peer mentors could be beneficial for all parties. The feasibility of this needed to be explored further, including, as an incentive, the possibility of participation as a peer mentor contributing to further education students qualifications;
- (e) That the effectiveness of SRE in Hartlepool was dependent upon the provision of quality teaching, and as such emphasis needed to be placed on provision of effective training and support to encourage teachers to become specialist SRE providers;

- (f) That with the 'APAUSE' programme beginning in Year 9, a gap in SRE provision existed during Years 7 and 8. This gap needed to be bridged to ensure that the commencement of SRE in secondary schools was not too late for some pupils, and in order for this to occur the pilot programme currently being implemented needed to be supported;
- (g) That parental involvement was crucial to the provision of effective SRE provision and ways of encouraging this needed to be explored. This could include the use of external learning sources such as the 'Speakeasy' programme and development of ways to raise parental awareness of the 'APAUSE' programme and external sources of advice and support, i.e. a stall or presentation at parents evenings and/or option selection sessions;
- (h) That although the provision of SRE was not a compulsory element of the National Curriculum, its importance for the children and young people of Hartlepool had to be recognised. In view of this, Head Teachers and Governors in all Hartlepool Schools needed to be encouraged to provide SRE, including the Lucinda and Godfrey programme, in addition to existing PSHE lessons. As an incentive to do this, ways of supporting schools in terms of resources and time needed to be explored;
- (i) That the sexual and emotional development of children and young people with special educational needs must be recognised and emphasis placed upon the development, and implementation, of SRE material suitable for all needs. This included the modification of the programme for the delivery of the Lucinda and Godfrey books;
- (j) That work by other Local Authorities had identified a clear benefit in the combination of external programmes, including the 'Time to Talk' and 'Speakeasy' programmes, with the 'APAUSE' system. The feasibility and benefits of developing SRE in Hartlepool in this way needed to be explored further.
- (k) That whilst relationship issues were included in the current SRE programme, it was apparent that young people did not feel that their needs in terms of the provision of relationship education were being met. In light of this further work needed to be undertaken to develop the relationship element of SRE provision, with a change of emphasis from sex to relationships, including the possible renaming of the programme;
- (l) That officer's work on the development of the Lucinda and Godfrey books was commended and support needed to be given to the further development of the learning resource;
- (m) That whilst the effectiveness of the 'APAUSE' programme was monitored through the Year 11 student questionnaire additional ways of ascertaining the effectiveness of SRE provision needed to be explored, including the possible development of a questionnaire for parents and use of feedback forms to assess the effectiveness of individual lessons;

- (n) That in terms of the further development of SRE in Hartlepool consideration needed to be given to:-
 - (i) The importance of raising pupil aspirations;
 - (i) The use of less formal language in the delivery of the 'APAUSE' programme, as suggested by young people and external providers;
 - (ii) The development of information/best practice sharing systems between schools, as suggested by teachers through a regular seminar or shared personal development days; and
 - (iv) The development of a central resource/query line for schools, possibly through Health Development, to ensure that teachers are aware of the internal and external assistance available for the provision of SRE.
- (o) That as a means of achieving buy in for the provision of SRE outside PSHE lessons it could be beneficial for the Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum to meet with school governors to present the findings of this investigation.

15. RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Forum's key recommendations to the Cabinet are as outlined below :-

- (a) That all primary, secondary and specialist schools in Hartlepool be encouraged to provide SRE, as part of PSHE, and a uniform approach to its provision promoted, based upon the use of trained teachers, with:-
 - (i) support from a health professional (e.g. School Nurse);
 - (ii) an element of peer mentoring, where appropriate; and
 - (iii) the use of specialist external providers where appropriate.
- (b) That the establishment of a working relationship with Millennium Volunteers and further education establishments in Hartlepool for the provision of SRE peer mentors be explored;
- (c) That parental involvement/awareness plays a crucial role in the effective provision of SRE and more emphasis should therefore be placed upon the use of external learning sources such as the 'Speakeasy' programme and stalls/presentations at school events;

- (d) That in recognition of the sexual and emotional development of children and young people with special educational needs, work continues to be undertaken to develop, and modify, SRE materials;
- (e) That in order to further develop SRE provision in Hartlepool the Local Authority explore:-
 - (i) Ways of improving the delivery of the 'relationship' element of SRE to better meet young people's needs;
 - (ii) The use of less formal language in the delivery of the 'APAUSE' programme;
 - (iii) Ways of improving training and support for SRE teachers, to encourage their participation;
 - (iv) Ways of ensuring the continuation of SRE provision between Years 7 and 8;
 - (v) Ways of increasing the current frequency of SRE provision within the curriculum; and
 - (vi) The development of improved information/best practice sharing systems/processes for schools, including the provision of a central resource/query line.
- (f) That additional ways of assessing the effectiveness of SRE provision, including the introduction of a parental questionnaire and feedback forms for students following individual lessons, be explored;
- (g) That the combining of external programmes, including the 'Time to Talk' and 'Speakeasy' programmes, with the 'APAUSE' system be explored;
- (h) That consideration be given to the renaming of 'Sex and Relationship Education' (SRE) to place primary emphasis upon the relationship aspect of provision within Hartlepool schools, and
- (i) That the current Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum meets with school governors to present the findings of this investigation and encourage 'buy in' for the provision of SRE.
- (j) That the young people who participated in the Focus Group Session on the 15 March 2007 be thanked for their involvement in the Forum's investigation.

16. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 16.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

Hartlepool Borough Council:

Sandra Saint, PSHE and Healthy Schools Co-ordinator
Deborah Gibbin, Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator
John Robinson, Children's Fund Manager
Cynthia Alder, School Nurse
Chris Rounsley, School Nurses
A Hamilton, English Martyrs Secondary School,
Claire Nossiter, English Martyrs Secondary School
Marcia McHale, English Martyrs Secondary School
W Smith, Brierton Secondary School,
Grace Mitchell, Brierton Secondary School
Jill Hall, Manor College of Technology
Reuben Bianco, Manor College of Technology
Dwayne Douglas, Manor College of Technology
Chelsea Carrington, Manor College of Technology
R Goodhand, Manor College of Technology

External Representatives:

Doug Hallam, Regional Co-ordinator North East/UK Youth Parliament
Michael Kay, Service Manager, Teesside Positive Action
Jan Dobson, Training & Development Officer, PATCH
Debby Ianson, Parent participating in the 'Speakeasy' programme (PATCH)
Rita Nelson, Director, Relate North East
David Messenger, SRE Co-ordinator, South Tyneside Council

**COUNCILLOR JANE SHAW
CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM**

April 2007

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:-

- (vi) Office of National Statistics – Provisional 2005 Conception Rates.
- (vii) Extended Schools: Improving Access to Sexual Health Advice Services (DfES).
- (viii) National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (Prevention of sexually transmitted infections and under 18 conceptions) February 2007.
- (ix) Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled ‘Scrutiny Investigation into the Provision of Sexual Health Education for Young People in Hartlepool Schools – Scoping Report’ presented to the Children’s Services Scrutiny Forum on 8 January 2007.
- (i) Department of Health – Hartlepool 2006 Health Profile.
- (ii) Article by Michael Reiss (Professor of Science education at the Institute of Education, University of London).
- (iii) The Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools 2004/05
- (iv) Sex and relationship education (HMI 433), Ofsted, 2002
- (v) APAUSE Year 11 Reports, Peninsular Medical School, Universities of Exeter & Plymouth, 2006.
- (vi) Sex Education Forum – SRE Framework – Fact Sheet 30

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27 April 2007



Report of: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

Subject: FINAL REPORT – PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND LANDLORDS IN HARTLEPOOL

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into the 'Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords in Hartlepool'.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

- 2.2 Historically, the private rented sector has played a major role in the housing market with in the 1900's 90% of households in England living in private rented accommodation.
- 2.1 Over the last decade changes to the housing market, and people's expectations in terms of home ownership, have nationally resulted in the decline of the private rented sector. Rising house prices are, however, now making it increasingly unaffordable for many people to get onto the property ladder and this coupled with a reduction in the availability of good quality public housing has resulted in a gap in housing provision. The private rented sector is to play a vital role in filling this gap, and with increased levels of buy to rent, the prevalence of private rented accommodation is increasing again.
- 2.2 In considering a subject for investigation the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum explored a variety of options and during the course of initial discussions raised issues around:-
- (i) Problems experienced by private sector tenants and surrounding residents, particularly in relation to the condition of properties and anti-social behaviour (criminal or non-criminal);



- (ii) The effect on communities (both social and economic) of increasing levels of private rented accommodation of varying quality in areas across the town; and
- (iii) The operational practices of Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and Private Sector Landlords (PSL's) and the options available particularly for the regulation of the private sector.

2.3 The private rented sector has throughout its history been the subject of contention in terms of quality of provision and the behaviour of landlords and tenants. It is, however, important to acknowledge that not all private landlords and their tenants are bad, the majority are responsible. There are also clear benefits from the operation of the private rented sector, including the provision of a flexible form of tenure and wider choice to assist in meeting the full range of housing needs.

2.4 Taking into consideration all of these issues, and their impact on the residents of Hartlepool, the 'Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords in Hartlepool' was selected as an investigation to be undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's 2006/07 workprogramme.

3. THE OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

3.1 The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to examine the performance/operation of private sector rented accommodation, and landlords, in Hartlepool and evaluates the options available to the Local Authority for the protection of tenants and surrounding residents.



4. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

4.1 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny investigation were as outlined below :-

- (a) To gain an understanding of national policies and practice relating to the performance/operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords, with particular reference to:-
 - i) Current and future national policy/legislation regulating the provision of rented accommodation;
 - ii) The difference between private sector landlords and registered social landlords and the legislation/regulations effecting the operation of each; and

- ii) Possible changes to the Local Authorities enforcement powers in relation to private sector landlords as a result of changes in legislation and the introduction of landlord licensing (Mandatory and Discretionary).
- b) To gain an understanding of local policies and practice relating to the operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords, with particular reference to:-
 - i) The position in Hartlepool in terms of the regulation of private landlords and the options currently available to the Local Authority for the protection of private sector tenants and surrounding residents;
 - ii) The level and types of problems experienced by private sector tenants, landlords and surrounding residents and the social/economic effects on communities of concentrated pockets of private rented accommodation;
 - iii) Ways of dealing with the social and economic effects on communities of concentrated pockets of private rented accommodation, which could include schemes to facilitate increased home ownership (i.e. shared ownership) and demolition of properties;
 - iv) The effectiveness of the voluntary registration scheme for private landlords currently in operation in Hartlepool; and
 - v) The implications of current and future actions in relation to the regulation of the private rented sector particularly the 'knock on' effect of enforcement action against landlords and tenants.
- (c) To examine and compare best practice for the provision of rented accommodation with particular reference to:-
 - i) Examples of best practice implemented by Registered Social Landlords, responsible private landlords and letting agencies/companies to deal with problem tenants in order to ascertain if any could be implemented as part of a landlord licensing scheme (Mandatory and Discretionary); and
 - ii) Strategies/practices implemented in other Local Authorities (for example Gateshead Council, Newcastle Council or Manchester Council), with those in place in Hartlepool in order to identify any possible areas for improvement.
- (d) To seek the views of local residents, Ward Councillors, private landlords, tenants, letting agents and representatives from national and local bodies in relation to the provision of rented accommodation.
- (e) To determine on the evidence provided whether the action available to

Hartlepool Borough Council to protect tenants and surrounding residents is being undertaken effectively.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

5.1 The membership of the Scrutiny Forum was as detailed below :-

Councillors S Allison, Brash, Clouth, R W Cook, Cranney, Gibbon, Hall, Henery, Lilley, Rayner and D Waller.

Resident Representatives: Ann Butterfield, Ian Campbell and Linda Shields.

6. METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

6.1 Members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum met formally from the 25 October 2006 to 21 March 2007 to discuss and receive evidence relating to this investigation. A detailed record of the issues raised during these meetings is available from the Council's Democratic Services.

6.2 A brief summary of the methods of investigation are outlined below :-

- (a) Detailed officer reports supplemented by verbal evidence and detailed presentations;
- (b) Evidence from the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Housing and Liveability;
- (c) Site visit to examine good practice within a neighbouring Local Authority (Gateshead Council);
- (d) Relevant officers from various Departments (Community Safety Division and Benefits Division);
- (e) Private Landlords. (Both registered and unregistered landlords with particular involvement through a Focus Group Session);
- (f) Representatives from national and regional bodies. (Teesside Landlords Association and Letting Agents operating in Hartlepool - Involved in the process through a Focus Group Session);
- (g) Representatives from Residents Associations, Housing Associations, Letting Agents, Housing Hartlepool (Registered Social Landlord), New Deal for Communities, the Rent Office and Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau;
- (h) Local residents and Resident Representatives; and
- (i) Ward Councillors.

FINDINGS

7. COMPOSITION OF THE HOUSING MARKET AND IN PARTICULAR THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR (NATIONAL AND LOCAL)

- 7.1 At the beginning of its investigation the Forum received national and local base line evidence on the composition of the housing market, and in particular the private rented sector.

The National Housing Market ⁽ⁱ⁾

- 7.2 The Forum was advised that the majority of the United Kingdom housing market is today made up of mixed tenure housing, consisting of different social landlords, private landlords and owner occupiers. In terms of the private rented sector, the 2001 Census showed a decrease in the proportion of households in England and Wales, and the North East, renting privately over the decade from 1991 to 2001.

	1991	2001
North East	6.7	6.3
England & Wales	9.2	8.7

- 7.3 This trend is, however, being reversed nationally and the private rented sector now accounts for 10% of the overall housing market. It is also dominated by landlords with small portfolios, with:-

- 74% of private lettings owned by those for whom being a landlord is a sideline activity;
- 60% of private lettings owned by private individuals;
- A quarter of all private lettings owned by landlords with only one letting and three quarters have less than 40 lets. (The average number of lettings owned is seven); and
- More landlords, particularly those with small portfolios, indicating that they would welcome more information about their rights and responsibilities.

The Housing Market in Hartlepool ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

- 7.4 On a local basis, the Forum learned that the housing market in Hartlepool is currently unbalanced in terms of its composition with a high number of small terraced houses that no longer attract owner-occupiers. It was also noted that the main issues affecting Hartlepool relate to affordable housing, large numbers of empty properties (leading to illegal use) and poorly maintained and managed homes (causing problems for tenants and neighbours). All of these issues have served to discourage owner occupiers and increase the number of properties left empty or rented out.

(i) Department of Communities and Local Government - Housing Research Summary (No. 054, 2005) – Private Landlords in England

- 7.5 In March 2004 the Council transferred its housing stock to Housing

Hartlepool, which is now the largest of the town's sixteen Registered Social Landlords (RSL's). The Forum was interested to learn that Registered Social Landlords now account for 26.6% of the housing market in Hartlepool, with the remainder of the market consisting of 63% owner occupier, 7.4% private rented and 3% other. The level of private rented accommodation across the town does, however, vary with higher concentrations in certain areas such as the New Deal for Communities area (21.6%) and Dyke House ward (9.6%).

- 7.6 When comparing previous year's figures, it became apparent to the Forum that there had been an increase in the proportion of households in Hartlepool renting privately over the decade from 1991 to 2001 (7.7% in 1991 to 8.3% in 2001). This trend was mirrored across the Tees Valley with 5.8% of households privately renting in 1991 compared to 6.5% in 2001.

8. NATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICE – PERFORMANCE/OPERATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND LANDLORDS

Differentiation between Private Sector Landlords (PSL) and Registered Social Landlord (RSL)

- 8.1 During the course of the investigation it became apparent that there was some confusion as to the local authority's power to initiate enforcement action against RSL's, PSL's and their tenants. This often leads to expectations over and above what the local authority can actually do in terms of controlling the behaviour of the different types of tenants and landlords. To assist in clarifying the situation evidence was provided by the Chief Executive of Housing Hartlepool, and Council officers on the organisational and regulatory differences between the two types of landlords.
- 8.2 Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) - The Forum noted that organisations such as trusts, co-operatives and housing associations act as RSL's on a 'not for profit' basis with any surpluses they might have retained within the organisation. In terms of their operational practices RSL's are regulated through the Housing Corporation (a Quango). In addition to this, in Housing Hartlepool's case, as the 'transfer' organisation it shares a waiting list, allocation policy and housing strategies with Hartlepool Borough Council.
- 8.3 The Forum noted that the operation of RSL's can affect the private sector market in a number of ways. Particular concern was expressed regarding their waiting lists and allocation policies which can deter some tenants from applying or result in their eviction. Whilst the Forum was pleased to see the effective management of tenancies and implementation of tenancy agreements issues were raised regarding the displacement of problem tenants into the private rented sector. To this end there is a greater degree of control over RSL's.

(ii) 2001 Census

- 8.4 Private Sector Landlords (PSL) - The Forum learned that the definition of a

PSL is a private individual or company who owns property that is entirely independent of the local authority or the registered social landlord sector. The size of property portfolio owned by private landlords can vary and whilst RSL's offer assured tenancies PSL offer, in the main assured short-term tenancies.

- 8.5 In terms of the regulation of PSL's, the Forum learned that the Authority has very little control over this element of the housing market with the exception of powers in relation to property maintenance and tenancy management in relation to houses of multiple occupation. Further details of these powers are outlined in Section 9 of the report.

Legislation Covering the Regulation of the Private Rented Sector

- 8.6 It was evident to Members upon receipt of the evidence provided that Central Government legislation covering the private rented sector is much and varied. Members also learned how legislation was being updated and expanded to create a fairer and better private rented housing market, with the most recent legislation enacted being the Housing Act 2004. The Forum discussed in detail the following key aspects of the Act and considered how they were being, or would be, implemented in Hartlepool as outlined in Section 9 of the report:-

- (i) The Health and Safety Rating System;
- (ii) Licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation;
- (iii) Selective voluntary licensing for low areas of housing demand or areas faced with particular anti-social behaviour problems;
- (iv) A Private Sector Pilot Project;
- (v) Landlord Accreditation; and
- (vi) Tenant Referencing.

9. LOCAL POLICIES AND PRACTICE – PERFORMANCE/OPERATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND LANDLORDS

The Regulatory Position in Hartlepool and Options Currently Available for the Protection of Private Sector Tenants and Surrounding Residents

- 9.1 The Forum accepted that despite the level of legislation covering this sector of the housing market, as shown in Section 8.6 of the report, the local authority has very little actual control. Areas where the local authority does, however, have regulatory/enforcement control are:-

Property Maintenance - The Local Authority regulates the condition of Housing; empty properties (securing and bringing them back into use) and statutory nuisance (leaky gutters etc. and not anti-social behaviour).

Management of Tenancies – The licensing of houses of multiple occupation, and accreditation in the NDC area.

Strategically:-

- i) Influencing size and location of sector;
- ii) Supporting the sector through advice and assistance;
- iii) Licensing and accreditation;
- iv) Homelessness strategies; and
- v) The 'Supporting People' strategies.

- 9.2 Members were pleased to find that the local authority is successfully undertaking a variety of activities under each of these areas and is exploring further schemes to support tenants, landlords and neighbouring residents. Details of these schemes/initiatives are outlined at a later stage in this report (Section 9.15 refers).
- 9.3 Despite the work being undertaken, Members continued to be concerned regarding the misapprehension that the local authority has power/responsibility to deal with issues such as anti-social behaviour (criminal or non-criminal) in private rented accommodation beyond its role through the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit. This view came to the fore again during the Focus Group session on the 13 December 2006.
- 9.4 The Forum welcomed clarification that it is the responsibility of the landlord to take eviction action where their tenants, or their visitors, are causing problems. How this misapprehension could be dispelled was, however, to continue to be a problem.

Evidence from the Authority's Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Liveability

- 9.5 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Housing and Liveability informed the Forum of his concerns as to how the new legislation for the provision of selective licensing and tenant referencing was being portrayed in the press. The Forum shared the Portfolio Holder's view that the legislation would not be the sole solution to all anti-social behaviour problems, but could work as part of a package of measures. The Forum also welcomed Cabinet's commitment, financial and otherwise, to landlord licensing and tenant referencing schemes in 2007.

Problems Experienced by Private Sector Tenants, Landlords and Surrounding Residents

- 9.6 The Forum considered evidence in relation to the problems experienced by private sector tenants, landlords and surrounding residents at each of its meetings throughout the investigation. A Focus Group session was also held on the 13 December 2006 at which the Forum received further evidence (Section 11 of the report refers).
- 9.7 Problems and issues raised throughout the investigation were as outlined in **Appendix B**.

Dealing with the Social and Economic Effects on Communities of

Concentrated Pockets of Private Rented Accommodation

- 9.8 The Forum was reminded that the composition of the housing market in Hartlepool is unbalanced with in some areas of the town high numbers of small terraced houses that no longer attract owner-occupiers and large numbers of empty or poorly maintained properties. The Forum acknowledged the detrimental affect this can have on the sustainability of communities and welcomed the activities of New Deal for Communities (NDC) in areas of the town to improve housing and the environment and build strong sustainable communities.
- 9.9 Traditional approaches to dealing with problem tenants/landlords and residents concerns have in the past tended to be on a case by case basis. Much of the recent legislation affecting private renting, however, now relies on local authorities developing coherent and relevant strategies for improving the private rented sector, going beyond previous methods of intervention. The Forum acknowledged the importance of initiatives such as selective demolition, redevelopment, and in particular the NDC's role as the pilot area for the voluntary landlord registration scheme.
- 9.10 The Forum agreed with the views of the NDC's in relation to the importance of tenant referencing and support and was interested to learn about other initiatives in place to assist tenants who have had tenancy problems in the past, including the NDC Bond Scheme. Members were also interested to find that the Council's activities in supporting people and reducing homelessness were proving to be very effective.
- 9.11 Whilst the Forum noted landlords concerns regarding the disadvantages of selective licensing and creation of ghettos in the area(s) selected it was apparent that there are possible benefits from the introduction of selective licensing. The Forum was, however, clear in its view that further work would need to be undertaken in relation to the selection of an area and the feasibility/benefits of the scheme. The Forum was also of the view that the scheme would operate best in conjunction with a package of other measures, including landlord accreditation and tenant referencing.
- 9.12 In considering this issue the Forum was also encouraged by the activities of Housing Hartlepool in terms shared equity and new build initiatives (Section 10.2 refers) and the work being undertaken by the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit.

Effectiveness of Hartlepool's Voluntary Registration/Accreditation Scheme for Private Landlords

- 9.13 The Forum learned that the Landlord Accreditation Scheme currently provides advice to 200 landlords (approximately 380 properties) per year on the management and maintenance of properties. The scheme has also been useful in relation to anti-social behaviour complaints and has been used to inform landlords of responsible and effective methods to deal with

such problems. The Forum was pleased with indications that the scheme had led to improved engagement with landlords and with closer working relationships had improved the Authority's understanding of the market, enabling activities to be more effectively focused.

- 9.14 Members acknowledged that it was difficult to assess the effectiveness of the scheme with no figures in terms of its effects on the creation of sustainable tenancies available at this time. The Forum welcomed indications that recent inspections had shown an improvement in standards, particularly in the fitting of smoke alarms and security, with four out of five properties inspected now up to standard. The Forum, however, noted with concern that the level of staffing within the Private Sector Housing Team had meant that not all properties covered by the scheme had been inspected. With this in mind it was apparent to the Forum that the level staffing and other resources would need to be reassessed if the Landlord Accreditation Scheme was to operate effectively.

The Implications of Current and Future Actions in Relation to the Regulation of the Private Rented Sector

- 9.15 Whilst it was accepted that the local authority has little direct control the private rented sector, the Forum was of the view that with joined up working the private rented sector could be successfully managed. If this was to occur a full range of tools needed to be utilised, and sufficient resources provided, including Selective Landlord Licensing and Tenant Referencing.
- 9.16 Selective Licensing - In terms of Selective Licensing, the Forum was interested to receive the results of the recent consultation exercise with residents and landlords. Members were advised that the majority of residents supported selective licensing whilst there was limited support from landlords. This had also been reflected during the course of the Forum's investigation.
- 9.17 Members acknowledged possible problems in relation to the displacement of problem landlords and tenants and it was suggested that the most effective way of trying to prevent this would be to implement a selective licensing scheme alongside an expanded version of the existing voluntary accreditation, and the new tenant referencing, schemes. Again, however, the Forum was of the view that prior to the implementation of a Selective Licensing Scheme, consideration would need to be given to the benefits/feasibility of the scheme, specifically the geographical location of the area covered and staffing/financial implications.
- 9.18 Tenant Referencing – In relation to the Tenant Referencing Scheme, Members considered proposals for the introduction of a scheme and noted the views expressed in relation to its benefits, including those made at the Focus Group session (**Appendix C** refers). These views included the suggestion that the most appropriate way of providing a reference would be through the use of a tenant 'Passport'.
- 9.19 In considering the information provided, Members emphasised the

importance of the support from resident, landlords, tenants, and the provision of a 'housing support' package, if the introduction of a Tenant Referencing Scheme was to be successful. The Forum again discussed the issue of displacement of problem landlords and tenants and reiterated the earlier view that the most beneficial way of implementing a Tenant Referencing Scheme would be in conjunction with any Selective Licensing and Accreditation Schemes.

- 9.20 Rent Assessments, Under 25 Single Room Rate and Discretionary Payments – The Forum considered evidence from the Rent Officer in relation to the way in which rent assessments are made and the level at which they are set. Members noted with concern the gap that regularly exists between rent assessments and actual rents and were advised of the option for the Authority to make discretionary payments to bridge this gap.
- 9.21 Members learned that Hartlepool was in 2006 allocated £45,000 for the payment of discretionary payment and on a regular basis utilises over and above its allocation. In view of this, it was apparent to the Forum that there was not only a need for a review of the current budgetary allocation for Discretionary Payments to more truly reflect demand, but also a need to explore mechanism by which to lobby the Rent Office and Central Government in relation to the requirement of realistic rent assessments.
- 9.22 In relation to the process for the allocation of discretionary payments, the Forum also noted that there was an issue regarding the role of the Housing section and the lead currently taken by the Benefits section. The Forum listened to explanations in terms of the appropriateness of both options and on the basis of the information provided was of the view that a review of the process for the award of Discretionary Payments would be beneficial, with particular reference to:-
- (i) The possible inclusion of a Housing section representative on the Discretionary Payments Panel; or
 - (ii) The practicalities of transferring responsibility for the award of discretionary payments to the Housing section with input from Housing Benefits.
- 9.23 The Forum also learned that there is a real issue in Hartlepool in terms of the effects of the under-25 single room rate and the knock on effect in terms of 'sofa surfing'.

What More Could Be Done By the Local Authority

- 9.24 On the basis of the information provided, including the views expressed at the Focus Group session on the 13 December 2006 (**Appendix C**), Members acknowledged that there are limited enforcement options available to the local authority in terms of the regulation and enforcement of the private rented sector. It was, however, recognised that a considerable amount of good work is being undertaken by the Authority and its partners to

reduce problems associated with the private rented sector, including the effects of anti-social behaviour (criminal and non criminal).

- 9.25 In relation to tenancy advice and support, the Forum noted the considerable efforts were being made to help tenants and landlords manage and maintain tenancies. Particular attention was drawn to the role of supported accommodation in equipping individuals who had previously experienced failed tenancies to take on new tenancies in the private and social rented sectors. The Forum, however, expressed concern regarding the amount of supported accommodation available in Hartlepool and suggested that ways of increasing its provision needed to be looked into. It was also suggested that where insufficient supported accommodation was available the provision of additional 'floating support' needed to be explored.
- 9.26 Whilst no single action, or initiative, could solve the problems associated with the private rented sector Members shared the national view that there is a general lack of knowledge of responsibilities among Landlords regarding both the ending of tenancies and how to deal with anti social behaviour. The Forum also recognised that tenant referencing, tenancy support, selective licensing, accreditation and enforcement were all vital elements of a package of activities required to address problems associated with the operation of the private rented sector.

10. EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE - MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY LANDLORD LICENSING SCHEMES

- 10.1 The Forum were keen to seek examples of best practice implemented by registered social landlord and a neighbouring local authority with a view to identifying any possible areas for further improvement in Hartlepool. The findings of which are outlined overleaf.

Registered Social Landlords (RSL's)

- 10.2 There are currently sixteen Registered Social Landlords in Hartlepool, as shown in **Appendix D**. As the largest of the sixteen the Forum considered evidence provided by the Chief Executive of Housing Hartlepool and found of real interest how thoroughly the organisation manages its tenancies and interfaces with the Local Authority and other agencies/bodies.
- 10.3 The Forum shared the view that whilst RSL's and PSL's are different entities this should not be a barrier to good management practice. The Forum also found of interest:-
- (i) The view that the licensing regime could make it attractive for RSL's to compete to provide management and maintenance services to the private rented sector;
 - (ii) The long term prospect that there was through licensing and referencing

schemes the possibility of a blurring of the distinction between the private rented sector and social renting in terms of quality and access; and

- (iii) Housing Hartlepool's involvement in shared equity schemes as a way of getting people on to the property ladder and new build schemes as a way of providing revenue for the sale of property to increase their housing stock.

10.4 The Forum welcomed Housing Hartlepool involvement in shared equity and new build schemes and suggested that this could be one of the ways forward to provide people with good quality housing in sustainable communities. The Forum, however, noted problems relayed to it regarding the complexity of some RSL allocations policies and highlighted the need for the provision of effective advice.

Local Authority Best Practice – Gateshead Council

10.5 Members of the Forum visited Gateshead Council on 29 January 2007 to examine good practice within a neighbouring Local Authority and how Hartlepool could benefit from the adoption of any such practices.

10.6 During the delivery of the presentation from Gateshead Council, Members were informed of the Council's approach to working with landlords, tenants and other partners. Members found of particular interest the Council's experience in implementing selective licensing and learned that:-

- (i) Gateshead operates an incentive scheme to encourage landlord participation in their Accreditation Scheme;
- (ii) Staffing in Gateshead's Housing Renewal Team, with responsibility for the implementation of initiatives and enforcement in the private rented sector, is approximately 29 staff;
- (iii) The Housing Renewal Team is funded from NRF, NDC and lottery funding;
- (iv) Gateshead Council considers selective licensing, with emphasis on partnership working, as the way forward;
- (v) Gateshead Council had assisted in the formation of the Gateshead Landlord Association and worked in close partnership with it;
- (vi) Approximately 700 and 800 tenants were vetted last year as part of the referencing scheme. This included a five years housing history; and

(vii) The area selected for the introduction of Selective Licensing in

Gateshead was clearly defined, something which it would be hard to do in Hartlepool.

- 10.7 The Forum found information provided in relation to the incentive scheme of particular interest and were impressed with the possible benefits of introducing of a similar scheme in Hartlepool. Members also considered evidence in relation to staffing levels in Hartlepool and it was evident to the Forum that consideration needed to be given to the actual staffing/resource levels required for the implementation of schemes such as selective licensing, accreditation and tenant referencing if they are to be effective.

11. PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND LANDLORDS - THE COLLECTIVE VIEWS OF HARTLEPOOL'S RESIDENTS, WARD COUNCILLORS, PRIVATE LANDLORDS, TENANTS AND LETTING AGENTS

- 11.1 In addition to the consultation exercise already being undertaken with landlords, tenants and residents in relation to selective licensing and tenant referencing, Members of the Forum were keen to engage with residents, providers and users of private rented accommodation as part of the investigation.
- 11.2 Therefore the Forum sought the views residents associations, tenants, landlords and letting/estate agents in a Focus Group event held on 13 December 2006 in West View Community Centre (illustrated in the photograph below). The event was publicised in the local press, on local radio and with direct invitations to those outlined in **Appendix A**.



Focus Group with members of the public, tenants, landlords and Estate/Letting Agents held on 13 December 2006

- 11.3 The issues raised during the course of discussions were as outlined in **Appendices B and C**.

12. CONCLUSIONS

12.1 The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum concluded:-

- (a) That there are limited enforcement options available to the local authority in terms of the regulation and enforcement of the private rented sector. However, a considerable amount of good work is being undertaken to reduce problems associated with the private rented sector, including the effects of anti-social behaviour (criminal and non criminal);
- (b) That the importance of good quality rented accommodation can not be underestimated in creating an environment of respect for tenants in terms of the properties they live in and the surrounding communities;
- (c) That no single action, or initiative, can solve the problems associated with the private rented sector;
- (d) That tenant referencing, tenancy support, selective licensing, accreditation and enforcement are vital elements of a package of activities required to address problems associated with the operation of the private rented sector;
- (e) That any action taken to improve the operation and management of the private rented sector should not have a detrimental effect on work being undertaken elsewhere in the town or on other services, e.g. homelessness and the costs of temporary accommodation;
- (f) That shared equity and new build schemes could be one of the ways forward to provide people with good quality housing in sustainable communities;

Selective Licensing

- (g) That in principle the introduction of selective licensing in Hartlepool be supported;
- (h) That it was evident that the most effective way of implementing selective licensing in Hartlepool would be for it to run in conjunction with the existing voluntary accreditation and tenant referencing schemes. Thereby providing a holistic approach against the displacement of problem tenants/landlords;
- (i) That should the authority chose to introduce a Selective Licensing Scheme in Hartlepool, consideration would need to be given to the benefits/feasibility of the scheme, the geographical location of the area covered (i.e. where it could be detrimental to surrounding areas) and staffing/financial implications;

Landlord Accreditation Scheme

- (j) That in principle the continuation of the existing voluntary landlord accreditation scheme be supported;
- (k) That based on the evidence obtained during the visit to Gateshead Council, the Forum recognised the benefits of an incentive scheme to encourage landlord participation and was of the view that Hartlepool would benefit from the introduction of a similar scheme;

Tenant Referencing Scheme

- (l) That in principle the introduction of a Tenant Referencing Scheme be supported;
- (m) That in terms of addressing the issue of displacement of problem landlords and tenants it would be beneficial for a Tenant Referencing Scheme to be implemented in conjunction with any Selective Licensing and Accreditation Schemes;
- (n) That support from resident, landlords, tenants and the provision of a housing support package would be vital to the success of a Tenant Referencing Scheme;

Partnership working with outside agencies/bodies

- (o) That, if future actions to deal with problems associated with the private rented sector are to be successful, significant emphasis should be placed upon partnership working between Council departments and outside agencies, including the Hartlepool Partnership;
- (p) That it was disappointed to find that existing funding arrangements for the NDC Bond Guarantee scheme were to cease in the near future, resulting in the discontinuation of scheme;

Supported Accommodation

- (q) That it was concerned to find that there is an insufficient supply of supported housing in Hartlepool to meet demand and recognised the need to explore ways of:-
 - (i) Increasing supported housing provision or providing additional 'floating support'; and
 - (ii) Improving the transmission of accurate information in relation to planning applications for supported housing premises in order to prevent the creation of misapprehensions.

Hartlepool Landlords Association

- (r) That it was encouraged to find that the work already undertaken in relation to this investigation had prompted the creation of a Hartlepool Landlord Association. It was, however, recognised that further efforts were required to develop the role, Code of Conduct/Constitution and activities of the association;
- (s) That in view of the authority's strategic role in the provision of housing in Hartlepool it would be imperative for there to be local authority representation on the Hartlepool Landlords Association;

Registered Social Landlords

- (t) That Registered Social Landlords should be commended on their activities to provide affordable and good quality housing;
- (u) That in view of the complexity of allocations policies emphasis should be placed upon the provision of effective advice for prospective tenants;
- (v) That in view of the effectiveness of the way in which Registered Social Landlords manage their tenancies ways of sharing expertise with the private rented sector would be beneficial;

Fair Rents and Discretionary Payments

- (w) That the consistent gap between the levels of rent assessments, undertaken by the Rent Office, and the actual rental charges in Hartlepool should be addressed;
- (x) That there were concerns regarding the process for the award of Discretionary Payments in relation to the membership of the Panel and involvement of the Housing Division;
- (y) In view of the importance of Discretionary Payments in bridging the gap between rent assessments and actual rents a review of the budgetary allocation for Discretionary Payments is needed to ensure that it meets demand;

Tenant, Resident and Landlord Support

- (z) That there is a need to place emphasis upon the benefit and value of support activities, in particular supported accommodation, already provided for tenants, residents and landlords in order to create sustainable tenancies and communities; and
- (aa) That it was pleased to learn of the advice service already available

through the local authority for residents, tenants and landlords. There was, however, a need for the availability of this advice service to be better publicised.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations.

13.2 The Forum's key recommendations to the Cabinet are as outlined below:-

- (a) That before any actions are taken to improve the operation and management of the private rented sector an assessment of their impact be undertaken;

Selective Licensing

- (b) That prior to the introduction of any Selective Licensing Scheme in Hartlepool an evaluation be undertaken of:-

- (i) Its feasibility and benefits;
- (ii) The level of staffing and financial resources required for its effective operation; and
- (iii) The practicalities of operating the existing Voluntary Registration Scheme alongside any Selective Licensing and Tenant Referencing Schemes.

Landlord Accreditation Scheme

- (c) That the introduction of an incentive scheme to encourage landlords to become members of the accreditation scheme be further explored;
- (d) That the provision of tenant and landlord information packs as part of the accreditation scheme be explored;
- (e) That an assessment of staffing requirements to enable the effective provision, and expansion, of the Landlord Accreditation Scheme be undertaken;

Tenant Referencing Scheme

- (f) That a Tenant Referencing Scheme be implemented within Hartlepool and the practicalities of its operation alongside the proposed Selective Licensing and Accreditation Schemes be explored;

Partnership working with outside agencies/bodies

- (g) That partnership working be developed further to ensure the success of future initiatives to deal with problems associated with the private rented sector;
- (h) That ways of assisting the NDC to identify alternative funding sources to ensure the continuation of its Bond Guarantee scheme be explored;

Supported Accommodation

- (i) That further work be undertaken to identify ways of increasing the level of supported housing in Hartlepool and/or 'floating support' in order to meet demand;
- (j) That in dealing with planning applications for the provision of supported housing ways of better publicising accurate details of applications be explored in order to prevent the creation of misapprehensions;

Hartlepool Landlord Association

- (k) That further work be undertaken with the newly formed Hartlepool Landlords Association in relation to:-
 - (i) The promotion of partnership working, in particular the inclusion of a Hartlepool Borough Council representatives on its board; and
 - (ii) The development of its code of conduct, role and activities.

Registered Social Landlords

- (l) That the development of a working relationship between Registered Social Landlords and the private rented sector for the sharing of management services be explored;
- (m) That an evaluation of the effectiveness of Registered Social Landlords advice to prospective tenants in terms of their allocation policies be explored;

Fair Rents and Discretionary Payments

- (n) That the Authority explores a mechanism by which to lobby the Rent Office and Central Government in relation to the requirement of realistic rent assessments;
- (o) That a review be undertaken of the process for the award of Discretionary Payments with particular reference to:-
 - (i) The possible inclusion of a Housing Division representative on the Discretionary Payments Panel; and

- (ii) The practicalities of transferring responsibility for the award of discretionary payments to the Housing Division with input from Housing Benefits.
- (p) That the current budgetary allocation for Discretionary Payments be reviewed to more truly reflect demand; and

Tenant, Resident and Landlord Support

- (q) That further work is undertaken to more widely publicise the advice service available for residents, tenants and landlords through the local authority.

14. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 14.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below -named:-

Hartlepool Borough Council:

Dave Stubbs, Director of Neighbourhood Services
 Penny Garner-Carpenter, Housing Strategy Manager
 Siobhan Rafferty, Homeless Strategy Officer
 Alistair Simpson, Tenancy Relations Officer
 Alison Mawson, Head of Community Strategy and Prevention
 Sally Forth, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator
 Joanne Burnley, Senior Environmental Health Officer
 Ken Natt, Landlord Registration Officer
 Christopher Akers-Belcher, Benefits Manager

External Representatives:

Joe Michna, Manager, Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau
 Alan Simpson, Valuation Team Manager, the Rent Service
 Graeme Wilson, Gateshead Council
 Mandy Reed, Gateshead Council
 Cath Purdy, Chief Executive, Housing Hartlepool
 Andy Powell, Director of Housing Services, Housing Hartlepool
 Malcolm Walker, Programme Director, New Deal for Communities
 Bryon Hanna, Partnership Chair, New Deal for Communities
 Brian Dixon, Programme Manager, New Deal for Communities
 Bob Farrow, Deputy Partnership Chair, New Deal for Communities
 Sue Thompson, Teesside Landlords Association
 Clair Clark, Neighbourhood Manager, New Deal for Communities

COUNCILLOR GERA RD HALL

CHAIR OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

March 2007

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Department of Communities and Local Government - Housing Research Summary (No. 228, 2006) – Dealing with 'Problem Rented Housing'
- (ii) Residential Landlords Association (web page – www.rla.org.uk)
- (iii) National Federation of Residential Landlords (web page – www.nfrl.org.uk)
- (iv) Housing Corporation (web page – www.housingcorp.gov.uk)
- (v) Department of Communities and Local Government - Housing Research Summary (No. 054, 2005) – Private Landlords in England
- (vi) Presentations given at Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum on 19 February 2007
- (vii) Protection from Eviction Act 1977
- (viii) Housing Act 1988
- (ix) Children's Act 1989
- (x) Housing Act part VII (as amended) 1996
- (xi) Homelessness Act 2002
- (xii) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2004
- (xiii) Housing Benefit Act (as amended) 2006 - Regulation 12 - Rent Determinations, Private Sector, Regulation 2 - Single Room Rent
- (xiv) Human Rights Act 1998
- (xv) 2001 Census
- (xvi) Gateshead Landlord Association – Membership Pack

APPENDIX A

**RESIDENT/COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS AND TRUSTS INVITED TO ATTEND
THE FOCUS GROUP SESSION HELD ON THE 13 DECEMBER 2006***Source –Hartlepool Housing Department*

- Anchor Trust;
- Guinness Trust;
- Home Housing Association;
- Bramley Court Residents Association;
- Elmtree Community Action Group;
- Fens Residents Association;
- Manor Residents Association;
- Oulton Fens Community Association;
- Oulton Manor West Neighbourhood Watch & Residents Association;
- Brougham Area Residents Association;
- Brus Ward Residents Association;
- Communities Acting Together (CAT);
- Derwent Grange Residents Association;
- Dyke House Residents Association;
- Friends of Regent Square;
- Residents Association of Clavering and Hart Station (RACHS);
- Headland Residents Association;
- Lancaster Road Residents Association;
- Middle Warren Action Group;
- Middleton & Raby Road Community Action Group;
- Percy Street Residents Association;
- Princess Residents Association;
- Springwell Residents Association;
- Throston Grange Residents Association;
- West View Residents Association;
- Oak & Pine Residents Association;
- Belk/Cameron/Furness Street Residents Association;
- Belle Vue Residents Association;
- Burn Valley North Residents Association;
- Clarence Estate Residents Association;
- Cobden Area Residents Association;
- Dent/Derwent Street Residents Association;
- Endeavour Residents Action Group;
- Greatham Community Association;
- Grosvenor Gardens Residents Association;
- Hart Villagers;
- Hartwell Residents Association;
- Holt & Lister Street Residents Association;
- Manor Residents Association;
- Oxford Road East Residents Association;
- Rift House Community Association;
- St Cuthbert's Resident Association;
- Stockton Road Areas Residents Association;
- Stotfold Area Residents Association;
- Salaam Centre;
- West End Residents Association;
- West Park Residents Association;
- Westbourne Road Residents Association;
- Wharton/Errol Area Residents Association; and
- Derwent Grange Residents Association.

APPENDIX A

LETTING AND ESTATE AGENTS IN HARTLEPOOL

Letting Agents:

- Paramount Homes;
- Ashvale Homes;
- Live Smart Homes Ltd; and
- Cavey Craig Commercial Ltd.

Estate Agents :

- Jones;
- Robins ons;
- Dow en;
- Gow land White; and
- Whitegates.

Source - Access (web page – www.accessplace.com)

APPENDIX B

ISSUES RAISED AT THE FOCUS GROUP SESSION ON THE 13 DECEMBER 2007**Problems experienced by tenants and residents.**

- (i) Anti-social behaviour of all types, from loud noise to threatening behaviour, over a sustained period;
- (ii) Landlords in the Raby Road/Perth Street and Stephen Street areas are renting properties to unacceptable tenants i.e. drug dealers resulting in anti-social behaviour problems;
- (iii) Some privately rented properties are unsafe, and not adequately maintained, and their appearance creates an adverse impression of the area;
- (iv) Tenants have reported problems to landlords/collection agents regarding the condition of properties and no action is taken. Alternatively some tenants are afraid to make complaints;
- (v) Residents find it difficult to contact landlords to pass on information directly to them regarding problems with vacant properties and problem tenants. In most instances residents have to go through the Local Authority to pass on this information and in some instances this has resulted in the boarding up of property when it is not really needed;
- (vi) Responses from Neighbourhood Police is patchy and slow with difficulty addressing noise/nuisance problems;
- (vii) The phrase 'anti social behaviour landlords' was used frequently in that it was felt that some landlords felt it was acceptable to rent properties to individuals with an ASB background;
- (viii) That there was clearly sub-standard properties placed on the rental market by landlords who felt it was acceptable to do so;
- (ix) That the majority of landlords lived out of the area or in fact the country, which resulted in rented properties becoming neglected/in a state of repair, although it was felt that the agents were not managing/dealing with the condition of such properties with a degree of urgency. In fact it was actually questioned whether some agents were actually fulfilling their role in an honest way;
- (x) That poor repairs were undertaken on rental properties although it was acknowledged that this was improving;
- (xi) The rental of properties to individuals with ASB quickly effects the owner occupier market within the area, resulting in properties being left empty which are then subject to acts of vandalism etc; and
- (xii) Void properties encourage ASB resulting in the neighbourhood deteriorating.

APPENDIX B**Problems experienced by landlords.**

- (xii) From a landlords perspective references and the requirement of guarantors is not always effective in weeding out problem tenants. Problems have been experienced with:
- Parents acting as guarantors for their children who then go on to create problems; and
 - Poor/inaccurate references from the Bond Scheme and Smart Move Scheme.
- (xiv) In instances where responsible private landlords serve eviction notices they can feel pressured by organisations such as the Council and Social Services not to do so.

Help received with your problem and how effective was it?

- (i) Whilst residents with problems go through various routes to seek solutions it is often felt that nothing really happens to deal with the problem. Also, that the needs of the tenant are seen as more important than rights of neighbours to live without disturbance;
- (ii) Where problems are experienced with vacant private rented properties often action taken is too much too soon, in terms of the installation of shutters. This can be detrimental to the image of even the best area and promote its degeneration;
- (iii) Police response times to complaints;
- Neighbourhood Policing has made a real difference; although there was also mixed feelings in relation to the response time from the police. Some felt that there was no urgency from the police in fact on occasions responses received were 'it was not a police matter its a council matter – sorry' with no further assistance being provided;
- (iv) Contact with Hartlepool BC and Housing Hartlepool was satisfactory although any action undertaken in terms of enforcement was felt to be extremely slow;
- (v) The formation of Resident Associations was proving to be very effective and should be encouraged across the town;
- (vi) On occasions it was felt that the letting agents choose to ignore tenants concerns, with no feedback or action being undertaken; and
- (vii) In general it was felt that the powers available to the Council weren't enough to deal with ASB issues associated with rented properties.

APPENDIX C**ISSUES RAISED AT THE FOCUS GROUP SESSION ON THE 13 DECEMBER 2007**

WHAT MORE IT WAS FEEL COULD BE DONE BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS AND THE GREATER OVERALL ISSUE OF PROBLEM LANDLORDS AND TENANTS IN HARTLEPOOL?

Suggested actions for landlords:-

- (i) Landlords should carry out more checks on the suitability of tenants;

Suggested actions for the Local Authority:-

- (ii) It should be easier for tenants to contact landlords directly should they wish. This would reduce the need for the Local Authority intervention;
- (iii) In terms of the transmission of information on tenants:
 - The concept of a tenant referencing scheme was supported, however, it was felt that the best way to do this would be through a 'Tenant Passport'. Landlords would be required to complete this document and tenants required to produce it when applying for a new tenancy;
 - It was suggested that a tenant referencing, or 'Passport', scheme needs to be operated on a regional basis if it is to work effectively; and
 - It was suggested that existing channels of communication between Residents Associations and some landlords (i.e. almost an informal referencing service) need to be formalised and made available to all landlords.
- (iv) Increased enforcement action should be undertaken and the length of time it takes addressed;
- (v) The Council should publicise an emergency contact number for residents and tenants with problems;
- (vi) Increased information needs to be made available to residents, tenants and responsible landlords to ensure that they know the most appropriate course of action to deal with problems;
- (vi) A way of dealing with irresponsible landlords and in particular those who live out of the town needs to be found;
- (vii) In respect of tenant complaints to landlords/collection agents regarding the condition of properties it was suggested that a process/service should be provided;

APPENDIX C

- To assist tenants in making complaints to their landlords. This could add weight to complaints and assist in getting something done;
 - Whereby the Council could make complaints for tenants who are perhaps unable to do so for themselves, for whatever reason; and
 - To enable tenants to make anonymous complaints to the Council without fear of retribution. The Council should then pursue the landlord through the avenues open to rectify the problems.
- (ix) Arrangements need to be put in place to provide a system that provides alternatives to the boarding up of vacant private rented properties by both the Council and landlords. Boarding up should be the last alternative;
 - (x) Co-ordination between Council departments and other organisations needs to be improved and the implementation of enforcement actions speeded up;
 - (xi) Residents, agents, tenants and landlords in attendance weren't aware of the Council's emergency out of hours number and it was felt that this would be widely publicised;
 - (xii) The Police's response to ASB issues in rental neighbourhood needs to be addressed and where the police say it's a council matter, further signposting of key services/contacts should be provided;
 - (xiii) The Council should both exercise and publicise its enforcement powers more widely; and

Suggested actions for other agencies:-

- (xiv) The rate at which police respond to complaints needs to be improved and the gravity of the impact of anti-social behaviour on neighbours acknowledged.

General Comments.

- (i) The primary problem with the private rented sector is that good tenants tend to go to registered social landlords leaving the less well behaved tenants to move into private rented accommodation;
- (ii) Enforcement action by registered social landlords results in the displacement of problem tenants into the private rented sector;
- (iii) Many problem tenants are 'serial movers'. This makes them difficult to deal with and even less inclined to behave in a responsible manner towards the property they occupy and the community around them;
- (iv) Concern was expressed that Government quangos are living off anti-social behaviour with little incentive to really solve the problem;

APPENDIX C

- (v) That not all problem tenants are on housing benefit. Those in employment can also create problems so in this sense the withholding of housing benefit payments to landlords would not completely address the problem;
- (vi) There was a clear difference of opinion between those landlords and residents present in terms of whether a landlord should be held responsible for the actions of their tenant; and
- (vi) Concern was expressed that the operation of a selective licensing scheme could create a negative image for the areas selected (a ghetto).

APPENDIX D

REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORDS IN HARTLEPOOL AND NUMBER OF RENTED HOMES WITHIN THEIR PORTFOLIOS

- Housing Hartlepool (7326);
- Tees Valley Trust Limited (11);
- Three Rivers Charitable Housing Association Ltd (118);
- Anchor Trust (342);
- Home Group Ltd (957);
- Tees Valley Housing Group Ltd (340);
- North British Housing Ltd (2);
- Housing 21 (50);
- New Era Housing Association Ltd (10);
- Accent Homes Ltd (105);
- Three Rivers Housing Association Ltd (241)
- The Guinness Trust (269);
- Endeavour Housing association Ltd (233);
- Victoria Homes and Others (26);
- Railway Housing Association and Benefit Fund (25); and
- Hartlepool's War Memorial Homes and Crosby Homes (24).

Source - Housing Corporation (web page – www.housingcorp.gov.uk)

**SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING
COMMITTEE REPORT**27th April 2007**Report of:** Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum**Subject:** YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT – FINAL REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into Youth Unemployment.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 16 June 2006 Members considered potential work programme items for the 2006/07 municipal year. During this meeting Members of this Forum selected the 'Youth Unemployment' topic as its second main Scrutiny investigations for the current municipal year. Youth Unemployment is one of the key economic targets included in the Hartlepool Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement and Best Value Performance Plan.
- 2.2 Members selected the topic from an appendix attached to the 'Determining the Work Programme' report submitted at the Forum's meeting on 16 June 2006. This appendix contained a list of the Authority's Performance Indicators of relevance to the remit of this Forum. Under the Corporate Plan Objective JE9, "To support young people to gain suitable employment," Members identified the *Local Area Agreement (LAA) target 2.5*, which focuses on the youth unemployment rate in Hartlepool, as an issue they wished to investigate. The outturn figure for this issue in 2005/06 was 36% (Nov 05) against a 2006/07 target of 31% and a 2008/09 LAA target of 30%. The target is measured by the proportion of Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) Claimants who are aged 18-24 years old, where the overall claimant count is 100%.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 To gain an understanding of the issues around Youth Unemployment and to suggest areas for improvement.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

4.1 The following Terms of Reference for the review were agreed by the Forum:-

- (a) To gain an understanding of why the level of Youth Unemployment has risen as a percentage of the overall unemployment level;
- (b) To gain an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in Hartlepool who have some responsibility for tackling Youth Unemployment;
- (c) To examine the role of the Authority as a non-statutory service provider in relation to Youth Unemployment, and in particular its role in Economic Development;
- (d) To gain the views of young people who are unemployed in relation to this issue; and
- (e) To identify suggested areas for improvement in relation to the Youth Unemployment rate.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM

5.1 Membership of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum for the 2006/7 Municipal Year:-

Councillors R W Cook, S Cook, Gibbon, Laffey, London, A Marshall, J Marshall, Richardson, Wallace, D Waller and Wright.

Resident Representatives:

Ted Jackson and Iris Ryder

6. METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

6.1 Over the course of the investigation Members have considered evidence from a wide variety of sources, including:

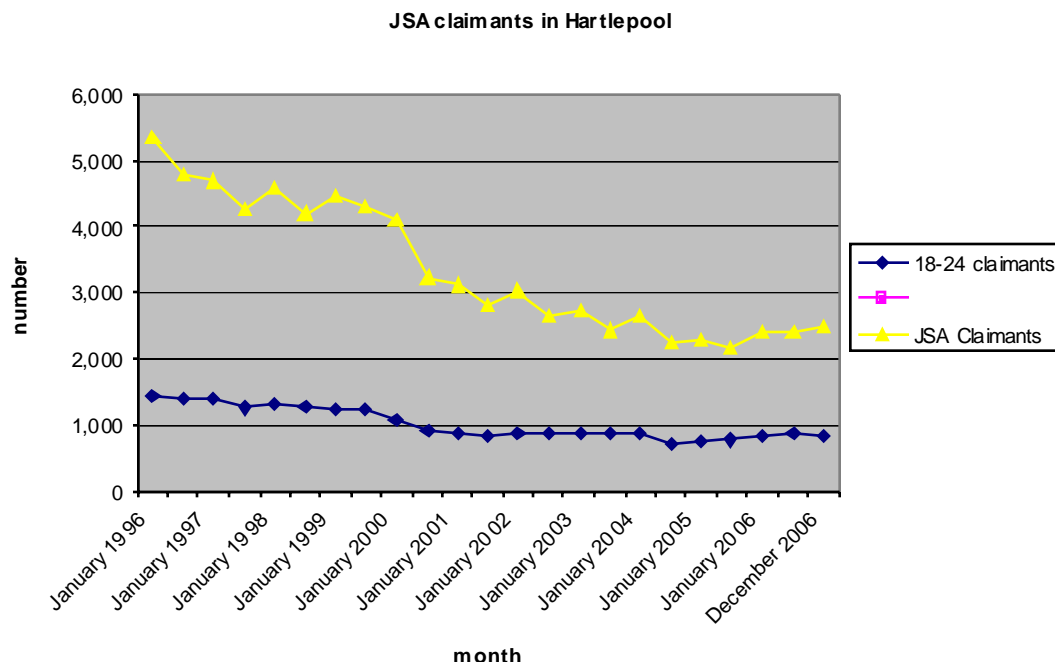
- (a) Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) Officers;
- (b) Representative from Job Centre Plus;
- (c) Representative from Connexions (submitted written evidence);
- (d) Representative from the Learning and Skills Council (submitted written evidence);

- (e) Representative from Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) – potentially seek involvement of HVDA as ‘umbrella’ organisation.
 - (f) Focus Group with unemployed young people – fed into the Forum through *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base* report on 23 February 2007; and
- 6.2 In addition the Economic Development Service commissioned a report on, *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base*. The research took place between November 2006 and January 2007. The first stage of the research involved a review of the existing data using NOMIS (who produce official labour market statistics) and Joint Strategy Unit (JSU) reports, comparing the data where possible, to the rest of Tees Valley and the UK; focusing on indicators in relation to claimant count, economic activity and inactivity, worklessness, the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) group and destinations of school leavers. This data was supplemented by qualitative anecdotal information from semi structured interviews with individuals and focus groups as well as responses to questionnaires. Consultation took place with 18 representatives from the public, private and voluntary sector as well as interviews and focus groups with 10 young people.
- 6.3 The findings from the *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base* report have been used extensively in the production of this final report.

FINDINGS

7. Causes of the Level of Youth Unemployment Increasing as a Percentage of the Overall Unemployment Level

- 7.1 As can be seen from the chart (below), overall unemployment (as measured in terms of claimant count JSA) has declined from a high of 5357 in 1996 to just over 2500 in January 2004 with 18-24 claimants reducing from a high of over 1400 to fewer than 800. However, during this period, the rate of 18-24 claimants measured as a proportion of overall JSA claimants fluctuated between 27% and reaching a high of 35% in the same period. Consequently, the overall number of Hartlepool residents claiming JSA has declined at a greater rate than that of the 18-24 year old age group. Recently there has been a steady increase in the overall numbers of young people claiming JSA, from under 700 in January 2005 to nearly 900 by September 2006, although during the last two months this figure has reduced by 10% to 805 in November 2006.



7.2 In 2001 the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) produced a report providing a snapshot of the local economy in 2000 and found some defining characteristics:

- (a) Slack labour market;
- (b) Low wage levels;
- (c) Lowered expectations of work and attainment; and
- (d) High availability and provision of training.

7.3 At this time unemployment was at 10.9% (February 2000). Over the last six years unemployment has reduced to 4.5% (September 2006) but the characteristics of the labour market remain similar.

7.4 The table below identifies the percentage of young people in the 16-18 cohort 'in learning'; 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' (NEET); 'in employment'; and those 'not known'.

	Hartlepool	Tees Valley	England
16-18 Cohort Profile	2950	21209	1125658
% In learning	70.2	71.2	75.2
% NEET	11.7	12.4	8.6
% In employment	17.2	15.5	17.9
% Not known	4.00	4.8	5.4

Source: Connexions Tees Valley

In Learning

7.5 Hartlepool compares well with Tees Valley and England in terms of the number of young people in learning with 70.2% of this cohort in learning in

Hartlepool compared to 71.2% in Tees Valley and 75.2% in England. Of those in learning, 58.2% are in education – slightly lower than Tees Valley (59.4%) and lower than England at 65.6%. 3.3% of those in learning are in employment with training – consistent with Tees Valley but significantly lower than in England (6.4%). 8.7% of those in learning in Hartlepool are on government supported schemes. Both Hartlepool and Tees Valley are significantly higher than England at 3.2%. Data on qualifications from the JSU shows that Hartlepool has higher rates of people achieving NVQ level 1 and 2 than Tees Valley, the region or nationally, but lower rates of those achieving trade apprenticeships.

In Employment

- 7.6 The number of young people in employment in Hartlepool compares well with England and is higher than in the Tees Valley. However, data indicates that a significant proportion of this employment is part time (65%) (NOMIS Jan-March 2006). During the consultation process for the production of, *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base*, concerns were expressed that education and training were not linked closely enough to the labour market and employers, and that the curriculum and training programmes do not prepare young people for the labour market.

NEET

- 7.7 The NEET figures for Hartlepool are higher than England but lower than the Tees Valley at 11.7%. The NEET group can be broken down into those available for work and those not available for work. In relation to Hartlepool, those NEETs available for work make up 7.9% of the overall 11.7% with those not available for work making up 3.6%. This is significantly higher than Tees Valley at 2.8% and almost three times the rate for England at 1.3%.
- 7.8 Consultation for the, *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base*, report with agencies and organisations revealed a number of factors that lead young people to becoming NEET:
- (a) Disengaging from learning at school;
 - (b) Low skills and qualifications;
 - (c) Low aspirations – linked to generational unemployment;
 - (d) Lack of confidence to access support networks when things go wrong;
and
 - (e) Wider social issues e.g. homelessness, dependency issues, mental health issues, teenage pregnancy, caring responsibilities, young people in care.
- 7.9 Analysis of vulnerable young people reveals that Hartlepool has the highest percentage of teenage parents of all local authority areas in England. Furthermore, the data indicates that only 50% of 19 year old care leavers in the town are in education, employment or training (EET), therefore,

correspondingly 50% are NEET or not known. This trend is replicated in Tees Valley (with the exception of Redcar and Cleveland) and England.

Not Knowns

- 7.10 Hartlepool has a lower number of 'not knowns' than Tees Valley but is higher than England. Hartlepool in particular has made a significant improvement in reducing the numbers of not knowns at 16 – a reduction of 83% since June 2005 and has also made an impact on the 17 and 18 year olds, however, 18 year olds still make up 70% of those not known.
- 7.11 Discussions with Connexions in the consultation for the, *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base*, report highlighted that destinations of those aged 17 and 18 are much harder to trace at 18 as many sign on and 'shift' contact from Connexions, as a young people's service, to Job Centre Plus. The two agencies have started to share data to enable closer tracking of young people aged 17-18. The higher numbers of not known at 17 and 18 can in part be explained by the difficulty in tracking them, however, this would also be consistent with a significant number of 17 and 18 year olds dropping out of training programmes as highlighted in the previous sections.

Employment and Worklessness

- 7.12 The following table shows a profile of young people in the town in relation to employment and worklessness (May 2006). Due to how data is collected and collated it is not possible to analyse the data consistently across age groups and categories, however, the data in the table below provides an indication of the numbers in each category.

Indicator	16-17 years	16-19 years	18-24 years	20-24 years	Total
Unemployment (JSA Claimants)			820		820
Employment		2300		3700	6000
Income Support	50		730		780
Incapacity Benefit	30		410		440
Workless/Not known (remainder of population)					2560
Total					10,600
Ward with highest unemployment	Stranton				

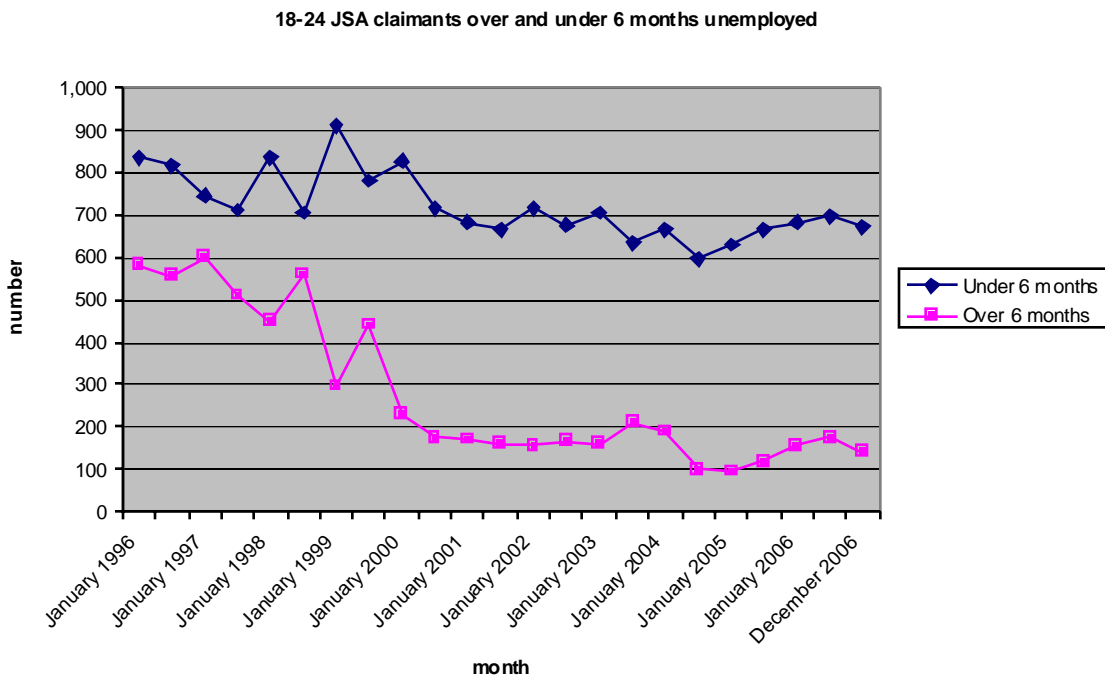
- 7.13 67% of the 16-24 age groups are in employment, with almost 8% unemployed. 7% of the cohort is claiming income support and 4% are claiming Incapacity Benefit. When this data is compared with the corresponding rates for the 25-retirement age group, (3.7% unemployed, 14%

Incapacity benefit, 10% income support), the rates of unemployment and income support would seem high – however, this concurs with the data indicating that youth unemployment has reduced at a slower rate than overall unemployment but it would also be anticipated that the high incidence of teenage pregnancy amongst this age group would impact on the income support rate.

- 7.14 Furthermore, whilst the incapacity benefit rate for this group does not appear overly high in relation to the older age group – there are 440 young people on incapacity benefit. It is highlighted in the, *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base*, report that this figure does give cause for concern given the Government's green paper - *A New Deal for Welfare Empowering People to Work* (January 2006) which stated that, "after two years on Incapacity Benefit, a person is more likely to die or retire than to find a new job". Furthermore, the report questions whether this means that 4% of the 16-24 age groups could potentially be looking at long term benefit dependency?

Claimant count and duration of unemployment

- 7.15 A closer look at the data reveals that the rate of unemployment is affected according to how long a young person has been unemployed. The following chart shows that those young people who have been unemployed for over 6 months have seen a significantly greater reduction in the numbers unemployed over the period than for those unemployed under 6 months.



Source: NOMIS

- 7.16 Those unemployed over 6 months are eligible for New Deal and it is this group that have seen a downward trend of 84% from its peak of 600 in January 1997 to its lowest point of 95 in January 2005. However, the numbers in this group have also started to increase steadily from this point, increasing to 175 in July 2006, although this figure has since come down to 140 in December 2006.
- 7.17 Those unemployed for less than 6 months have not seen the corresponding reduction in numbers. This group has seen a 35% reduction from its peak of 910 in January 1999 to its lowest point of 595 in July 2004. It would appear that the lower rate of reduction amongst this group is keeping the overall 18-24 rate at the 'high' identified in the baseline data. This trend is repeated across Tees Valley. Redcar and Cleveland have the lowest reduction in this claimant group of 33%. Further exploration of the factors impacting on the under 6 month unemployed group is required.

'Churn'

- 7.18 The term 'Churn' is used to explain the number of young people moving on and off the unemployment claimant count. The table below shows the 'on' and the 'off flow' for unemployed young people across the Tees Valley, the region and nationally for those aged under 25 years.

	On flow		Off Flow		On flow under 25 years		Off Flow under 25 years	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Darlington	495	29.4	520	30.9	210	42.7	220	42.7
Hartlepool	585	24.4	590	24.7	280	48.2	245	41.6
Middlesbrough	945	23.5	1010	25.2	430	45.7	445	44.0
Redcar & Cleveland	835	27.3	860	28.2	415	49.7	400	46.7
Stockton	1130	29.1	1030	26.6	480	42.4	435	42.1
Tees Valley	3985	26.6	4015	26.6	1815	45.6	1750	43.5
North East	14060	28.2	14190	28.5	6375	45.3	6080	42.8
Great Britain	242735	26.0	233610	25.1	103445	42.6	90995	39.0

Source: JSU July 2006

- 7.19 Hartlepool has slightly lower numbers of those signing on and off the register than in Tees Valley, the North East or nationally. However, amongst those aged under 25 years, Hartlepool has a higher percentage (48%) signing on than that of the sub region, the region or nationally. For those signing off the register, Hartlepool's rate is lower than Tees Valley and the region but higher than the national rate. This indicates significant churn amongst this age group.

7.20 The table below provides the reasons why young people sign off the register.

Reason for leaving claimant count – 18-24 year olds	January 2006	April 2006	July 2006	October 2006
Found work	40	80	60	70
Increases work to 16+ hours/week	0	5	5	5
Gone abroad	0	0	10	0
Claimed Income Support	15	5	10	5
Claimed Sickness Benefit	-	-	-	-
Claimed Incapacity Benefit	5	5	15	20
Claimed another benefit	0	0	0	0
Gone to full-time education	0	0	0	15
Gone onto approved training	0	5	5	5
Transfer to Govt-supported training	15	45	20	40
Retirement age reached	0	0	0	0
Automatic credits payable	0	0	0	0
Claims back-to-work bonus	0	0	0	0
Gone to prison	0	0	0	0
Attending court	0	0	0	0
New claim review	0	0	0	0
Defective claim	0	0	5	0
Ceased claiming	0	0	0	5
Deceased	0	0	0	0
Not known	15	10	25	25
Failed to sign	90	120	90	110
Total	180	285	245	300

- These figures are missing. Data rounded to nearest 5.

Source: NOMIS

7.21 A snap shot of 'flow off' the register in 2006 taken at quarterly intervals shows that by far the most common reason for leaving the claimant count is failure to sign amongst this age group – accounting for between 37-50%, with finding work second (22-28%), and transfer to government supported training programme next (8-16%) with not known accounting for between 3-10%. Those signing off JSA to claim another benefit (incapacity and income support) account for 3.5-11%. It is not clear from the data how many of those transferring to Government supported training are young people on New Deal transferring to the options period.

7.22 The data also indicates a slightly greater churn amongst those young people unemployed under 6 months. It has not been possible to analyse the data further but consultation suggests a number of reasons for the slower reduction in the rate of those under 6 months unemployed and the significant churn on and off the register:

- (a) Avoidance of New Deal – 'the threat effect'. Young people are signing off the register before they are eligible for New Deal to take up employment or training, transfer to another benefit or fail to sign – only to sign on at a later date.

- (b) This creates the potential for churn between those claimants unemployed for over 6 months and those unemployed for under 6 months. If a young person who is eligible for New Deal signs off or fails to sign for 13 weeks, they break their eligibility for New Deal and return to under the 6 months unemployed category. Given that failure to sign is the most common reason for claimants in this age group signing off the register, there is a significant possibility that this kind of churn is taking place. Without further in depth analysis – the extent of this is not possible to gauge. Those who complete the gateway, options and follow through parts of New Deal return to JSA and have to complete another 26 weeks on JSA before they are eligible again for New Deal however, they are still counted in the 6+ unemployed category. To reduce this incidence of 'churn' amongst the 25+ claimants on New Deal, the eligibility criteria was amended – claimants would be eligible for New Deal if they had claimed JSA for 18 months over a 21 month period.
- (c) Young people dropping out of training and signing on. Discussions with young people and agencies indicate a number of possible reasons for this:
- 1) Young people completing the first year of their training who are then unable to secure a placement to complete their second year of training. These young people then join the claimant count when they are eighteen years old.
 - 2) Young people leaving school and start training but have no clear direction or progression route in mind. They later drop out as this was not the appropriate progression route for them.
 - 3) Young people leave school and embark on NVQ level 2 training. The progression routes available at this stage include level 3 training and university or employment. For those not 'academically' able to progress to a level 3 or University, the links to the labour market after completing their level 2 are not always visible or achievable. This may also link in with the high number of those at 18 who are 'not known' to Connexions.

7.23 Furthermore, the *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base report* identifies a number of barriers to young people accessing and progressing in the local labour market:

- (a) Employability skills** – it was felt that many young people lack key employability and life skills. From discussions with employers and training providers it is possible to see their role developing into one of 'parent', providing 'life skills' support to young people e.g. help with managing money, personal hygiene, getting to work/training on time, taking responsibility for their actions.

- (b) **Basic skills-** concern was expressed that despite significant funding to support the improvement of basic skills, this was still a major barrier to young people accessing and progressing in training or the labour market. Changes to the New Deal programme in Hartlepool have seen the introduction of basic skills support in the gateway period to assist with job search and progression to training.
- (c) **Generational unemployment** - it was felt that young people lack role models in relation to training and employment and that this was limiting their aspirations. 7 out of 10 of the young people interviewed stated their parents and other family members were not working – a significant number of parents had caring responsibilities either for other siblings or relatives. The issue was also raised that worklessness was increasingly concentrated in families and communities where a culture of worklessness and benefit dependency was the 'norm' and an accepted way of life. Since 1996 the number of families on benefits with children under 15 in the town has increased overall. However, single parent families have significantly decreased. This could be an indication that New Deal for Lone Parents is having an impact on lone parent's families.
- (d) **Structural issues** - Benefit dependency was felt to impact on the group identified above, particularly in relation to a young person's status (e.g. in learning, unemployed working) and its impact on the family's benefits. It was also felt to be an issue where young people were claiming incapacity benefit, where minimum wage jobs are not that attractive in comparison.
- (e) **Macroeconomic issues** – there was felt to be a lack of jobs resulting in a significant number of young people taking up training.
- (f) **Recruitment and training of young people** – Employers were not always clear about "how to go about" recruiting young people under the age of 18. Where recruitment and retention of young people had been successful this was attributed to:
- Good local networks – local businesses embedded in local communities
 - Employer had employed the young person straight from school and invested significant training and support. One employer felt that when young people leave education/training at 18-20 they were less inclined to "learn a trade and more difficult to mould".
 - Employer assumes the 'parent role' providing significant social and emotional support to young people.

7.24 During discussions of this item Members expressed concern that the process of claimants signing off the unemployment register to go abroad and re-signing onto it when returning from abroad was contributing towards unemployment figures, and 'churn' in particular, and that this should be challenged, wherever possible.

Impact of mainstream provision

- 7.25 The *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base report* argues that it is possible to conclude that mainstream support is impacting positively on young people aged 16-18 in Hartlepool because the majority of young people in this cohort are engaged in Education, employment or training (EET) - 87%, and the NEET group and the 'not know n' have both seen reductions in Hartlepool.
- 7.26 However, the data and qualitative information highlights a number of areas for further consideration:
- (a) There are vulnerable groups within the NEET group who require targeted and intensive support – in particular teenage parents and young carers.
 - (b) Young people appear to be dropping out of training and potentially contributing to the significant number of 'not know n' aged 17 and 18 in Hartlepool.
 - (c) Young people still seem unsure about progression routes and the need for more targeted vocational Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) linked to the local labour market as identified.
 - (d) There was a general consensus that training and education was not adequately preparing young people for the labour market. Whilst Hartlepool has high rates of people achieving NVQ level 1 and 2, how far is this training improving their employability and assisting them to get jobs?
 - (e) Young people are 'turned off' by traditional learning styles, particularly if they have basic skills issues.
 - (f) The young people interviewed and feedback from agencies identified a very clear lack of aspiration and inspiration with some of the provision available

8. Roles and Responsibilities of the Various Stakeholders in Hartlepool who have some Responsibility for Tackling Youth Unemployment

- 8.1 Over the course of this Scrutiny Investigation each of the major stakeholders that exercise some responsibility for this issue have been invited to attend the Forum to provide evidence. These bodies are:
- (a) Job Centre Plus;
 - (b) The Learning and Skills Council;
 - (c) Connexions; and
 - (d) The Community and Voluntary Sector.

Jobcentre Plus

- 8.2 Jobcentre Plus is a government agency supporting people of a working age from welfare into work, and helping employers to fill their vacancies. They are part of the Department of Work and Pensions and play a major role in supporting the Department's aim to, 'promote opportunity and independence for all through modern, customer-focused services.' Initially a new claim for

JSA has a work focused interview. If the claimant has been claiming Hardship for longer than 6 months they will immediately be available for New Deal. At 13 weeks of unemployment about 70% of claimants have got employment at this stage. At 6 months unemployment they move onto New Deal for Young people.

- 8.3 At a macro level youth unemployment was identified as a key economic issue by the current Government and in 1998 and the New Deal for Young People was introduced to provide a series of cohesive and integrated interventions that aimed to improve the skills and employability of young people.
- 8.4 The New Deal is delivered by Jobcentre Plus, an executive agency of the Department of Work and Pensions and elements of the programme are sub-contracted to external public, private and voluntary sector organisations that provide training, work placements and personal development support. Each person is provided with a Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisor who is responsible for supporting the claimant through the New Deal journey to the point whereby employment is secured. The New Deal is a mandatory programme, and JSA claimants are expected to participate in programmes that will meet the objectives of individual job seeker agreements. Benefit entitlement can be affected if the young person fails to adhere to the requirements of the programme in relation to attendance and timekeeping.
- 8.5 During the evidence gathering session with the representative from Jobcentre Plus Members focused on the need to make jobs and employment attractive to young people. The issue of low wages for potentially unrewarding jobs was discussed and it was felt that employment needed to be sufficiently attractive for some young people to move them away from benefits.
- 8.6 At the following meeting of this Forum on 22 March 2007 Members questioned the impact that the six month period of unemployment as a qualification for New Deal training programmes was having on the unemployed claimant count. It was argued that some young people may be remaining unemployed specifically to access training courses through the New Deal programme. It was indicated to Members that the New Deal programme had been set up with the intention of responding to the key issue of young people who had been unemployed for over six months and that the programmes were geared towards improving the skills and employability of young people that had been unemployed for this length of time. Nevertheless, Members argued that the Authority should be lobbying for enhanced flexibility in the delivery of the New Deal programme so that young people could access training courses if they were unemployed for less than six months.

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

- 8.7 Representatives of the LSC were unable to attend the Forum's evidence gathering session with external partners. However, they were eager to be involved in the process and submitted written evidence to the Forum instead. This sub-section draws on the written information provided by LSC.

- 8.8 The LSC plan and invest in high quality education and training for young people and adults that will build a skilled and competitive workforce. They help employers to get the training and skills they need for their business. The LSC are transforming the further education sector to meet the needs of employers and the local community. They are committed to improving learning opportunities for everyone.
- 8.9 The LSC is working towards the following regional priorities as detailed in the Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council Annual Plan 2006 – 07:
- (a) Increase employer demand for, and investment in, skills.
 - (b) Raise individual aspirations and demand for learning and provide individuals with opportunities throughout life to achieve their aspirations and embrace change.
 - (c) Enable those excluded from the Labour market to access learning and sustainable employment.
 - (d) Ensure all individuals have the foundations for employability – the attainment of Skills for Life and a first level 2 qualification.
 - (e) Increase the achievement of intermediate and higher level skills to support growth, innovation and productivity.
 - (f) Enable colleges and learning providers to be more responsive to employers' and learners' needs.
- 8.10 Following a joint mapping exercise by the LSC and Hartlepool LA it was found that there was no significant gaps in provision in this age band with the exception of level 3 in Accounting and Horticulture. However, NEET remains stubbornly high despite working in collaboration with Connexions on a number of projects. A review of the young people classified as NEET has highlighted that young people from vulnerable groups form a higher than expected percentage of the NEET group. Local Area Agreements have identified these groups and projects have been introduced to target these vulnerable groups. Specific actions that will be taken, across the Tees Valley, to reduce the NEET group will include:
- (a) Via the European Social Fund provision of programmes of support for 500 13-17 year olds at risk of joining the NEET;
 - (b) Provide 300 additional places on pre E2E programmes; and
 - (c) Deliver a programme of education business link activity to include 8,200 work experience places, 100 professional days for teachers and 250 employers engaged in work related activity.
- 8.11 The LSC collaborates with the following organisations in relation to this issue: Jobcentre Plus; Connexions; the Local Authority; Schools; Colleges; Work-based Learning Providers; Sector Skills Councils; and Local employers.

Connexions

- 8.12 Representatives of Connexions were unable to attend the Forum's evidence gathering session with external partners. However, they were eager to be

involved in the process and submitted written evidence to the Forum instead. This sub-section draws on the written information provided by Connexions.

- 8.13 Connexions is a relatively recent statutory service, created under the Learning & Skills Act 2000 in order to, *“encourage, enable or assist, directly or indirectly, young people’s effective participation in learning”* (Section 114).
- 8.14 The Connexions service also totally subsumed the responsibilities and budgets of the previous Careers Service, created under the still extant 1973 Employment & Training Act in order to *“assist young persons undergoing relevant education to decide what employments, having regard to their capabilities, will be suitable for and available to them when they cease undergoing such education; and what training or education is, or will be required, by and available to them, in order to fit them for those employments.”* (Section 8 as amended by Trade Union Reform & Employment Rights Act 1993).
- 8.15 Since 2002 Connexions partnerships have had a responsibility to report the current known destinations of all 16-19 year olds who have completed compulsory education. Throughout its brief history, all 47 Connexions Partnerships have been set targets by DfES, via its annual planning guidance, to reduce the levels of youth unemployment amongst those aged 16-18 in particular. Initially all partnerships were asked to reduce youth unemployment by one tenth (10%) between November 2002 and November 2004, and subsequently by varying levels (depending on previous baselines) between November 2004 – November 2006.
- 8.16 These targets were the forerunners of the current national DfES PSA target 12 to reduce Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) by 2 percentage points from 8% to 6% over the period 2004 to 2010. With the demise of subregional Connexions services, these targets have now manifested themselves, with an annual trajectory, as part of local authorities’ Local Area Agreement targets.
- 8.17 During discussions at the informal meeting of this Forum on 8 March 2007 it was recognised that Connexions is being brought under the remit of the Local Authority. Consequently, Members suggested that the Authority (and Economic Development and Children’s Services, in particular) seek to work closely with Connexions to support young people to achieve economic well-being.
- 8.18 The key elements of provision by Jobcentre Plus, Learning and Skills Council and Connexions Tees Valley (this sub regional service will be disaggregated in April 2007) have been included in the table below. Delivery of programmes can be via a range of contractors from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Provider	Provision	Key Elements
Job Centre Plus	<p>Support for people of working age</p> <p>Under 6 months unemployed –</p> <p>Over 6 months unemployed</p> <p>New Deal for Young People 18-24 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory programme • Must have been claiming JSA for 6 months to be eligible for the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active help from personal advisers to find work to meet individual needs • Jobseeker Direct is a job vacancy phone service • All young people assigned Personal Adviser • Assistance to draw up action plan • 'Gateway' for up to 4 months – regular meetings with Personal Adviser and then move into full time help/package of support • Option period: during this time the young person receives a training allowance equivalent to JSA and may also receive a £15.38 top up • Options include: work experience, placements with employer or voluntary organisation, courses to develop skills employers want, help applying for jobs. • At end of option period if not found employment or moved into training they young person returns to JSA for 'follow through' period.
Learning and Skills Council	<p>Improving the skills of young people and adults to ensure a workforce of world-class standard.</p> <p>Apprenticeships -</p> <p>Entry to Employment (E2E)</p> <p>Further Education</p> <p>1st level 2 Entitlement</p> <p>Adult & Community Learning</p>	<p>A work-based learning programme that allows employers to train existing staff and new young people. The programme involves key skills qualification as well as technical certificate eg BTEC, City and Guilds. Lasts between 1-4 yrs.</p> <p>Programme aimed at young people aged 16 – 18 who are not involved in employment, education or training; aims to prepare the learner for employment in the apprenticeship programme through work placements and/or training.</p> <p>Courses can be full or part time, academic or vocational. Providers fall broadly into five categories: agriculture and horticulture colleges; art, design and performing arts colleges; general FE and tertiary colleges; sixth form colleges; and specialist designated institutions.</p> <p>Priority given to those learners who have not already achieved this standard.</p> <p>Support a diverse range of community-based and outreach learning opportunities.</p>

	Skills for Life – National LSC Train to Gain -for businesses,	Initiative for improving literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) skills. Skills Brokers match any training needs identified with training providers ensure that training is delivered to meet business needs.
Connexions Tees Valley	Offers a family of services Valley including impartial and accessible information, advice and guidance for 13-19 year olds	Service delivered by teams of Personal Advisers located at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools and colleges • community locations • youth facilities • one stop shops in high street locations As well as the Connexions Tees Valley website. Support offered includes: Support learning, removing barriers to progression, raising aspirations and creating opportunities to enter education, employment or training.

The Community and Voluntary Sector

- 8.19 A representative of HVDA, who manages Millennium Volunteers, provided verbal evidence to Forum. It was argued that the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) can identify needs and fill in gaps not provided by statutory providers. In the CVS in the town only two organisations offer support specifically for young people, these are Brougham Annex and OFCA. However other CVS organisations provide support to young people on an ad hoc basis. For example, the West View Project takes young people away on confidence building weekends.
- 8.20 Through volunteering young people can gain skills and confidence. Volunteering can be an important stepping stone into work. Indeed, through Millennium Volunteers (MV) many young people move on to get jobs. Of the 35 young people who were unemployed and volunteered through MV last year 25 felt they had gained employment through volunteering.
- 8.21 Over the course of the investigation Members were generally supportive of the CVS's role in providing services for tackling youth unemployment. It was argued that the CVS's role should be maximised in providing services for this issue.

9. The Role of the Authority as a Non-statutory Service Provider in relation to Youth Unemployment, and in particular its Role in Economic Development

- 9.1 HBC is a non-statutory service provider for this issue. However, the Authority does exercise a role in monitoring and co-ordinating the LAA target and in its role as a 'Community Leader' and 'Place Shaper' in the locality. Consequently, it is HBC's intention to develop an additional range of employment and training projects that will assist in a reduction of youth unemployment and economic inactivity. To this end the Council have commissioned research to provide an evidence base that will support the development of these additional initiatives. As has been indicated earlier in this paper much of this evidence base has been used to inform the findings of this report (particularly section 7).
- 9.2 Locally HBC's Economic Development Service has worked closely with a number of agencies contracted by Job Centre Plus to deliver elements of the New Deal. This includes Nacro Tees Valley who are responsible for delivering the Environmental Task Force. This offers New Deal participants training, work experience and personal development, using environmental projects as the basis for improving employability. HBC developed a funding scheme to provide this as a waged option, so that young people are employed directly by the Council and the Neighbourhood Services Department has provided significant work activities to develop individual skills. In addition the Economic Development Service have used a variety of area based funding schemes to develop employment schemes that add value to mainstream New Deal provision and also support those people who are not eligible due to their benefit entitlement.
- 9.3 In this respect HBC, through Hartlepool Working Solutions, offers a range of employment related activities that facilitate a joined up approach to service delivery in the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS) area. Hartlepool Working Solutions has seven separate elements:
- 1) Targeted Training;
 - 2) Womens Opportunities;
 - 3) Jobs Build;
 - 4) Work Route (ILM);
 - 5) Enhancing Employability;
 - 6) Progression to Work; and
 - 7) Work Smart.

Each element complements each other and aims to:

- (a) Provide support for residents furthest removed from the labour market by offering a cocktail of interventions, which help to overcome multiple barriers to employment.

- (b) Employment focused training, which meets the needs of the local labour market.
 - (c) Intermediary activities, which offer NRS residents with paid employment through HBC and acts as a transition to unsupported employment.
 - (d) Incentives to improve the match between the needs of employers and the aspirations of residents.
 - (e) Focused activities to support lone parents wishing to return to the labour market or become self-employed.
 - (f) Build links with employers to improve job brokerage and enhance agency activities in the town through the sharing of best practice.
 - (g) Ensure that residents have access to effective information, advice and guidance in order that they can make informed decisions regarding the opportunities open to them.
- 9.4 In 2005-06 Hartlepool Working Solutions supported 157 young people into employment.
- 9.5 During discussions Members expressed a desire to see more apprenticeships developed for young people. In addition, Members agreed that generational unemployment is a key issue that needs to be targeted.

10. Views of Young People who are Affected by this Issue

- 10.1 Given the time constraints for this investigation, it was agreed during the initial scoping exercise for this investigation that the views of young people would be sought through a focus group and fed back into the Forum. This was achieved through a couple of sessions with young people at the end of January and the beginning of February 2007. The views of the young people were fed back into the Forum through the, *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base* at its meeting on 23 February 2007 and are reproduced here.
- 10.2 The young people consulted with ranged from 17-21 years of age. Five young people were on E2e programmes, two were on New Deal and had just been accepted on HBC Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) project, one was in employment, and two were on placement with a voluntary sector organisation. Young people's perception of the training they had undertaken or were currently undertaking raised a number of issues:
- (a) It was evident that all the young people were unclear about what they wanted to do when they left school. This appears to result in:

Training as a stop gap – it was evident that most of these young people had taken up training because they did not know what else to

do or because “their mates were going on the course”. 6 out of 10 of the young people who had been on training all commented that they were unsure what they wanted to do when they left school and that the training course “was better than doing nothing”. One young person was very clear that once they turned eighteen they would leave the course and “they would get a job or sign on”.

Dropping out – many of the young people had started courses, usually straight from leaving school at 16 and had then ‘dropped out’ and then went on to start another programme at a different provider. Two of the young people interviewed said that they did not think they would complete the programme.

- (b) The young people were keen to start the job related aspects of the programmes and were not keen on the classroom elements of the training.
- (c) All the young people interviewed had had contact with a Connexions Personal Adviser with Personal Advisers referring young people to training provision.
- (d) One young person who had undertaken a diploma course at a college, but dropped out after two years, felt that there was not enough vocational support and was unclear as to the available progression routes had he completed the course.
- (e) Young people were keen to have more tasters of programmes to help them identify which course is ‘for them’.
- (f) 7 out of 10 of the young people interviewed stated their parents and other family members were not working – a significant number of parents had caring responsibilities either for other siblings or relatives.
- (g) The young people interviewed felt there were not enough jobs advertised for young people. Job adverts tended to ask for people with experience.

11. Suggested Areas for Improvement

- 11.1 The Terms of Reference for this investigation identified the need to suggest areas for improvement as part of the Forum’s remit in relation to this issue. This report has provided a summary of the evidence gathered by the Forum over a relatively short period of time. The information provided in this report suggests that this issue is broad and fairly complex. Indeed, the *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base report*, concluded that further consultation with young people, agencies and organisations is needed and highlighted some of the key areas that require further exploration. It argues that from discussions with young people, agencies and

organisations it is possible to identify a number of areas where additional resources could be targeted:

1. Links to the local labour market. Training and employment support must be closely linked to current and future opportunities in the local labour market. Employers are central to this and need to be:

- (a) Involved in the design and delivery of programmes.
- (b) Enabled and supported to provide work experience and placements to young people. The brokerage of placements is crucial to ensure young people complete their programmes.
- (c) Enabled and supported to provide more w aged apprenticeships.
- (d) Involved as earlier as possible. Employer involvement needs to start in schools with clearly identified progression routes with training.

Specialised Diploma Lines will be available from 2008 onwards to learners aged 14-19 within applied settings and contexts. They are designed to meet skills needs of employers and on this basis should assist in bridging the gap between learning and the labour market.

2. Sustained support for those with multiple barriers. Mentoring was seen as an initiative that could provide sustained support to this target group.

3. More Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) provision – in linking points 2 and 3 together, ILM type activity can provide intensive support clearly linked to the labour market, engaging local employers and leading to real jobs. This provision would need to be available across the age range 16-24.

4. More training and vocational tasters. This would provide more opportunities for young people to gain a real insight into different courses and areas of work before making decisions as to which training/vocational route they would like to go down.

5. Information, advice and guidance. Additional support is needed for those that drop out of training or are in danger of dropping out of training. Once a progression route had been identified additional support is needed to ensure that young person does not become NEET. More focused and clearly linked to progression routes to the local labour market

6. More intensive and focused support for those young people unemployed under 6 months. To ensure they identify an appropriate progression route and that their engagement and retention in that provision/opportunity is supported to prevent them returning to the claimant count.

7. Funding. Funding needs to be more flexible to respond to the needs of those hardest to reach. More provision needs to include flexible grants to support young people to overcome barriers to accessing and staying in training and employment.

11.2 More specifically the *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base report* made a number of recommendations that included:

- (a) A number of data issues need to be addressed, including:
 - 1) More in depth analysis of 18-24 claimant count and flow ; and
 - 2) Data on the delivery and outcomes of New Deal for Young People in Hartlepool.
- (b) Systems for recording, collating and sharing data between agencies need to be developed and implemented in order to gain as full an understanding of these claimant group.

11.3 In addition a number of further potential projects areas have been suggested through the *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base report*. These include:

Extending ILM type activities across the age range to provide intensive support that can effectively address issues of basic skills, employability and wider social issues. Consideration needs to be given to extending current provision to 12months and introducing increments as incentives. Particularly with the 'hard to reach' groups a significant amount of resources and multi-agency working is required to remove more fundamental barriers eg care, financial/benefit, health, housing, aspirations

Support for those young people unemployed under 6 months to ensure they identify an appropriate progression route and that their engagement and retention in that provision/opportunity is supported to prevent them returning to the claimant count.

Support for young vulnerable young people – ensure existing and new provision can be targeted to the needs of vulnerable young people as identified in this report: young people leaving care, teenage parents, young carers and those with other 'family issues', homeless young people, young people with mental health issues, dependency issues and learning difficulties and disabilities. This also touches on the need for **support for those young people on incapacity benefit**. A greater understanding of this group and the support they require to move into training or employment is needed.

More training and vocational tasters to provide young people with the opportunity to gain a real insight into different courses and areas of work

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) must be focused and clearly linked to progression routes in the local labour market and provide targeted support for those that drop out of training or are in danger of dropping out of training.

Explore the potential for social enterprise activities to support young people in training and employment opportunities.

Impact of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) needs to be monitored in terms of how far it assists young people to engage and stay engaged in learning.

- 11.4 In addition, in their written submission to the Forum on 23 February 2007 Connexions argued that:

There are no panacea solutions for what is a complex problem. As well as continuing to work on simplifying progression routes from foundation & intermediate level qualifications, areas to consider include making the rewards for participation in work based training as comparatively attractive to young people as they were prior to the introduction of the Educational Maintenance allowance. More support for organizations to employ young people through the work based learning programme and pay employed status rates of around £80 per week direct to the young person may reinvigorate participation. The proportion of young people in real jobs remains low. Whether this is more a reflection of the overall lack of buoyancy in the local labour market, as opposed to a potential relative lack of employability skills vis a vis other age cohorts needs to be more thoroughly investigated as this could shape potential solutions.

- 11.5 During the informal meeting of this Forum on 8 March 2007 Members indicated that they felt careers guidance and training for young people under 16 years of age is crucial to determining young people's attitude to employment. It was felt that the attitudes of young people to employment before they reached 16 years of age is key. Consequently, it was suggested further research should be conducted into the impact of the provision of key stakeholders on careers guidance and training and that these services should be fully integrated within schools.

12. CONCLUSIONS

- 12.1 Over the course of the Scrutiny Investigation the following conclusions have been agreed by the Forum:-

- (a) The overall rate of unemployment over the last ten years has fallen faster than it has done for the 18-24 ('youth') cohort.
- (b) Hartlepool has high levels of under 25's moving both on and off the unemployment claimant count. This is in contrast to the town's overall number of people moving both on and off the unemployment claimant count. Consequently, there are relatively high levels of 'churn' in terms of youth unemployment.
- (c) Through its consultation process with agencies and organisations the *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base report* identified that a significant amount of work and resources had been targeted at supporting the NEET group in Hartlepool and that headway

had been made in working with this group. The report argues that the focus for resources should now be directed towards those vulnerable young people within the NEET group: young people leaving care, teenage parents, young carers and those with other 'family issues', homeless young people, young people with mental health issues, dependency issues and learning difficulties and disabilities.

- (d) It was also felt that many NEET and vulnerable young people often have low aspirations, self esteem and motivation, and that further work is needed to address wider issues of social deprivation and generational worklessness. Many of the young people interviewed had eventually embarked on a particular training route because their Dad, Mum, brother, friend etc. had worked in this field. However, the majority of their parents and siblings were currently not working.
- (e) There is a general consensus that training and education is not adequately preparing young people for the labour market. Whilst Hartlepool has high rates of people achieving NVQ level 1 and 2, how far is this training improving their employability and assisting them to get jobs?
- (f) Young people face particular barriers in relation to their engagement and retention in training and employment, which include; lack of employability skills, lack of basic skills, and structural barriers, including benefit dependency and a lack of jobs in the local labour market
- (g) Over the last 10 years Hartlepool has seen a reduction in the number of 18-24 year old claimants. But there is insufficient data available to ascertain the impact of New Deal on this reduction or to analyse the destinations of these young people. Within this cohort there is significant 'churn' on and off the claimant register which would be consistent with feedback from young people, agencies and organisations that young people are dropping out of provision or avoiding New Deal, however, without further data and analysis this cannot be confirmed.
- (h) The young people interviewed and feedback from agencies identified a very clear lack of aspiration and inspiration in relation to some of the provision available. However, there was a general consensus that mainstream provision had the potential to make a difference to young peoples' training and employment opportunities and to their lives in general, but it was felt that this was down to how individual providers delivered the programmes and that due to the sometimes fragmented nature of provision the support to ensure their learning and experience gained from various programmes of support was translated into positive outcomes, was often lacking.
- (i) That the identification of Youth Unemployment as a local 'problem' through a Local Area Agreement (LAA) target represents a positive step towards improving this issue through the enhanced performance management and monitoring and local actions that the introduction of a LAA target can bring about.

- (j) That the *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base report*, which has been attached at **Appendix A** (and has informed much of the findings of this report) identifies a number of data issues that need addressing and a number of potential project areas, which could help to maintain the momentum generated for this issue through the introduction of the LAA target.
- (k) A number of issues were raised were by the young people, agencies and organisations consulted with in the production of the *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base report*, which could contribute to the Forum's conclusions. Including:-
 - 1) Concern was expressed that young people are dropping out of training, in particular this was felt to be an issue in relation to young people part completing programmes due to being unable to secure a placement.
 - 2) It was felt that academic routeways were not suitable for all and that more vocational routes incorporating different (individual) learning styles were needed to assist with keeping young people engaged in education and training.
 - 3) There needs to be "a stronger bridge between training and labour market" and in particular it was felt that there needed to be more input and support from employers for apprenticeships.
 - 4) Introduction of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was seen as having both a positive and negative impact. Whilst it was recognised the EMA may help some young people to take up training it was also suggested that it may not necessarily help those young people wanting to progress along the work based learning route and its introduction had resulted in a reduction in numbers of young people on E2e and apprenticeships, and the 'means test' element of the application was deterring some families from applying.
 - 5) The key to engaging and retaining young people in learning is identifying a 'spark' of interest – something that interests and inspires them.
 - 6) Mainstream funding can be too output driven and not always flexible enough to support the hardest reach young people. Additional funding streams (e.g. European Social Fund, Co financing) have been targeted at the NEET and hard to reach groups to assist with engaging and retaining them in learning. However, as these short term funding streams come to an end – concern was expressed that Hartlepool may see an increase in these figures without sustained targeting of additional resources.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 The Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum has gathered evidence from a wide range of sources. The key recommendations to Cabinet are:

- (a) That the Authority is commended for taking on an active role in relation to Youth Unemployment and that the value of this work is supported and that, wherever possible, it should be supported further.
- (b) That the data issues and potential project areas identified in the *Youth Unemployment in Hartlepool: Developing an evidence base report*, which has been attached at **Appendix A**, are supported as a means to maintain the momentum generated for this issue through the introduction of the LAA target.
- (c) That, given that Connexions is being brought under the remit of the Local Authority, the Authority (and Economic Development and Children's Services, in particular) seek to work closely with Connexions to support young people to achieve economic well-being.
- (d) That further research should be conducted into the impact of the provision of key stakeholders on careers guidance and training for under 16's and that these services should be fully integrated within schools.
- (e) That the Authority should lobby for increased flexibility of the New Deal programme so that young people are able to access training programmes through this programme even if they have been unemployed for less than six months.
- (f) That the CVS's role should be maximised, wherever possible, in providing services for tackling youth unemployment.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in preparation of this report:-

- (a) Report entitled 'Determining the Work Programme' (Scrutiny Support Officer) presented to the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 16 June 2006.
- (b) Report entitled 'Youth Unemployment – Scoping Report' (Scrutiny Support Officer) presented to the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 18 January 2007.

- (c) Report entitled 'Youth Unemployment – Evidence from Connexions – Covering Report' (SSO) presented to the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 23 February 2007
- (d) Report entitled 'Youth Unemployment – Evidence from the Learning and Skills Council – Covering Report' (SSO) presented to the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 23 February 2007
- (e) Report entitled 'Youth Unemployment – Evidence from Job Centre Plus – Covering Report' (SSO) presented to the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 23 February 2007
- (f) Report entitled 'Youth Unemployment – Evidence from the Community and Voluntary Sector – Covering Report' (SSO) presented to the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 23 February 2007
- (g) Report entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into Youth Unemployment – Draft Research Report' (Economic Development Manager) presented to the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 23 February 2007.
- (h) Report entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into Youth Unemployment – Draft Final Report' (Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum) presented to the Forum on 22 March 2007.
- (i) Minutes of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum from the 16 June 2006, 18 January, and 23 February 2007. In addition, the draft minutes from 22 March 2007 were used in preparation of this report.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN HARTLEPOOL
Developing an evidence base

FEBRUARY 2007

Tracy Elwin - Research and Consultancy

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1. Introduction

It is Hartlepool Borough Council's intention to develop an additional range of employment and training projects that will assist in a reduction of youth unemployment and economic inactivity. To this end the Council have commissioned research to provide an evidence base that will support the development of these additional initiatives.

1.1 The Brief

The research brief outlines a number of key areas for further exploration.

- What is the real scale of the NEET problem in Hartlepool and what are the factors that lead to 16 and 17 year olds becoming classified as NEET?
- What has been the impact of mainstream publicly funded employment and training programmes targeted at 16-24 year olds?
- Where are the gaps in mainstream provision?
- What are the perceptions of employers and young people?

It was also the intention that this work should build upon the research undertaken by CLES into unemployment in Hartlepool in 2001. This research brief posed a number of questions:

- Why had the unemployment rate for Hartlepool remained at the 10-11%?
- Why had success across a range of initiatives not translated into lower unemployment levels?
- What are the key groups or segments within the total group of unemployed and how are they fairing within the overall statistics?
- Churn in the labour market - what does it say about the structure of the labour market?

The report concluded that the vast part of what was going on in the labour market ***“is a direct result of macro economic drivers and policies. Other problems are institutionalised or cultural and will not be easy to resolve”***.

The report highlighted in particular that:

- Unemployment rates had remained high due to macro economic pressures – Hartlepool's slack labour market meant that active labour market projects had had less impact. Employment opportunities were not impacting on those on JSA but were being taken up by those who were economically inactive and had a greater incentive to work.
- There was evidence of significant churn in the labour market – with many people coming on and off training courses and initiatives
- Barriers to employment for the 16-24 age group included:

- A lack of work experience and qualifications
- The inter relationship between work and parents' benefits (where the young person was living at home)
- Unrealistic expectations of work and wages
- These young people were often in a non working peer group.

This report aims to build on and update the findings of this research focussing on the 16-24 age group. Given the huge body of data and the breadth of provision available to this target group it has not been possible to provide an in depth analysis in the available timeframe. However, this research has begun the process of 'unpicking the headline data' on youth unemployment and undertaken some initial consultation with young people and key stakeholders. From this initial research it has been possible to build up a picture of youth unemployment in Hartlepool and to identify a number of key areas that require further and more detailed exploration and analysis.

1.2 Methodology

The research took place between November 2006 and January 2007. The first stage of the research involved a review of the existing data using NOMIS and JSU reports, comparing the data where possible, to the rest of Tees Valley and the UK; focusing on indicators in relation to claimant count, economic activity and inactivity, worklessness, the NEET group and destinations of school leavers.

This data has then been supplemented by qualitative anecdotal information from semi structured interviews with individuals and focus groups as well as responses to questionnaires. To date consultation has taken place with 18 representatives from the public, private and voluntary sector as well as interviews and focus groups with 10 young people. The young people ranged from 17-21 years of age. Five young people were on E2e programmes, two were on New Deal and had just been accepted on Hartlepool Borough Council's ILM project, one was in employment, and two were on placement with a voluntary sector organisation.

2. Background

Over the last 10 years Hartlepool has benefited from significant investment in the regeneration of the town, both physically and in its people.

- City Challenge
- Single Regeneration Budget
- New Deal for Communities
- Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
- European Social Fund Objective 2 &3 and ERDF

Improving the employability of the town's residents has been a key priority for these regeneration initiatives.

2.1 Mainstream provision

Within the timeframe available it has only been possible to apply a 'light touch' approach to assessing mainstream provision and undertaking a gap analysis.

On this basis the mainstream programmes available to this target group include those funded by Job Centre Plus, Learning and Skills Council and Connexions Tees Valley (this sub regional service will be disaggregated in April 2007). Delivery of programmes can be via a range of contractors from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Provider	Provision	Key Elements
Job Centre Plus	<p>Support for people of working age</p> <p>Under 6 months unemployed –</p> <p>Over 6 months unemployed: New Deal for Young People 18-24 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory programme • Must have been claiming JSA for 6 months to be eligible for the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active help from personal advisers to find work to meet individual needs • Jobseeker Direct is a job vacancy phone service • All young people assigned Personal Adviser • Assistance to draw up action plan • 'Gateway' for up to 4 months – regular meetings with Personal Adviser and then move into full time help/package of support • Option period during this time the young person receives a training allowance equivalent to JSA and may also receive a £15.38 top up. • Options include: work experience, placements with employer or voluntary organisation, courses to develop skills employers want, help applying for jobs. • At end of option period if not found employment or moved into training the young person returns to JSA for 'follow through' period.
Learning and Skills Council	<p>Improving the skills of young people and adults to ensure a workforce of world-class standard.</p> <p>Apprenticeships -</p>	<p>A work-based learning programme that allows employers to train existing staff and new young people. The programme involves key skills</p>

	<p>Entry to Employment (E2E)</p> <p>Further Education</p> <p>1st level 2 Entitlement</p> <p>Adult & Community Learning</p> <p>Skills for Life – National LSC</p> <p>Train to Gain - for businesses,</p>	<p>qualification as well as technical certificate eg BTEC, City and Guilds. Lasts between 1-4 yrs.</p> <p>Programme aimed at young people aged 16– 18 who are not involved in employment, education or training; aims to prepare the learner for employment in the apprenticeship programme through work placements and/or training.</p> <p>Courses can be full or part time, academic or vocational. Providers fall broadly into five categories: agriculture and horticulture colleges; art, design and performing arts colleges; general FE and tertiary colleges; sixth form colleges; and specialist designated institutions.</p> <p>Priority given to those learners who have not already achieved this standard</p> <p>Support a diverse range of community-based and outreach learning opportunities.</p> <p>Initiative for improving literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) skills.</p> <p>Skills Brokers match any training needs identified with training providers ensure that training is delivered to meet business needs.</p>
Connexions Tees Valley	Offers a family of services Valley including impartial and accessible information, advice and guidance for 13-19 year olds	<p>Service delivered by teams of Personal Advisers located at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools and colleges • community locations • youth facilities • one stop shops in high street locations <p>As well as the Connexions Tees Valley website.</p> <p>Support offered includes: Support learning, removing barriers to progression, raising aspirations and creating opportunities to enter education, employment or training.</p>

The above agencies supplement their mainstream provision with a range of additional projects and initiatives funded from Europe as well as area based

regeneration programmes. This enables the targeting of additional resources to identified needs. However, these funding streams are fixed term but they enable pilot provision to be delivered and any subsequent good practice to be mainstreamed.

Hartlepool Borough Council provision

Hartlepool Working Solutions offers a range of employment related activities that facilitates a joined up approach to service delivery in the NRS area. Hartlepool Working Solutions has seven separate elements:

- Targeted Training
- Womens Opportunities
- Jobs Build
- Work Route (ILM)
- Enhancing Employability
- Progression to Work
- Work Smart

Each element complements each other and aims to:

- Provide support for residents furthest removed from the labour market by offering a cocktail of interventions, which help to overcome multiple barriers to employment.
- Employment focused training, which meets the needs of the local labour market.
- Intermediary activities, which offer NRS residents with paid employment through Hartlepool Borough Council and acts as a transition to unsupported employment.
- Incentives to improve the match between the needs of employers and the aspirations of residents.
- Focused activities to support lone parents wishing to return to the labour market or become self-employed.
- Build links with employers to improve job brokerage and enhance agency activities in the town through the sharing of best practice.
- Ensure that residents have access to effective information, advice and guidance in order that they can make informed decisions regarding the opportunities open to them.

In 2005-06 Hartlepool Working Solutions supported 157 residents into employment.

2.2 Population

The table below shows the population of Hartlepool by age group. The cohort this report focuses on, the 16-24 age group, represent 10,600 of the overall population in Hartlepool in mid 2006 making up 12% of the overall population.

	Total Population	Population by Age Group:						
		0-4	5-15	16-24	25-44	45-ret*	Ret*-74	75 plus
Darlington	99,800	6,100	13,400	10,900	26,400	23,200	11,700	8,000
Hartlepool	89,600	5,200	13,000	10,600	23,400	20,400	10,600	6,500
Middlesbrough	137,300	8,200	19,800	18,000	37,600	29,700	14,600	9,600
Redcar & Cleveland	137,200	7,200	18,600	15,600	34,100	32,600	18,000	11,200
Stockton-on-Tees	187,100	10,500	26,400	22,000	51,600	43,700	20,500	12,500
Tees Valley	651,000	37,100	91,100	77,100	173,100	149,600	75,400	47,700
North East	2,529,000	132,700	334,000	305,500	662,400	592,200	302,000	200,200
England & Wales	53,463,000	3,070,000	7,131,000	6,219,000	15,128,000	11,813,000	5,942,000	4,160,000

Notes : * "Ret" - Retirement age is 60 for Women, 65 for Men. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source : TVJSU

2.3 Economic Profile of Hartlepool

This section provides a snapshot of the local economy for the year ended December 2005 (Economic Profile for Districts in the Tees Valley - October 2006 Edition, JSU).

- 71.7% of the working age population are economically active. Hartlepool has the lowest rate of economic activity across Tees Valley and is significantly lower than the rate for the region – 75.2% and nationally 78.4%. Since 1999 Hartlepool is the only area in the Tees Valley that has seen an overall reduction in the rate of economic activity.
- 67.2% of the working age population are in employment – 49.6% in full time and 17.7% in part time employment. Hartlepool has a lower rate than Tees Valley (only Middlesbrough is lower than Hartlepool at 66.4%), the region and nationally.
- 6.4% of the working population are in self employment – this is the second highest rate in Tees Valley. Hartlepool has seen a significant

increase in this rate since 1999 – almost 3% - the highest increase in Tees Valley. This rate compares favourably with Tees Valley and the region at 6% and 6.3% respectively but is still lower than the national rate at 9%.

- 16.1% of the working age population have an NVQ4 or above (the lowest in Tees Valley). This is significantly lower than the regional rate of 21.3% and the national rate of 26.5%. 20.2% have no qualifications (the second highest in Tees Valley) compared to 18.8% for Tees Valley, 15.6% for the region and 14.3% nationally.
- Unemployment has been steadily decreasing since 1997 – from 8% to a low of 3.8% in 2005. The rate is now increasing and had reached 4.5% in September 2006. This rate is higher than Tees Valley at 3.8%, the region at 3.2% and nationally at 2.6%.
- Worklessness can be used as an alternative view of unemployment by measuring the total percentage of people of working age without work. Hartlepool's workless rate in September 2006 was 34.8% - the second highest in Tees Valley – higher than both Tees Valley at 33% and Great Britain at 25.5%.
- Hartlepool's average weekly earnings (full time and resident based) at £373 are lower than Tees Valley, the north East and Great Britain.
- The job density figure for Hartlepool (devised as an indicator of job demand whilst vacancy data was temporarily unavailable) was 0.64 in 2004. The national average was 0.8 – indicating Hartlepool has more people than jobs and therefore has a slack labour market.

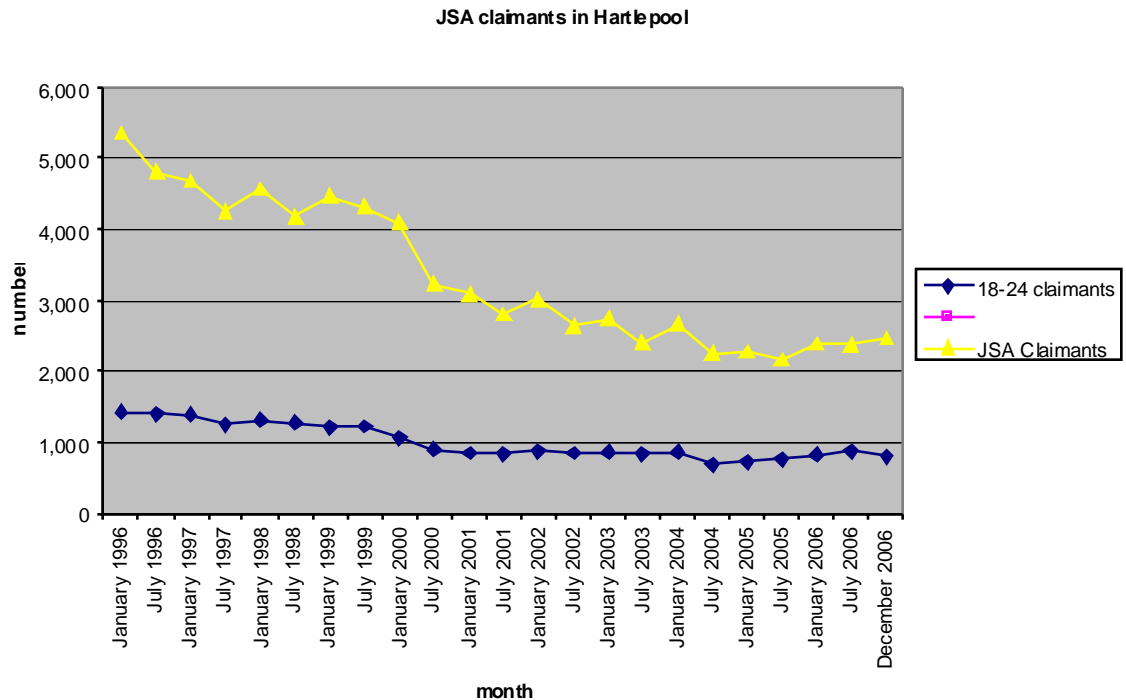
The CLES report provided a snapshot of the local economy in 2000 and found some similar characteristics:

- Slack labour market
- Low wage levels
- Lowered expectations of work and attainment
- High availability and provision of training

At this time unemployment was at 10.9% (February 2000). Over the last six years unemployment has reduced to 4.5% (September 2006) but the characteristics of the labour market remain similar.

2.4 Unemployment and worklessness

Youth unemployment is one of the key economic targets included in the Hartlepool Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement and Best Value Performance Plan. The long term target established in 2002 is to reduce the overall rate to 29% in 2012 from a baseline of 30.7%



As can be seen from the chart, overall unemployment (as measured in terms of claimant count JSA) has declined from a high of 5357 in 1996 to just over 2500 in January 2004 with 18-24 claimants reducing from a high of over 1400 to fewer than 800. However, during this period, the rate of 18-24 claimants measured as a proportion of overall JSA claimants fluctuated between 27% and reaching a high of 35% in the same period. The overall number of Hartlepool residents claiming JSA has declined at a greater rate than that of the 18-24 year old age group.

This research seeks to understand what is the real scale of youth unemployment in Hartlepool and provide an evidence base that will support the development of additional targeted employment and training projects that will lead to a reduction in youth unemployment. This report will address a number of key issues as laid out in the research brief:

- Research into the factors that lead to 16 and 17 year olds becoming classified as NEET and identify the real scale of the problem
- Assess the impact of mainstream publicly funded employment and training programmes targeted at 16-24 year olds
- Undertake a gap analysis of mainstream interventions
- Ascertain employers and young peoples perceptions of the issues

3. Findings

In order to gain a better understanding of the factors that may have impacted on the youth unemployment rate in Hartlepool the following data has been analysed:

- Population trends of the target group.
- Key indicators for the 16-18 cohorts – to gain in sight into the real scale of worklessness amongst this group: young people in learning and work, the NEET group and those whose destination is “not known”.
- Issues of unemployment and worklessness
- Claimant count and duration of unemployment.

Feedback from consultations with young people, agencies and organisations and stakeholders has also been used to add value to the data and to explore barriers to young people taking up training and employment.

3.1 Population trends

The overall population of the town in this period has declined; however, there has been a 15% increase in those aged 15-24 compared to only a 7% increase in those aged 25-59. With the main increase in those young people aged 15-19.

Whilst an increase in the population in this age group may account for some of the rate rise in 18-24 year old JSA claimants, analysis of data and qualitative information in relation to the 16-24 target group highlights some further issues.

3.2 Key Issues – 16-18 cohort

	Hartlepool	Tees Valley	England
16-18 Cohort Profile	2950	21209	1125658
% In learning	70.2	71.2	75.2
% NEET	11.7	12.4	8.6
% In employment	17.2	15.5	17.9
% Not known	4.00%	4.8	5.4

Source: Connexions Tees Valley

(i) Young People in learning

Hartlepool compares well with Tees Valley and England in terms of the number of young people in learning with 70.2% of this cohort in learning in Hartlepool compared to 71.2% in Tees Valley and 75.2% in England. Of those in learning, 58.2% are in education – slightly lower than Tees Valley (59.4%) and lower than England at 65.6%.

3.3% of those in learning are in employment with training – consistent with Tees Valley but significantly lower than in England – 6.4%. 8.7 of those in learning in Hartlepool are on government supported schemes. Both Hartlepool and Tees Valley are significantly higher than England at 3.2%.

Data on qualifications from the JSUs show s that Hartlepool has higher rates of people achieving NVQ level 1 and 2 than Tees Valley, the region or nationally, but lower rates of those achieving trade apprenticeships.

Qualifications of working age population – 2005 Annual Population Survey

	Percentage people of working age with at least the following qualification level -						
	NVQ4 and above	NVQ3	Trade apprenticeships	NVQ2	NVQ1	Other qualifications	With no qualifications
Darlington	25.5	14.0	4.9	16.3	13.6	5.0	20.8
Hartlepool	16.1	17.0	6.7	19.1	15.7	5.3	20.2
Middlesbrough	16.5	15.4	7.1	17.9	14.4	8.8	19.8
Redcar & Cleveland	18.8	16.8	7.4	17.8	14.7	7.2	17.2
Stockton-on-Tees	25.4	17.8	5.5	18.6	14.3	4.1	14.3
Tees Valley	18.4	14.7	8.5	17.0	16.5	6.2	18.8
North East	21.3	15.4	7.3	18.3	15.5	6.6	15.6
Great Britain	26.5	15.1	5.6	15.8	14.3	8.4	14.3

Source: Annual Population Survey/JSUTV

Data from Connexions Tees Valley also reveals that more young people currently in training in Hartlepool join the NEET group from work based learning (WBL), E2e or Government Supported Training (GST) than in England 5.1% and 3.6% respectively.

Young people's perception of the training they had undertaken or were currently undertaking raised a number of issues. 5/7 young people were currently on E2e provision in Hartlepool, but all ten young people had undertaken some training provision in the town. Those currently on e2e programmes were all in receipt of EMA.

- It was evident that all the young people were unclear about what they wanted to do when they left school. This appears to result in:

Training as a stop gap – it was evident that most of these young people had taken up training because they did not know what else to do or because “their mates were going on the

course". 6 out of 10 of the young people who had been on training all commented that they were unsure what they wanted to do when they left school and that the training course "was better than doing nothing". One young person was very clear that once they turned eighteen they would leave the course and "they would get a job or sign on".

Dropping out – many of the young people had started courses, usually straight from leaving school at 16 and had then 'dropped out' and then went onto start another programme at a different provider. Two of the young people interviewed said that they did not think they would complete the programme.

- The young people were keen to start the job related aspects of the programmes and were not keen on the classroom elements of the training.
- All the young people interviewed had had contact with a Connexions Personal Adviser with Personal Advisers referring young people to training provision.
- One young person who had undertaken a diploma course at a college, but dropped out after two years, felt that there was not enough vocational support and was unclear as to the available progression routes had he completed the course.
- Young people were keen to have more tasters of programmes to help them identify which course is 'for them'.

The issues raised were reinforced by the agencies and organisations consulted with:

- Concern was expressed that young people are dropping out of training, in particular this was felt to be an issue in relation to young people part completing programmes due to being unable to secure a placement.
- It was felt that academic routeways were not suitable for all and that more vocational routes incorporating different (individual) learning styles were needed to assist with keeping young people engaged in education and training.
- There needs to be "a stronger bridge between training and labour market" and in particular it was felt that there needed to be more input and support from employers for apprenticeships.

A number of further points were raised with reference to young people and learning:

- Introduction of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was seen as having both a positive and negative impact. Whilst it was recognised

the EMA may help some young people to take up training a number of concerns were expressed:

- It was not necessarily helping those young people wanting to progress along the work based learning route and its introduction had resulted in a reduction in numbers of young people on E2e and apprenticeships
 - The 'means test' element of the application was deterring some families from applying.
- The key to engaging and retaining young people in learning is identifying a 'spark' of interest – something that interests and inspires them.
- Mainstream funding can be too output driven and not always flexible enough to support the hardest reach young people. Additional funding streams (e.g. ESF, Co financing) have been targeted at the NEET and hard to reach groups to assist with engaging and retaining them in learning. However, as these short term funding streams come to an end – concern was expressed that Hartlepool may see an increase in these figures without sustained targeting of additional resources.

(ii) Young People and employment

The number of young people in employment in Hartlepool compares well with England and is higher than in the Tees Valley. However, data indicates that a significant proportion of this employment is part time (65%) (NOMIS Jan-March 2006).

Employment is not seen as an 'option' at 16/17, "once I turn eighteen I'll leave the course and get a job or sign on".. The young people interviewed all saw employment as the end goal and were keen to receive a wage –although many were unsure of what kind of job they would like. It was evident that some had unrealistic expectations of the world of work – one young person commented when he was on placement "I had to start work at 7am and didn't finish till 6.30pm and I didn't even get any backhanders".

Concerns were expressed that education and training were not closely enough linked to the labour market and employers and that the curriculum and training programmes do not prepare young people for the labour market.

(iii) NEET Young People

The NEET figures for Hartlepool are higher than England but lower than the Tees Valley at 11.7%.

The NEET group can be broken down into those available for work and those not available for work. In relation to Hartlepool, those NEETs available for work make up 7.9% of the overall 11.7% with those not available for work making up 3.6%. This is significantly higher than Tees Valley at 2.8% but almost three times the rate for England at 1.3%.

Consultation with agencies and organisations revealed a number of factors that lead young people to becoming NEET:

- Disengaging from learning at school
- Low skills and qualifications
- Low aspirations – linked to generational unemployment
- Lack of confidence to access support networks when things go wrong
- Wider social issues eg homelessness, dependency issues, mental health issues, teenage pregnancy, caring responsibilities, young people in care

Vulnerable young people

Further analysis of this group reveals that Hartlepool has the highest percentage of teenage parents of all local authority areas in England. Furthermore, the data indicates that only 50% of 19 year old care leavers in the town are in education, employment or training (EET), therefore, correspondingly 50% are NEET or not known. This trend replicated in Tees Valley (with the exception of Redcar and Cleveland) and England.

The consultation process with agencies and organisations identified very clearly that a significant amount of work and resources had been targeted at supporting the NEET group in Hartlepool and that headway had been made in working with this group. The focus for resources should now be directed towards those vulnerable young people within the NEET group: young people leaving care, teenage parents, young carers and those with other 'family issues', homeless young people, young people with mental health issues, dependency issues and learning difficulties and disabilities.

It was also felt that many NEET and vulnerable young people often have low aspirations, self esteem and motivation and further work is needed to address wider issues of social deprivation and generational worklessness. Many of the young people interviewed had eventually embarked on a particular training route because their Dad, Mum, brother, friend etc had worked in this field. However, the majority of their parents and siblings were currently not working.

(iv) The Not Knowns

Hartlepool has a lower number of not knowns than Tees Valley but is higher than England. Hartlepool in particular has made a significant improvement in reducing the numbers of not knowns at 16 – a reduction of 83% since June 2005 and has also made an impact on the 17 and 18 year olds, however, 18 year olds still make up 70% of those not known.

16-18 cohort – Not knowns	June 2006	June 2005	Reduction	% in age range
Not knowns	122			
Not known at 16	5	29	83%	4
Not known at 17	32	102	69%	26
Not known at 18	85	216	61%	70
16-18	122	347	65%	100

Discussions with Connexions highlighted that destinations of those aged 17 and 18 are much harder to trace at 18 as many sign on and 'shift' contact from Connexions, as a young people's service, to Job Centre Plus. The two agencies have started to share data to enable closer tracking of young people aged 17-18.

The higher numbers of not known at 17 and 18 can in part be explained by the difficulty in tracking them, however, this would also be consistent with a significant number of 17 and 18 year olds dropping out of training programmes as highlighted in the previous sections.

(v) Young People still at school

Although this is beyond the remit of this research, a number of issues were raised in relation to school aged young people and support available at school regarding training and employment:

- Disengagement from school (sometimes exclusion) due to curriculum issues, teaching and learning styles
- Options and route ways are not sufficiently explained to young people early enough. This was reinforced by the young people interviewed who indicated that they would have liked more information about courses and what they entailed and what they could expect
- Pressure at school to perform in course work and exams. Many young people feel they cannot live up to expectations. This was a feeling expressed by one young person interviewed "there was too much pressure to do well".

(vi) Impact of mainstream provision

From the data and qualitative information it is possible to conclude that mainstream support is impacting positively on young people aged 16-18 in Hartlepool:

- The majority of young people in this cohort are engaged in Education, employment or training (EET) - 87%.
- The NEET group and the not known have both seen reductions in Hartlepool.

However, the data and qualitative information highlights a number of areas for further consideration:

- There are vulnerable groups within the NEET group who require targeted and intensive support – in particular teenage parents and young carers
- Young people appear to be dropping out of training and potentially contributing to the significant number of 'not known' aged 17 and 18 in Hartlepool.

- Young people still seem unsure about progression routes and the need for more targeted vocational IAG linked to the local labour market was identified.
- There was a general consensus that training and education was not adequately preparing young people for the labour market. Whilst Hartlepool has high rates of people achieving NVQ level 1 and 2, how far is this training improving their employability and assisting them to get jobs?
- Young people are 'turned off' by traditional learning styles, particularly if they have basic skills issues.
- The young people interviewed and feedback from agencies identified a very clear lack of aspiration and inspiration with some of the provision available

3.3 Unemployment and Worklessness

The brief poses a specific question in relation to the 18-24 cohorts: to assess the impact of mainstream publicly funded employment and training programmes targeted at 16-24 year olds. This needs to be considered in light of the fact that the overall number of Hartlepool residents claiming JSA declining at a greater rate than that of the 18-24 year old age group.

The following table shows a profile of young people in the town in relation to employment and worklessness (May 2006). Due to how data is collected and collated it is not possible to analyse the data consistently across age groups and categories, however, the data in the table below provides an indication of the numbers in each category.

Indicator	16-17 years	16-19 years	18-24 years	20-24 years	Total
Unemployment (JSA Claimants)			820		820
Employment		2300		3700	6000
Income Support	50		730		780
Incapacity Benefit	30		410		440
Workless/Not known (remainder of population)					2560
Total					10,600
Ward with highest unemployment	Stranton				

67% of the 16-24 age groups are in employment, with almost 8% unemployed. 7% of the cohort is claiming income support and 4% are claiming Incapacity Benefit. When this data is compared with the corresponding rates for the 25-retirement age group, (3.7% unemployed, 14% Incapacity benefit, 10% income support), the rates of unemployment and

income support would seem high – however, this concurs with the data indicating that youth unemployment has reduced at a slower rate than overall unemployment but it would also be anticipated that the high incidence of teenage pregnancy amongst this age group would impact on the income support rate.

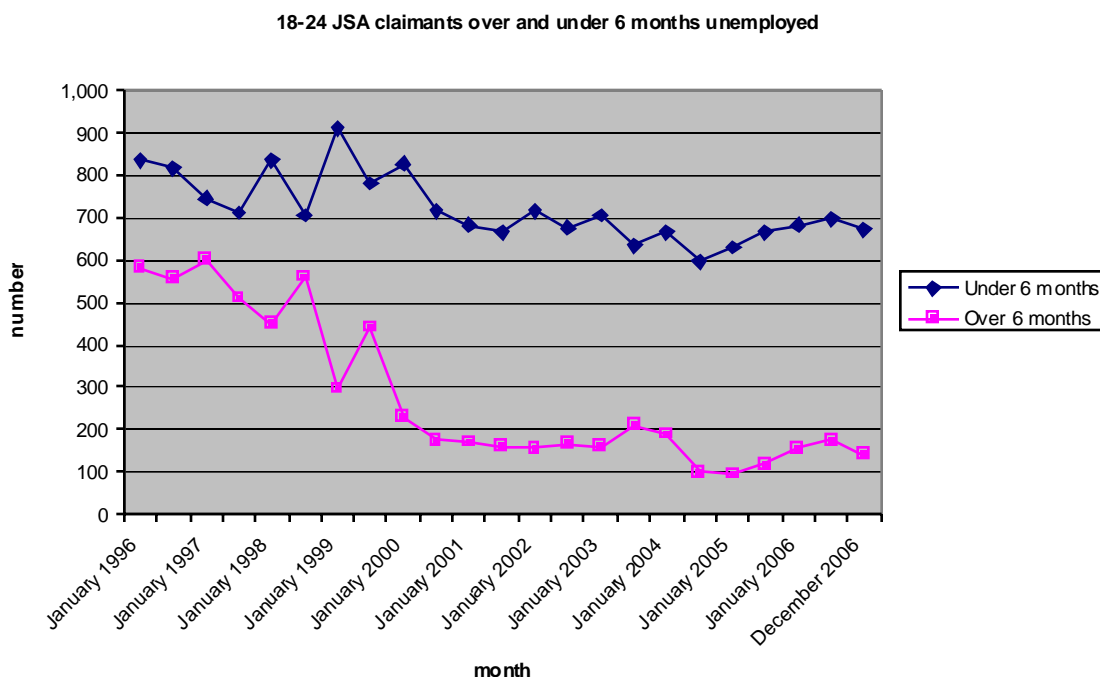
Furthermore, whilst the incapacity benefit rate for this group does not appear overly high in relation to the older age group – there are 440 young people on incapacity benefit – this figure does give cause for concern given the Government's green paper - A New Deal for Welfare Empowering People to Work (January 2006) which stated that "After two years on Incapacity Benefit, a person is more likely to die or retire than to find a new job". Does this mean that 4% of the 16-24 age groups could potentially be looking at long term benefit dependency?

(i) Claimant count and duration of unemployment

A closer look at the data reveals that the rate of unemployment is affected according to how long a young person has been unemployed.

Duration of unemployment

The following chart shows that those young people who have been unemployed for over 6 months have seen a significantly greater reduction in the numbers unemployed over the period than for those unemployed under 6 months.



Source: NOMIS

Those unemployed over 6 months are eligible for New Deal and it is this group that have seen a downward trend of 84% from its peak of 600 in January 1997 to its lowest point of 95 in January 2005. However, the numbers in this group have also started to increase steadily from this point, increasing to 175 in July 2006, although this figure has since come down to 140 in December 2006.

Those unemployed for less than 6 months have not seen the corresponding reduction in numbers. This group has seen a 35% reduction from its peak of 910 in January 1999 to its lowest point of 595 in July 2004. It would appear that the lower rate of reduction amongst this group is keeping the overall 18-24 rate at the 'high' identified in the baseline data. This trend is repeated across Tees Valley. Redcar and Cleveland have the lowest reduction in this claimant group of 33%. Further exploration of the factors impacting on the under 6 month unemployed group is required.

(ii) Churn

Churn is the number young people moving on and off the unemployment claimant count. The table below shows on and off flow for across Tees Valley, the region and nationally for those aged under 25 years.

	On flow		Off Flow		On flow under 25 years		Off Flow under 25 years	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Darlington	495	29.4	520	30.9	210	42.7	220	42.7
Hartlepool	585	24.4	590	24.7	280	48.2	245	41.6
Middlesbrough	945	23.5	1010	25.2	430	45.7	445	44.0
Redcar & Cleveland	835	27.3	860	28.2	415	49.7	400	46.7
Stockton	1130	29.1	1030	26.6	480	42.4	435	42.1
Tees Valley	3985	26.6	4015	26.6	1815	45.6	1750	43.5
North East	14060	28.2	14190	28.5	6375	45.3	6080	42.8
Great Britain	242735	26.0	233610	25.1	103445	42.6	90995	39.0

Source: JSU July 2006

Hartlepool has slighter lower numbers of those signing on and off the register than in Tees Valley, the North East or nationally. However, amongst those aged under 25 years, Hartlepool has a higher percentage (48%) signing on than that of the sub region, the region or nationally and for those signing off the register, Hartlepool's rate is lower than Tees Valley and the region but higher than the national rate. This indicates significant churn amongst this age group.

The following table provides the reasons why young people sign off the register.

Reason for leaving claimant count – 18-24 year olds	January 2006	April 2006	July 2006	October 2006
Found work	40	80	60	70
Increases work to 16+ hours/week	0	5	5	5
Gone abroad	0	0	10	0
Claimed Income Support	15	5	10	5
Claimed Sickness Benefit	-	-	-	-
Claimed Incapacity Benefit	5	5	15	20
Claimed another benefit	0	0	0	0
Gone to full-time education	0	0	0	15
Gone onto approved training	0	5	5	5
Transfer to Govt-supported training	15	45	20	40
Retirement age reached	0	0	0	0
Automatic credits payable	0	0	0	0
Claims back-to-work bonus	0	0	0	0
Gone to prison	0	0	0	0
Attending court	0	0	0	0
New claim review	0	0	0	0
Defective claim	0	0	5	0
Ceased claiming	0	0	0	5
Deceased	0	0	0	0
Not known	15	10	25	25
Failed to sign	90	120	90	110
Total	180	285	245	300

- These figures are missing. Data rounded to nearest 5.

Source: NOMIS

A snap shot of flow off the register in 2006 taken at quarterly intervals shows that by far the most common reason for leaving the claimant count is failure to sign amongst this age group – accounting for between 37-50%, with finding work second (22-28%), and transfer to government supported training programme next (8-16%) with not known accounting for between 3-10%. Those signing off JSA to claim another benefit (incapacity and income support) account for 3.5-11%. It is not clear from the data how many of those transferring to Government supported training are young people on New Deal transferring to the options period.

The data also indicates a slightly greater churn amongst those young people unemployed under 6 months. It has not been possible to analyse the data further but consultation suggests a number of reasons for the slower reduction in the rate of those under 6 months unemployed and the significant churn on and off the register:

- Avoidance of New Deal – ‘the threat effect’. Young people signing off the register before they are eligible for New Deal to take up employment or training, transfer to another benefit or fail to sign – only to sign on at a later date.

- This creates the potential for churn between those claimants unemployed for over 6 months and those unemployed for under 6 months. If a young person who is eligible for New Deal signs off or fails to sign for 13 weeks, they break their eligibility for New Deal and return to under the 6 months unemployed category. Given that failure to sign is the most common reason for claimants in this age group signing off the register, there is a significant possibility that this kind of churn is taking place. Without further in depth analysis – the extent of this is not possible to gauge. Those who complete the gateway, options and follow through parts of New Deal return to JSA and have to complete another 26 weeks on JSA before they are eligible again for New Deal however, they are still counted in the 6+ unemployed category. To reduce this incidence of 'churn' amongst the 25+ claimants on New Deal, the eligibility criteria was amended – claimants would be eligible for New Deal if they had claimed JSA for 18 months over a 21 month period.
- Young people dropping out of training and signing on. Discussions with young people and agencies indicate a number of possible reasons for this:
 - Young people completing the first year of their training who are then unable to secure a placement to complete their second year of training. These young people then join the claimant count when they are eighteen years old.
 - Young people leaving school and start training but have no clear direction or progression route in mind. They later drop out as this was not the appropriate progression route for them.
 - Young people leave school and embark on NVQ level 2 training. The progression routes available at this stage include level 3 training and university or employment. For those not 'academically' able to progress to a level 3 or University, the links to the labour market after completing their level 2 are not always visible or achievable. This may also link in with the high number of those at 18 who are 'not known' to Connexions.

(ii) Young people and the labour market

From discussions with young people, agencies, organisations and employers a number of key barriers were identified to young people accessing and progressing in the local labour market:

Employability skills – it was felt that many young people lack key employability and life skills. Those specifically mentioned included, communication skills, confidence, motivation – getting out of bed, personal hygiene, and an appreciation of 'appropriate behaviour' in relation to the workplace. From discussions with employers and training providers it is

possible to see their role developing into one of 'parent', providing 'life skills' support to young people e.g. help with managing money, personal hygiene, getting to work/training on time, taking responsibility for their actions.

Basic skills- concern was expressed that despite significant funding to support the improvement of basic skills, this was still a major barrier to young people accessing and progressing in training or the labour market. Changes to the New Deal programme in Hartlepool have seen the introduction of basic skills support in the gateway period to assist with job search and progression to training.

Generational unemployment

It was felt that young people lack role models in relation to training and employment and that this was limiting their aspirations. 7 out of 10 of the young people interviewed stated their parents and other family members were not working – a significant number of parents had caring responsibilities either for other siblings or relatives.

The issues was also raised that worklessness was increasingly concentrated in families and communities where a culture of worklessness and benefit dependency was the 'norm' and an accepted way of life. Since 1996 the number of families on benefits with children under 15 in the town has increased overall. However, single parent families have significantly decreased. This could be an indication that New Deal for Lone Parents is having an impact on lone parent's families.

Structural issues

Benefit dependency was felt to impact on this group, particularly in relation to a young person's status (e.g. in learning, unemployed working) and its impact on the family's benefits. It was also felt to be an issue where young people were claiming incapacity benefit, where minimum wage jobs are not that attractive in comparison.

Macro economic issues – there was felt to be a lack of jobs resulting in a significant number of young people taking up training

Recruitment and training of young people

Employers were not always clear about "how to go about" recruiting young people under the age of 18. Where recruitment and retention of young people had been successful this was attributed to:

- Good local networks – local businesses embedded in local communities
- Employer had employed the young person straight from school and invested significant training and support. One employer felt that when young people leave education/training at 18-20 they were less inclined to "learn a trade and more difficult to mould".
- Employer assumes the 'parent role' providing significant social and emotional support to young people.

The young people interviewed felt there were not enough jobs advertised for young people. Job adverts tended to ask for people with experience.

(iv) Impact of Mainstream Provision

From the data on claimant count and duration, there would appear to be a link between the introduction of New Deal in 1998 and the reduction in numbers claiming JSA who are over 6 months unemployed. However, young people can access additional training and employment support initiatives aimed at enhancing New Deal provision provided through the voluntary and community sector as well as the local authority and therefore, it is not possible to isolate the impact of New Deal.

Furthermore, data on young people on New Deal in Hartlepool in terms of destinations is not available. This means it is not possible to analyse the impact of New Deal on the flow of young people on and off the register to gauge the extent to which New Deal has supported young people into employment or training and how sustainable that destination has been. From discussions with JCP it would appear that:

- New Deal data recorded and collated by JCP is only available on a Tees Valley wide basis and cannot be interrogated for Hartlepool only
- Performance is measured by contractor not by area or cohort
- Targets and measures have changed over time making any form of time series analysis difficult.

Feedback from young people on New Deal was limited as only two young people had experience of New Deal. Both young people had completed the gateway elements of New Deal and were about to start 'employment' with Hartlepool Borough Council's intermediate Labour Market Programme as a result of joint working between Economic Development and the Leaving Care Team. Both young people would have liked more intensive support from New Deal. One of the young people had completed a short training course whilst on New Deal which he found useful but had then sourced employment himself and with the help of his social worker. The other young person would have liked more proactive job search support during the gateway period.

Evaluations of New Deal

An initial search for local evaluations of New Deal for Young People has revealed very little. There have been numerous national evaluations that comment on the performance of the programme and the experience of young people.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation- The New Deals: The experience so far (July 2000) found that just under a half of young people participating on the programme had found work and three quarters of these were sustained jobs. The report goes on to suggest that the programme had led to a reduction in youth unemployment by about 30,000 in the first year, but also raises the issues that some of these would have got jobs without the programme.

Research undertaken by David Wilkinson (2003) concludes that the New Deal programme has reduced youth unemployment, “a significant part of the impact has come from young people who no longer claim unemployment benefit for 6 months and hence do not qualify for New Deal. For those that did participate in the programme, the largest effect is an increase in the proportion of young people who left unemployment to go into GST”.

These findings are supported by a study undertaken by **Duncan McVicar and Jan M Podivinsky** in 2003 ‘**Into Jobs or into the classroom**’ which found that the New Deal for young people boosted exit rates to all destinations* at different durations of unemployment but identified a previously unidentified primary effect to “shift large numbers of young people out of unemployment and into education and training”.

*definition: employment, other benefits, education and training, other

This study went on to pose the further question “it is not yet clear whether these young people are subsequently more employable as a result of the intervention”. Without data on the destinations of young people in Hartlepool on New Deal, it is not possible to comment on the impact on exit rates or employability.

There exists a consensus that job search programmes work best in dynamic labour markets and that whilst “active labour market policies can assist the long term unemployed, the key to widening the opportunities available to the unemployed and work poor is sustained employment growth” (CLES report pg 8).

With reference to learning and training provision for the 18-24 age group, many of the issues raised in the section 4.1 apply:

- Provision is not closely enough linked to the labour market and ‘real jobs’.
- Young people completing NVQ level 2 training who are not ‘academically’ able to progress to a level 3 or University are struggling to make the transition to the labour market.
- Impact has been curtailed due to young people ‘dipping in and out’ of provision. This fragmented nature of support often dilutes any positive outcomes.

Whilst assessing the impact of mainstream provision has proved a very difficult exercise, it has raised a number of important issues:

- Additional data and further interrogation of available data is needed in relation to:
 - (i) Claimant count and duration of unemployment – in particular flow on and off the register to investigate further the potential links between claimant flow and :

- Avoidance of New Deal
- Young people dropping out of training

(ii) Incapacity benefit claimants – further understanding is needed of this group to ensure support can be targeted to prevent long term dependency on this benefit.

- In order to ensure the development of new and existing training and employment projects in Hartlepool can benefit from the experience of New Deal, systems for recording, collating and sharing data need to be developed and implemented.

4. Gap Analysis

From discussions with young people, agencies and organisations it is possible to identify a number of areas where additional resources could be targeted.

1. Links to the local labour market. Training and employment support must be closely linked to current and future opportunities in the local labour market. Employers are central to this and need to be:

- Involved in the design and delivery of programmes.
- Enabled and supported to provide work experience and placements to young people. The brokerage of placements is crucial to ensure young people complete their programmes.
- Enabled and supported to provide more w aged apprenticeships.
- Involved as earlier as possible. Employer involvement needs to start in schools with clearly identified progression routes with training.

Specialised Diploma Lines will be available from 2008 onwards to learners aged 14-19 within applied settings and contexts. They are designed to meet skills needs of employers and on this basis should assist in bridging the gap between learning and the labour market.

2. Sustained support for those with multiple barriers. Mentoring was seen as an initiative that could provide sustained support to this target group.

3. More Intermediate Labour market provision – in linking points 2 and 3 together, ILM type activity can provide intensive support clearly linked to the labour market, engaging local employers and leading to real jobs. This provision would need to be available across the age range 16-24.

4. More training and vocational tasters. This would provide more opportunities for young people to gain a real insight into different courses and areas of work before making decisions as to which training/vocational route they would like to go down.

5. Information, advice and guidance

- Additional support needed for those that drop out of training or are in danger of dropping out of training. Once a progression route had been identified additional support is needed to ensure that young person does not become NEET.
- More focused and clearly linked to progression routes to the local labour market

6. More intensive and focused support for those young people unemployed under 6 months

- To ensure they identify an appropriate progression route and that their engagement and retention in that provision/opportunity is supported to prevent them returning to the claimant count.

7. Funding

- Funding needs to be more flexible to respond to the needs of those hardest to reach
- More provision needs to include flexible grants to support young people to overcome barriers to accessing and staying in training and employment.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Young People 16-18

The majority of young people at 16 are identifying progression routes – the vast majority of these into further learning (71.7%). However, for a significant number of these young people this is not a sustained outcome and they are disengaging from learning for a variety of reasons:

- Lack of direction – “I don’t know what I want to do” and many seem unsure about progression routes
- Unable to secure a placement
- Inappropriate provision often due to:
 - basic skill needs
 - ‘academic’ teaching and learning styles

The majority of young people are signposted to education and training at 16 as they cannot claim JSA. Employers and young people rarely saw employment between the ages of 16-18 as a possible option.

There was a general consensus that training and education was not adequately preparing young people for the labour market. Whilst Hartlepool has high rates of people achieving NVQ level 1 and 2, how far is this training improving their employability and assisting them to get jobs?

The NEET Group

There are vulnerable groups within the NEET group who require targeted and intensive support – in particular teenage parents and young carers. The wider issues of social deprivation and generational unemployment also need to be addressed before issues relating to learning or employability can be addressed. It was evident that training providers and employers were confronting many of these issues on a daily basis and in some instances assuming the role of 'parent' to provide these young people with the necessary level of support.

Barriers to training and employment

Young people face particular barriers in relation to their engagement and retention in training and employment:

- Lack of employability skills
- Lack of basic skills
- Structural barriers, including benefit dependency and a lack of jobs in the local labour market

Impact of mainstream provision

Over the last 10 years Hartlepool has seen a reduction in the number of 18-24 year old claimants. But there is insufficient data available to ascertain the impact of New Deal on this reduction or to analyse the destinations of these young people. Within this cohort there is significant 'churn' on and off the claimant register which would be consistent with feed back from young people, agencies and organisations that young people are dropping out of provision or avoiding New Deal, however, without further data and analysis this cannot be confirmed.

The young people interviewed and feedback from agencies identified a very clear lack of aspiration and inspiration in relation to some of the provision available. However, there was a general consensus that mainstream provision had the potential to make a difference to young peoples' training and employment opportunities and to their lives in general, but it was felt that this was down to how individual providers delivered the programmes and that due to the sometimes fragmented nature of provision the support to ensure their learning and experience gained from various programmes of support was translated into positive outcomes, was often lacking.

Recommendations

Data

There are a number of data issues that need to be addressed

- More in depth analysis of 18-24 claimant count and flow
- Data on the delivery and outcomes of New Deal for Young People in Hartlepool.

In order to gain as full an understanding of these claimant group systems for recording, collating and sharing data between agencies need to be developed and implemented.

Potential projects areas

Extending ILM type activities across the age range to provide intensive support that can effectively address issues of basic skills, employability and wider social issues. Consideration needs to be given to extending current provision to 12 months and introducing increments as incentives. Particularly with the 'hard to reach' groups a significant amount of resources and multi-agency working is required to remove more fundamental barriers eg care, financial/benefit, health, housing, aspirations

Support for those young people unemployed under 6 months to ensure they identify an appropriate progression route and that their engagement and retention in that provision/opportunity is supported to prevent them returning to the claimant count.

Support for young vulnerable young people – ensure existing and new provision can be targeted to the needs of vulnerable young people as identified in this report: young people leaving care, teenage parents, young carers and those with other 'family issues', homeless young people, young people with mental health issues, dependency issues and learning difficulties and disabilities. This also touches on the need for **support for those young people on incapacity benefit**. A greater understanding of this group and the support they require to move into training or employment is needed.

More training and vocational tasters to provide young people with the opportunity to gain a real insight into different courses and areas of work

IAG must be focused and clearly linked to progression routes in the local labour market and provide targeted support for those that drop out of training or are in danger of dropping out of training.

Explore the potential for social enterprise activities to support young people in training and employment opportunities

Further consultation with young people, agencies and organisations

The research brief 'threw a very wide net' over the issues to be explored. This initial report has highlighted some of the key areas that require further exploration.

Other issues

Impact of the EMA needs to be monitored in terms of how far it assists young people to engage and stay engaged in learning.

Appendix 1

Interviewees

Tom Argument, Hartlepool Borough Council – 14-19 Coordinator

Rick Wells, Principal, Hartlepool Sixth Form College

Terry Curren, English Martyrs Sixth Form College

Trevor Mortlock and Susan Alderson, Job Centre Plus

Dave Waddington and Paul Marshall, Hartlepool College of Further Education

Marjorie James, Community Empowerment Network

Miriam Robertson and Terry Wilson, Connexions Tees Valley

Sue William, Denise Taylor and Paul Johnson, Hartlepool Borough Council,
Hartlepool Working Solutions

Dane Mills, Managing Director, Flexability

Leo Gillen,

Gill Dunn, Call Centre Manager, Garlands

Respondents to Questionnaires

Stephen Wright, Partnership Manager Learning and Skills Council

Chris Wise, West View Project

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27 April 2007



**Report of: Adult and Community Services and Health
Scrutiny Forum**

Subject: SOCIAL PRESCRIBING – FINAL REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into Social Prescribing.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

- 2.1 At a meeting of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum on 13 June 2006 the Forum established its annual work programme which included an investigation into 'Social Prescribing.' Social Prescribing is an emerging field and is an approach for linking patients and the public with non-medical sources of support, especially within primary care and community settings. It is widely accepted that 'the broader, holistic framework evident in Social Prescribing, with an emphasis on personal experiences, relationships and social conditions, is more compatible with lay understandings of mental well-being and mental distress than a medical model'. (Rodgers and Pilgrim, 1997)
- 2.2 Social Prescribing has been widely adopted in the context of mild to moderate mental health problems with a range of positive outcomes. (Friedli and Watson, 2004) Increasingly, it is also being used to help extend social inclusion and, thereby increase health and well-being, among disadvantaged, isolated and vulnerable populations. The aim of this investigation was essentially to explore the ways in which Social Prescribing can be further developed in Hartlepool with its high levels of deprivation, mortality and illness.
- 2.3 The investigation explored a number of factors (outlined overleaf) with a view to identifying how non-medical interventions might assist people with longer term or complex health and social care needs to maintain their independence and to live as fulfilling a life as possible. It also sought to understand the links between primary care, Local Authority, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) services necessary to provide such interventions and how the funding

streams for each of these services could be used to secure appropriate flows of resources.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to explore the ways in which Social Prescribing is being and might be further developed in Hartlepool.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4.1 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny investigation were:-

- (a) To gain an understanding of national policy and practice in relation to 'Social Prescribing';
- (b) To seek evidence for the effectiveness of Social Prescribing;
- (c) To identify current provision of Social Prescribing in Hartlepool;
- (d) To identify challenges in integrating Social Prescribing within primary care practice and other areas;
- (e) To identify the funding streams that currently support and in future will support Social Prescribing and, to examine the long-term sustainability of these;
- (f) To compare what good practice exists in other Local Authorities in relation to Social Prescribing;
- (g) To seek the views of the service users and carers in relation to Social Prescribing initiatives; and
- (h) To seek the views of GPs and service providers in the statutory and non-statutory sectors.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HEALTH SCRUTINY FORUM

- 5.1 The membership of the Scrutiny Forum was as detailed below :-

Councillors Barker, Akers-Belcher, Brash, Fleet, Griffin, Lauderdale, Lilley, Rayner, Wistow, Worthy and Young.

Resident Representatives: Mary Green, Jean Kennedy and Joan Norman

6. METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

- 6.1 Members of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum met formally from 25 July 2006 to 29 March 2007 to discuss and receive evidence relating to this investigation. A detailed record of the issues raised during these meetings is available from the Council's Democratic Services.
- 6.2 A brief summary of the methods of investigation are outlined below:-
- (a) Detailed Officer reports supplemented by verbal evidence;
 - (b) Evidence from the Authority's Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health Services;
 - (c) Examination of good practice that exists within a neighbouring Local Authority;
 - (d) Evidence received from a representative of HVDA;
 - (e) Evidence received from Hartlepool PCT;
 - (f) Evidence received from Hartlepool MIND;
 - (g) Evidence received from Hartlepool NDC, and
 - (h) The views of local service users and representatives of carers' views.

FINDINGS

7 NATIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE IN RELATION TO SOCIAL PRESCRIBING;

- 7.1 Members of the Forum learned that a number of developments have created a potentially favourable policy environment for developing Social Prescribing. These factors are outlined below:-
- (i) Our Health, Our Care, Our Say
- 7.2 The Government White Paper, Our Health, Our Care, Our say states that People with longer-term or more complex health and social care needs want services that will help them to maintain their independence and wellbeing and to lead as fulfilling a life as possible. With over 17.5 million people in Britain reporting a long-term condition such as diabetes, asthma or arthritis the White Paper recognises that discomfort and stress is an everyday occurrence.
- 7.3 The Government further acknowledges that care for many of these people has traditionally been reactive, unplanned and episodic. This resulted in heavy use of secondary care services. It was clear to Members, therefore,

that that improved support and a wholesale change in the delivery of health and social care services was essential.

- 7.4 Thus the Forum welcomed change in Government policy which is moving away from reactive based care in acute systems towards a systematic, patient centred approach with care rooted in primary care settings and the creation of new partnerships across the whole health and social care spectrum to provide a different and more extensive range of interventions in the community. Evidence suggesting that only 50% of medicines are taken as prescribed raised further questions about the effectiveness and appropriateness of current medical interventions.

(ii) Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)

- 7.5 The Forum established that public participation and patient involvement are closely linked to a growing emphasis on the need to take account of consumer views in deciding how services are planned, delivered and evaluated. LINKs are intended to provide flexible ways for individuals, organisations and communities to engage with health and social care services in ways that best suit the communities and the people in them. They are also intended to build on the best work of public and patient involvement forums creating a strengthened system of user involvement and promote greater public accountability in health and social care through open and transparent communication with commissioners and providers.

(ii) Partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sectors

- 7.6 Also significant is the recent agreement between the Department of Health, the NHS and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to promote an increasing role for the latter in health service delivery, as well as its complementary and distinct roles in relation to promoting health and health care. (Department of Health, 2003). At a national conference on Social Prescribing, the benefits for patients of greater involvement through partnerships between PCTs and the voluntary and community sectors were summarised as follows:-

- (a) Builds networks
- (b) Provides group support
- (c) Increases confidence
- (d) Develops transferable skills
- (e) Fosters feelings of control

[Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service 2003 –Community on Prescription Conference Report]

- 7.7 The Forum welcomed the expansion of the boundaries of primary care which is a recurring theme in a range of primary care guidelines and has led to stronger engagement with all sectors which is essential to tackle health issues in disadvantaged and deprived communities such as Hartlepool.

- 7.8 Members further welcomed initiatives such as the introduction of personal medical contracts which links primary care development to local health needs and thereby allows more flexible working patterns related to local needs. In addition, Members recognised the need to link the outcome of the local Fair Access to Care Services Consultation to any future work in relation to Social Prescribing.

8 EVIDENCE FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

- 8.1 The Forum learned that whilst the evidence base for Social Prescribing is still developing, it is suggesting that benefits for both service users and GP practices can be expected locally.
- 8.2 For example, research has indicated that 75% of service users presenting in general practice have at least one psychosocial problem, and that these service users make up approximately 15% of the total primary care workload. It is also well known within primary care that around 30% of all consultations and 50% of consecutive attendances concern some form of psychiatric problems, predominantly depression or anxiety. (Kessler et al, 2001; NIMHE, 2003).
- 8.3 The Forum noted with concern that patients with psychosocial problems may present with physical symptoms to their GP rather than psychological symptoms which can make diagnosis extremely complex. Furthermore, as the solution to their problems often lies outside the primary care arena, the ability of practice staff to respond is limited. This situation is further exacerbated if patients develop multiple long-term conditions as their care becomes disproportionately complex and it can be difficult for the individual and the health and social care system to manage given the intricate mix of health and social care difficulties.
- 8.4 The Forum was pleased to learn that a review of the literature by Sykes (2002) showed that some social prescribing schemes can result in reduced workload for general practice in the order of one or two less consultations per annum (equivalent to a 1% reduction in workload). Furthermore, the research reported that most Social Prescribing projects identified the reduction in workload as a perceived benefit by GPs.
- 8.5 Other potential benefits to service users highlighted by the research included: improved general health and quality of life; improved functional ability; and reduced anxiety. In light of these findings, it was encouraging to note that Social Prescribing schemes are becoming increasingly common in primary care.
- 8.6 Whilst not always labelled as Social Prescribing, on-going and personalised care has been shown to improve both the quality of life and outcomes for patients. In addition, there is also growing interest in Social Prescribing as a route to reducing social exclusion, both for disadvantaged, isolated and vulnerable populations. (Bates, 2002, Gask et al 2000).

- 8.7 However, the National Institute for Mental Health in England notes that Social Prescribing sits within, and may also include, a range of emerging areas of service provision for which there is varying or limited high quality evidence of effectiveness. (E.g. telephone support / self help).
- 8.8 The development of an evidence base for Social Prescribing has been limited by wide variations in how the term is used and understood and considerable inconsistency in indicators used to measure success. (Friedli and Watson, 2004). The small size of pilot trials and lack of independent evaluation make it difficult to draw robust conclusions about the health impact of Social Prescribing, particularly in comparison with usual GP care or in terms of cost effectiveness.
- 8.9 In many cases, project evaluations are said to have been confined to feedback from participants and/or health and other staff involved. This suggests that primary care needs to work more closely with agencies to develop alternative responses to and sources of support for mental and long-term illness. In spite of these apparent weaknesses in the evidence base for Social Prescribing, Members considered that there is sufficient evidence of potential benefits to merit further investment especially where evidence suggests that existing interventions may also be of questionable effectiveness, appropriateness and/or acceptability.
- 8.10 The Forum learned that, nationally, there are no general guidelines on referrals to non-medical sources of support. Whilst there are some limited examples of national quality assurance frameworks for exercise referrals and the management of anxiety and depression, quality control largely is the responsibility of individual schemes. Whilst this does enable each primary care-based scheme to establish its own selection criteria tailored to the local population and the range of facilities available, some background framework or guidance might be helpful especially in terms of reinforcing the wider acceptance of social prescribing among medical and other health professions.

9 CURRENT PROVISION OF SOCIAL PRESCRIBING SERVICES IN HARTLEPOOL

- 9.1 Members sought evidence from a variety of witnesses about the current provision of Social Prescribing services in Hartlepool,. Their contributions are summarised below :-

Evidence from Independent Consultant / Hartlepool Partnership & HVDA

- 9.2 The Forum benefited from having in attendance the author of the report 'Developing Social Prescribing in Hartlepool' which was commissioned by Hartlepool Partnership and HVDA. The consultant presented the findings from the study which considered current provision of Social Prescribing in Hartlepool, the findings of which have been reproduced below :-

9.3 The study considered two Social Prescribing schemes operating in Hartlepool:-

(i). The MIND scheme – providing support and services for people with mental health issues.

9.4 The Forum learnt that Hartlepool MIND currently receives referrals from most of the 54 GP's in the town (estimated at between 60% to 70% of GP's referring to MIND). Most GP's use a referral form supplied by MIND whereas others call direct. Other providers including some VCS groups also use the MIND referral form.

9.5 In relation to process, Members were informed that MIND carry out a 'holistic assessment' of anyone who is referred to them and then provide in house services and/or refer on to another service. In some cases direct support is provided by MIND staff so they can access services including by accompanying people to attend sessions.

9.6 Members were pleased to find that MIND estimate that 90% of people referred to them attend for the holistic assessment, of whom over 90% take up further sessions/activities following their assessment. During the past 12 months, Hartlepool MIND has carried out 572 assessments. Table One below records the progress made by clients referred to them during the past 12 months. Members learned that the approach to social prescribing developed by Hartlepool MIND was nationally recognised and the subject of large numbers of visitors from other parts of the country. They highly commended this work as a valuable resource to the local community and were especially impressed by the degree of support from service users who attended Scrutiny meetings. Against this background, they were especially concerned to discover the precarious funding basis for this service and recommended that sustainable funding for it should be an early and high priority for the council and PCT. Consideration should be given during the 2007/08 year to re-allocating funds to this and similar services from activities that service users found less helpful and acceptable.

Table One

Accessed volunteering	70
Enrolled into Education	107
Medication has been reduced as a result of accessing Mind	61
Came off medication as a result of accessing Hartlepool Mind	19
Gained Employment	45
Returned to employment (came off benefits)	47

(ii). The Hartlepool Exercise for Life Programme (HELP) - providing a range of exercise sessions.

9.7 The Hartlepool Exercise for Life Programme is an exercise on prescription scheme operated by HBC and supported by the Hartlepool PCT. People who are referred receive an assessment to select the right activity. In terms of

supporting and encouraging users, Members learnt that everyone referred onto the scheme is contacted by telephone by the HELP co-ordinator.

- 9.8 The Forum also learned that the HELP scheme is currently using a range of eight local authority and community venues throughout Hartlepool to offer 11 different activities. HELP has formed working partnerships with the PCT Health Development Team and Manor Residents Association to deliver some of the services. Some of the programme provides additional support alongside exercise sessions for example the 'Shapes and Sizes' weight loss support groups supplements one hour of exercise with an additional hour when Pharmacists, Community Nutritionists, MIND and a Diabetic Nurse talk to the group members. There is a small sessional charge for attending most sessions although one of the weight management and a men's health group are free.
- 9.9 The Forum found that the HELP Co-ordinator estimates that the scheme is currently receiving approximately 500 referrals a year. Of those 500, 40% do not turn up and 10% do not complete the programme, thus the programme has a completion rate of 50%.
- 9.10 A referral to the Hartlepool Exercise for Life Programme is for a limited time usually 10 sessions over a ten-week period. However, the programme encourages people to continue to exercise and to take up offers linked to the venues from which it is delivered. To get back onto the HELP programme people would have to go back to their GP. HELP occasionally refers people onto MIND and refers to the HBC Walks for All programme.
- 9.11 Referrals to HELP are received from a range of health service settings including GP's, dieticians, nurses, health visitors, hospitals and various mental health organisations. HELP have referral forms in all 16 GP practices in Hartlepool and have received referrals from all, practices. HELP reported that they are working mainly, but not exclusively, with older people. Whilst Members welcomed the approach, some concern that referrals should not be limited to Health-care professionals and wished to explore further the possibility of self-referral.

Evidence from HBC, HPCT & VCS

- 9.12 Members also considered evidence from the Authority's Director for Adult and Community Services, Hartlepool PCT, and representatives from the VCS, all of whom highlighted the existence of a number of highly effective partnerships across all sectors. This has resulted in a number of initiatives that fit the definition of Social Prescribing, including such initiatives such books on prescription and allotments.
- 9.13 However, it was consistently highlighted to Members by all witnesses that the schemes are not always well co-ordinated which inevitably resulted in lost synergies. Further, Members considered that further work was necessary to assess the potential power of a well co-ordinated model of Social Prescribing, which have not been fully realised.

10 CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATING SOCIAL PRESCRIBING WITHIN PRIMARY CARE

10.1 Members learned that a key challenge in developing Social Prescribing is ensuring that it is appropriately integrated within the primary care model. A number of reviews have identified the following challenges in integrating Social Prescribing within primary care practice:-

- (a) Maintaining up to date information on sources of voluntary and community support;
- (b) Cultural differences between medical and community development models;
- (c) The need for a skilled link worker;
- (d) Concerns about voluntary sector capacity;
- (e) Concerns about increased GP workload, at least initially;
- (f) Agreeing referral criteria;
- (g) Recording and evaluating outcomes; and
- (h) Accountability and liability for referred patients.

(Sykes 2002)

10.2 The local study on the development of Social Prescribing in Hartlepool also found that there are a number of barriers that the design of a Social Prescribing scheme needs to consider:-

Gaining the Support of GP's and Health Care Professionals

10.3 The need to gain the support and trust of primary health care staff especially GPs. For a system to work it needs to be trusted by GPs and other key referrers.

Monitoring and Evaluation Methods

10.4 The need for common monitoring and evaluation methods with a Social Prescribing scheme. There needs to be robust systems in place to gather the monitoring data required to measure the impact of a social referring scheme. It is important that this information is fed back in an appropriate way to the people making referrals.

Funding - Community & Voluntary Sector

10.5 The voluntary sector said it was facing a funding crisis and that many organisations are at threat of closure or are having to scale down their operations. While strategically the voluntary sector is being increasingly identified as an important deliverer of services their inclusion within the procurement process is not developing at the same pace. Moreover, sources of funding (for example EU funds) used by the sector will not be available from 2006 and 2007 onwards.

Funding for the service delivery

- 10.6. If there is not access to funds that 'follow' the person in receipt of a social prescription then such service delivery agencies will be further stretched financially. While in theory this concept appears to fit with the introduction of Practice Based Commissioning and Payment by Results it has yet to be developed and applied in practice.

Waiting times for certain services.

- 10.7 Some of the key services delivered by the voluntary sector are working at capacity and have long waiting lists (for example up to 8 weeks for some Hartlepool MIND services). If further demand is put on these services without making additional resources available, waiting times would seem bound to increase.

Evidence from HBC, HPCT & CVS

- 10.8 During the collation of evidence, Members welcomed the establishment of a Joint Working Development Group chaired by the Director of Public Health which brought together the leads of a number of existing projects that could be considered to form a Social Prescribing network. Members were advised that the working group is considering the development of a specification defining the elements of a Social Prescribing service and standards. The group is being supported by a consultant, funded by NRF under-spends on health trainer projects, and it is anticipated that a toolkit will be developed to support other organisations that may wish to develop such a service. Members considered the establishment of the group as a step in the right direction and, had it been available its outcome would have usefully informed the Scrutiny review. Members also considered it important that the membership of the working group be reviewed to include new providers, service users and carers to ensure all stakeholders are represented at the formative stage in the network's development.

- 10.9 Members further considered that the challenges raised above in relation to integrating Social Prescribing within primary care are important issues for the group to address. This was considered particularly important if individual groups began to target health care staff, each with individual referral criteria. Members welcomed the development a co-ordinated approach to maximise the potential of Social Prescribing.

11 EXAMINATION OF THE LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF CURRENT FUNDING STREAMS FOR SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

- 11.1 Based on the evidence received below, Members noted that funding is a key factor that hampers the long-term development of Social Prescribing initiatives in Hartlepool.

Evidence from NDC / Hartlepool MIND

- 11.2 Members were informed that Hartlepool NDC are funding a pilot Social Prescribing scheme in conjunction with Hartlepool Mind and a local GP surgery. This project had been established within the context of research findings which were reported to highlight the link between psychosocial problems and loneliness to the extent that loneliness was said to be a bigger risk than smoking for heart disease. Moreover, other research was said to suggest that volunteers and people with meaningful occupations were healthier and lived longer. Against this background, the NDC considered it important to recreate social connections for vulnerable people.
- 11.3 The Programme Manager for NDC advised that Hartlepool MIND would offer clients a holistic assessment considering the emotional as well as physical needs of individuals. MIND will then use skilled service navigators (or brokers) to refer patients to appropriate schemes based on the outcome of the assessment.
- 11.4 While the Forum welcomed the support from NDC, Members were keen to see the short-term / one-off funding situation addressed so that Social Prescribing projects could have sufficiently sustainable funding to have the opportunity to develop as viable alternatives to the traditional medical model.
- 11.5 The Programme Manager for NDC advised that if the relationship between the GP surgery becomes well-developed and effective, in theory it should lead to a reduction in the practice's drug bill. If so, mechanisms to re-invest such savings into social prescribing would be helpful to their sustainability. Members were told that long-term support for Social Prescribing could only be achieved if the pilot initiatives demonstrated direct benefits to patients and budgets. Whilst a reduction in practice drug bills were one mechanism of assessing effectiveness, Members acknowledged that quantifying psychosocial improvement is difficult to assess. Monitoring and evaluation of such outcomes would be necessary to attract longer term funding.

Evidence from HVDA

- 11.6 HVDA informed Members about its brokerage role for people wishing to volunteer. This involves recruitment, interviewing, advice, guidance and placement of volunteers with VCS groups and the public sector. This role is particularly important for many people wanting to volunteer but who are unaware of available opportunities. The aim is to match the skills, interests and motivation to volunteer with available voluntary work opportunities.
- 11.7 In addition to the volunteer brokerage role, HVDA offer a Career Coaching Project which is another project facilitated by the Volunteer Centre at HVDA. Effective coaching methods will uncover underlying issues; seek out participants' hidden abilities and motivations so they are empowered to take positive action towards achieving their goals. It enables people to accept responsibility for their lives by taking control and making necessary changes for life improvement.

- 11.8 The third part of HVDA's work is with young people under 25 known as Millennium Volunteers. Members were advised that since inception the project has encouraged over 1700 people from across Hartlepool to volunteer.
- 11.9 The Manager highlighted these key aspects of HVDA's work for two reasons:-
- (i) The brokerage role is currently funded, but on a short-term basis;
 - (ii) HVDA receives many referrals from health care professionals.
- 11.10 Members were advised that the Government has committed to funding the work with young people from September 2007 for a further three year period. However, concern was expressed that no such funding is in place for the work with adults beyond March 2008. Given the importance of the volunteer brokerage role within any Social Prescribing model the manager of HVDA was keen to see this issue addressed through the Scrutiny Investigation.

12 BEST PRACTICE IN RELATION TO SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

- 12.1 The Forum received evidence from representatives of Bradford South and West Primary Care Trust at a meeting held on 14 November 2006. Members were advised that a pilot Social Prescribing scheme has been established by the Trust.
- 12.2 The aims of the scheme, called CHAT (Community Health Advice Team), are to broaden service provision for patients with non-clinical needs and to facilitate links between primary health care and the community and voluntary sector. The first pilot scheme in the PCT was started in 2004 through Healthy Lifestyle Healthy Living Centre at Highfield Health Centre. This has recently expanded to include Dr Mills and Partners. A second Social Prescribing pilot was started in 2005 within two general practices, The Ridge (in Great Horton and Wibsey) and Royds (in Buttershaw). A CHAT worker was appointed to develop and deliver the scheme in both practices.
- 12.3 Members were informed that the Social Prescribing scheme in Bradford South and West PCT works by primary health care professionals referring patients with non-clinical needs to CHAT. The CHAT worker meets with the patient to discuss their needs and then identifies an appropriate source of support in the community. The CHAT worker facilitates access to community groups or courses and may accompany the patient on their first visit if required. Any member of the primary health care team, including GPs, nurses, health visitors, district nurses and receptionists, can refer patients to the scheme by completing a simple referral form. Alternatively, patients can self refer by completing the tear off slip included in a leaflet which is available from surgery receptions and local pharmacies.
- 12.4 Members noted that a key benefit of the scheme is that the CHAT worker offers up to three forty-minute appointments and, is therefore able to spend longer with a patient than primary care staff are often able to,. This provides

the patients with the opportunity to discuss any issues that they feel are affecting their health and the possibility of exploring a variety of solutions.

12.5 Based on the information shared with Members, it was found that:-

- (a) That Bradford South and West PCT is facing the same challenges to their Social Prescribing Scheme as those documented within the national and local studies. (Section 10 Refers).
- (b) That involving Health Care Professionals in the recruitment of the service navigator helped gain the trust of those groups.
- (c) That Bradford and South West PCT's funding of the CHAT scheme is time limited until March 2007. Funding options to extend the life of the project were at the time of writing being considered.
- (d) That the PCT is exploring where Social Prescribing will sit in the future. The areas under consideration include; mental health, public health (via health trainers funding), primary care or social services.

13 VIEWS OF SERVICE USERS / CARERS AND INTERESTED STAKEHOLDERS

13.1 Members of the Forum were keen to engage with service users and carers and other interested stakeholders as part of this investigation.

13.2 Therefore, the Forum sought the views of a group of service users accessing services via Hartlepool MIND. The session was well attended and service users were given the opportunity to provide their views on the value of Social Prescribing initiatives based on their experience. The views of service users are outlined below :-

Views of Service Users

- (a) Service users felt abandoned and dismissed by the mental health service;
- (b) The encouragement and support offered by Hartlepool MIND was very different to traditional health approaches;
- (c) Hartlepool MIND deal with approximately 900 clients per year;
- (d) Hartlepool MIND enable people to develop new skills and refine existing skills which build confidence and raise self esteem;
- (e) Hartlepool MIND may direct service users to a range of projects based on their interests, including art classes and volunteering opportunities;
- (f) Limited resources result in a delay of 4-8 weeks before appointments are available;

- (g) The Hartlepool MIND approach is held up as a beacon of best practice nationally.

Views of Carers

13.3 The Forum also thought it was important to consider what impact Social Prescribing may have on carers. Thus the Authority's Planning Manager (Carers) was invited to make a presentation to the Forum identifying how carers in Hartlepool may benefit (if at all) from Social Prescribing. The views expressed are noted below:-

- (a) Many carers remain unrecognised in the community and continue in their caring roles without support and with increasing levels of emotional, physical and social needs;
- (b) Carers make a valuable contribution to the local health and social care economy;
- (c) All stakeholders need to ensure that carers are recognised and appropriate services provided to meet assessed need;
- (d) All agencies have a responsibility to work together in partnership to ensure that carers receive relevant information and support to enable them to continue caring for as long as they wish, whilst also having access to opportunities for a good quality of life within the local community;
- (e) Carers in Hartlepool already benefit from a range of support services provided through voluntary sector agencies such as Hartlepool Carers, Hartlepool MIND and Hartlepool and East Durham Alzheimer's Trust;
- (f) Existing examples of the types of support provided to carers falls within the remit of Social Prescribing;
- (g) The needs of the person cared for and the needs of the carer are interdependent and agencies need to work closely together to ensure that both sets of need are appropriately met;
- (h) That there is a gap in services available for couples in Hartlepool. Reference was made to a dementia café that has recently been launched in Easington that enables patients and carers to access activities together;
- (i) Care needs to be taken to ensure that the needs of ex-carers are recognised; and,
- (j) The requirement that GPs maintain a carers' register provides a real opportunity to identify target groups of such individuals who might benefit from Social Prescribing.

View of Interested Stakeholders

- 13.4 The Forum was also approached by a representative of Briarfields Allotments Association who wished to highlight the benefits of allotment gardening which include social inclusion, and aids mental well-being during stressful circumstances.

14 VIEWS OF GP'S AND SERVICE PROVIDERS – STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY SECTORS

- 14.1 The Forum invited Dr Brash, a local GP who is involved in the pilot Social Prescribing project with NDC and Hartlepool MIND to outline a GP's perspective in relation to Social Prescribing. The views expressed at that meeting are summarised below :-

Evidence from Dr. Brash – The GP's Perspective

- (a) That Social Prescribing can be of enormous benefit to patients;
- (b) That the idea of holistic assessments and a service navigator to assist GP's/patients in identifying appropriate schemes is welcomed;
- (c) That consideration needs to be given to how and when the pilot will be rolled out across the Town;
- (d) That data protection issues need to be resolved to ensure that patients are fully aware and consent to their medical records being disclosed to a third party; and,
- (e) That an appropriate feedback mechanism needs to be developed to enable GP's to assess the effectiveness of the non-medical intervention.

Evidence from Service Providers- Statutory and Non-Statutory Sectors

- 14.2 Whilst evidence received from all service providers in the statutory and non-statutory sectors has been reflected throughout this report, Members welcomed the clear partnership working going on amongst all sectors in relation to Social Prescribing.
- 14.3 The Forum consistently received common messages from agencies from the statutory and non-statutory sector which supported the principles of Social Prescribing and highlighted areas for review and further development. Clearly the creation of the working group with representation from all bodies demonstrates a clear commitment to developing Social Prescribing in Hartlepool.
- 14.4 Members of the Forum particularly welcomed the presentation from the Director of Adult and Community Services which usefully established a possible way forward:-

- (a) That the Council agrees that Social Prescribing is a priority;
- (b) That the evidence from Scrutiny and the Consultant be used to identify a way forward and agree a model for Hartlepool;
- (c) That all stakeholders begin to focus on co-ordinating existing schemes. For example, referral routes, signposting, promotion of information etc
- (d) That an invest to save approach be adopted across Health and the local authority and Council be asked to support a joint funding strategy;
- (e) That the beneficiaries of Social Prescribing should be identified supported by a clear evaluation strategy;
- (f) That Social Prescribing be linked to the Public Health Strategy outcomes and;
- (g) That Social Prescribing is incorporated within the Voluntary Sector Strategy Development.

15 CONCLUSIONS

15.1 The Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum concluded:-

- (a) That the evidence base for the effectiveness of non-medical responses is sufficiently robust to justify further investment and exploration;
- (b) That Social Prescribing is a potentially effective mechanism to link patients in primary care with non-medical sources of support within the community, based on a holistic assessment of need;
- (c) That a number of Government policies have created a potentially favourable environment for developing Social Prescribing;
- (d) That there is no accepted model for Social Prescribing or any national guidelines for organizations interested in pursuing such a model;
- (e) That Hartlepool is considered as one of the best practice authorities in relation to work on Social Prescribing and the VCS, including HVDA, NDC and Hartlepool MIND should be commended for their efforts in developing it ;
- (f) That, Social Prescribing can be used as a tool to both improve health outcomes but also to improve community well-being and reduce social exclusion;
- (g) That there are a number of schemes that could be encompassed within the term 'Social Prescribing.' Consequently it has been stressed that a co-

ordinated approach needs to be developed to ensure synergies are achieved and duplication is minimized;

- (h) That there needs to be a clear acceptance within the medical community of the influence of social and cultural factors on health outcomes, coupled with a commitment to consider alternative approaches to the traditional medical model;
- (i) That the development of an evidence base for Social Prescribing has been limited by wide variations in how the term is used and understood and considerable inconsistency in indicators used to measure success;
- (j) That the brokerage /referral facilitator role is vitally important within any Social Prescribing model to assist Health Care Professionals in assessing need and identifying appropriate support;
- (k) That training and support is required to develop indicators to measure the impact of Social Prescribing interventions;
- (l) That appropriate feedback and evaluation mechanisms need to be developed to enable GP's and other Health Care Professionals to assess the effectiveness of the non-medical intervention.
- (m) That under the current system, quality control of Social Prescribing projects is largely the responsibility of individual schemes. Whilst this enables each scheme to establish its own selection criteria Members recognized a need a degree of standardisation in quality and evaluation processes to support future bids for funding/mainstreaming;
- (n) That referrals should not be limited to HealthCare Professionals, and the possibility of self-referrals should be encouraged;
- (o) That the requirement for GP's to maintain a carers' register provides a real opportunity to identify target groups of such individuals that may benefit from Social Prescribing;
- (p) That Social Prescribing projects primarily is supported by short-term / one-off funding which hampers the long-term development of future projects;
- (q) That data protection issues need to be resolved to ensure that patients are made fully aware of and consent to aspects of their medical records being disclosed to a third party; and,
- (r) That the Local Authority needs to link the outcome of the local Fair Access to Care Services Consultation to any future work in relation to Social Prescribing and also use the potential of individualised budgets, self assessments and direct payments to develop projects;

16 RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 The Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Forum's key recommendations to Council and HPCT are as outlined below to be championed by both organisations for implementation / action via the Working Group:-

- (a) That the authority agrees that Social Prescribing is a priority and use the evidence gathered through this investigation, and other studies to agree a framework for Hartlepool;
- (b) That a comprehensive and coordinated strategy for the development, delivery, funding and evaluation of social prescribing be produced within the coming Municipal Year (2007/08) across council departments and, so far as possible, the NHS and VCS.
- (c) As part of this process, detailed consideration should be given during the 2007/08 year to re-allocating funds to the MIND and other social prescribing services from existing activities that service users found less helpful and acceptable.
- (d) That work is undertaken locally to standardise and secure greater understanding of the definition of Social Prescribing;
- (e) That work is undertaken to establish a clear picture of Social Prescribing projects currently offered in Hartlepool or those that can be encompassed within the definition of Social Prescribing with a view to securing greater standardisation of issues such as the availability of information, data protection, referral routes and evaluation;
- (f) That Social Prescribing be adopted as part of the joint PCT and council Public Health Strategy and its outcome criteria, together as well as the emerging strategy for integrating adult social care and community services;
- (g) That Social Prescribing be incorporated within the Voluntary Sector Strategy Development;
- (h) That Social Prescribing be linked to any future Commissioning strategies;
- (i) That funding streams to support Social Prescribing in the long-term be actively identified and developed;
- (j) That the Council link the outcomes of the FACS consultation to funding Social Prescribing activities as part of the proposed resourcing of low level support;
- (k) That work is undertaken by HBC and HPCT with the PBC Group in a bid to increase the level of support for Social Prescribing;
- (l) That work be undertaken to identify target groups who would benefit from Social Prescribing initiatives, including carers and hard to reach groups;

- (m) That capacity issues be considered within the VCS in conjunction with plans to develop Social Prescribing;

17 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 17.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

Hartlepool Borough Council:

Councillor Ray Waller – Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health Services.

Nicola Bailey – Director of Adult and Community Services

Janet Wistow – Planning Manager- Adult and Community Services

External Representatives:

Paul Hyde – Independent Consultant

Julian Penton – Programme Manager for Community Development & Inclusion - NDC

Iain Caldwell – Manager of Hartlepool MIND

Dr Brash – Brash Medical Practice

Tracy Higgins – Health Partnerships Co-ordinator, Bradford South & West PCT

Simon White – Public Health Project Development Worker, Bradford South & West PCT

Members of the Public (Including Resident Representatives)

COUNCILLOR GERALD WISTOW

CHAIR OF THE ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HEALTH SCRUTINY FORUM

March 2007

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:-

- (i). Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into Social Prescribing' – Scoping Report, presented to the Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum of 25 July 2006.
- (ii). Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'National Perspective / Social Prescribing' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum on 26 October 2006.
- (iii). Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Evidence from HVDA & Author of Report Commissioned by Hartlepool Partnership & HVDA in relation to 'Developing Social Prescribing in Hartlepool', presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum on 26 October 2006.
- (iv). Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Introduction of New Deal in the Community Social Prescribing Project' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum on 26 October 2006.
- (v). Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Written submission from Hartlepool MIND in relation to Social Prescribing in Hartlepool' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum on 26 October 2006.
- (vi). Presentation from Dr Brash to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum of 26 October 2006.
- (vii). Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Evidence from Bradford PCT – Covering Report' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum on 14 November 2006.
- (viii). Presentation from Director of Public Health & Well-being entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into Social Prescribing' to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum of 19 December 2006.
- (ix). Report of Director of Adult and Community Services entitled 'Carers and Social Prescribing' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum of 19 December 2006.

- (x). Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Evidence from Service Users and Interested Stakeholders' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum of 19 December 2006.
- (xi). Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Evidence from Hartlepool MIND' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum of 19 December 2006.
- (xii). Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into Social Prescribing – Evidence Gathering Session presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum of 29 January 2007.
- (xiii). Presentation from Director of Adult and Community Services entitled 'Social Prescribing' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum of 29 January 2007.
- (xiv). Developing Social Prescribing in Hartlepool, Commissioned by Hartlepool Partnership and Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency – February 2006.
- (xv). Solutions not medication – Hartlepool NDC 2004
- (xvi). Social Prescribing for Mental Health, Northern Centre for Mental Health – February 2004.
- (xvii). Sign Posting Evaluation Report – March 2005
- (xviii). The Evaluation of the CHAT Social Prescribing Scheme in Bradford South & West PCT – November 2005
- (xix). Department of Health - Our health, Our care, Our say: A New Direction for Community Services.

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- (i). Kessler D, Lloyd K And Lewis G (1999) 'Cross sectional study of symptom attribution and recognition of depression and anxiety in primary care' -British Medical Journal 318:436-39
- (ii). Gask L, Rogers A, Roland M, Morris D (2000) 'Improving quality in primary care: a practical guide to the national service framework for mental health' National Primary Care Research and Development Centre: University of Manchester
- (iii). BATES P (EDITOR) (2002) 'Working for Inclusion: making social inclusion a reality for people with severe mental health problems' London: Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health.
- (iv). Sykes S (2002) Literature Review (Conducted for Penge Social Prescribing Scheme)

- (v). Department of Health (2003) 'Making partnership work for patients, carers and service users a proposed strategic partnership agreement between the Department of Health, the NHS and the voluntary and community sector.'

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

27 April 2007



Report of: Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum

Subject: FINAL REPORT - RESPONSE TO HARTLEPOOL PCTS CONSULTATION ON ITS PROPOSED MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS -

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum's response to Hartlepool PCT's consultation in relation to its proposed management structure.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

- 2.1 Hartlepool PCT was confirmed as a separate statutory body following the Department of Health exercise, "Commissioning a Patient-Led NHS". In determining its future management arrangements Hartlepool PCT consulted key stakeholders including this Overview and Scrutiny Committee to seek views in relation to its proposed management structure.
- 2.2 The Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum met on September 19 2006 to receive from the PCT a presentation of its proposals. This meeting followed the Forum's previous submission to the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) in March 2006, recommending the continuance of one to one coterminosity between the PCT and the Borough Council. The same view was unanimously supported by the Borough Council at its meeting on 16 February 2006 and Hartlepool Partnership (of which Hartlepool PCT is a core Member) at its meeting on 4 November 2005. In addition, each body supported the concept of an independent Board for the PCT rather than one incorporating shared management arrangements with other PCTs.
- 2.3 The Forum submitted an interim report to Cabinet and HPCT on 9 October 2006 in response to the PCT's consultation on its proposed management arrangements. A formal response to this report was received by the Authority on the 18 December 2006 (outside of the 28 days within which the Forum had requested a response and within which health bodies are expected to reply to OSC reports). Members considered the response at the Forum's meeting on 29 January 2007 and agreed the approach to be adopted in this final report. In

particular, Members endorsed their previous findings and conclusions within the context of both bodies having now placed their considered views on the public record. Members also concluded that local residents were better served by a focus on securing more effective working relationships rather than a further point by point account of what is now an historical decision making process.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

3.1 The overall aim of the Scrutiny Inquiry was to provide a response to Hartlepool PCT's consultation on its proposed management structure. This focus was of particular significance because:

3.1.1 The PCT had proposed to initiate a form of shared management arrangements under which the Executive Director posts would be joint appointments with North Tees PCT;

3.1.2 The PCT had previously supported the case put forward in an independent report it had jointly commissioned with the council and other members of the LSP. This position was endorsed unanimously at the LSP meeting of 4 November 2005 and the report submitted to the Strategic Health Authority;

3.1.3 The Executive of the Council had obtained advice from leading counsel in the Chambers of the former Lord Chancellor that the NHS was obliged to conduct a formal statutory consultation on its proposals for management re-structuring.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HEALTH SCRUTINY FORUM

4.1 The membership of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum 2006/07 Municipal Year was as detailed below:-

Councillors: Barker (Vice-Chair), Akers-Belcher, Brash, Fleet, Griffin, Lauderdale, Lilley, Rayner, Wistow (Chair), Worthy and Young.

Resident Representatives: Mary Green, Jean Kennedy and Joan Norman

5. METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

5.1 Members of the Scrutiny Forum met on 19 September 2006 to receive and discuss evidence in relation to this inquiry. A detailed record of the issues raised during this meeting is available from the Council's Democratic Services.

5.2 Due to the limited time available during which to undertake this inquiry, the key method of investigation involved detailed reports supplemented by verbal evidence by representatives of Hartlepool Primary Care Trust.

SCRUTINY FINDINGS

6. HARTLEPOOL PCT MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

6.1 The Forum was advised that under the proposals presented to the SHA:-

- (a) Hartlepool PCT will be a statutory body with its own Board with a Chairman and Non Executive Directors appointed by the Appointments Commission.
- (b) HPCT will receive its own financial allocations to meet the health care needs of its population and will need to meet its statutory duties to achieve financial balance and the re-payment of previous deficits.
- (c) HPCT Board will consider how it can best meet its duties and responsibilities, and, where appropriate, may decide to work collaboratively with other organisations, including other PCTs or Local Authorities.

6.2 The PCT informed Members that after careful consideration involving discussions with a range of stakeholders and the initial feedback following the Fitness for Purpose Review, Hartlepool PCT proposed to create a joint management team with North Tees PCT together with a range of Tees wide functions including commissioning. In further developing these arrangements, the PCT chairman stated that his 'bottom line' was that decision making in the joint committee would be on the basis of unanimity rather than majority voting.

6.3 The PCT advised Members that the proposal demonstrated a significant presence at a senior level north of Tees, supported by some Tees wide functions where this is the most effective way to undertake these. Further, the PCT informed the Forum that several areas must have senior local leaders in each PCT/LA area and may lead to the creation of joint posts, subject to further discussion and agreement over governance and funding arrangements. In summary the PCT stated that for Hartlepool this option would enable the PCT to create senior posts focussed on areas of work with direct relevance to Hartlepool Borough Council. However, no detail of these proposals was then available to enable the Forum to form a view on whether they might meet the conditions in the letter from the Acting Permanent Secretary and Andy Burnham's Ministerial statement to Parliament both of 16 May 2006.

6.4 In light of all these issues, the Forum considered that the proposals needed to be developed further to demonstrate clearly how local responsiveness would be maintained to deal with differing local needs. The Forum was pleased to note that HPCT and HBC had begun to work together to address this requirement. However, Members maintained that the loss of a locally-focussed PCT in favour of a Joint Management Structure would make health improvement in Hartlepool and joint commissioning more difficult to achieve.

- 6.5 Members considered it vital to preserve joint working in Hartlepool to reinforce the community and public health agenda. Members also continued to support the direction in 'Delivering the NHS Improvement Plan' [2005] which refers to the relationship with local authorities as being crucial and states: *"all PCTs need to play strongly into LSPs and where applicable LAAs"* (para 5.11 refers) and hoped to see clear evidence of Hartlepool PCT remaining committed to closer integration with local governance structures.
- 6.6 The Forum learned via Hartlepool PCTs response to its interim report that HPCT has affirmed its own commitment to ensuring that these conditions be met, especially with regard to increased co-operation between co-terminous PCTs and local Authorities. Whilst the Forum welcomes HPCTs resolve to ensure that all the conditions set out in the Acting Permanent Secretary's letter are met, the Forum has yet to see robust evidence demonstrating how the PCT intend on achieving this beyond a reference to the role of the Chair and NED team.
- 6.7 While acknowledging that the Chair and NED team will play a central role in ensuring that the needs of Hartlepool are realised, Members consider that further work still remains to develop a more detailed framework for joint working to ensure that partnership working is maintained and enhanced in Hartlepool.

7. CONSULTATIVE BASIS

- 7.1 The Forum learned that Hartlepool Council has obtained legal advice from leading counsel on the duties of the SHA and PCT to consult under the terms of the Health & Social Care Act 2003 and Health Scrutiny Regulations. This advice was communicated to these bodies by the Chief Executive of Hartlepool Borough Council in letters dated 28 July 2006 and 11 August 2006.
- 7.2 Consequently, the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum conducted this enquiry in line with the legal advice received by the Council that the PCT Consultation in relation to the proposed management structure comprised a substantial change in the provision of health services which necessitated a formal consultation process involving local authorities and the Patients and Public Involvement Forums. The requirement for such consultation enables a Health Scrutiny Committee to refer disputed matters to the Secretary of State for consideration before any changes can be implemented. In practice, Hartlepool PCT made a decision to implement its management changes within three weeks of submitting them to the Forum and before even an interim report could be completed and approved.(see below).
- 7.3 The SHA rejected the view that it had a legal duty to consult and Hartlepool PCT did not accept that changes in management arrangements were subject to formal statutory consultation processes. While Members of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum considered that the timetable proposed by HPCT (3 weeks) was too short to allow due process, they nevertheless wished to interpret their statutory duty as flexibly as possible in

the circumstances. Consequently, the Forum agreed to consider its response to the PCT's proposals at a joint meeting with the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on September 29 2006. The normal process would be for the Forum to conclude its enquiry and submit its report to the next meeting of Scrutiny Coordinating within the normal meetings cycle. The special joint meeting was arranged with the minimum notice that could be given to comply with Scrutiny process. The Forum's aim was that at least an interim report could be submitted to the authority's Cabinet at its scheduled meeting on 9th October. The Forum was however disappointed to learn that, despite its best efforts to respond as rapidly as possible, the HPCT Board made a decision on October 2 2006 to implement the proposals presented to the Forum. Thus, it made a decision on the outcome of its consultation in the absence of a response from Scrutiny.

- 7.4 The Forum readily understands why the SHA and PCT might wish to question the advice which leading counsel supplied to the Local Authority. Its content apparently challenges assumptions on which the NHS and local government have generally operated in terms of what constitutes substantial changes in the provision of health services. The Forum does not believe that the interests of local residents would be served by placing the Council and PCT in a position of legal conflict or delaying the implementation of new arrangements for effective joint working. Legal action by the Council and a formal report to the Secretary of State by this Forum would be likely to have those serious disadvantages even if justified by the advice received.
- 7.5 Nonetheless, the Executive has commissioned a legal opinion and the nature of the advice it received is such that it may be of wider regional and national significance. Consequently, the Forum considers that the Executive would be serving the wider public interest, and potentially securing fuller value for money, if the Executive were to draw to the attention of other relevant bodies the nature of the advice it commissioned., Members of the Forum also considered that they could contribute to this process by publicising this report to other local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees through the Centre for Public Scrutiny in the normal way.

8. CABINET OFFICE CODE OF PRACTICE ON CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Whilst the nature of the consultation exercise (statutory or not) remains unresolved between the PCT and the Borough Council the Forum notes that the consultation process adopted by HPCT did not comply with the Cabinet Office, Code of Practice on written consultations. The code of practice clearly outlines that one of the main purposes of consultation is to "improve decision making by ensuring that decisions are soundly based on evidence, that they take into account the views and experience of those affected by them, that innovative and creative options are considered and that new arrangements are workable." In addition the code of practice outlines that sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest, and twelve weeks is considered as a standard minimum.

- 8.2 In light of this advice the Forum does not consider that HPCT has consulted in a proper or effective manner irrespective of whether the consultation required was of a statutory nature. This is an unfortunate start for the new PCT in a context where the need for the public to have greater confidence in consultation processes conducted by the NHS has received growing attention (as in for example the White Paper 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say').

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum concluded:-

- (a) That the consultation process adopted by HPCT did not comply with the Cabinet Office, Code of Practice on written consultations. Consequently the Forum was not provided with sufficient time to "improve decision making by ensuring that decisions are soundly based on evidence, that they take into account the views and experience of those affected by them, that innovative and creative options are considered and that new arrangements are workable."
- (b) That the consultation process did not comply with the legal requirements placed on it to conduct a statutory consultation, though it recognizes that the Council and PCT have received different advice on the relevance of these requirements to this case.;
- (c) That the Forum considers that there is limited value in pursuing the advice of leading counsel as this will un-necessarily hamper relations between the Council and the Trust. However, the Forum does recognize the value in developing a protocol to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both organizations in respect of consultation processes;
- (d) That the Forum welcomes the recognition within the NHS that it must 'Raise the bar' on the quality of consultations. A national review found high variation in the manner and success of reconfiguration consultations, even within the same area. Sir Ian Carruthers, who led the review said: 'The detail, style, format [and] language of consultation documents varies too much. When you read a lot of them, it is not clear what is being discussed.' It also says that primary care trusts should take a central role in leading reconfiguration. 'PCTs should normally lead the preparation and consultation on service improvement proposals.' Although the Carruthers review focussed on service re-configurations, the Forum would expect his recommendations to apply to NHS consultations more generally.
- (e) That the Forum is aware, informally that that progress has been made in establishing joint arrangements between HPCT and this Local Authority.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Based on the evidence considered during the undertaking of this Scrutiny investigation, the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum recommends:-

Hartlepool PCT

- (a) That future consultation/engagement exercises undertaken by Hartlepool PCT comply with the relevant statutory guidance and the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on written consultations;
- (b) That consultation processes are planned clearly with identifiable markers identifying where Scrutiny can input into the process;
- (c) That Hartlepool PCT support the implementation of a protocol governing consultation between both organisations;
- (d) That the PCT submit an update report to this Forum on the development of the management structure including plans for Joint Commissioning with the Council together with the terms of reference for any Tees-wide and North of the Tees Joint arrangements and Committees.

Hartlepool Borough Council

- (e) That the Executive draws to the attention of national and regional organisations, such as the LGA and ANEC, the nature of the legal advice received by this Local Authority, namely that consultation on proposed management arrangements are subject to a formal statutory consultation processes.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 11.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

Chairman of Hartlepool PCT;

Officers representing Hartlepool PCT;

Hartlepool Borough Council's Chief Executive;

Hartlepool Borough Council's Director of Adult and Community Services; and

Hartlepool Borough Council's Chief Solicitor.

COUNCILLOR GERALD WISTOW

CHAIR OF THE ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HEALTH SCRUTINY FORUM

March 2007

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:-

- (i). Report of Hartlepool Partnership entitled 'Locality Plus – Retaining a Coterminus PCT in Hartlepool';
- (ii) "Locality Plus" - Hartlepool Borough Council's Health Scrutiny response to the County Durham and Tees Valley Strategic Health Authorities consultation document on new Primary Care Trust arrangements in County Durham and the Tees Valley.
- (iii) Letter from Acting Permanent Secretary Hugh Taylor to David Flory –Dated 16 May 2006.
- (iv) Letter from SHA to PCT Chairs and Chief Executives – Dated 23 May 2006.
- (v) Letter from David Flory SHA Chief Executive to Local Authority Chief Executives - Dated 30 May 2006
- (vi) Report of the Director of Adult and Community Services entitled 'PCT Reconfiguration – Tees Valley' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum held on 23 June 2006.
- (vi) Report of the Chairman of Hartlepool PCT entitled 'Hartlepool PCT – Future Board and Management Arrangements' presented to the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum held on 19 September 2006.
- (vii) Statement by Andy Burnham MP to the House of Commons on 16 May 2006.